

# Zi Gong 子贡

- Zi Gong said, ‘In poverty, yet not be abject; in affluence, yet not be arrogant. How’s that?’ The Master said, ‘Possible. But still, it is not as good as being poor yet in delight; being rich yet fond of Li. Zi Gong said, ‘The Odes have it, “Like a gem! Now quarried, now filed, now sculpted and now polished!” Is that what you mean?’ The Master said, ‘Ci, Now we can talk poetry together! I tell you one thing and you understand the next.’

貧而能不苟，富而能不驕。貧而能樂，富而能好禮。《論語》（子，1.15）

- The Master said, “To be in poverty without resenting it is difficult. To be in affluence without being arrogant is easy.”

貧而能不怨，富而能不驕。（論語，14.10）

- The Master said, ‘A noble man is not a vessel.’

君子不器。（論語，2.12）

- The Master spoke of Zi Jian: “He is a noble man indeed! ...”

子貢也子貢也...君子。（論語，5.3）

- Zi Gong asked, ‘What about me?’ The Master said, ‘You are a vessel.’ ‘What do you mean, a vessel?’ said Zi Gong. The Master said, ‘You are a wonderful vessel made of jade.’

子貢也子貢也...君子。（論語，5.4）



- Zi Gong said, “Suppose you have a beautiful jade like this. Will you put it in a safe and keep it? Or will you seek a buyer offering a good price and sell it?” The Master said, “I will sell it! I will sell it! I am just waiting for the buyer.” 子贡曰“子亦有不善焉不欲居人上乎子曰“子亦有不善焉不欲居人上乎” (論語 9.13) [Also see Li Ji, 論語 12]
- Zi Gong said, ‘I do not want people to aggrandize me. I also want to avoid aggrandizing people.’ The Master said, ‘Ci, this is beyond your reach.’ 子曰子不欲居人上也子亦不欲居人上也 (論語, 5.12)
- The Chief Counsellor asked Zi Gong, “Is your Master a Saint? How come he has so many talents?” Zi Gong said, “The Heaven originally sent him as a Great Saint. He has many talents as well.” The Master heard this and said, “The Chief Counsellor knows me. When I was young, I was lowly. That’s why I am good at many mundane jobs. Is a noble man good at many things? No, he is not.” (論語 9.6)
- Lo said, “The Master told once, ‘I do not have an employment. That’s why I am good at many things.’ ” (論語 9.7)
- Ji Zi Cheng said, ‘It suffices for a noble man to have substance. What use do you have for sophisticated erudition?’ Zi Gong said, ‘Alas, what you say about a noble man is revealing of you (You open your mouth and reveal what you are made of). Sophisticated erudition is not different from substance. Substance is not different from sophisticated erudition. Tiger or leopard hide stripped of hair is not different from dog or lamb hide stripped of hair.’ 子貢曰子不欲居人上也子亦不欲居人上也子曰子不欲居人上也子亦不欲居人上也 (論語, 12.8)
- Zi Gong asked about noble man. The Master said, ‘He who acts first and whose words follow afterwards.’ 子貢曰子不欲居人上也子亦不欲居人上也 (論語, 2.13)
- The Master said, “Those who followed me to Chen and Cai have all left my school now.”

- As for virtuous conduct, Yan Yuan, Min Zi Qian, Ran Bo Niu and Zhong Gong excelled. In speech, Zai Wo and Zi Gong excelled. In politics, Ran You and Ji Lu excelled. In erudition, Zi You and Zi Xia excelled.

- The Master spoke to Zi Gong, “Between you and Hui, who is ahead of whom?” Zi Gong replied, “How dare I hope to catch up with Hui? When Hui hears one thing, he understands ten. When I hear one thing, I can only understand two.” The Master said, “Surely, you are not like him! I agree with you, you are not like him.”

- Zi Gong asked, “Between Shi (Zi Zhang) and Shang (Zi Xia), who has more talent?” The Master said, “Shi goes too far and Shang falls short.” “Shi is better, then?” said Zi Gong. The Master said, “Going too far is similar to falling short.”

（11.16）

- The Master said, “Ci, do you suppose you and I are those who have learned a lot and gained the knowledge?” Zong Gong answered, “Yes, are we not?” The Master said, “No. I just stick to one overarching principle, that’s all.”

- Zi Gong is in the habit of comparing people. The Master said, “Ci must be a talented man, eh? I have no time for this.”

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