

# Confucius

Profession, Teacher



Confucius What kind of person was Confucius in everyday life? Focus on the following: his clothing and diet, his possessions, his pastimes, the company he kept, and anything else that is relevant. In everyday life Confucius was a relaxed and cheerful man who was constantly in search of new knowledge. He studied the Chinese Classics mainly focusing on the Books of Odes, History and Rites. In his spare time, however, he liked to relax in his manor. He was very picky with the people he chose to keep around. They had to love strategy and the possible success you could get from it. He taught culture, conduct, conscientiousness and good faith and was also picky about who he let in to his school. They had to be modest and willing to listen because he didn't repeat lessons. He loved music. He would sing in the company of those who were singing. When passing through Ch'i he heard their music and said, " I did not imagine that music had reached such perfection. " (Confucius 35). This having been said he also traveled with his students and neglected his family duty. Once when his son saw him in passing and Confucius asked him if he had " Studied the Odes? " (Confucius 102) His son said no so Confucius told him that he would have nothing to use in conversation. So his son left determined to study the book of Odes. On a different day his son saw him again and a similar thing happened only this time Confucius asked about the Rules of Ceremony. The result was exactly the same as the first time. This goes to prove that those who can teach don't always put their own teachings in to practice. Why is Volume One, Book Two entitled " Concerning Government" but barely mentions government? Hint: the contents of Book Seven may assist you in answering this question. You can't teach someone how to run a government but you can teach them how

to be a better person in hope that they will be able to better govern the country. One must correct themselves before they try to correct others. This is exactly why Volume One, Book Two says little about government and a lot on how to be a better person. Confucius said “ If a man put himself aright, what difficulty will he have in the public service; but if he cannot put himself aright, how is he going to put others right? ” (Confucius 75) This saying is basically saying one must correct themselves first and others later, but if one can't correct themselves then they have no right to attempt at correcting others. In some senses Confucius was a very straight forward man and in others he was just plain confusing. This was one of the areas that he was straight forward with his teaching. It was very important to him that one knew how to act. Despite his reputation as a charismatic teacher, Confucius makes no claim to originality—in fact, it is hard to discern exactly what his teachings are. Why is this the case? He himself did not claim to be a teacher at all. It was his disciples who made him so. He had people who followed him and listened to what he said and this was enough to make him a teacher, whether what he was saying was original or not made no difference. What mattered was that he had a group of students who were willing to listen to what he said and put it into practice. His teachings, however, were hard to understand. This was because he didn't want just anyone to be able to follow and understand what he was saying. They had to be smart and make an effort to understand. This was also because sometimes he just spoke in riddles and didn't give a simple answer. When he did this it would seem that what he was saying was completely unrelated to the question asked, but in some roundabout way it was actually the answer to the question all along.

His students just had to think it over a lot before they understood. Confucius himself had no desire to be a teacher but because so many people liked his teachings, it just sort of happened that way. What contrasts does Confucius present with the religious figures of ancient Egypt, India, Mesopotamia, China, etc.? Does he strike you as a particularly “religious” figure? Why or why not? In contrast to the religions of the ancient world Confucianism is more about teaching someone how to live justly. Confucius teaches his students to respect their family and honor their ancestors not about the gods and the afterlife; this is probably the biggest difference. He teaches about what it means to live in this life and how one should go about doing so. In the religions of ancient Egypt, India and Mesopotamia there has always been a priest like figure who would perform religious and sacrificial ceremonies. This figure also had the task of letting everyone know about their religion and how to follow it properly. Sometimes these religious leaders were the head of their country/city/empire and if they weren’t, the leaders had almost always practiced the same or a very similar religion. Confucius was neither the king nor a particularly important person in society (or at least that’s what I gathered from the Confucius Analects). He was just an ordinary man who just so happened to know what he was talking about and how to teach others how to properly live their lives. One could do this by honoring their ancestors and by living a virtuous life. In these other religions, however, there has always been some form of afterlife, be it cheerful or gloomy, and most of these ancient civilizations buried their dead (especially those who were important) with luxury items for them to take to the afterlife. Confucius never taught about the afterlife though. Once a student of his asked about

death and Confucius replied, “ Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?’ (Confucius 61). Confucius does not seem like a religious figure at all. In fact, there is some debate about whether or not Confucianism can actually be considered a religion. What Confucius taught was how to live a moral life as a human being. He taught that one should study the Chinese Classics and follow a few basic rules of life. This is why he does not seem like a religious figure or to have been a religious man.