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## TRAINING TO WIN

By Richard Curren

I'm in pain. I'm exhausted. I'm focused. My pulse is quick; my body aches. Yet I press on. On through the blood and sweat. On through the bruises and sprains. On toward the goal ahead of me. I am in so deep I don't even feel the pain. The stinging in my feet leads to abrasions across the arches. Soon the skin opens and the blood mixes with the sweat. But I don't feel it. My mind is no longer in the gym, but at another place. The bag is not a bag anymore, but a challenger who wants MY title, MY win. Still, I keep kicking. Round kicks, back kicks, crescent kick, punch. The heat that oppressed me all day now doesn't bother me as I drive my feet into that bag, all the while waiting for the day that all of this will pay off. The day I will walk off the mat victorious. The years of discipline, commitment, and struggle are the very currency that buys that win. And I stand at the top. But for now, I train.

*"Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."*

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (NIV)

It is no coincidence that the Apostle Paul often compared the Christian walk to athletic endeavor. The two are very similar. Neither allows for an easy life, and neither permits a lucky winner. Sure, you may get lucky here and there, but you won't last long without commitment and time honed skills. You can't win a tournament from your couch and you won't live the life Christ died for you to have if you don't train to "fight the good fight" (1 Tim 6:12 & 2 Tim 4:7). As in competitive sports, defeat comes quickly to the spiritually unprepared. Are you prepared?

In the Christian walk, your training comes in two ways. First, through the learning of God's Word; the very hiding of it in our heart. Second, through the application of our faith through our trials and testing. Testing comes in the arena of combat. Here we face the Enemy head on. Face to face. And you can bet he is ready for you. He knows the Word. More importantly, he knows you. You see, he has been studying you since the day you were born. He knows your weaknesses, and he won't play fair. He will go right after that sin you keep secret. You know what I mean guys, the one you won't even tell the other guys about. The one you won't face on your own. Your enemy knows it and he will exploit it.

But God also knows that sin. That is why you are in this ring; to beat that sin, to face that Enemy. And guess what, if you lose, it's back to training for the eventual rematch. Because God won't carry you through to the next level in your life till you beat this level's evil. You won't just pass through it, you'll bleed through it. And like any great trainer, God will push you and challenge you until you CAN beat it. He loves you that much!

How do you beat this enemy? He seems so powerful, so cunning, always there, always attacking. First, you train. And train, and then train some more. How? By learning God's Word. This is your weapon. You can't fight if you don't understand your weapons or the rules of the match.

**SIMPLY PUT: IF YOU AREN'T IN THE WORD, YOU AREN'T IN THE FIGHT!**

*"Behold! I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and [physical and mental strength and ability] over all the power that the enemy [possesses]; and nothing shall in any way harm you."*

Luke 10:19 (Amplified Bible)

Jesus studied the Word. It was the very weapon he used against Satan in the wilderness and against the Pharisees as he confronted their hypocrisy and phoniness. The Bible tells us,

*"After three days they found Him [came upon Him] in the [court of the] temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And Jesus increased in wisdom (in broad and full understanding) and in stature and years, and in favor with God and man."*

Luke 2: 46 & 52 (AMP)

Now, if Jesus was in the Word daily, shouldn't you be too? How will you face Satan in your wilderness if you cannot quote scripture back to him when he confronts you with his favorite weapons of fear, doubt, and pride?

*"For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world."*

1 John 2:16

Open the Bible, and read. Start a daily habit of reading from God's Word. Learn the rules of the fight, and win. When I was at Fort Bragg, a Colonel in charge of the training battalion I was assigned to said "Remember men, more sweat in training equals less blood in battle!" He is right. I would rather prepare for the fight than roll into combat unprepared and untrained for the battle ahead. My enemy was training for me. And that was all the motivation I needed.

Our second training comes from the Lord in the form of the trials and testing he allows in our lives. Now let me be perfectly clear, you do not have to like these trials. Personally, I dread them. Yet, I know this; God will **NEVER** allow more than I can handle to confront me. Mother Theresa once quipped, "I know that God will never give me more than I can handle, I just wish He didn't have so much faith in me!" Truly, that is a very genuine feeling for us all. How can we possibly endure the trials and tests that seem to buffet us in our walk? It is in these trials that we learn who we are and, more importantly, who God thinks we are. Remember this, God does not test us. That is an inaccurate statement at best.

**WE SERVE AN OMNIPOTENT GOD, SO WHY WOULD HE TEST IF HE ALREADY KNOWS THE ANSWER?**

I submit to you that God allows us to endure trials and testing to grow and develop us. This is more of a diagnostic tool of our faith, our strength, and our resolve. The wisdom gained is the insight, should we pay

attention to the outcome, of the condition of our own souls and our Lord's sincere desire to develop us into the very image of Him.

I say this to help you to understand that trials are His way of allowing us to draw closer to Him and learn about our own character. He does not cause our suffering, but as the scriptures promise, he uses them for His good purpose. This actually offers me some level of solace in knowing that I am not going through my troubles for nothing. Further, God restrains the trial only to the level he knows we can endure. In the book of Job, we see in the in chapter 1, verse 12, and again in chapter 2, verse 6, that our enemy, Satan, has no dominion over us beyond that granted by God. In the New Testament, Peter also experiences God's mercy as he is informed by Jesus that Satan has "*asked excessively that [all of] you be given up to him [out of the power and keeping of God], that he might sift [all of] you like grain.*" (Luke 22:31)

The reason Satan targeted Peter is clearly demonstrated in the earlier statements of Peter boasting of his loyalty and commitment to Christ. I believe God allowed this trial because, unlike Satan who only wanted to humiliate and destroy Peter, God knew that destroying that last remnant of pride would ultimately launch Peter to his next level of calling. Remember that Peter, who denied Jesus three times before the morning of the crucifixion, ultimately was martyred for his faith. His ministry after being "sifted" included planting churches, writing portions of the New Testament, and helping to forge the framework of the Christian faith. I believe his high calling was the result of his hard suffering. God's plan for Peter required Peter to be developed. To develop Peter, God had to show him his faults and weaknesses, and, allow enough pain to have Peter never want to endure that separation from Him again.

What we must remember in our daily walk is this: we will face trials. They may or may not be fair. They aren't always the result of sin in our lives. Often, like Job, testing is the result of walking upright. It is the spiritual part of the Christian faith, the hard part. It is easy to conform to standards of those around you. It is easy to blend in and be liked. But that is not where spiritual champions come from. Champions train hard and face the trials of their chosen endeavor. It is how they grow, and how they check the effectiveness of their training. As Christians we train by immersing ourselves in our endeavor, following Christ, by learning the Word. We learn how He wants us to play the game; His rules. By following Him we are sure of one thing; in the end, we will win!



Richard Curren is the co-founder and President of Boundless Limits International and Live Guilt Free. Rick's passion is to speak and motivate others to live to their maximum potential physically, mentally, and spiritually. Through their events and publications, Rick and his wife Tanya are able to inspire others and show that each one has boundless potential to change our world. He is a former United States Army Officer. Rick serves on the Board of Directors for the So Help Me God Project as an Advisor and is a founding Board Member. With a passion for health and fitness, he is a Black Belt in Korean Olympic Tae Kwon Do, and serves as an Associate Instructor for Palmetto Martial Arts School.