

Confucius Analects

From [Lun Yu – The Analects of Confucius](#)

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Chapter 1

Chapter 1, Verse 1

The Master said, 'Is it not a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals? Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar? Is it not gentlemanly not to take offence when others fail to appreciate your abilities?' Lau [1:1]

Chapter 1, Verse 2

Yu Tzu said, 'It is rare for a man whose character is such that he is good as a son and obedient as a young man to have the inclination to transgress against his superiors; it is unheard of for one who has no such inclination to be inclined to start a rebellion. The gentleman devotes his efforts to the roots, for once the roots are established, the Way will grow therefrom. Being good as a son and obedient as a young man is, perhaps, the root of a man's character.' Lau [1:2]

Chapter 1, Verse 3

The Master said, 'It is rare, indeed, for a man with cunning words and an ingratiating face to be benevolent.' Lau [1:3]

Chapter 1, Verse 4

Tseng Tzu said, 'Every day I examine myself on three counts. In what I have undertaken on another's behalf, have I failed to do my best? In my dealings with my friends have I failed to be trustworthy in what I say? Have I passed on to others anything that I have not tried out myself?' Lau [1:4]

Chapter 1, Verse 5

The Master said, 'In guiding a state of a thousand chariots, approach your duties with reverence and be trustworthy in what you say; avoid excesses in expenditure and love your fellow men; employ the labor of the common people only in the right seasons.' Lau [1:5]

Chapter 1, Verse 6

The Master said, 'A young man should be a good son at home and an obedient young man abroad, sparing of speech but trustworthy in what he says, and should love the multitude at large but cultivate the friendship of his fellow men. If he has any energy to spare from such action, let him devote it to making himself cultivated.' Lau [1:6]

Chapter 1, Verse 7

Tzu-hsia said, 'I would grant that a man has received instruction who appreciates men of excellence where other men appreciate beautiful women, who exerts himself to the utmost in the service of his parents and offers his person to the service of his lord, and who, in his dealings with his friends, is trustworthy in what he says, even though he may say that he has never been taught.' Lau [1:7]

Chapter 1, Verse 8

The Master said, 'A gentleman who lacks gravity does not inspire awe. A gentleman who studies is unlikely to be inflexible. 'Make it your guiding principle to do your best for others and to be trustworthy in what you say. Do not accept as friend anyone who is not as good as you. 'When you make a mistake, do not be afraid of mending your ways.' Lau [1:8]

Chapter 1, Verse 9

Tseng Tzu said, 'Conduct the funeral of your parents with meticulous care and let not sacrifices to your remote ancestors be forgotten, and the virtue of the common people will incline towards fullness.' Lau [1:9]

Chapter 1, Verse 10

Tzu-ch'in asked Tzu-kung, 'When the Master arrives in a state, he invariably gets to know about its government. Does he seek this information? or is it given him?'

Tzu-kung said, 'The Master gets it through being cordial, good, respectful, frugal and deferential. The way the Master seeks it is, perhaps, different from the way other men seek it.' Lau [1:10]

Chapter 1, Verse 11

The Master said, 'Observe what a man has in mind to do when his father is living, and then observe what he does when his father is dead. If, for three years, he makes no changes to his father's ways, he can be said to be a good son.' Lau [1:11]

Chapter 1, Verse 12

Yu Tzu said, 'Of the things brought about by the rites, harmony is the most valuable. Of the ways of the Former Kings, this is the most beautiful, and is followed alike in matters great and small, yet this will not always work: to aim always at harmony without regulating it by the rites simply because one knows only about harmony will not, in fact, work.' Lau [1:12]

Chapter 1, Verse 13

Tzu said, 'To be trustworthy in word is close to being moral in that it enables one's words to be repeated. To be respectful is to being observant of the rites in that it enables to stay clear of disgrace and insult. If, in promoting good relationship with relatives by marriage, a

man manages not to lose the good will of his own kinsmen, he is worthy of being looked up to as the head of the clan.' Lau [1:13]

Chapter 1, Verse 14

The Master said, 'The gentleman seeks neither a full belly nor a comfortable home. He is quick in action but cautious in speech. He goes to men possessed of the Way to have himself put right. Such a man can be described as eager to learn.' Lau [1:14]

Chapter 1, Verse 15

Tzu-kung said, "'Poor without being obsequious, wealthy without being arrogant." What do you think of this saying?'

The Master said, 'That will do, but better still "Poor yet delighting in the Way, wealthy yet observant of the rites."'

Tzu-kung said, 'The Odes say, Like bone cut, like horn polished, like jade carved, like stone ground. Is not what you have said a case in point?'

