

# THE CHARACTER OF THE BLACK BELT

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This booklet is a study of the character qualities that should be manifested in the life of a student of Seigi Bushido Ryu once he or she attains the rank of fourth-degree black belt. Lower ranking students can benefit from this booklet by understanding the results of a life that is conformed to the image of Christ as they progress through the ranks of this martial arts system.

These character traits can be found in the list of qualifications for an elder or deacon in the church as detailed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

We are taught in 1 Tim. 3:1 that it is valid to aspire to church leadership and church leadership is a noble task. More is required of an overseer, bishop or elder than just mere willingness to serve.

In like manner, the advanced Christian martial artist must possess certain character traits and experiences if he or she is to be an effective leader and one that can experience God's blessings. Followers are not attracted to exhortation nearly as much as they adhere to example. Such is the responsibility of the Christian Martial Arts Master.

A list and brief description of the 27 character traits that are to be cognizantly developed in the life of the growing Christian martial artist follows.

We begin our study in 1 Timothy 3:2.

1. **Blameless.** He must be above reproach in his behavior. The Greek word means to have nothing in one's conduct on which someone could ground a charge or accusation. No hidden motives, no self-serving objectives, he practices what he preaches; his ministry cannot be undermined because of other dealings or contacts he maintains. There are three aspects here:

A. Blameless before the Lord (Col. 1:21-23). Our first priority is to be right with God regardless of what anyone else does. It is never right to do wrong. He is to do what he knows to be right in the Word of God and let God take care of him.

B. Blameless before Christians (1 Thes. 2:10). He is to maintain a good testimony before God's people.

C. Blameless before the world (Phil. 2:14-16). He will constantly have opposition from the world, but he must make sure it is for his beliefs and not his life.

2. **Husband of one wife.** This is literally “a one woman man” While there are various levels of strictness in interpretation of what Paul intended in this phrase, it is safe to say that polygamy and promiscuity would disqualify a person from high leadership. The phrase also implies that the sole target of affection of a person is to be his spouse. To behave otherwise shows self-indulgence and is evidence of a lack of self-control necessary for an overseer. An improper relationship with one’s mate opens a door for Satan. Faithfulness to one’s mate will indicate how faithful one will be in his ministry. The real issue here is fidelity and faithfulness rather than divorce. Single people must ensure that they deal properly with those of the opposite sex.

3. **Vigilant** (temperate). In the Greek it means discreet, watchful, circumspect and well-balanced. This describes one who is not rash, one who thinks and considers the options before acting. One who is aware of his surroundings and is not forced into actions because he was caught off-guard. Be watchful physically and spiritually. One must be watchful for himself (Satan attacks those who are serious towards God), his family, those in his ministry (Acts 20:28), and for the Lord's return (1 Thes. 5:1-9).

4. **Sober** (sober-minded). Sound in mind, self-controlled and moderate as to opinion or passion. One who uses any substance which affects his mind or who allows taunts or grievances to accumulate would find himself short of this character trait. One must be sensible, in control of his mind and senses in all areas using moderation in his lifestyle (1 Cor. 6:12). Be sensible in doctrine, don't major on the minors.

5. **Good behavior.** Respectable, modest, it is a derivative of *kosmos* and denotes orderliness. One must be aware of etiquette and of acting appropriately at all times. One must have proper decorum and not be wild or garish. He must have a life that is holy (sanctified for God) and unblameable, productive and marked by service that is quiet and meek. He must have proper behavior in society, honoring government (1 Pet. 2: 12-15). He must separate himself from improper behavior (Eph. 5:11-12), but not from people (Mt. 5:13-16).

6. **Given to hospitality.** He must be fond of guests and a lover of hospitality in the Greek. This is a derivative of *philos* - fondness, friendliness. He mixes well with all kinds of people. He opens his home to people and groups, is outgoing as needed, and befriends those who need it. He does so freely without grudging or “keeping score” as a lifestyle and attitude (1 Pet. 4:9). He is willing to let God use whatever He has given him to help others (1 Thes. 2:5-8).

7. **Apt to teach.** This speaks of a leader's ability to handle the Scriptures. He must be able to understand and to communicate the truth to others as well as be able to refute those who mishandle it; this can be publicly or informally. This requires a personal knowledge of the Scriptures and an aptitude for handling them with skill. This is a learned character quality, for every child of God to develop in conjunction with the expectation to be a “teacher” (Mt. 28:18-20) by our words and deeds. It also communicates the need to be teachable (Titus 1:9 and Heb. 5:12-14).

8. **Not given to wine.** The Bible very carefully and specifically defines a Christian's attitude towards alcohol. It is allowed for medicinal purposes and some cultural situations (with caution). One must always consider his testimony (Ro. 14:21) and his life is to be transformed to live by higher standards than the strict observance of laws (Ro. 12:1-2). The Bible implies a broader principle. Nothing should control our lives but the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:12 and Eph. 5: 18). It is safe to say that the closer a Christian draws to God (and the control of the Holy Spirit), the further he will withdraw from alcoholic beverages (Luke 1:15 and Num. 6:1-3).

