

# The character that stinks will eventually sink

*"If you do not conquer self, you will be conquered by self" — Napoleon Hill*

**D**estiny decays when character declines. The Athenian statesman, Critias, said: "If you discipline yourself within, you will be less vulnerable to injury from outside." In life, you need more than a willing spirit to fulfill destiny; you need a conquered flesh. Self-discipline is the ability to do what is right even if you don't feel like it. Living a principle-centered life is the hallmark of winners. Great people are greatly principled. The core secret of winners is held up in the belief that to go up in life, there are things to give up. There are two ways of learning in life: By 'instruction' or by 'destruction.' Winners don't just show up suddenly; they are all products of a rigorous and disciplined system. Alan Armstrong said: "Champions do not become champions when they win the event, but in hours, weeks, months and years, they spend preparing for it. The victorious performance itself is merely the demonstration of their championship character." Lao-Tzu said: "He who gains victory over other men is strong, but he who gains victory over himself is all powerful." One of my most fascinating books ever on Discipline, Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win, is co-authored by a retired Navy SEAL commander in the U.S. Navy, Jocko Willink, who talked extensively on how we must always take ownership of our lives and that nobody must ever be the reason why we fail in life.

He succinctly captured his idea about discipline in one quote, when he said: "Discipline equals freedom." As a youth pastor and leadership coach, I have observed with unflinching accuracy that what ultimately destroy a man at the top are actually indiscipline, habit and sin that followed him there. Finally, R-Kelly goes to 20 years in jail for pornography, statutory rape and other sexual offenses. He was unarguably the one of the best R&B recording artists of all times. I have never known such brilliant lyrics and melodic sounds as him. I still remember his greatest hit of all times that shook the world—I Believe I Can Fly. I also remember another smashing hit—If I Could Turn. He was a solid master in his craft; a virtuoso of the Mic. He did no wrong when he hits the stage; he was lord of that stage, with a charismatic nature that no one could contend. I remember all. Up till this moment, they still resonate in my head; they still serenade my senses. But the turn of event has reduced a star to a piece of bread. So, here we are, from three-time Grammy Award winner to wearing prison overall. As much as I feel justice should take its course, my heart still bleeds for this legend. My heart bleeds to see what this guy has been reduced to—a defeated and despondent figure. Helpless and hopeless, now he is paying for his choice of life. Now convicted to spend 20 years, this means he should be over 70 after serving his prison term. Really sad!

Plato said: "For a man to conquer himself is the first and noblest of all victories."

When R-Kelly was acquitted and his case dismissed over a decade ago for child pornography, his brother, Kerry Kelly, called him on the phone and told him: "Hey man... God has given you another chance." The singer's response, according to his brother, during an interview, was: "No.... God didn't give me another chance; I gave

myself another chance. My money gave me another chance." Since over a decade after his acquittal, R-Kelly never learnt; he never changed. He took the fact that the judgment was in his favour for granted. He continued his salacious act of sleeping with under-aged girls. He forgot that it was only a matter of time before his actions would catch up with him big time. Fyodor Dostoevsky said: "It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man's life is made up of nothing, but the habits he has accumulated during the first half." What would eventually bring a man down from a great height is actually the habit that followed him there. You cannot be a winner with loser's habits. Successful people are simply those with successful habits.

Depending on what they are, our habits would either break us or make us. Any habit that you refuse to deal with in the present would deal with you in the future. Stop that habit of pornography, masturbation, lying, anger or whatever it is that is holding you back from living a fulfilling life. You have to 'face' your bad habits, so that you can 'phase' them out. A former President of the United States (US), Harry S. Truman, said: "In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves. Self-discipline, with all of them, came first." At the height of his fame and career, R-Kelly was one of the most recognised entertainment personalities in the world. Apart from his many accomplishments, his outrageous, undisciplined and controversial behaviour with under-aged girls and deep involvement with child pornography had kept him in the public eye and in the courtroom. He was a man noted for his undisciplined sex escapade and erratic behaviour. Jim Rohn said: "Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment." Character matters in everything. Beauty without manner cannot sustain you in marriage. Intelligence without character cannot make you outstanding. Power without discipline would end you in futilities. What are you blessed with? Never take advantage of others, as it may not end well.

Jim Rohn said: "We must all suffer one of two things: The pain of discipline or the pain of regret." It is either we suffer the pain of change or suffer remaining the way we are. I am reaching out to all the youth out there in the words of Max DePree: "We cannot become what we want to be by remaining what we are." We need to constantly adjust ourselves to get the best out of life. Destiny decays when discipline declines.

If life doesn't teach you anything, let it teach you to acknowledge the grace and mercy of God. Let it teach you never to take things for granted; to learn from your mistakes when you are given a second chance. Let it teach you to introspect and observe your conscience. Above all, let it teach you to cut off the habits that have the potential to cut you down in the future.