

## **“Loyalty”**

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A few months back I was at a work function and I had the opportunity to listen to a speaker describe the term “loyalty”. Now the discussion was around corporations and employees, however, I could not help put it in context of feudal Japan, specifically in what we study and do at The Gi Yu Kyo Kai, koryu bugei (古流武芸 “old martial school/way”). Mr. James Kane has shared keynoting duties at global events with US Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Sir Richard Branson, Malcolm Gladwell, Jack Welch, Sara Blakely, Thomas Friedman, Seth Godin, and Warren Buffet, among other leading, business, political, and thought leaders. So he has done his research, he has explored these thoughts and has delivered them with success. Obviously, I cannot speak to his specifics, nor can I deliver all he had during his lecture, however, there were a few takeaways I thought could benefit us all. I hope my paraphrasing of his content is accurate.

When we think of the Budo it is interlaced directly with the Samurai and Ninja of old Japan. A nation that had hundreds of years of civil war which helped refine the many ways to fight, kill and show respect for others. A nation that created a culture of loyalty to the many lords that inherited through birth right, battle or luck vast areas of

land, resources and subordinates. “Subjects” of the royal lords were of many different societal classes, from Samurai to Artisans to Peasant Farmers and many more. Each having a distinct role to play in their environment. The environment was “owned” and controlled by the “lord”, Emperor, Shogun, Daimyo or other. Normally these “lords” held a strong military presence, resources and even a warped perception that their title had been “God” given.



The fact of the matter is, we have had this perception that samurai followed their lords because of their “duty” (義務 “GiMu”) to the lord. At times the duty to the lord may be to commit “seppuku”, ritual suicide by cutting their own bellies open. That is SOME kind of loyalty! Was it out of true loyalty or out of fear? What convinced people to have that type of determination for another person?



According to the speaker I heard, his hypothesis was that Loyalty is one of the first things the human brain focuses on when it meets a person for the first time. It immediately decides if you are a threat or an opportunity. First impressions count, I guess. The term satisfaction is derived from our human mood from a past experience

of success. Versus Loyalty being human behavior which dictates future experiences. For example, cats are satisfied and dogs are loyal.

Loyalty asks; do you make my life safer, easier and better? Physics demands constant optimization to make things more efficient or easier, safer and better. The three items that create loyalty are trust, belonging and purpose. If you can give another human being those three things, you will form a bond of loyalty, according to Mr. Kane.



Now if I take those ideas and inject them in to the Japanese Feudal system of the Samurai era, I believe I can see these ideals in their societal structure. Trust was established by giving the populace safety/protection from other lords by having a strong and well trained military. Belief in their superiors (trust) was also established by giving land, titles, food (ability to grow crops) and shelter etc. to the subordinates. Belonging would have been created by bonding the warriors and different classes together and then up the hierarchy by protecting the population from other warring lords. Then the idea of Purpose, a reason for just existing is present in all things Japanese, from Budo to Shodo (calligraphy) to Ikebana (flower arranging) to Chado (tea ceremony).

If I think of these three ideals of Trust, Belonging and Purpose, I can truly say we at The Gi Yu Kyo Kai dojos have been doing these things for over 25 years. We show our students they can trust us and we can trust them by our words matching our actions

and doing the right thing at all times. We show each and every individual that they belong to our dojo and the great heritage of the lineages we study. The strength they gain from that practice enhances their physical being along with their character. That helps them feel a sense belonging in their greater communities. Finally, we have a shared purpose of life with our students through one of our core beliefs and through that produce productive and just members of our greater communities.



I can truly say we give loyalty to those who “learn to earn” it from the dojo. I am loyal to those around me. Trust is built by teaching and mentoring with sincerity and honest feedback given to the student. Belonging is created by all students, regardless of their daily titles, working together to polish their skills. They realize they are one piece in something much greater than ourselves. Our purpose is solidified by the effort, guidance and belief that we are bettering our bodies, minds and spirits to help BE better for our families, communities and countries.

I would ask, are you getting those 3 ideals from where you train? Do you feel loyal?