

Martial Arts as Evangelism

“Bam!” “Pow!” “Fuutt!” “Skretch!” All of these sounds came tumbling in as I would sit glued to the television every week to watch Batman. As a young boy in the ‘60’s and early ‘70’s I was attracted to the heroics of Batman and his sidekick, Robin. I had Mom and Dad buy me a Batman utility belt and used an old towel to make a cape and I became the Batman.

Around the same time, another program came out with a fascinating twist. The Green Hornet featured some type of oriental judo-type stuff that I didn’t understand. It did, however, leave an indelible impression in my mind that it was incredible. It’s remarkable how much a young mind can be fed and made to believe. Needless to say, I was hooked on this thing called the martial art of fighting.

As I grew into my teenage years, the fascination never diminished. In fact, it received new “food for thought” through such venues as 007 and Kung Fu- the Series. However, my family was not of the financial means nor was there an opportunity available in my part of the “Mill Hill” of South Carolina. So, I let the dream subside for a while and took up interests in playing the guitar and clarinet.

It was also at this time that my two best friends and I found a relationship with God. We used our musicianship to grow together and put together a band playing Christian music. We embodied the phrase “Iron sharpens iron.” All three of us continually challenged one another to new heights in Christ. Eventually Dan was to become a Missionary, Rick was to become an entrepreneur and head of a Christian foundation, and I was to become a Pastor.

I have served as a Youth and Children’s Pastor for 24 years. (I have only been a Senior Pastor for three years.) In that time, I often looked for new and innovative ways to reach people for Christ. I had observed the Power Team and a ministry out of Lakeland, Florida called the Sell Team. I saw that these big presentations could be used to reach people for Christ. At that point, the Pastor Heart in me came out and I thought that maybe there would be a way through the martial arts to not only reach people for Christ, but to disciple them as well.

Thus, I entered into the martial arts; not to defend myself or even gain some health benefits, but simply to take advantage of a childhood fascination in order to reach, keep, and nourish people for and in Christ. I began my training way back in 1982 (at 24 years of age) with the specific goal of developing a skill to fulfill the Great Commission. As I have matured in the martial arts, I have found that there are many aspects of training that are available that I did not want to carry over to the Christian ranks. There are, I believe demonic influences that lie dormant and must be dealt with at some point as the martial arts are pursued. I also found, however, that the discipline that comes through the martial arts can also be applied to an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit known as self-discipline. In fact, I found that much of the martial arts could be beneficially applied to Christian Discipleship.

Further, I found that little effort was required on my part to advertise what we were doing because every time a new Jackie Chan movie or Teen Age Mutant Ninja Turtles movie comes out, I have free advertising to kids looking for something. The beauty of it all is, that I can train them in legitimate martial arts, then sit them down for a time of devotion (or spiritual training) accompanied by a challenge or altar call, then finish the evening with sparring. Hey, I have a captive audience.

I am thankful for the opportunities that God has afforded me through the venue of the martial arts and I highly recommend it as an evangelistic tool.

Pastor Jim Garrett