

Thomas E. Kirk - Cho Dan

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MOVING TO A HIGHER LEVEL

Why am I still training in Tang Soo Do? Why do I look forward to being tested and promoted to E Dan? I hope because it is part of my lifestyle. I want to grow. I don't want to stay where I am. I want to move to a higher level.

The goal of moving to a higher level is born partly out of a desire that is inbred in all men. Some of it is personality. Most of it is my choice. Am I satisfied with my present state? No! Do I have goals? Do I have hopes, dreams and aspirations? Am I willing to sacrifice to reach those goals? Yes!

My Tang Soo Do training has taught me a lot of things, but I have so much left to learn. The real question for me: is what am I doing with what I have already learned? In my personal quest to move to a higher level of Black Belt, all things must relate to the overall guiding principles of my life. Is Tang Soo Do the most important thing in my life? No. By choice, the "Spiritual" dimension of my life is the most important. I believe that we are "Spirit" beings. We have a "Soul" (our mind realm), and we live in a "Body".

The "Spiritual" path that I have chosen is Christianity. I am a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ. Therefore, His teachings, as I read and understand them from the Bible, are my guiding doctrines. How I develop my mind and my body are very important, but secondary (or should be) to how I develop my spirit.

Because of this, as I train to move to a higher level in Tang Soo Do, I am not without some inner conflict. There is no conflict with training my body. As stated in 1st Timothy: "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." So, there is great benefit in bodily training although it is not the highest of my aspirations.

There is some conflict in how I train my mind. The mind is one of the hardest battlegrounds in which to gain and keep victory. I believe that I must renew my mind according to Romans 12:2 which states: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In part, this is done by filling my mind with God's truths from the Bible. Therefore, I can not follow the Eastern philosophy of "moo shim" or "empty mind". The Bible is clear that my mind must be "full" of God - not "empty". An empty mind would be open to spiritual influences that are contrary to God's word. This warning is made clear in the parable in Luke 11: 24-26 that shows the danger of emptying the mind or soul without then filling it with the Holy Spirit of God and His Word.

Additional conflict arises in the area of training my spirit. Although the Bible provides many great promises of help, I sometimes find myself in the position of the person who has "good seed" scattered on him, but has "thorns" in his soil and doesn't let the seed grow but lets it get choked out by life's worries. (See Luke 8:4-15) This is the area of my life that should be granted the highest priority, yet I so easily let it get pushed aside.

As I move into the higher levels of training as a Black Belt, I realize that there is so much in Tang Soo Do that I do not know. There is so much more to learn. Can I overcome these conflicts? Yes! Do I want to? Yes! The question is, am I disciplined enough to get and keep my priorities straight in all that I do, and not let Tang Soo Do have a higher priority in my life than it should?

Fortunately for me, I have chosen to train at an exceptional studio. At Lititz World Tang Soo Do, I was assured from the start of my training, that there would be no "Eastern" religious doctrines pushed on me, and that I was free to live my life and train in a way that was comfortable for me. I am thankful that they have lived up to that in every way. I now ask the question of myself: am I living up to what is desired of me by my Lord and Savior - Jesus Christ?

In my essay for Cho Dan, I wrote about the seven tenets of Tang Soo Do because I believe that all other aspects of my Tang Soo Do training are meaningless without them. And, since my Christian faith is the highest priority in my life, the tenets of my faith must have preeminence over all other tenets. I believe that the tenets of Tang Soo Do do not conflict with, but compliment the tenets of my Christian faith. The following quick review will show their importance.

Integrity is the quality of being honest and trustworthy. In Matthew 5:37, Jesus admonishes us to "let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'." Fortunately, that does not mean living a life of perfection. Not "if", but "when" I fail, as long as I am honest about my shortcomings with God and others involved, I can still walk in integrity.

I need to **concentrate** on growing in all three aspects of my life - spirit, soul and body. When all three parts of me concentrate on what is appropriate, I can be strong in my faith, and strong in Tang Soo Do.

I must **persevere** steadfastly on my chosen path. Ephesians 6:18 says "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints". I choose to spend our time of meditation in prayer that I and my fellow students may be able to persevere in our training and that I may be a witness for the Lord Jesus in all my actions and words.

In the Bible I am commanded to **respect** and **obey** those in authority. Obviously this holds true in our Tang Soo Do training as well. I must respect my instructors and fellow students. I am to obey those in authority as long as they are not commanding me to do something contrary to the Word of God.

Self control means to have reserve, discretion, stability and constraint. In my training, I need to have control of my body and my mind. Controlling the mind is a constant battle within me because I have my own will, and my will doesn't always lead me in the right direction. Fortunately, I have the Holy Spirit to help me, and with concentration and perseverance, I will be able to exercise self control.

