

How Martial Arts Should Be Taught in a Christian Context

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Many people don't believe that martial arts should not be taught in a Christian environment. A major part of Christianity is about forgiveness, love, and respect toward one another. Thus, it may seem that teaching martial arts in a church would interfere with the practice of these tenets of Christianity. The things we do in martial arts may seem violent and lethal, but we practice these skills and techniques in order to be able to defend ourselves against violent people and to save our lives in a life-threatening situation. The term "Tae Kwon Do" itself means, "punching and kicking as a means of self-defense."

There is actually a good passage in the Holy Bible that discusses practicing martial arts. This passage would be I Corinthians 6: 19-20, where it says, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which is God's."

To some, just one passage in the Holy Bible is still not enough to persuade them that practicing martial arts in a Church is acceptable, but there are different ways of practicing and applying martial arts in a Christian context. One way that martial arts can be applied in a Christian context is adhering to a pledge, or creed, that the practitioner will only use martial arts as a means of self-defense or to protect those who cannot protect themselves in a life-threatening situation. In addition, one can pledge to find non-violent ways to resolve verbal conflict and other conflicts, so they will not result in the unwarranted application of physical force. Accordingly, the St. Mark United Methodist Church Martial Arts Program Student Creed reads, "I will always do my best to behave in a Christian manner during training, at home, and in society. Therefore, I will always seek peaceful solutions to conflict before resorting to force, strive to help others, and work to build a strong community."

A pledge, or creed, promising never to allow unnecessary violence can be both convincing and persuading, but the possibility of one of the students of our program ignoring or disobeying our Student Creed still remains. Such occurrences can be prevented by performing disciplinary actions to those who disobey our Student Creed, and by continuously teaching examples of good behavior and manners. Here, at our program, we are taught these things, but there are some students that do not apply these things to their everyday life. I believe that it is safe to say that people get their negative impressions of our program from some of our younger students, as they haven't yet grasped some of the concepts of discipline and etiquette as quickly, or as fully, as our older students.

Some activities that we participate in are in the form of Christian worship. For example, at the beginning of each class, we participate in a daily devotion - starting with one of the class assistants reciting our monthly "Foundation Scripture." After that, we recite the Lord's Prayer in unison, and then join in the singing of a hymn. Furthermore, at the conclusion of each training session, we recite a benediction prayer together. I believe that we do these things not just to persuade people not to dislike our program, but to fulfill our duties as Christians. In conclusion, although I understand, though that some people still have their reasons why they don't believe in martial arts being taught in a church -and that you can't convince everybody - I would argue that the methods applied in the St. Mark United Methodist Church Martial Arts Program are well-suited for teaching Martial Arts appropriately and effectively in a Christian context.