

The Heartbeat of Taekwon-Do

By Gary A. Bossé - 7th Dan, USTF-7-37

The name Taekwon-Do, which means “the way of the hands and feet”, is a relatively new martial art. Introduced by the soldier and scholar, Major General Choi, Hong Hi on April 11, 1955. Taekwon-Do has become an international martial art, taught world wide.

In the early years of Taekwon-Do, 1964-66, when I started to learn Taekwon-Do as a young soldier in Korea, no one outside of Korea knew what the word Taekwon-Do meant. As far as they knew, it was another oriental restaurant. The general public in the world knew what Karate meant. Therefore, most Taekwon-Do instructors advertised Karate and taught Taekwon-Do. Today, some people advertise Taekwon-Do and teach Karate. We should have the integrity to say what we are teaching and educate the people instead of deceiving them. People are really intelligent if given the chance.

Taekwon-Do means different things to different people. To some, it means a way of life. To some, it is a business or a source of income. To others it is a sport or a recreation activity. A self-improvement vehicle, a physical fitness, a mental discipline or a self-defense. To parents who send their children, you can add character building. To the doctor who refers their patients, Taekwon-Do means better total health. To me, Taekwon-Do is the best self-improvement vehicle ever devised by man. You may join Taekwon-Do for any one reason, but you get the whole package in return. Church gives you spiritual well being and Taekwon-Do gives you everything else.

In a free society, which the entire world is moving to, (not because of politics or ideologies but because of telecommunication and the global market) 80% of all people are not looking or willing to improve their lives. They accept who they are and what they have. 20% of all people are looking to improve their lives but only 10% are willing to do something about it. 2% of the population will excel at whatever they do. These are the movers and shakers of the world. For example, at a Taekwon-Do tournament, you can beat 90% of all competitors by being in excellent condition and using superior technique. Most people go to participate not to win. They're out of shape and their technique isn't sharp. You beat 50% of your competitors by being in shape. 40% by superior technique. The last 10% is a dogfight. Not who wants it most, but who refuses to lose. For every 100 students who start Taekwon-Do training, only 2 will achieve black belt. One out fo every 10 black belts will become an instructor and stay in Taekwon-Do. Think about it, 2% of the worlds population of 5 billion is 100,000,000 movers and shakers. What percent do you fit into? See, Taekwon-Do means different things to different people.

We read and hear so much about unifying Taekwon-Do under on umbrella. Then someone else breaks away and forms another organization. Instead of unifying we seem to be diversifying. The very nature of being a mover and a shaker is to go your

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own way and to do your own thing. Taekwon-Do is no different. People choose to belong to certain organizations. Organizations don't choose to belong to people. Look at Christianity for example. Christ started one church and passed it on to St. Peter. How many different Christian denominations are there today? And still growing. Taekwon-Do has a heartbeat of its own. It means different things to different people. The key to any organization is to create an atmosphere where people want to belong. Just as where the church is the people, so is any organization. As long as we don't compromise our integrity and what we stand for as an organization, we should allow maximum participation from it's members.

Blind loyalty should only be given to God. Everyone else has to earn it every day. Same thing with respect. You can't demand respect, you have to earn it. You can respect my rank and not respect me as a person. You can respect my knowledge and skill of Taekwon-Do and not respect me as a leader. You have two basic types of leadership – authoritarian and persuasive. They both get the task accomplished. One, you have to do it. The other, you want to do it. Big difference in attitude. Loyalty also has to be earned every day. In order to be a good leader, you must first be a good follower. If I expect you to be loyal to me, first I must be loyal to myself, in who I am and what I stand for. Then I must be loyal to my higher headquarters and seniors, and to theirs. The higher we go up the ladder of responsibility, the more like Christ we need to be. Good in every way. President Clinton was very knowledgeable with a charismatic personality and can get the job done. However, his bad character traits overshadow all of his accomplishments. He has lost respect with most people and who is going to be loyal to someone who isn't loyal to themselves and their cause?

Takewon-Do is probably the most popular martial art in the world today. Taught by hundreds of thousands of instructors world wide. Everyone from a red belt to a 9th degree black belt. Just like no two snowflakes are alike, no two instructors think or teach exactly the same. Taekwon-Do means different things to different people. The word Taekwon-Do originated in the mind of one man (Choi, Hong Hi). Christianity originated from one man (Jesus Christ). From the Twelve apostles, Christianity spread throughout the world. They led by example. People would say, see how those Christians get along with each other. As the centuries went by, Christianity splintered into many different denominations. So long as they follow the Ten Commandments, they are Christ like, or Christians. Only the customs and rituals are different. Likewise, Taekwon-Do has splintered into many different organizations. Many of the early students and pioneers of Taekwon-Do have broken away and formed their own organizations. Some have joined others. Even some of their students have formed their own organizations. It is the nature of the beast (human). Unfortunately, some people are only loyal to themselves. The best we can hope for is that all students are loyal to the Tenets of Taekwon-Do. Show COURTESY to everyone, have INTEGRITY, PERSERVERANCE in your goals and beliefs, have SELF-CONTROL over the dark forces inside of you, develop that INDOMITABLE SPIRIT that makes us truly alive.

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Just as the Wright Brothers developed flying machines, flying and aviation do not belong to them or any one company or organization. Flying belongs to all mankind. Taekwon-Do belongs to all mankind. When all of us are dead and gone, if all our organizations cease to exist, Taekwon-Do will continue on. Because Taekwon-Do has a Heartbeat of its own.

PS: In no way am I referring to Choi, Hong Hi as Christ or Taekwon-Do as Christianity.