

## How to Be a Gentleman?

Gaining knowledge on various issues is a continuous part of human existence. Learning helps us make sense of the world. In Hsun Tzu's "Encouraging Learning," he gives various metaphors on how education can mold human beings into virtuous creatures. Education also determines the paths many of us follow in life, and if we want to live fully, then we can never stop learning. Through his writing, Tzu was able to shape an entire aspect of history. He gave different analogies describing how learning could change perspectives and better the human race in general. A gentleman, according to him, is anyone who seeks education for the betterment of the self and uses it to do well. As the gentleman says, "Learning never ceases" (Tzu 1).

There are different perspectives one may look at in becoming a gentleman, and one of them is being a student and studying. The results we get in life are mostly the result of our actions. The harder one works, the more successful they become. We could look at the "A" student, for instance, a well-driven individual who is focused and devotes time and effort not only to learning but also to mastering the content they receive. Then there is the below-average student, someone who chooses not to put any effort into academics. "Achievement consists of never giving up" (Tzu 2). Their grades could be termed as a direct reflection of their hard work. According to Tzu, study is of more value than thought (1). It continually refills your knowledge base, giving one insight and purpose day after day. Education gives one a sense of right and wrong, enabling people to live well with each other and shape their lives. It is not at all difficult to distinguish someone with a good education from someone with none at all or someone who does not care for learning. Gathering the correct content through study and self-examination makes one's "wisdom

be clear and his conduct without fault” (Tzu 1). Knowledge is like food for the mind, body, and soul. It builds virtue and character and separates us from every other person in the world.

Bad company corrupts good morals. That is an old, wise saying that most people would consider true. Friendship is a part of human existence, since no one can do it alone. The gentleman chooses well-bred men for friends and carefully chooses his surroundings, according to Tzu (2). Everyone needs healthy relationships to bond, share ideas, and reduce stress. Our friends show the kind of people we are; most of us make friends with people with whom we share common interests. Tzu uses the analogy of a bird that builds its nest on reeds but loses it when the wind blows because the reeds are not strong enough to hold it (1). Just like the bird, we may build our lives into what we want, with the right goals and a vision of where we want to be, but our friends may destroy it. Psychologically, surrounding yourself with positive energy determines how driven you are and how quickly you reach your goals. A certain orchid root is used in making a perfume called “chih,” but if the root grows in a vile substance, the perfume will not be appealing (Tzu 2). We all need the right environment in order to grow emotionally and psychologically and to give us motivation whenever we lose sight of our paths in life. More often than not, we surround ourselves with friends, and we can only move forward if those friends are the right ones.

According to Tzu, learning basically means achieving oneness (4). You need to be able to finish what you begin and finish it in the best possible way. In order to deal with issues, we all need a certain strategy or a defined approach to problem-solving. The right strategy gets things done. Experience is the best teacher, but it is wise to make use of the intellect of others and the explanations of scholars. Then you will “become honored and make your way anywhere in the

world.” The right counsel leads to correct decision-making, and decisions set off a chain reaction in every aspect of life, since all choices have consequences. There is a need to carefully consider the people we share counsel with, as well as the actions we take to deal with issues. Negativity inside us attracts negativity from all around us, and acting toward people in the wrong way generally puts a leash on progress and the right ideologies. “Associate with the learned, there’s nothing more profitable” (Tzu 4).

A gentleman has different character traits, and the most important one is understanding the true value of learning. Education shapes our lives and gives everyone an equal chance to go beyond the boundaries that life sets. Making friends, being a scholar, and acting toward others to deal with issues are some of the perspectives through which we can apply Tzu’s ideology of being a gentleman. Every moment in life is an opportunity to learn something new, and it is up to you to decide what you learn and whether to let that lesson take root and influence your life for the better.