

# The Sayings Of Confucius



*Confucius*

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## **PUBLISHER NOTES:**

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## BOOK I

1. The Master said, To learn and then do, is not that a pleasure? When friends come from afar do we not rejoice? To live unknown and not fret, is not that to be a gentleman?
2. Yu-tzu<sup>[2]</sup> said. Few men that are good sons and good brothers are fond of withstanding those over them. A man that is not fond of withstanding those over him and is yet fond of broils is nowhere found. A gentleman heeds the roots. When the root has taken, the Way is born. And to be a good son and a good brother, is not that the root of love?
3. The Master said, Smooth words and fawning looks are seldom found with love.
4. Tseng-tzu<sup>[3]</sup> said, Thrice daily I ask myself: In dealing for others, have I been unfaithful? Have I been untrue to friends? Do I practise what I preach?
5. The Master said, To guide a land of a thousand chariots, honour business and be true; spend little and love men; time thy calls on the people.
6. The Master said, The young should be dutiful at home, modest abroad, careful and true, overflowing in kindness for all, but in brotherhood with love. And if they have strength to spare they should spend it on the arts.
7. Tzu-hsia<sup>[4]</sup> said, If a man eschews beauty and honours worth, if he serves his father and mother with all his strength, if he is ready to give his life for his lord, and keeps faith with his friends, though others may say he has no learning, I must call him learned.
8. The Master said, A gentleman will not be looked up to unless he is staid, nor will his learning be sound. Put faithfulness and truth first; have no friends unlike thyself; be not ashamed to mend thy faults.
9. Tseng-tzu<sup>[4]</sup> said, Heed the dead, follow up the past, and the soul of the people will again grow great.

10. Tzu-ch'in<sup>[5]</sup> said to Tzu-kung,<sup>[6]</sup> When he comes to a country the Master always hears how it is governed; does he ask, or is it told him?

Tzu-kung said, The Master gets it by his warmth and honesty, by politeness, modesty and yielding. The way the Master asks is unlike other men's asking.

11. The Master said, Whilst thy father lives look for his purpose; when he is gone, look how he walked. To change nothing in thy father's ways for three years may be called pious.

12, Yu-tzu<sup>[7]</sup> said, To behave with ease is the best part of courtesy. This was the beauty of the old kings' ways; this they followed in small and great. But knowing this, it will not do to give way to ease, unchecked by courtesy. This too is wrong.

13. Yu-tzu said, If pledges are close to right, word can be kept. If attentions are close to courtesy, shame will be kept far. If we do not choose our leaders wrong, we may worship them too.

14. The Master said, A gentleman that does not seek to eat his fill, nor look for ease in his home, who is earnest at work and careful of speech, who walks with those that keep the Way, and is guided by them, may be said to love learning.

15. Tzu-kung<sup>[8]</sup> said, Poor, but no flatterer; rich, but not proud: how would that be?

It would do, said the Master; but better still were poor but merry; rich, but loving courtesy.

Tzu-kung said, When the poem says:

If ye cut, if ye file,  
If ye polish and grind,  
is that what is meant?

The Master said, Now I can begin to talk of poetry to Tz'u. Tell him what is gone, and he knows what shall come.

16. The Master said, Not to be known is no sorrow. My sorrow is not knowing men.

## FOOTNOTES:

[2] A disciple.

[3] A disciple.

[4] A disciple.

[5] A disciple.

[6] A disciple.

[7] A disciple.

[8] A disciple.

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## BOOK II

1. The Master said, He that rules by mind is like the north star, steady in his seat, whilst the stars all bend to him.
2. The Master said, The three hundred poems are summed up in the one line, Think no evil.
3. The Master said, Guide the people by law, aline them by punishment; they may shun crime, but they will want shame. Guide them by mind, aline them by courtesy; they will learn shame and grow good.
4. The Master said, At fifteen, I had the will to learn; at thirty, I could stand; at forty, I had no doubts; at fifty, I understood the heavenly Bidding; at sixty, my ears were opened<sup>[9]</sup>; at seventy, I could do as my heart lusted without trespassing from the square.
5. Meng Yi asked the duty of a son.  
The Master said, Not to transgress.  
As Fan Chi'ih<sup>[10]</sup> was driving him, the Master said, Meng-sun<sup>[11]</sup> asked me the duty of a son; I answered, Not to transgress.  
What did ye mean? said Fan Chi'ih.  
To serve our father and mother with courtesy whilst they live; to bury them with courtesy when they die, and to worship them with courtesy.
6. Meng Wu asked the duty of a son.