9. **No striker** (not violent). *Plekten* describes someone who is pugnacious and quick-tempered, someone who explodes with his fists and is anxious to exchange blows in the face of provocation (John 18: 10-11). This is precisely what the godly man does not do. He never assaults others and neither is he a bully (2 Timothy 2:24-26). This pertains to violent verbal abuse as well as physical abuse.

10. **Not greedy of filthy lucre.** This refers to money received by improper methods (Prov. 13:11). The issue is not how much money one has, but our attitude towards money. A key issue is that of contentment (Phil. 4:11 and Heb. 13:5). There is a great temptation to minister with an eye on our pocketbook (1 Pet. 5:2). There is also great temptation to forget God when one has money (Prov. 30:7-9).

11. **Patient.** *Epieikes* carries the idea of “sweet reasonableness.” It is a portrait of mercifulness, yieldedness, and forgiveness which is gentle, unselfish and patient. It is the ability to bear adversity without complaint. There is nothing as strong as gentleness and there is nothing as gentle as real strength. It describes the capacity for tempering justice with mercy, of refusing to insist upon one's rights, and of forgiving when one has a perfect right to condemn (Ro. 5:3-5). Joseph demonstrated this toward his brothers and Potiphar's wife when he finally had it in his power to avenge their wrongs. It is the ability to bear adversity without complaint. It is trusting God in times of adversity and this is a developed character quality (2 Cor. 12:7-12).

12. **Not a brawler.** The idea of *amachon* exhorts God's people to be peaceable, tolerant, and disinclined to fight. It pictures a spiritual leadership which is uncontentious. On the surface this is puzzling. Every student of Scripture knows that no man can embrace the Christian faith without a sense of militancy. Christians are always to be prepared to defend the faith as Paul and others did, and to refuse to do so on the grounds of pacifism is false pietism. Paul means that God's man is never trigger happy, offensively aggressive, or looking for a fight; that he never explodes with anger; and that he never views the battle as the first step in resolving a problem, but, as the last step, coming only after all other means have been carefully explored and fully exhausted. However, when all such means have failed, and the preservation of truth is at stake, this peaceable man who is disinclined to fight, and is marked by a sweet reasonableness, is prepared to stand and to engage in the good fight, the noble battle which defends truth in a fallen world. There is a valuable insight in this scenario. When a violent man fights, after a while no one really pays any attention because that is what he always does. But when a peaceable

man fights, there is moral weight! It gains the attention of sensitive and perceptive observers because it is so uncharacteristic. The battle is perceived to be vital, and therefore, worthy of support. It is important for all Christians to develop a “team” attitude as part of the body of Christ in their ministry.

13. **Not covetous.** Not a lover of money. It is also defined as idolatry in Col. 3: 5 and Eph. 5: 3 -7. Idolatry is letting something come between you and God. Covetousness goes beyond being greedy of money. It includes things and others. It is the root cause of all evil (see 1 Tim. 6: 10). The “covetous” man is often cruel as well as grasping, while the avaricious man is simply miserly and stinting.

14. **Ruleth own house.** The major principle is to put your family first. One must provide for his own in all areas (1 Tim. 5:8) with balance. Do not exclude God or ministry. Ruleth means to be over, to superintend, to preside over, and to be a protector or guardian (to give aid). The word “well” in the verse has a “moral” implication. One is to watch over his family in such a way that there is no room for blame. Do the children respect the father enough to submit to his leadership? It refers to the manner in which the father exercises his authority as much as to the children's submission. It does not say that children and mates must never make a mistake. It means: does the father have the wisdom to deal with children regardless of how they behave? The principle applies to the male and the female (see Titus 2:1-5, 1 Tim. 5:2-3, 14-15 and Prov. 31:10-31).

15. **Not a novice.** A novice is someone in a position of leadership before they are qualified. We get the word neophyte from this Greek word. The issue is maturity, not necessarily age. A novice has a special danger of pride (consider Saul in 1 Sam. 14:33 and 15:30). Because of pride, the premature leader will face the same judgment as Satan (see Is. 14:12-15). A novice cannot develop the proper character qualities overnight or by going to school. They must be lived daily. Paul was saved seventeen years before his first missionary trip. Jesus was thirty years old before he began his public ministry.

16. **Have a good report.** Church leaders, as representatives of the congregation, are constantly susceptible to the snares of the devil (2 Tim. 2:26). Satan likes nothing better than to disgrace God’s work and God’s people by trapping them in sin before a watching world. There are several purposes to having a good testimony toward the lost world: to win them, to keep just criticism down, that one may prosper, and that one may have an answer for his faith.

17. **Not double-tongued.** He must be sincere in the sense of being honest and non-hypocritical. The Greek is *dilogos*, meaning double in speech, saying one thing with one person and giving a different view of it to another (with the intent to deceive), to be insincere or hypocritical. In James 1:8 and 4:8 we see the concept applied to the “mind” which is literally to be “two-souled,” to be divided in thinking-- to waver or falter between two opinions. Psalm 12:2 tells us it is speaking from a “double heart.” This would encompass slandering as well as flattering others. In Japanese is it *ni-gon* and was punishable by death for the samurai.

