

Virtues Education Works!

As we teach young children about courtesy, gentleness and honesty, we sometimes wonder if they will ever show these qualities by themselves without being reminded. How will they act when faced with a moral decision? The following true story about a little boy in Gansu might give us all hope and confirmation.

Last September, Yangjiang, a teacher from Gansu province who had just finished *Virtues in Us* Teacher training workshop in Beijing, enthusiastically started teaching her grade 2 class about the virtues. The first virtue in the curriculum was truthfulness. Children as usual enthusiastically participated in the lessons. She talked to them about how truthfulness is important and the foundation for all human virtues. In the fourth lesson, children read from a picture book called *Virtues in Action*. One of the pictures showed an adult who had found some money asking a little boy on the street if the money belonged to him. The child truthfully answered that it did not. The class then discussed this scenario and other opportunities to practice truthfulness. After finishing the ten lessons on truthfulness, the class went on to learn about other virtues such as gentleness, and courtesy and responsibility.

Shortly after the spring festival holiday, on a normal afternoon in March when Yangjiang returned to school from lunch, she was greeted by an excited group of her students. Everyone spoke at the same time. She barely made out a couple of sentences from the crowd: “Miss Yang, Zhu picked up a lot of money.. and there is also a thank you letter for you.”. “Oh, Zhu picked up money? And a thank you letter? For me?” She wondered what this was all about as she walked quickly towards her classroom. The students excitedly led her to where the thank you letter was left. The letter was about Zhu, an eight year old boy in her class. The writer of the letter had thanked Yangjiang for teaching about the virtues to Zhu. But, the letter was not from Zhu’s parents or grand parents. Just then, Zhu’s grandfather came in to her classroom and told her the whole story.

The day before, Zhu was traveling home on the bus with his aunt. As he approached an empty seat to sit down, he saw a bulging plastics bag left on the seat. At first, he did not think much of it, but slowly, his curiosity peaked, he picked up the bag and opened it. To his surprise, the bag was stuffed full of 100RMB notes! His heart was racing as he quickly closed the bag, rested it on his knees and clutched it tight. “What should I do now?” Zhu asked himself.

After getting off the bus, he rushed home to his parents and showed them the bag. Inside the bag was a purse with 3 bank cards, 2 ID cards, passwords for the cards, bank deposit book and the cash. They counted the cash; more than 150,000 Yuan, a significant sum for a country boy in Gansu, one of the less advantaged provinces of China.

When Zhu understood the importance of what he had found, he insisted that his parents find the bag’s owner as he hung on to the bag for dear life. His parents teasingly asked him, ” Don’t you want to use this money to buy things for yourself?” Zhu answered: ” I want to, but it is not mine.” “But no one would know.” His parents tested him. Zhu then

became very stern and said: “If it is not our money, we cannot touch it. My virtues teacher Miss Yang told us we can’t take away something that does not belong to us, we should be honest.” His parents were delighted to see the change in their son who on occasions had been found stealing money from them to buy toys and treats. They promised to turn the bag of money into the police the next morning. Zhu, held on to the bag the whole night in his bed, vowing to let it go only when its rightful owner is found.

The next morning, Zhu and his grandfather went to the police station. The owners were found shortly after. Zhu joyfully handed the bag to the young couple who received it with tearful eyes and a grateful heart. The husband said: “When I found out that I had left the bag on the bus, I almost went crazy..150,000 is a *lot* of money . All my hopes were dashed to ever have a decent life again. I could not sleep at all. My wife cried all night. If I had not found the money today, I would have committed suicide...” . Holding Zhu’s hand, the wife said to Zhu “I really never thought we will find the bag. Thank you so much, and also thanks to your virtues teacher and family who have educated you so well. You saved our life.”

The couple came to school to see Yangjiang to personally thank her. When they could not find her, they left her a thank you letter, Zhu’s grandfather explained. Yangjiang’s heart was filled with joy. “The virtues are so powerful!” She thought.

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For Virtues in Us