The Master said, He should not grieve his father and mother by anything but illness.

7. Tzu-yu<sup>[12]</sup> asked the duty of a son.  
The Master said, He that can feed his parents is now called a good son. But both dogs and horses are fed, and unless we honour our parents, what is the difference?
8. Tzu-hsia<sup>[13]</sup> asked the duty of a son.  
The Master said, Our manner is the hard part. For the young to be a stay in toil and leave the wine and food to their elders, is this to fulfil their duty?
9. The Master said, If I talk all day to Hui,<sup>[14]</sup> like a dullard, he never differs from me. But when he is gone, if I watch him when alone, he can carry out what I taught. No, Hui is no dullard!
10. The Master said, See what he does; watch what moves him; search what pleases him: can the man lie hidden? Can the man lie hidden?

11. The Master said, To keep old knowledge warm and get new makes the teacher.

12. The Master said, A gentleman is not a vessel.

13. Tzu-kung<sup>[15]</sup> asked, What is a gentleman?

The Master said, He puts words into deeds first, and follows these up with words.

14. The Master said, A gentleman is broad and fair; the small man takes sides and is narrow.

15. The Master said, Learning without thought is naught; thought without learning is dangerous.

16. The Master said, To fight strange doctrines does harm.

17. The Master said, Yu,<sup>[16]</sup> shall I teach thee what is wisdom? To know what we know, and know what we do not know, is wisdom.

18. Tsu-chang<sup>[17]</sup> learned with an eye to pay.

The Master said, Hear much, leave all that is doubtful alone, speak warily of everything else, and few will be offended. See much, leave all that is dangerous alone, deal warily with everything else, and thou wilt have little to rue. If thy words seldom give offence, and thy deeds leave little to rue, pay will follow.

19. Duke Ai<sup>[18]</sup> asked, What should I do to win the people?

Confucius answered, Lift up the straight, put away the crooked; and the people will be won. Lift up the crooked, put away the straight; and the people will not be won.

20. Chi K'ang<sup>[19]</sup> asked how to make the people lowly, faithful and painstaking.

The Master said, Meet them with dignity, they will be lowly; be a good son and merciful, they will be faithful; lift up the good and teach the unskilled, and they will take pains.

21. One said to Confucius, Why do ye not govern, Sir?

The Master said, What does the Book<sup>[20]</sup> say of a good son? 'To be a good son and a friend to thy brothers is to show how to govern.' This, too, is to govern. Must one be in office to govern?

22. The Master said, A man without truth, I know not what good he is! A cart without a crosspole, a carriage without a yoke, how can they be moved?

23. Tzu-chang<sup>[21]</sup> asked whether we can know what is to be ten generations hence.

The Master said, The Yin<sup>[22]</sup> took over the manners of the Hsia; the harm and the good that they did them can be known. The Chou took over the manners of the Yin; the harm and the good that they did them can be known. And we may know what shall be, even an hundred generations hence, whoever follows Chou.

24. The Master said, To worship the ghosts of men not akin to us is fawning. To see the right and not do it is want of courage.

### FOOTNOTES:

[9] *Lit.*, obedient.

[10] A disciple.

[11] Meng Yi.

[12] A disciple.

[13] A disciple.

[14] The disciple Yen Yüan.

[15] A disciple.

[16] The disciple Tzu-lu.

[17] A disciple.

[18] Of Lu.

[19] The head of the Chi clan.

[20] The Book of History.

[21] A disciple.

[22] Up to the time of Confucius, China had been ruled by three lines of kings. First the T'ang, next the Yin or Shang, then the Chou.

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