



- In your own words, what is *filial piety*?
- According to Confucius, what are the responsibilities of each family member?

Confucius believed that if everyone behaved according to *li* in their relationships, society as a whole would be peaceful and harmonious. He believed that the emperor had to provide good leadership and set an example of how to live a virtuous (morally good) and responsible life. If he was a wise and just ruler, his subjects would be obedient, and there would be harmony (peace and good will) in the government. Likewise, if children respected and obeyed their parents, wives respected their husbands, and younger siblings obeyed older siblings, family life would be peaceful. If everyone at every level in society obeyed the *li* appropriate to their situation, police, jails, and war would not be necessary because everyone would naturally do what was best for the community.

Confucian philosophy strongly influences much of Chinese society today. Most families still operate according to Confucian principles, and children are expected to be loyal and obey their parents. The elderly are treated with great reverence (honor) and respect by the young. Government is still controlled by an elite (top) few; there has never been a democracy in China. Throughout China—in government, business, and many families—society is still governed by hierarchical relationships between superiors and inferiors.



- According to Confucius, what would make society harmonious?
- How does Confucianism influence Chinese society today?

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### Quotes from the Teachings of Confucius

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**Quote 1:** *“Be respectful at home, serious at work, faithful in human relations. Even if you go to uncivilized areas, these virtues [good qualities] are not to be abandoned.”*

**Quote 2:** *“Seeing that our body, with hair and skin, is derived from our parents, we should not allow it to be injured in any way. This is the beginning of filial respect [repaying a parent’s kindness]. We develop our own character and practice the way so as to perpetuate our name for future generations, and to bring honor to our parents.”*

**Quote 3:** *“Lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them by law and punishment, and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame. Lead them with virtue and regulate them by the rules of propriety [li], and they will have a sense of shame and, moreover, set themselves right.”*