



# Respect In Martial Arts

By

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# Showing Respect

I was about 12 when I first saw someone doing martial arts. It was a Judo class. I was amazed at the ability of the smaller people in throwing the larger people over their shoulders. I was a small child and often bullied by older boys who were larger and stronger. The idea of being able to throw one of them over my shoulder was very appealing.

I joined a Judo class when I was almost 13 and soon learned about “belt” ranks. I had a **white belt** as a beginner. Some of the older boys had **green** and **brown belts**. The instructor had a **black belt**. I was aware from the first classes that those belts meant something important in the class. Black belts taught and colored belts learned, but it was more than that. I learned about respect in those early classes and that’s where we begin in learning to “be strong in the Lord.”

We did a lot of bowing in those days. Sometimes we were standing (*ritsurei*). Sometimes we were kneeling (*zareii*). We demonstrated respect throughout class. We bowed upon entering and leaving the dojo. We bowed to our teacher (*sensei*) and the highest ranking students in the class (*sempai*). We bowed to other students before and after practicing techniques (*waza*) with them. We bowed to the front of the class (*shomen*) with its display of a photo of Dr. Jigaro Kano (founder of Judo).

Bowing to others as a white belt taught me humility and patience. I remember waiting patiently for the teacher to acknowledge me so I could ask him a question and quickly kneeling when he would demonstrate with another student nearby. Unfortunately, the process of bowing also led me into idolatry as we would bow to inanimate objects. Even writing those words 60 years after beginning martial arts makes me sad. Lessons in respect must be tempered with Truth.

The Apostle Paul taught respect throughout his letter to the Christians in Ephesus. The verses immediately preceding “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” emphasized demonstrating respect to others.

- “understand what the will of the Lord *is*”
- “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”
- “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord”
- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her”
- “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right”

- “fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”
- “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ”
- “masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him”
- “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”

(Ephesians 5 & 6)

Respect in Christian martial arts begins by understanding what the will of the Lord is for our life and being filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit. That is showing proper respect for the Lord of Truth. That is why our first demonstration of “respect” in a Grace Martial Arts class is to stand at attention, bow our heads and pray to God. He deserves our respect, thanks and obedience.

Bowing to teacher, senior students and fellow students in Grace Martial Arts is a demonstration of our understanding the will of the Lord and being controlled by the Spirit – “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” When we bow toward each other during class, it is a demonstration of our respect for one another and commitment to help each other grow in understanding God’s will for our lives. Your teachers are submitting to you to do our very best at teaching martial arts from a Christian perspective. You are submitting to your instructors to do your very best at learning martial arts from a Christian perspective.

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