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Confucius Assignment

BIFX 545

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There are several themes and precepts that can be found throughout The Analects of Confucius. As you read through the work, find at least one passage that refers to each of the themes and precepts below. Hint: If you are not exactly sure just do your best.

1. Being benevolent or humane in dealing with others

Book II, Chapter III.

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. 2. ‘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.’

1. Being sincere

Book I, Chapter V.

The philosopher Tsang said, ‘I daily examine myself on three points:—whether, in transacting business for others, I may have been not faithful;—whether, in intercourse with friends, I may have been not sincere;—whether I may have not mastered and practiced the instructions of my teacher.’

1. Exhibiting trust or fidelity

Book II, Chapter XXII.

The Master said, ‘I do not know how a man without truthfulness is to get on. How can a large carriage be made to go without the cross-bar for yoking the oxen to, or a small carriage without the arrangement for yoking the horses?’

1. Showing propriety or decorum and/or performing ceremony

Book III, Chapter IV.

1. Lin Fang asked what was the first thing to be attended to in ceremonies. 2. The Master said, ‘A great question indeed! 3. ‘In festive ceremonies, it is better to be sparing than extravagant. In the ceremonies of mourning, it is better that there be deep sorrow than a minute attention to observances.’

1. Seeking wisdom

Book II, Chapter XI.

The Master said, ‘If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others.’

1. Demonstrating righteousness, justice, or appropriate behavior

Book XIII, Chapter VII.

The Master said, ‘When a prince’s personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed.’

1. The importance of filial piety

Book I, Chapter II.

The philosopher Yu said, ‘They are few who, being filial and fraternal, are fond of offending against their superiors. There have been none, who, not liking to offend against their superiors, have been fond of stirring up confusion. 2. ‘The superior man bends his attention to what is radical. That being established, all practical courses naturally grow up. Filial piety and fraternal submission!—are they not the root of all benevolent actions?’

1. The “golden rule”

Book XII, Chapter II.

Chung-kung asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, ‘It is, when you go abroad, to behave to every one as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself; to have no murmuring against you in the country, and none in the family.’ Chungkung said, ‘Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will make it my business to practice this lesson.’

1. Long term thinking

Book XIII, Chapter XVII.

Tsze-hsia, being governor of Chu-fu, asked about government. The Master said, ‘Do not be desirous to have things done quickly; do not look at small advantages. Desire to have things done quickly prevents their being done thoroughly. Looking at small advantages prevents great affairs from being accomplished.’

1. Moderation/the doctrine of the mean

Book VII, Chapter XXXV.

The Master said, ‘Extravagance leads to insubordination, and parsimony to meanness. It is better to be mean than to be insubordinate.’

1. Governance by ethics versus governance by law

Book XII, Chapter XIX.

Chi K’ang asked Confucius about government, saying, ‘What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?’ Confucius replied, ‘Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors, is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.’