

Sacred Threads

Lesson 10: Essentials of Confucianism

12.16.2018

Objectives: Introduce basic tenets of Confucianism, review relevant elements of Chinese culture and history.

Materials: Flipchart, lesson attachments, identical sets of Confucian cards, fabric underlay, laptop/projector.

Time allotments suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 25 minute closing service.

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ Name a political figure you admire. Why?
 - ▶ Would you ever run for public office?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Silly Fun: “Go, Grab, Go!” (5 minutes max)

Participants stand in a circle, arms out to the side. Left hand palm up, right index finger pointing down and touching neighbor’s outstretched palm.

When teacher says “GO,” youth do two things: (1) try to grab the finger in their left hand, and (2) prevent their right finger from being grabbed. Repeat several times.

Then add a bit of challenge by having youth NOT go on “GO” but wait until they hear the word “Confucius” before they try to grab fingers (i.e. “Go... Go... Go... Confucius!”).

3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “*We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.*”

Teacher reads: (from the 6th century BCE teacher and politician, Confucius)

“*In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.*”

4. Chinese Warring Feudal States and Kung Fu Tze (10 minutes)

Pass out attached lyrics for “What Plant is Not Faded” and “Where Have All The Flowers Gone?” The first is a Chinese folk song that became one of the Five Classics of Confucianism; and the second is from longtime UU, Pete Seeger, first performed in 1955 as the conflict in Vietnam was escalating.

- Play video of Seeger’s song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pZa3KtkVpQ>

Questions for Discussion:

- Despite the difference of over 2500 years between the songs, there is a similar sentiment about the futility of war. What speaks to you from each song?
- What can you say about the moral, social, or political fabric of the world when both songs were written?

5. Presentation on Confucianism (25 minutes)

Teacher summarizes: Kung Fu Tzu lived at a time when China was caught in war and violence, and corrupt rulers did little for the greater well-being of the people. Into such a world, he set out to bring about order and harmony.

- Pass out attached script that introduces Confucianism. Follow instructions.

6. Confucian Government (10 minutes)

Teacher summarizes: Confucius hoped that his teachings would lead to a form of government where people would be given power based on their wisdom, skill, and virtue. His teachings eventually lead to a system in China where even a poor, peasant farmer could take a test and be granted a position of power in local government. Let’s think about our government...

Questions for Discussion:

- Is this different or similar to what we have in the US government? Are our leaders elected for their Rén, Yí, Lǐ, Zhì, and Xìn?
- Should they be?
- Are there other, more important qualifications?
- Like the test that people took to merit a position in the local government, what questions would you put on a Test of Merit for candidates to earn the right to be president?

7. Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

8. Help clean up classroom before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets