

How Martial Arts Should Be Taught in a Christian Context

Submitted by: Spencer Slaton

Over the last 3 years, there has been a lot of controversy about the St. Mark United Methodist Church Martial Arts Program. Some people believe it was a great idea, while others say, "Martial arts has no place in a church." However, Jesus taught that you should teach a man to fish, or teach skills to others, in a way that meets their needs, so that they may be led to a whole relationship with God, and motivates them to pass on the knowledge to others, in the same fashion and with the same intent; much like the martial arts program which Master Pembroke has developed.

Martial arts teach far more than self-defense. Students of the arts learn respect, fortitude, and discipline – and these traits should be more prevalent in our society today. In I Corinthians 6: 19-20 it says, "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Through the St. Mark United Methodist Church Martial Arts Program, I have learned to do what Paul prescribes.

The greatest misconception that martial arts receive is that they promote violence. But they don't - - self-defense maybe, but never violence. I think that most instructors would agree that martial arts promote the self-control necessary to walk away from most potentially violent situations. The teachings and training in this program have also helped me to develop discipline, to act in a Christian manner, and to proudly represent St. Mark as I go through my daily activities at school, home, in society, and in the program. Another important concept of this program has been to teach the importance of bettering ourselves from the inside out. As a result, incidents of students using their skills to show off or bullying others are far and few between. Furthermore, the more advanced, powerful techniques are only taught to students whom Master Pembroke believes have developed a non-violent mentality.

In this program, we compete in tournaments throughout the country. These tournaments are not promoted or participated in by violent, aggressive, rude people, but instead, by a group of people looking to better themselves. But, I really believe the major difference between our program and many others is our ability and desire to become better martial artist through spiritual growth and by becoming closer to God. This unique approach to martial arts has helped me to reach this goal today.