The Master said, 'Ssu, only with a man like you can one discuss the Odes. Tell such a man something and he can see its relevance to what he has not been told.' Lau [1:15]

Chapter 1, Verse 16

The Master said, 'It is not the failures of others to appreciate your abilities that should trouble you, but rather your failure to appreciate theirs.' Lau [1:16]

Chapter 2

Chapter 2, Verse 1

The Master said, 'The rule of virtue can be compared to the Pole Star which commands the homage of the multitude of stars without leaving its place.' Lau [2:1]

Chapter 2, Verse 2

The Master said, 'The Odes are three hundred in number. They can be summed up in one phrase, Swerving not from the right path.' Lau [2:2]

Chapter 2, Verse 3

The Master said, 'Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with punishments, and the common people will stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with the rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves.' Lau [2:3]

Chapter 2, Verse 4

The Master said, 'At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I came to be free from doubts; at fifty I understood the Decree of Heaven; at sixty my ear was attuned; at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line.' Lau [2:4]

Chapter 2, Verse 5

Meng Yi Tzu asked about being filial. The Master answered, 'Never fail to comply.' Fan Ch'ih was driving. The Master told him about the interview, saying, 'Meng-sun asked me about being filial. I answered, "Never fail to comply."' Fan Ch'ih asked, 'What does that mean?' The Master said, 'When your parents are alive, comply with the rites in serving them; when they die, comply with the rites in burying them; comply with the rites in sacrificing to them.' Lau [2:5]

Chapter 2, Verse 6

Meng Wu Po asked about being filial. The Master said, 'Give your father and mother no other cause for anxiety than illness.' Lau [2:6]

Chapter 2, Verse 7

Tzu-yu asked about being filial. The Master said, 'Nowadays for a man to be filial means no more than that he is able to provide his parents with food. Even hounds and horses are, in some way, provided with food. If a man shows no reverence, where is the difference?' Lau [2:7]

Chapter 2, Verse 8

Tzu-hsia asked about being filial. The Master said, 'What is difficult to manage is the expression on one's face. As for the young taking on the burden when there is work to be done or letting the old enjoy the wine and the food when these are available, that hardly deserves to be called filial.' Lau [2:8]

Chapter 2, Verse 9

The Master asked, 'I can speak to Hui all day without his disagreeing with me in any way. Thus he would seem to be stupid. However, when I take a closer look at what he does in private after he has withdrawn from my presence, I discover that it does, in fact, throw light on what I said. Hui is not stupid after all.' Lau [2:9]

Chapter 2, Verse 10

The Master said, 'Look at the means a man employs, observe the path he takes and examine where he feels at home. In what way is a man's true character hidden from view? In what way is a man's true character hidden from view?' Lau [2:10]

Chapter 2, Verse 11

The Master said, 'A man is worthy of being a teacher who gets to know what is new by keeping fresh in his mind what he is already familiar with.' Lau [2:11]

Chapter 2, Verse 12

The Master said, 'The gentleman is no vessel.' Lau [2:12]

Chapter 2, Verse 13

Tzu-kung asked about the gentleman. The Master said, 'He puts his words into action before allowing his words to follow his action.' Lau [2:13]

Chapter 2, Verse 14

The Master said, 'The gentleman enters into associations but not cliques; the small man enters into cliques but not associations.' Lau [2:14]

Chapter 2, Verse 15

The Master said, 'If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril.' Lau [2:15]

Chapter 2, Verse 16

The Master said, 'To attack a task from the wrong end can do nothing but harm.' Lau [2:16]

Chapter 2, Verse 17

The Master said, 'Yu, shall I tell you what it is to know. To say you know when you know, and to say you do not when you do not, that is knowledge.' Lau [2:17]

Chapter 2, Verse 18

Tzu-chang was studying with an eye to an official career. The Master said, 'Use your ears widely but leave out what is doubtful; repeat the rest with caution and you will make few mistakes. Use your eyes widely and leave out what is hazardous; put the rest into practice with caution and you will have few regrets. When in your speech you make few mistakes and in your action you have few regrets, an official career will follow as a matter of course.' Lau [2:18]

Chapter 2, Verse 19

Duke Ai asked, 'What must I do before the common people will look up to me?' Confucius answered, 'Raise the straight and set them over the crooked and the common people will look up to you. Raise the crooked and set them over the straight and the common people will not look up to you.' Lau [2:19]

Chapter 2, Verse 20

Chi K'ang Tzu asked, 'How can one inculcate in the common people the virtue of reverence, of doing their best and of enthusiasm?'

