

Truthfulness & Sincerity

For many years a large tree stood behind a house that belonged to a husband and wife with several children.

As the tree grew, its branches reached up and out, shading the back of the family's home. One winter morning, the father was passing under the tree when he met a neighbor. They spoke briefly of the comings and goings in the village.

After a while, the neighbor, taking notice of the large tree, said to the man, "You know, it really is time for you to cut that enormous tree down. It is sprawling and unruly. What if one of the branches were to break off and fall onto your roof—or worse yet, hit one of your children while they play in the shade?"

When the two had parted, the man considered his neighbor's advice. The tree had stood in this place since before he could remember, and no harm had come of it. It gave good shade in the summer and shielded the house from the bitter winds of winter. It seemed sturdy and strong. "Still, perhaps my neighbor has a point," the man said to himself.

"Appearances can sometimes be deceiving. What if the tree is not as sturdy as it seems?" And so he decided to cut it down.

It was a difficult job, for the tree was very big, indeed, and had many limbs and branches, some of them quite high. Just as the man finished, his neighbor returned, this time accompanied by his two sons and a cart.

"I see you decided to take down the tree," the neighbor said, looking at the many stacks of wood. "I suppose you'll need someone to take those piles away. Perhaps we can help you. I have brought my cart and my two sons, and we will be happy to remove all this from your yard."

Without waiting for an answer, the sons began loading the wood into the waiting cart. As they pulled away, the man sat down on the stump of the tree that had sheltered his home for so long. It was then that he realized that his neighbor had not been concerned for his family's safety after all, but for the supply of firewood that would keep him warm through the winter months.

"Appearances can, indeed, sometimes be deceiving," he said with a sigh.