

# **Fighting A Way Through Violence**

## **Biblical guidelines to help one stay safe.**

Violence against humanity is an inexcusable reality in today's society. From the first sibling slaughter, when Cain killed his innocent brother Able, until the current pandemic of homicides, marginalization, devaluation and unjustified deaths, violence is a most formidable foe.

Urban America continues to feel the brunt of a violence-saturated culture, and its inhabitants are often victimized by those who are commissioned to protect and serve. Some are just caught in the crossfire of displaced battles on their home turf.

While innocent lives will continue to succumb to careless, cowardly acts of warfare, and frustration, revenge and retaliation continue to shape sin-driven motives, how do the innocent fight back? The complexities of violence make it more challenging to identify and funnel all violence through a singular solution, but let us examine some possible approaches.

### **Peace-make**

One approach for learning how to fight is to avoid violence and look inward at proactive and preventative assets to navigate dangerous times. Of note are the whole life developmental urban programs that support youth.

Extracurricular activities and organized athletics programs have successfully provided mentorship, accountability and team building skills for adolescents.

### **Prepare to Fight**

Another approach to ending some forms of violence comes as an oxymoron, and that is, learning to fight as a way to avoid violence. American culture has misconstrued and mystified what youth can develop through true martial arts. At its core, an authentic martial arts system is learning to live for the well-being of self and others. In his book, *Living The Martial Way*, Morgan Forrest (1992) accentuated the benefit of martial arts as a way of living when he said, "The Martial Way is a way of living. It is a holistic discipline aimed at the pursuit of excellence, not just in the training hall, but in life" (p. 11).

It doesn't take much for violence to erupt in some. A violent encounter can be triggered by words, gazes, perceptions, or innuendos that elicit in one's undisciplined mind some form of retaliation. Untrained and undisciplined people fight. Practitioners of authentic martial arts are trained not to fight.

The greatest battles fought have very little to do with combat. Battles for self-esteem, self-worth, academic achievements, and overcoming relational family conflicts are the continual byproduct of genuine martial art skills. When the battles of self are won, they defuse conflict with others.

"Today, warriorship focuses on life. Where warriors once trained to die, we now train to live" (p. 52). The focus is truly on living and learning to thrive despite elements of despair and hopelessness. An authentic warrior

controls his or her personal environment.

## **Little David Could Do More Than Play the Harp**



One young man in the Bible who demonstrated this concept was David. His example was recorded in the following way:

“Then one of the servants answered and said, ‘Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the Lord is with him’” (1 Samuel 16:18, NKJV).

David was called a “man of valor.” He was a skilled musician as well as a brave man of war. In addition, he was articulate, intelligent, physically well-defined, and attractive. The presence of God was in him.

It is significant that David’s developmental process included physical and military training, and musical mastery that called him into the presence of the king. His attention to speech and intellectual development provided him with the communication skills to engage in conversations and to comprehend matters of the mind.

David was polished in etiquette, groomed and debonair, which attracted others to him. The crowning achievement of this “man of valor” was that the presence of God was with him. The anointed future king became a fit vessel for God’s divine purpose. David learned that all lifestyle skills required his commitment to live for the good of God, others and self.

## **Having Done All to Stand, Let God Fight**

David wasn’t perfect. He had family and personal life issues. Warfare and violence surrounded his community and culture. He was trained in how to fight. His fighting spirit brought him through life’s most challenging battles, and he was honored. He never stopped fighting for the presence and wholeness that comes from God and God alone.

David’s fight is applicable for modern day fighters: “Keep fighting the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12).

David’s battle and defeat against Goliath is a prototype of how to fight today’s racial tension and hate groups. Recently, emboldened, radical White supremacists, KKK and Neo-Nazi groups espouse the hateful undertones of the promise to “Make America Great Again.” This divisive slogan, coded language

for White superiority, has exposed the Goliath-sized racial pandemic in American culture.

King Saul's army had no response for the public and defiant challenge from Goliath. Leadership cowered in the face of this national moral, political, spiritual and social protest. God's nation was under siege.

David's training and life preparation was to be revealed in this moment of crisis.

It is clear that David's whole life training, included learning how to fight in life and death situations. He was a man of war. Yet, Goliath represented a new type of warfare, one that polarized the nation, one that could not be ignored. On the surface, David's fighting skills were no match for the size and challenge of Goliath.



The biblical record emphasizes this over-match, in the daunting, humanly-impossible scenario. In the face of overwhelming odds, it appears that injustice would prevail.

In the encounter of David and Goliath, the fighting skills used were physical for this encounter, because that is what was needed at that time. However, the text explains that David's training included other fighting skills for different kinds of battles. He was skilled in speech (diplomacy), a man of valor (courage to do the right thing), music (in touch with the vibe of the day), and spiritually connected to God (morally competent). These are fundamental assets needed for all in our society.

David met the crisis with these encouraging words. "...You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of host... that all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands" 1 Sam 17:45-47 (NKJV).