

# The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #9 - Character Must Precede Prowess

In the wisdom of time  
with its messages ageless,  
the pinnacle of all is that  
*Character Must Precede Prowess.*

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*The first essential step to a spiritual life is character.  
One may deceive one's friends, relatives and even  
oneself, but the Power within is not deceived.*  
Saint Sawan Singh, 20th Century

*For he who is honest is noble,  
whatever his fortunes or birth.*  
Alice Cary  
*Nobility*

*Try not to become a man of success  
but rather to become a man of value.*  
Dr. Albert Einstein

*An honest man's the noblest work of God.*  
Alexander Pope

If we are to live with a noble and elevated spirit, regardless of our personal comfort, it is axiomatic that we realize that *Character Must Precede Prowess*. In other words, character must come first before our martial arts rank, status, championships, name, fame, skill, billfold, bank account, titles on the door, trophies on the shelf, name plates on the desk, headlines in the local society column or records in the record book. Without a high ethical and moral character, of what true value is our life? Regardless of our achievements, if we lack a sound character, how

can we be truly satisfied with ourselves as human beings and the legacy we will leave upon the earth when our last breath is expended?

Yet, how often is the great ideal of personal character sacrificed for the passing pleasures, ephemeral accomplishments and empty titles of this world? Who is there, what is there that extols the nobility of personal character? Where are the virtue schools in our society? Where are the headlines praising those whose lives are wrapped with the garments of virtue? For the most part, those who are lauded, applauded and praised in a daze are saturated with energies far from that which speaks to a noble character.

Thankfully, there are higher powers that recognize and reward higher values and virtues. As martial artists, as those individuals on a path of self-improvement and personal integration, we should be one part of society that teaches and expresses that which is noble, good, decent, kind, caring, compassionate and magnanimous. If not us, then who?

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