

A Good Work Ethic

by Dr. Dennis McCain

Some Taekwondo students train for a time but have the wrong perception that they can progress without proper training and instruction. Over the years, I have seen students reach different belt levels and then quit. Some wanted the higher rank without the time and effort required to achieve it (entitlement); some felt they were not learning fast enough for their ability, intellect (conceit); or personal gratification (being selfish or self-centered). Mastery of any area of life does not come quickly!

In Taekwondo the right course of action involves the following critical areas: Having Confidence and being loyal to your instructor; and having a teachable spirit and desire to learn.

This correct attitude deepens our desire to follow prescribed methodology, and to experience continuous personal growth in your life and in Taekwondo. This ethic involves work (time and energy), a true humility, and a desire to teach others what you have learned.

A Confidence and Loyalty To Your Instructor: If students continuously move from school to school, they fail to have the structure needed for complete success. The question, "Who is your instructor?" is not answerable. If we are accountable to no one, we lose the impetus to train. Having an instructor who guides us in our training, provides strong and caring instruction, allowing us to reach our goals. We can certainly learn from others, but always remember who your instructor is, and follow that personal guide to learning. **BE LOYAL.** If you decide that you must stop training, talk with your instructor and tell him why you must move to another area of development in your life. Never just walk away, without a personal visit, call or letter.

A Teachable Spirit: Without a desire to learn, or seeing the necessity to learn, we fail to learn. Conceit promulgates failure and does not allow us to see ourselves as a student, only a teacher. I have had new students, who have never trained previously, want to teach me how to "correctly" perform the patterns or movements. We can learn something from everyone we meet, but the true student always knows there is more to learn. Be teachable. A sign of true wisdom is the desire to be taught.

We do not have an hap-hazard approach to martial arts. The Choong Sil Taekwondo Federation has a purpose statement: "The purpose of Choong Sil Kwan Taekwondo is to develop an individual's mental and physical well-being through a highly stylized and deliberate method of rigorous martial arts training." The program is structured for learning and achieving in the areas of mental growth, as well a physical well-being. Both are needed for this complex world.

A Strong Work Ethic: Often, issues of life change the direction of our training. We are sometimes set back by adversity (injury, circumstances, travel, job, school), but we must finish the course that we have begun. The path to achievement is dotted with many potholes, which

may hamper us along the way to the completion of our goals. However, being side-tracked or being injured, should be a challenge for us to take our training to a higher or different level. When my knees swell, or my back aches, etc., it reminds me of my physical limitations, but it should not keep me from moving on in my life and in my personal training.

A True Humility: It seems that each in our lives we are confronted with mistakes (an error in our patterns), memory loss ("What was that definition again"), or some physical ailment (bad knee, old injury, head ache, sore elbow, etc.). These daily occurrences remind me that we are not perfect, and that we are being humbled daily by our Creator. True humility stems from knowing where we stand in relationship to God, and at times to others around us. Each time I travel to a black belt camp or attend a martial arts event, I see talented and powerful students that challenge me to work harder. When I see the greatness of God, I am constantly reminded, that I am in need of His blessing and direction for my life. A truly humble person never sees himself as great, but as truly needy. In Seattle, Washington, in 1975, I saw a young man wearing a large button on his jacket. The button read, "I'm Spiritual." If he were a martial artist, I wonder what the button would have said. Maybe, "I am The Greatest Kicker." Whatever we project in our lives, why not be humble in spirit and powerful in life.

A Desire To Teach Others: Why learn? We limit our effectiveness when the only reason for training is for personal gain, or to show others how good we are. We train for a higher purpose: to effect the lives of those around us and the world around us. Share what you have learned. Be a teacher of the art. More importantly, be a follower and teacher of your art. Those things worth learning, should be worthy of teaching.