18. **Holding mystery of faith.** He must be a person who understands and holds fast the deep truths of the faith. One cannot understand the “faith” if one has not read and studied the Word of God. The vast majority of Christians claim they believe the Bible is the Word of God, yet they have yet to read the entire Bible, let alone study any significant portion of it. The Greek *musterion* means mysteries which are confided only to the initiated and not to ordinary mortals. One must be committed to the Word in order to grasp the mysteries of it.

19. **Must first be proved.** While similar to the concept of “not a novice” it adds to the meaning. One must demonstrate his maturity before being placed in a position of responsibility. One must “prove” his quality over time in the ordinary activities of life and ministry. After showing himself “irreproachable” (free from any charge at all), then one is to be allowed to serve as a representative of Christ. As David did not use Saul’s sword and armor, because he had “not proved” it (1 Sam. 17:39), so one should observe people in a variety of circumstances over a period of time before thrusting them into a role of leadership.

We now shift our attention to Titus 1:7 for the remainder of the character traits to be found in a mature master-level black belt.

20. **Not self-willed.** One who is self-willed always wants things done his way as opposed to wanting things done God's way. There are only two “wills” on earth --- God's and the Devil's. Man's “free-will” submits to one of them (2 Tim. 2:24-26). The Greek *authades* means overbearing, self-pleasing, self-willed, and arrogant. This person seeks the glory rather than giving God the glory.

21. **Not soon to anger.** This is the person who is seldom angry; a person who, when angry or a just cause, is not angry long. Anger is not always sin, there is a proper Biblical anger (Ps. 7: 11, Mt. 5:22 and Eph. 4:26). Anger is a sin when it is a continuous state (which gives place to the Devil) or when one is angry because his personal desires are violated (the only time you have the right to be angry is when God’s rights are being violated). Anger is caused by egotism, pride, insecurity (false bravado --- all needs are met in Jesus Christ - Phil. 4:19), bad associations and the flesh. It will result in a loss of all defenses (Prov. 25:28) and revenge (getting even).

22. **Lover of good men.** The Greek *philagathos* means a promoter of virtue. Good men are defined Biblically as saved and fruit-bearing such as Barnabas (Acts 11:24). It is developing a special love for the brethren - especially those whom God is using as seen in 1 Sam. 18:1, 1 Kings 5:1, Ps. 16:3, Amos 5:15, 1 Jn. 3:14, and 1 Jn. 5:1. It does not mean uniformity, but unity in the common cause with those who are doctrinally of the same mind.

23. **Just.** This person has the ability and wisdom to judge matters properly in light of the Word of God. He has the ability to discern between right and wrong. He is upright, righteous, observing divine laws, innocent, faultless -- one whose thoughts and actions are conformed to the will of God. The need for such people is seen in 1 Cor. 6:1-5 to

avoid and settle squabbles over internal matters among God's people and to keep the family functioning as a family.

24. **Holy.** Not a state of sinless perfection, but a daily lifestyle acceptable unto God. undefiled by sin and free from wickedness, this is a learned lifestyle (Eph. 4:17-32). In Eph. 4:20, “learned” means to learn by hearing, use and practice; to get accustomed to. This is accomplished in seven stages: grounded, settled, not moved away, rooted, built up, established and abounding (Col. 1:21-23; 2:6-7).

25. **Temperate.** He is moderate, balanced, and not excessive in any area. It comes from a word that signifies strength, and denotes one who has power over his appetite and affections, or, in things lawful, can, for good ends, restrain and hold them in. It is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, produced only by a close walk with the Spirit. This is also a “learned” quality (2 Pet. 1:5-8). There is temperance in striving for the mastery (1 Cor. 9:25-27) and focusing on the return of the Lord (Phil. 4:5)

26. **Holding fast the faithful word.** The man or woman of God must be doctrinally sound (Eph. 4:4, 1 Tim. 3:16-17, 1 Pet. 3:15 and Acts 6:10) and must know how to use the Bible (Phil. 2:16, Heb. 5:12-14, 2 Tim. 2:15, and Eph. 6:13-17). He is to be a conservator of the truth, one who must understand it, hold it fast (to adhere to and to care for).

27. **Exhorter** (convincer). This means to encourage others by teaching the “faithful word” and “sound doctrine.” We have *parakale*: to call to one's side, to call for, to summon, to admonish, to exhort, to encourage, to strengthen, exhorting and comforting and encouraging, and to instruct, to teach

**Conclusion.** God will not use an unprepared, ill-equipped, unclean vessel. One cannot “do” what God wants him to do until he “is” the kind of person God wants him to be.

The list of character qualities in this booklet is the basis for qualification for ministry. One is disqualified for ministry if he does not meet all of these standards. Realize, however, no one will ever achieve perfection in any area, but consistent violation of anyone of these qualities is cause for disqualification from ministry.

The martial artist of God is made through a lifetime process (accountability over time). There is no such thing as instant spirituality and there should never be an end to one's spiritual growth. There is no mention of any special gifts or natural talents in this booklet. It has to do with character.

When properly manifest, this list of qualities will cause such a radical difference in one's life that it will be an unmistakable testimony to the lost world of grace and power of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:13).