I read just the other day: “Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”

Building character is a lifelong process. I believe that character defines who we are and how we behave in all matter of circumstances. The aspects of character are related to important traits like patience, resourcefulness, trustworthiness, integrity, effort, organization, perseverance and problem-solving.

Each and every one of us has an area in which we can improve, and I believe that our surroundings, experiences, reactions and actions shape our personality and characteristics. On the other hand, reputation isn’t everything. Character is much more important. Our life is within our own grasp.

Abraham Lincoln said it best – “Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.”

In a world preoccupied with image, it’s easy to worry too much about our reputation and too little about our character. Building a reputation is largely a public relations project; building character requires us to focus on our values and actions. Noble rhetoric and good intentions aren’t enough.

What we’re looking for is moral strength based on ethical principles. Character is revealed by actions, not words, especially when there’s a gap between what we want to do and what we should do, and when doing the right thing costs more than we want to pay.

Our character is revealed by how we deal with pressures and temptations. But it’s also disclosed by everyday actions, including what we say and do when we think no one is looking, and we won’t get caught.

The way we treat people we think can’t help or hurt us, tells more about our character than how we treat people we think are important. People who are honest, kind and fair only when there’s something to gain shouldn’t be confused with people of real character who demonstrate these qualities habitually, under all circumstances. Character is not a fancy coat we put on for show. It’s who we really are.