



With Heavy Heart Protecting The Children

By

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My heart is heavy today as I'm sure yours is as well. The senseless murder of children and adults at the elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut just breaks your heart. As someone who teaches children how to defend themselves against violence, I look at any violent situation with an eye toward what people could have done to protect themselves and how I can train people to be better prepared for a similar situation.

Being approached by a deranged killer ambushing little children, teachers, and administrators in an elementary school is a tough situation to defend. I think one reason more children weren't killed was because of brave and quick-thinking adults in the school who moved children out of harm's way. We'll hear more in the coming days about how things happened at the school, but our hearts and prayers go out now to the families and friends of the children and adults so brutally attacked yesterday morning.

We have a saying in martial arts that “you can be attacked anywhere, at anytime, by anyone.” There is no truly safe place in this world. So, what’s the use in learning self defense? To be ready, be prepared, if we’re faced with violence.

I’m a father and grandfather, so I understand if parents don’t want to send their children to school next week. We think that if we keep our children close to us, we will be able to protect them from any danger. But how long can we do that? There comes a point at which each of us needs to live our lives without fear. So, how do we do that?

To begin with we trade “being afraid” for “being aware.” Awareness is the first “skill” in personal self defense. Since investigators are still gathering evidence and information about the horrible attack at Sandy Hook Elementary, we don’t know yet if a lack of awareness played a role in what happened. However, as investigators often learn in other violent crimes there was a point at which “awareness” on the part of one or more people was lacking.

Next, we trade “fear” for “faith.” Instead of cowering in fear because of what “could” happen to us, we learn specific, life-saving self-defense skills, train in them diligently, then have “faith” in our ability to react with the proper skills if we’re confronted with a violent or potentially-violent situation. That’s the long-established, well-proven process of learning martial arts and why I love teaching it.

Some of my favorite drawings of Jesus Christ are the ones where He’s with children. It harkens back to the many times in the Gospel accounts when Jesus demonstrated His love and concern for children. Children were not thought of highly 2,000 years ago. They were often abused and left to fend for themselves. Jesus fed them, healed them, and held them in high esteem.

“Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the

kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.” Matthew 19:13-15

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:1-3

Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of Lords, and He is a friend to children. Kings and lords of the past often had little or no time for children. Not so with Jesus. He loves children and died for them to prove it and rose from the dead to make a path for them to eternal life. In fact, God calls people who believe in Jesus Christ His “children.”

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children,

then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Romans 8:15-17

There is only one system of defense that I believe is more important than self defense and that is “faith” defense. If we train children to protect themselves physically against the violence of this world but do not train them to defend themselves spiritually, we have not helped them for long. “Forever” is a very long time.

We help children memorize God’s Word in our classes because of its importance to their young lives. Our current memory verses are Ephesians 2:8-9. Here’s the full quote beginning with chapter 2, verse 1. It opens up the spiritual world for us to see and understand. It shows us how defenseless we are without the richness of God’s mercy. May these verses be a great comfort to you and your children during these trying days. Our future in Christ is bright indeed!

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

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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