

We Must Practice With Each Other

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." – Proverbs 27:17

We must practice with others in combat sports to truly understand technique. Therefore, we gain knowledge when we practice with others by facing resistance and fatigue. When we practice we truly learn how to defend ourselves and win a fight. The Word of God teaches us that we are in a spiritual war. (Ephesians 6:10-18) In light of that, we must prepare each other for *spiritual* battle. We are first and foremost God's family. (Hebrews 2:10, Ephesians 2:19) However, we are also a family called to soldier-up (2 Timothy 2:3-4) and *"fight the good fight."* (1 Timothy 6:12) Who are you practicing the art of *spiritual warfare* ("Jew-Jitsu") with?

The Practice of Empowering Prayer

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5:16)

The bible teaches us to confess our sins *"to each other!"* Confessing our sins to one another is an expected and vital part of our *"spiritual jew-jitsu."* Have you ever wondered why in this scripture the bible mentions "confessing sins" and "a righteous person" together? Wouldn't it make more sense if the bible talked about doing what is right, being holy, or obeying God at the same time as *"a righteous person?"* Furthermore, a *"righteous person"* having powerful prayers is the obvious and logical trope.

However, God does not think the same way that we typically do about "righteousness." Our righteousness is directly connected to our confession of sin. 1 John 1:7-10 makes this connection crystal clear! *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.* (1 John 1:7-10)

If we want to be *"purified from all unrighteousness"* we must walk in the light and confess all

our sins. When we are humble and transparent with all our sin, then the blood of Jesus makes us righteous. We are not righteous because of our acts and true righteousness is not something our good deeds can “earn” for us. (see Isaiah 64:6)

Contrite Hearts And Humble Prayers

Jesus taught those with confidence in their own righteousness that they are not justified by God!

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)

We learn that it is our humility and contrite heart that makes our prayers powerful. Therefore, confessing our sins to each other is critical! If we live in the dark (unopen) and the Word having no place in our lives, our prayers are both powerless and detestable! *“If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable.”* (Proverbs 28:9) The blood of Jesus and confessing our sins to each other makes us righteous! This righteousness from the blood of Jesus is what empowers our prayers! Furthermore, when we get in touch with our sins we are much more grateful and reverent before God!

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” (Hebrews 5:7)

Mutual Practice Brings Mutual Progress

“See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns

away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (Hebrews 3:12-13)

God expects us to practice with each other our "Christianity." Combat sports demand practice with others in order to be successful. However, Christianity is not just a "combat sport" – it is *actual spiritual combat*! Therefore, we must train one another and practice with utmost diligence our spiritual jew-jitsu!

Christianity is not about being perfect but about making tangible progress. *"Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress."* (1 Timothy 4:15) Who is your spiritual sparring partner? How has your personal practice been? Who have been practicing "daily encouragement" with? Have you been dealing with *"sin's deceitfulness"* or dealing in it?

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25) We must make certain we practice these things with one another. If you are out of practice, then today is the day to repent and return to diligence! *"The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."* (1 Timothy 1:5)

Most importantly, we must strengthen each other when we practice "Spiritual Jew-Jitsu." Additionally, our training should be rooted in love. (Ephesians 3:16-19) We practice with one another to build one another up! *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."* (1 Thessalonians 5:11) To intentionally harm a fellow practitioner in BJJ (and other combat sports) is *highly frowned upon*. It is the same in God's church as we practice "Spiritual Jew-Jitsu." We can unintentionally harm one another too – but this is where mercy, grace, and love are most needed.

"Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." (Proverbs 27:5-6) Do we have friends that multiply kisses because they are afraid to spiritually spar with us? When was the last time a friend *"wounded you"* spiritually? I would consider "getting tapped out" from a choke or a joint lock while sparring a "trustworthy" wound.

In grappling, we also call “tapping-out” a “submission.” Spiritually, the goal is to get each other to “*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*” (Ephesians 5:21) We must use the Word of God in our discipleship. We ensure we submit out of our reverence for Christ when we “wound” one another with the “*sword of the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 6:17)

NOW GO TRAIN!

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” (1 Corinthians 9:25) The combat sporting world understands the necessity of training with consistency and wholeheartedness. They train for a trophy, or a belt around their waist, or perhaps for a medal slung around their neck. None of these things “*last forever.*”

Recently, we watched the “Jake Paul vs Mike Tyson” fight on Netflix. I admit that as an older man I was hoping my childhood boxing hero “Iron Mike” would win. It was a hard fight for me to watch, as I know the younger “Mike Tyson” had a lot more energy and zest. However, it is commendable that “Iron Mike” went the distance for the whole fight. Equally commendable was that Jake Paul showed Mike respect at the end of the last round.

We must remember that what we train for when we “practice” our Christianity determines our eternity. *“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”*(1 Timothy 4:8) Additionally, we train with the Word of God as our standard. *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

With these two key things in mind, today is the day to train and now is the time! Set up that discipleship time. Make that uncomfortable call. Pick up that cross you’ve been avoiding. Go after that relationship you need to resolve. Remember the promises of God to those who persevere! (Revelation 2:26-29) Who are you going to practice Jew-Jitsu with today?

NOW GO TRAIN!