

The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #8

Character is More Important than Victory

In a phenomenal world
with its contents illusory,
of all the triumphs
*Character Is More
Important Than Victory.*

The gem cannot be polished without friction.

Chinese Proverb

*Only a man's character is the real criterion of worth.
Do what you feel in your heart to be right - for you'll
be criticized anyway. You'll be damned if you do,
and damned if you don't.*

Eleanor Roosevelt

*Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.
Only through experience of trial and suffering can the
soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.*

Helen Keller

It is one thing in life to be victorious in our battles, whether those battles involve internal or external opponents. Yet, one thing is clear and must never be overlooked and that is that *Character is More Important than Victory.*

Victory and defeat are opposite ends of the same continuum. Both are temporal, short lived. Furthermore, it is a fundamental law of life that when the pendulum swings one way it must, by its very nature, swing the other. Therefore, we must never be elated in victory or discouraged in defeat. Both victory and defeat are parts of the same process.

How often in life do we see victors gloat over their triumphs? How often do we likewise see losers sulk and hang their heads? Neither is commendable. What is worthy is for a person to

remain balanced at all times and in all situations, realizing that character is more important than either victory or defeat.

Because of the nature of this world, people often gain victory by buying it, bribing it or stealing it. What nobility is there in such a victory? Nothing. Such a victory is nothing more than an empty illusion fueled by the fires of ego and emptiness. Anyone who would gain a victory in such a manner is no victor at all but a loser of the greatest proportions.

True story. During a fighting competition at a major national martial arts tournament, a gentleman signed up to fight in the Black Belt under 175 lb. weight division. All the other competitors voiced their objection in a mass protest because this individual was clearly over the 175 lb. weight limit. He more accurately weighed closer to 200 lbs. Tournament officials were called to the ring to assess the situation. The officials, betraying their own eyes, knowledge and experience, allowed this man to fight because he showed an entrance pass validating his weight at 175 lbs. Because of his increased mass, he won the division. He gained his victory, or did he? It was later discovered after he won that this man, so hungry to be a champion, had paid another man to weigh in for him, thus falsifying his application, which was sadly and quite unprofessionally accepted by the tournament officials. Basically, this so-called black belt was devoid of character, totally. Yet, he won, or so the record books say. With such an abuse of ethics and unprofessional conduct by the tournament hierarchy, a huge defeat was registered that day in the category of professional ethics.

Is this story rare? Unfortunately not. In all walks of life people achieve things they don't rightfully deserve because of politics, money, personal favors, nepotism and a whole host of dishonest means. So are such people who gain victory and acclaim by such devious and unethical conduct true champions? Of course not. Yet, such is the reality of life in this imperfect world. Therefore, it is critical for the ethical person to understand this unfortunate reality, not be negatively affected by it, but rather to exude a higher code of true victory in life, a code declaring that *Character is more important than victory*.

~finis

© 2025 Richard Andrew King, the Karate Institute of America and Kiado-Ryu Martial Arts