The Master said, 'Rule over them with dignity and they will be reverent; treat them with kindness and they will do their best; raise the good and instruct those who are backward and they will be imbued with enthusiasm.' Lau [2:20]

Chapter 2, Verse 21

Someone said to Confucius, 'Why do you not take part in government?' The Master said, 'The Book of History says, "Oh! Simply by being a good son and friendly to his brothers a man can exert an influence upon government." In so doing a man is, in fact, taking part in government. How can there be any question of his having actively to "take part in government"?' Lau [2:21]

Chapter 2, Verse 22

The Master said, 'I do not see how a man can be acceptable who is untrustworthy in word? When a pin is missing in the yoke-bar of a large cart or in the collar-bar of a small cart, how can the cart be expected to go?' Lau [2:22]

Chapter 2, Verse 23

Tzu-chang asked, 'Can ten generations hence be known?'

The Master said, 'The Yin built on the rites of the Hsia. What was added and what was omitted can be known. The Chou built on the rites of the Yin. What was added and what

was omitted can be known. Should there be a successor to the Chou, even a hundred generations hence can be known.' Lau [2:23]

Chapter 2, Verse 24

The Master said, 'To offer sacrifice to the spirit of an ancestor not one's own is obsequious. 'Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage.' Lau [2:24]

Chapter 4

Chapter 4, Verse 1

The Master said, 'Of neighbourhoods benevolence is the most beautiful. How can the man be considered wise who, when he has the choice, does not settle in benevolence?' Lau [4:1]

Chapter 4, Verse 2

The Master said, 'One who is not benevolent cannot remain long in strained circumstances, nor can he remain long in easy circumstances. "The benevolent man is attracted to benevolence because he feels at home in it. The wise man is attracted to benevolence because he finds it to his advantage.' Lau [4:2]

Chapter 4, Verse 3

The Master said, 'it is only the benevolent man who is capable of liking or disliking other men.' Lau [4:3]

Chapter 4, Verse 4

The Master said, 'If a man sets his heart on benevolence, he will be free from evil.' Lau [4:4]

Chapter 4, Verse 5

The Master said, 'Wealth and high station are what men desire but unless I got them in the right way I would not remain in them. Poverty and low station are what men dislike, but even if I did not get them in the right way I would not try to escape from them. 'If the gentleman forsakes benevolence, in what way can he make a name for himself? The gentleman never deserts benevolence, not even for as long as it takes to eat a meal. If he hurries and stumbles one may be sure that it is in benevolence that he does so.' Lau [4:5]

Chapter 4, Verse 6

The Master said, 'I have never met a man who finds benevolence attractive or a man who finds unbenevolence repulsive. A man who finds benevolence attractive cannot be surpassed. A man who finds unbenevolence repulsive can, perhaps, be counted as benevolent, for he could not allow what is not benevolent to contaminate his person. 'Is there a man who, for the space of a single day, is able to devote all his strength to benevolence? I have not come across such a man whose strength proves insufficient for the task. There must be such cases of insufficient strength, only I have not come across them.' Lau [4:6]

Chapter 4, Verse 7

The Master said, 'in his errors a man is true to type. Observe the errors and you will know the man.' Lau [4:7]

Chapter 4, Verse 8

The Master said, 'He has not lived in vain who dies the day he is told about the Way.' Lau [4:8]

Chapter 4, Verse 9

The Master said, 'There is no point in seeking the views of a Gentleman who, though he sets his heart on the Way, is ashamed of poor food and poor clothes.' Lau [4:9]

Chapter 4, Verse 10

The Master said, 'In his dealings with the world the gentleman is not invariably for or against anything. He is on the side of what is moral.' Lau [4:10]

Chapter 4, Verse 11

The Master said, 'While the gentleman cherishes benign rule, the small man cherishes his native land. While the gentleman cherishes a respect for the law, the small man cherishes generous treatment.' Lau [4:11]

Chapter 4, Verse 12

The Master said, 'if one is guided by profit in one's actions, one will incur much ill will.' Lau [4:12]

Chapter 4, Verse 13

The Master said, 'If a man is able to govern a state by observing the rites and showing deference, what difficulties will he have in public life? If he is unable to govern a state by observing the rites and showing deference, what good are the rites to him?' Lau [4:13]

Chapter 4, Verse 14

The Master said, 'Do not worry because you have no official position. Worry about your qualifications. Do not worry because no one appreciates your abilities. Seek to be worthy of appreciation.' Lau [4:14]

Chapter 4, Verse 15

The Master said, 'Ts'an! There is one single thread binding my way together.'

Tseng Tzu assented.

After the Master had gone out, the disciples asked, 'What did he mean?'

