



How Long To Black Belt?

By

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How Long?

A question I often hear from new students is, “how long will it take me to be a black belt?”. That question is understandable because of how the “black belt” has been portrayed in the media and played up in urban legends for decades. Black belts can do amazing things with their hands and feet. They’re almost invincible. Right?

That’s what many of us thought in the early 1960s when we were working up a good sweat and our bodies ached with the pains of strenuous practice in the dojo. We watched as Black Belts moved powerfully and quickly through their kata and randori. We wanted to be Black Belts.

A wise teacher once said that when you reach the rank of Black Belt, you are ready to learn. What he meant by that was after several years of learning the basics, a Black Belt student could build on that foundation to develop special skills in martial arts. If a student learns the basics well, they are prepared for the rigors of training at a higher level.

Interestingly, many martial arts styles have 10 colored belts (10th – 1st Kyu or Gup) and 10 degrees of Black Belt (1st – 10th Dan). Even though it would appear that a Shodan (1st Degree Black Belt) was halfway through their training in the art, that is not true.

Here's an example of how long you might spend earning the first eight degrees of Black Belt (9th – 10th degrees are often honorary ranks):

1st Degree — 3-4 years

2nd Degree — 3-5 years

3rd Degree — 4-6 years

4th Degree — 5-7 years

5th Degree — 6-8 years

6th Degree — 7-9 years

7th Degree — 8-10 years

8th Degree — 9-12 years

Using the above example, you can see that while a student might be able to earn a 1st Dan (1st Degree Black Belt) in 3-4 years, they might spend another 25-40 years mastering the art and another 25-35 years reaching the top rank of their system. If someone became a 1st Dan at the age of 15, they might be 45 before becoming a 6th

Dan and 80 before becoming a 10th Dan, and that's with continual, unbroken involvement with the same martial arts system.

Be Strong In The Lord

The same is true in learning how to be “strong in the Lord.” It takes years to learn the fundamentals, but it may take decades to develop top strength as a spiritual warrior. Here are some insights into how we train to be “strong” in the Lord.

Let’s begin this week with learning the fundamentals. We will be limited in our strength in the Lord if we do not develop these basics.

“... put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:22-24

“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:25-32

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” Ephesians 5:1-7

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.” Ephesians 5:8-13

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all

things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Ephesians 5:14-21

These basic, fundamental, foundational steps for building spiritual strength are vital for eventually reaching the high goal that God has for our lives:

*“... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ —from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”
Ephesians 4:14-16*

The idea of being “tossed to and fro and carried about” is lacking a strong stance and the ability to withstand spiritual attacks that comes with it. To be “strong in the Lord” means that we are able to “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). The “wiles” of the devil are those things that trick and trip us up and move us from a position of strength that a strong stance can give us.

What do you want to be in martial arts after 3-4 years? A true “Black Belt?” or someone who has been at a “white belt” level every year for 4 years? Many Christians are still children years after trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. As Paul wrote the Corinthians, “I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

My prayer for you and every member of Grace Martial Arts is that we will all be strong in the Lord, able to stand against the wiles of the devil, “no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”

If you would like more information about Grace Martial Arts classes in your area, contact Senior Instructor Mark McGee at gracemartialarts1@gmail.com.

Saved and Safe!

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

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