



MENTORING MOMENT: The Badge & The Man

For the past two years I have had the privilege of mentoring a young man who, upon securing his associates degree in criminal justice, applied to and was accepted into the Dallas Police Dept. Academy. About a month into his academy training, we met to catch up. I asked him, “What is your most significant learning thus far?” I have been pondering his answer for weeks now.

He said, “When I entered the Academy, I thought that the badge made the man. But I was wrong. It’s the man who makes the badge.” He went on to explain that he had this notion that once he was a police officer, he would have the respect and strength that came with wearing the badge. But now he understood that if he wasn’t a strong person on the inside, the badge wouldn’t make him a strong person - that character and inner strength mattered more than badges and uniforms.

We live in a society that gets caught up in externals. We often define ourselves and others by badges. Badges come in many forms – degrees, titles, positions. Even our successes and failures can become badges that define us. But my young friend is right: it’s not the badge that makes the man – it’s the man who makes the badge. The chief goal of mentoring is never the achievement of some external badge, but the development of character. In the end, we are not defined by our successes and failures, but by the kind of person we are becoming.

Dr. Blair Ritchey is Executive Director of ISF, a non-profit foundation dedicated to providing scholarships, mentoring and leadership development for young people who have aged out of orphan or foster care, as they pursue their dream of a college education and a successful life. Mentoring Moment is a weekly message of encouragement and inspiration to those committed to the mentoring process. If you prefer NOT to receive Mentoring Moment, simply reply to this email.



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