I believe that true **humility** can only come through an honest evaluation of myself and how I am seen by the eyes of God. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time." That is a life goal for me, that I might be able to walk humbly before my God.

An **indomitable spirit** means unconquerable. I hope to exemplify that the indomitable Spirit in me is the Holy Spirit of God which is truly unconquerable. God's Spirit helps me to walk in "**integrity**". When I have integrity, I can "**respect**" and "**obey**" those in authority. As I "**concentrate**" on His word and "**persevere**" in prayer, I will be able to exercise "**self control**" and walk in "**humility**".

It is my desire that His Spirit will control my mind and emotions and every other aspect of my being. As I allow this to happen on a daily basis, I will truly be a man of God who happens to study and enjoy the art of Tang Soo Do.

So - what must I do to move to a higher level in Tang Soo Do? I must train my physical body. I must study to improve my mind and learn what is required of each successive level of Black Belt. I must strengthen my spirit so that those who teach me, those that train with me, and those I teach will see a man that is exemplifying the seven tenets of Tang Soo Do. As we examine each of these three areas: the body, the mind, and the spirit, we'll see that the "Fourteen Attitude Requirements" are also needed for me to move to the next level of Black Belt.

I train my body because I have a purpose (*#1 Purpose of training should be enhancement of mental and physical betterment*). How should I go about training my body? To start with, I will seriously give my all (*#2 Serious approach, #3 All out effort*) as I train at our studio an average of two times a week (*#4 Maintain regular and constant practice, #6 Regularly spaced practice sessions, #10 Always follow a routine training schedule*). There I will be taught new techniques and refine old techniques (*#5 Practice basic techniques all the time, #11 Repeatedly practice all techniques already learned*). In addition, I will go through stretching techniques every day to keep myself limber. I will alternate aerobic and strength training mixed with Tang Soo Do practice at home a minimum of two days per week. This will help my body become more flexible and stronger over time. And, I will keep myself clean (*#14 Cleanliness is required after training. Keep yourself and your surroundings clean*).

How can I study to grow in my mind, and learn what is needed to move to the next level? Again, I have a purpose (*#1 Purpose of training should be enhancement of mental and physical betterment*). I must mentally approach my training in a serious manner (*#2 Serious approach*). I must be alert to what is being taught (*#7 Always listen to and follow the directions of instructors or seniors*). I must apply my mind and learn what is behind the forms, one-steps and techniques (*#12 When learning new techniques, learn thoroughly the theory and philosophy as well*). This, along with continual review of what I have already learned (*#5 Practice basic techniques all the time, #11 Repeatedly practice all techniques already learned*) will help me keep my mind strong and healthy.

Finally, I must move on in the spirit of Tang Soo Do while maintaining an ever watchful eye on how I grow in my spiritual quest to be more like Jesus. I must keep my spirit under control at all times (*#8 Do not be overly ambitious*). I may have pride in what I have accomplished, but I must not be prideful or arrogant. I can keep things in perspective by remembering that I have come this far by working hard and by the grace of God (*#9 Frequently inspect your own achievements*). I must continually strive to move forward in my training (*#13 When you begin to feel idle, try to overcome this*). Developing this vital area of training my spirit is all important. How well I succeed in allowing the Holy Spirit of God to direct my path, will be the deciding factor that will cause me to grow and move on to the next level or, or will cause me to stumble and stay at my current level.

As I analyze all of this, I have to go back to the ultimate "Purpose of Tang Soo Do Training". Why am I doing this? In this day and age and in our society, I believe it is becoming more and more important to learn some basic self defense techniques (*#1 Self-Defense: We protect our lives and possessions from injustice and danger*). I want to be able to protect myself and my family from those who may desire to harm us.

I started with Tang Soo Do, and desire to continue in my training, with the distinct desire to strengthen my body - specifically my back (*#2 Health: We promote our physical and spiritual health and enjoy strong bodies and sound minds through rigorous training*). Continuous training has done wonders for me in this area.

I believe my training has helped me overall as a person. (*#3 Better Person: We strive to be of better character through endurance and hard work*). I can physically endure more, and it has given me many opportunities to develop character.

I look forward to continued training and growth. As I endeavor to move to a higher level within Tang Soo Do, I offer my thanks and sincere respect to our grand master Jae C. Shin for starting and leading the World Tang Soo Do

Association. Above all, I hope to be seen as a man who faithfully honors, serves and represents his true Master - the Lord Jesus Christ!