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GM Taejoon Lee

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Hwa Rang Do®: School of Leadership Part 1

(MISSION STATEMENT OF THE WORLD HWA RANG DO® ASSOCIATION)

HWA RANG DO®:

A legacy of Loyalty, Relentlessly seeking Truth, Empowering Lives, Serving Humanity

Essentially, our ultimate goal is to better the World! For us we strive to accomplish this by maximizing our human potential to enhance the ideal of humanity through the rigorous training of our mind, body and spirit with the ancient martial and healing art of Hwa Rang Do®, "The Way of the Flowering Knights". Hence, we have transformed our governing body, the World Hwa Rang Do® Association (WHRDA) into a humanitarian organization as we strive to empower the world one person at a time. We are a school of leadership/knighthood rather than of just sports or self-defense as only a foot soldier can affect change one person at a time; a general can direct the course of a nation.

In a rare private moment with Grandmaster Taejoon Lee, 8th dan, the son of the Founder, Dr. Joo Bang Lee and WHRDA President, I had the privilege to discuss with him on the subject of Leadership.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?:

"Of course, that is not easy to answer with multitudes of point-of-views. However, for me, I have come to realize that one essential foundational principle of leadership must exist in order to truly be a leader - blamelessness. This in essence is the intrinsic definition of self-accountability where all things start and stop with you.

In our recent annual ten-day Black Sash Conference where all Hwarangdo (Knights) leaders across the globe gathered to share and exchange knowledge, create greater bonds, and to reconnect with the Hwarang spirit, the subject of "the Original Sin" was discussed. Not for religious purposes, but to illustrate that knowledge itself is not bad or evil; but that both Adam and Eve was exposed to knowledge without experience, without having earned the knowledge, without wisdom, which diminished the value and appreciation for knowledge, creating all the turmoil, trials and tribulation of humankind that we endure still today. From the discussion one of our Hwarangs continued to expound on how can we be a better Christian as a Hwarangdoist? His conclusion was truly enlightening.



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He made the point that as a Hwarang, he disagrees with the traditional understanding of “the Original Sin.” Commonly, it is perceived that the disobedience to God is the sin. However, he feels that “the Original Sin” is not disobedience but rather lack or absence of self-accountability. He continues by saying when Adam and Eve bit into the forbidden fruit, God asked Adam, “Why did you disobey?” And Adam's answer is because Eve, whom you created from my rib told me so, blaming indirectly to God and directly to Eve. Then when God asked Eve, she answers by saying that the snake told her so. In each case, they did not accept responsibility but rather blamed others. Hence, he concludes that “the Original Sin” was unaccountability. Then, I added further, obviously God has no one to answer to as all things begin and end with Him. Therefore, there is no one to blame but Himself whether his creation was and will be good or bad.

So when God says in the Bible to be Godlike, we assume he means perfection. However, could he possibly have meant to be like Him you must come to understand what it means to be Him, that there is no one to blame, no others at fault but our own. Therefore we must care for ourselves and all of God's creations as though it were our own. Thus, God instilled upon us compassion and empathy to connect all living creatures so that we all feel it's suffrage. There is a traditional Korean saying which says, 'when you bite any one finger among the ten, do they not all hurt;' as to say if you have ten children and when one does wrong, does not the parent hurt equally amongst the ten? Whether this is

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ultimately true or not we shall never know until we meet God. However, as a warrior/philosopher, a Hwarang, a leader this is a more functional perception.”

WHAT OTHER ATTRIBUTES MUST A LEADER POSSESS?:

A leader must possess all the things that make a great person; he/she should be virtuous, benevolent, and most importantly possess abundance of compassion and empathy. However, I think what further distinguishes a leader is that he/she has a strong connection with history. One feels his/her value and purpose, believing that he/she can offer something better to the world. He/she can affect change in other people. He/she is self-empowered and believes

in oneself and that what it is true. He/she clearly knows one's objectives and has strong convictions, real enthusiasm, pure energy, determination, tenacity and perseverance to reach such goals, whatever the cost, understanding the extent to which they must sacrifice in order to gain.

After possessing the determination and the plan to reach his/her goals a leader must possess a sense of accountability as discussed earlier. If one made a mistake, he/she must be willing to accept the consequences of their actions. Think about a group of soldiers led by a general involved in a battle. Although, the soldiers in the frontline usually have many doubts whether they will live or die, the general must instill confidence and belief that they will be victorious. Even when faced with uncertainty, he/she must be charismatic and lead with the strength of conviction.”

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WHAT CHARISMA IS?:

“Charisma is essential for a leader and it is not something you cultivate easily if you don't have it. It is the ability to lead, motivate and inspire people to believe when none existed. It is the ability to not only suffice the intellect, but more importantly to touch the heart of the people and inspire them to believe in themselves to accomplish that which they felt was previously impossible. Obviously, the leader also has doubts. He/she can't be 100% certain of what the outcome of one's actions are going to be: positive or negative, but failure is not an option and success is a matter of when, not what. Therefore, a leader must first accept the ultimate consequences of failure and accept the worse case scenario before proceeding forward, being self-accountable!

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