



PRIMARY SOURCE



Confucius lived from 551 to 479 BC, in the troubled late Zhou years. He taught students how to live well and how rulers should govern. After he died, his students and their followers collected his sayings in a book called the Analects. In it, "the Master" means Confucius. The numbers show the book and chapter, so 2.3 is Book 2, Chapter 3.

The Analects of Confucius

	The Analects (Legge, 1861)	In plain English
1.1	<i>The Master said, 'Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application? Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters? Is he not a man of complete virtue, who feels no discomposure though men may take no note of him?'</i>	Learning and practicing is a joy. So is a visit from faraway friends. A truly good person stays calm even when nobody notices him.
1.2	<i>The philosopher Yu said, 'They are few who, being filial and fraternal, are fond of offending against their superiors. ... Filial piety and fraternal submission!-- are they not the root of all benevolent actions?'</i>	Confucius's student Master You said: people who respect their parents and older brothers hardly ever make trouble for their rulers. Respect for your family is the root of all goodness.
2.1	<i>The Master said, 'He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.'</i>	A ruler who leads by being good is like the North Star: he stays in his place, and everyone turns toward him.
2.3	<i>The Master said, 'If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good.'</i>	Rule people with laws and punishments, and they will just try not to get caught. Lead them by good example and good manners, and they will feel ashamed of doing wrong and become good.
2.17	<i>The Master said, 'Yu, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it;-- this is knowledge.'</i>	Real knowledge means saying "I know" when you know, and "I don't know" when you don't.
15.24	<i>Tsze-kung asked, saying, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?' The Master said, 'Is not RECIPROCITY such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'</i>	Is there one rule for your whole life? Yes: treat others the way you would want to be treated. Don't do to others what you would not want done to you.

Confucian Analects, translated by James Legge, The Chinese Classics, Volume 1 (1861). Public domain. Text from Project Gutenberg eBook #4094 (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4094>), checked against the Chinese Text Project (<https://ctext.org/analects>). Passages 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.17 and 15.24 (Legge numbers the last one Book XV, Chapter 23). ... marks words left out; Legge's words unchanged.