EPISODE 18 // SHOW NOTES

Character Is Everything

A fifteen-minute pause in a noisy world — with Paul Cleworth

The Steady Path
Green Farm, Bendish
SG4 8JD
~15 minutes per episode

THE BIG IDEA

These days we only use the word virtue to accuse somebody of faking it. The Stoics thought it was the whole point. Their word was areté — excellence, being the best version of yourself — and two thousand years later Maslow put the same thing at the top of his pyramid. It comes as a set of four: wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. Money, health and status are lovely, and they sit lower down. Character is who you are when no one is watching.

"What a man can be, he must be."
— Abraham Maslow, A Theory of Human Motivation, 1943
The peak of the pyramid is self-actualisation. The Greeks called it areté: becoming everything you are capable of becoming.

"Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching."
— Author unknown — often wrongly credited to C. S. Lewis
Platoon in a line. Two sergeants with identical courage, in a jungle where nobody who matters will ever find out.

EPISODE OVERVIEW

The Hook	"Virtue." The word nobody uses any more.
Areté	Excellence: the best version of yourself.
The Pyramid	Maslow put the same thing at the top.
The Extras	Money, health, status: lovely, not the point.
Four Things	Wisdom, courage, temperance, justice.
Two Fathers	Platoon: same courage, different men.
No One Watching	Where character actually lives.
The Hero	Batman: stop holding out. It's you.
Two Books	Résumé virtues, and eulogy virtues.
The Mirror	One question, tonight.

WHY 'CHARACTER'?

- **In investing —** wisdom and temperance beat cleverness: knowing what truly matters, and knowing when you have enough.
- **In family life —** nobody asks to be remembered for their pension. It's who they were to the people they love.
- **In business —** justice is doing the job properly when nobody would notice if you didn't.
- **In life —** what happens to you isn't your character. What you do next is. The top of the pyramid is open to everybody, today.

"Was I good today?"

— not "was I successful?" Not "was I busy?" Some days the answer will be no. That's what tomorrow is for.

STOIC & OTHER WISDOM

"Whatever any one does or says, I must be good, just as if the gold, or the emerald or the purple were always saying this, Whatever any one does or says, I must be emerald and keep my colour."
MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS, BOOK 7

"No longer talk at all about the kind of man that a good man ought to be, but be such."
MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS, BOOK 10

"Success is about what you achieve. Areté is about the excellence of the person you become while you're achieving it."
THE STEADY PATH · ON ARETÉ

"Courage without justice isn't a virtue. It's just dangerous."
THE STEADY PATH · ON THE FOUR VIRTUES

REFERENCES THIS EPISODE

FILM

Platoon (1986) · Batman (1989)

MUSIC

Bonnie Tyler — Holding Out for a Hero (1984) · Michael Jackson — Man in the Mirror (1988)

BOOKS & THINKERS

The Road to Character — David Brooks · Right Thing, Right Now — Ryan Holiday · Meditations — Marcus Aurelius · Maslow's hierarchy of needs · Areté

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THE STEADY PATH PRINCIPLE

Write your eulogy line. Train your weakest virtue. Ask the mirror.

THIS EPISODE'S REFLECTION QUESTION

"Was I good today?"

Ask it in the mirror tonight, when you clean your teeth. One question. Then again tomorrow.

COMING UP — EPISODE 19

Who Are You Underneath?

Another man in a suit of armour — with rather less say in the matter.

RoboCop, Blade Runner, and what's left of you when they take away the job, the uniform and the kit.

TAKE THIS WITH YOU **Money and success are lovely. They sit lower down the pyramid. Character is the top.**

Slow down. Think clearly. Keep walking your steady path.

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