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Socrates

Socrates is a Greek philosopher who was well known for teaching and learning through asking lots of questions.

What is a Philosopher?

A philosopher is a person who studies concepts like knowledge, existence, time among other ideas. The word 'philosopher' comes from the Greek words 'philo', meaning 'love', and 'sophia', meaning 'wisdom'. Therefore, the word 'philosopher' translates to 'love of wisdom'. This may explain Socrates' many wise sayings and quotes. Here are some of his more famous quotes:

- *'The only true wisdom is knowing you know nothing.'*
- *'Know thyself.'*
- *'To find thyself, think for thyself.'*

Socrates' Childhood

Socrates was born and lived in Athens. Socrates' father was a stonemason (a person who works with stone) named Sophroniscus and his mother was a midwife (a person who helps deliver babies) named Phaenarete. He also had a half-brother named Patrocles. He went to school and received a basic education in grammar, gymnastics and music. When he grew up he became a stonemason like his father, before becoming the famous philosopher he is known as today.

Socrates' Youth

Socrates fought as a hoplite* in the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, fighting in multiple major campaigns including the battles of Potidaea, Delium, and Amphipolis. He was known for his bravery, endurance, and philosophical contemplation even whilst in the military.

*A hoplite was a heavily armed, citizen-soldier from Ancient Greece. They are known for using a spear and a large shield. Hoplites were typically wealthy and were able to afford their own bronze armor, including a helmet, breastplate, and greaves, along with their weapons.

Socrates' Adult Life

As an adult, Socrates married a woman called Xanthippe, who was known for having a bad temper. He had three sons named Lamprocles, Sophroniscus, and Menexenus. Socrates supposedly made jokes about marrying Xanthippe, being a way to become a philosopher, regardless of the outcome.

What is the Socrates Method?

The Socrates method was a philosophical model designed by Socrates to teach people how to think deeply and ask important and meaningful questions. The method involves answering questions with more questions or following up one question with another. Eg. If you were to look at an ant and ask the person next to you: What is the ant doing? Then follow it up with a question such as: Where do you think the ant is going?

Socrates' Death

In 399 BC, Socrates was accused of polluting the minds of young Athenians, and for worshipping false gods and failing to worship the gods of Athens. At the trial, Socrates defended himself unsuccessfully. He was found guilty by a majority vote cast by a jury of hundreds of Athenian citizens. He was given the death penalty. He accepted the decision and calmly drank poison hemlock, a potent plant toxin. The next morning he died in prison.