

idea of **benevolence**, or kindness. According to Confucius, one becomes benevolent by following a set of **guidelines** (rules) of acceptable behavior.

Through the practice of these **rituals** (repetitive acts), one can learn to become a better person and lead a good life.

Confucius believed the world would be harmonious if individuals were kind and respectful in five basic relationships: father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, elder friend and younger friend, and emperor and subject.

"According to Confucian theory, if an individual were good and virtuous, then his or her family would be, too," explains Lipman. And if families were good and virtuous, it would follow that all of society would be harmonious.

Confucius approved of the rule of kings and



emperors, but he argued that the best leader was one who guided his people with kindness and morality, not force. One of his rules said: "If you govern your province well and treat your people kindly, your kingdom shall not lose any war."

By the time of the Han Dynasty (202 B.C. to 220 A.D.), Confucian philosophy had become a key part of official government doctrine. Over the next thousand years, it gradually became the most important tool for advancement for young men wishing to become government officials. They had to pass a highly competitive exam based on the Confucian texts.

Confucianism eventually became the foundation of the modern Chinese education system. For centuries, Chinese students memorized the master's words and recited his stories. Many still do.

Although the ancient government exams were abolished in 1905, Chinese culture remains steeped in Confucianism. **JS**

SAYINGS OF CONFUCIUS

- * **A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.**
- * **To study something and practice it at appropriate times, is that not a great joy?**
- * **Study the past if you would define the future.**
- * **To see what is right and not do it is a lack of courage or principle.**