



David M. Valadez  
Senshin Center  
Dojocho

---

## **The Two Sons** by David M. Valadez

Sensei: Once there were two sons. Along with their father, these two sons were caretakers of a well that was on one side of a great desert. This responsibility had remained in their family for generations. The father tried to raise his sons wisely in the caring for the well and in the servicing of all those that depended upon the well. To this end, the father guided his sons from his heart in all of the knowledge he had gained over the decades of his life and in all of the knowledge that was passed down to him from his father and his father's father and his father's father's father.

A man, having been stranded somewhere deep in the desert, at long last made it to outskirts of the well. He was on the verge of death - his thirst was burning within him just as his skin burned upon him. The elder son, having seen the man from a long way off, came to sit by the well, waiting for the man to complete his arduous journey. As the man stumbled near the well, and crawled the last few feet to the drink that would save his life, the elder son poured the man half a container of water. The father, from the doorway of the house, had seen this. Calling the younger son to follow him, the father approached the well, his elder son, and their guest.

The father knelt down to hold the man - helping him to drink. When the man had finished, the father had asked his younger son to fill the container back up. The younger son, doing what he was told, proceeded to fill the glass up as his brother had done before - halfway full. The father took the cup from his younger son's hand and put it to the man's mouth - helping him to drink more slowly and more fully. So pure were the waters of this well that with this second cup the man had begun to feel his life returning to him. The father took the cup and gave it again to the elder son to fill. As the elder son began to fill the cup once more, the father asked, "Why do you only give this man half a cup?" To that the elder son, in silence, proceeded to fill the cup up to its rim. Still in the father's arms, the man reached for his own cup this time. Having finished it, the father took the cup and gave it to his second son. The second son filled the cup to the rim. The father, not yet reaching for it, asked, "Why do you fill it to the rim?" At this, the younger son poured half of the cup back into the well. He, again, gave the father a half full cup to give to the man. The man drank this and fell asleep there in the shade of the well, still in the father's arms. At this, the father spoke to his sons. "My sons, why have you not answered my questions? Why have you thought that making a glass full or making another half-full would suffice as an answer to my questions? Are you not, in such actions, avoiding the very questions I have posed? Had I wanted you, my elder son, to fill the glass up, and you, my younger son, to empty the glass half-way, would I have not simply asked for such things?"

"We do not understand," said the younger son.

“Am I inquiring concerning the amount of water or of the heart that poured it?” said the father.

“You are asking of our hearts my father,” said the elder son.

“And why would I do this my son?” asked the father.

“Because it is in our hearts that we will find the right amount of water to offer – not in tables of full and half-full,” replied the elder son.

“But father, how can we get in touch with our hearts in order to determine such things?” asked the younger son.

“By putting yourself in this poor man’s shoes and asking yourself how you would feel according to what size container of water you were being offered,” answered the father.

“Father, doing that, I am ashamed at having offered this poor man but a container half-full. And I can concede that it is partly this shame that drove me to avoid your first question with my action of filling the container all the way as a silent response,” said the elder son.

“Be not ashamed my son. Be proud. Be proud knowing that now that you have opened your heart as I have taught you, you will never again offer a man less water or more water than he desires,” finished the father.

Deshi: Sensei, too many times we are like the sons when they heard the father’s first questions – we act only to avoid the lesson. I am sorry.

Sensei: Be not sorry; be proud, as I am proud, knowing that you will never again avoid such lessons in that same way.