Tseng Tzu said, 'The way of the Master consists in doing one's best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge others. That is all.' Lau [4:15]

Chapter 4, Verse 16

The Master said, 'The gentleman understands what is moral. The small man understands what is profitable.' Lau [4:16]

Chapter 4, Verse 17

The Master said, 'When you meet someone better than yourself, turn your thoughts to becoming his equal. When you meet someone not as good as you are, look within and examine your own self.' Lau [4:17]

Chapter 4, Verse 18

The Master said, 'In serving your father and mother you ought to dissuade them from doing wrong in the gentlest way. If you see your advice being ignored, you should not become disobedient but should remain reverent. You should not complain even if in so doing you wear yourself out.' Lau [4:18]

Chapter 4, Verse 19

The Master said, 'While your parents are alive, you should not go too far afield in your travels. If you do, your whereabouts should always be known.' Lau [4:19]

Chapter 4, Verse 20

The Master said, 'if, for three years, a man makes no changes to his father's ways, he can be said to be a good son.' Lau [4:20]

Chapter 4, Verse 21

The Master said, 'A man should not be ignorant of the age of father and mother. It is a matter, on the one hand, for rejoicing and, on the other, for anxiety.' Lau [4:21]

Chapter 4, Verse 22

The Master said, 'In antiquity men were loath to speak. This was because they counted it shameful if their person failed to keep up with their words.' Lau [4:22]

Chapter 4, Verse 23

The Master said, 'It is rare for a man to miss the mark through holding on to essentials.' Lau [4:23]

Chapter 4, Verse 24

The Master said, 'The gentleman desires to be halting in speech but quick in action.' Lau [4:24]

Chapter 4, Verse 25

The Master said, 'Virtue never stands alone. It is bound to have neighbours.' Lau [4:25]

Chapter 4, Verse 26

Tzu-yu said, 'To be importunate with one's lord will mean humiliation. To be importunate with one's friends will mean estrangement.' Lau [4:26]

Chapter 20

Chapter 20, Verse 1

Yao said,

Oh, Shun,

The succession, ordained by Heaven, has fallen on thy person.

Hold thou truly to the middle way.

If the Empire should be reduced to dire straits

The honours bestowed on thee by Heaven will be terminated for ever. It was with these same words that Shun commanded Yu. [T'ang] said, 'I, Lu, the little one, dare to offer a black bull and to make this declaration before the great Lord. I dare not pardon those who have transgressed. I shall present thy servants as they are so that the choice rests with Thee alone. If I transgress, let not the ten thousand states suffer because of me; but if the ten thousand states transgress, the guilt is mine alone.'

The Chou was greatly blessed and the good men abounded.

I may have close relatives,

But better for me to have benevolent men.

If the people transgress

Let it be on my head alone.

Decide on standard weights and measures after careful consideration, and re-establish official posts fallen into disuse, and government measures will be enforced everywhere. Restore states that have been annexed, revive lines that have become extinct, raise men who have withdrawn from society and the hearts of all the common people in the Empire will turn to you.

What was considered of importance: the common people, food, mourning and sacrifice.

If a man is tolerant, he will win the multitude. If he is trustworthy in word, the common people will entrust him with responsibility. If he is quick he will achieve results. If he is impartial the common people will be pleased. Lau [20:1]

Chapter 20, Verse 2

Tzu-chang asked Confucius, 'What must a man be like before he can take part in government?' The Master said, 'If he exalts the five excellent practices and eschews the four wicked practices he can take part in government.' Tzu~hang said, 'What is meant by the five excellent practices?' The Master said, 'The gentleman is generous without its costing him anything, works others hard without their complaining, has desires without being greedy, is casual without being arrogant, and is awe-inspiring without appearing fierce.'

Tzu-chang said, 'What is meant by "being generous without its costing him anything"?' The Master said, 'If a man benefits the common people by taking advantage of the things around them that they find beneficial, is this not being generous without its costing him anything?'

If a man, in working others hard, chooses burdens they can support, who will complain? If, desiring benevolence, a man obtains it, where is the greed? The gentleman never dare neglect his manners whether he be dealing with the many or the few, the young or the old. Is this not being casual without being arrogant? The gentleman, with his robe and cap adjusted properly and dignified in his gaze, has a presence which inspires people who see him with awe. Is this not being awe- inspiring without appearing fierce?'

Tzu~hang said, 'What is meant by the four wicked practices?'

The Master said, 'To impose the death penalty without first reforming the people is to be cruel; to expect results without first giving warning is to be tyrannical; to insist on a time limit when tardy in issuing orders is to cause injury. When something has to be given to others anyway, to be miserly in the actual giving is to be officious.' Lau [20:2]

Chapter 20, Verse 3

Confucius said, 'A man has no way of becoming a gentleman unless he understands Destiny; he has no way of taking his stand unless he understands the rites; he has no way of judging men unless he understands words.' Lau [20:3]