

Lesson 9.

Character – It's a choice

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently.” ~ Warren Buffett

“Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right path, the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.” ~ Anne Frank

YOUR ACTIONS TELL OTHERS WHO YOU ARE

You can make an enormous difference in the quality of your life by choosing the type of character you want to have. You can be a bum or Agent 007. You can be a medical doctor or a thief. You can be an artist or a pimp. But the reputation you develop for your character will follow you the rest of your life, no matter what profession you choose. Your character will be what your family, friends, and colleagues care about. You get to choose. Think about these with care. This is one of the most important choices you will ever make in life for it is character that defines a man.

If you choose to spend too little time investing in your character, your life will reflect this missed opportunity. As you grow older, people will discuss your character, ethics, values and reputation, often within the same conversations. You want those words to be well-spoken and positive. You should defend your character and reputation as strongly as you'd defend your home or your family. It is that important.

MONEY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH CHARACTER

If I were to say the only way to make significant money or have a successful career is to have good character, I'd be lying. The movie *The Wolf of Wall Street* will show you that. You can have horrible character and make a ton of money and become financially successful. If you adopt bad character while you may be able to go back, change and rebuild both your character and reputation, you still may never be accepted by some people. It is a thousand times harder to rebuild and rebrand yourself than it is to just build yourself the right way from the start.

Unfortunately, society's values have eroded so much that you don't have to have great talent to make money or have a successful career, depending on how you choose to define "success." Bernie Madoff, who "made off" with billions of dollars of people's money, was financially successful and respected for decades. That is until everyone found out he was a crook. He ruined thousands of people's lives and went to prison at the age of seventy-four. Yes, he had a successful career until his deception and cheating were discovered.