BE PATIENT

Last week, I encouraged you to pray and to pray especially for one another. When you pray for someone, it's hard to remain bitter toward them. When you pray, you honor God, because it is an expression of faith, as you seek from God what you are powerless to do. Oftentimes, during meditation before martial arts practice, I pray. By it I am seeking God's will and power to be done through me.

This week, I would like to begin considering our six principles, beginning with the principle "BePatient". As GMH has repeatedly said, these principles have their source in the Bible. So, that is where we will look:

* Whoever is **patient**has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly (Proverbs 14:29).
* A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is **patient**calms a quarrel (Proverbs 15:8).
* Better a **patient**person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city (Proverbs 16:32).
* A person’s wisdom yields **patience**; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense (Proverbs 19:11).
* The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and **patience**is better than pride (Ecclesiastes 7:8).
* Be joyful in hope, **patient**in affliction, faithful in prayer (Romans 12:2).
* Love is **patient**, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud (1 Corinthians 13:4).
* Be completely humble and gentle; be **patient**, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).

Patience is the opposite of quick temper and contrary to pride. The patient are humble, slow to anger, long-suffering, and self-controlled. The impatient are foolish and rash, quick to pick a fight, and easily offended. Patience is characterized by gentleness, loving-kindness, forbearance, and wisdom. A patient person is greater than a warrior, for while the warrior may conquer cities, the patient person has conquered himself.

Consider the famous duel between Miyamoto Musashi and Sasaki Kojiro "Ganryu" that took place on April 13, 1612 on Funashima island in Japan:

Kojiro was a retainer to the Hosokawa clan, while Musashi was a "ronin", a masterless samurai. The day of the duel, Nagaoka Sado, lord Hosokawa Tadaoki himself and many men accompanied Kojiro to Funashima, while Musashi traveled alone in a boat except for the boatman.

Kojiro was famous for his legendary speed with the sword. His favorite sword was a*nodachi*, a long sword he called *Monohoshi Zao*(“Drying Pole”). It is said that he was able to draw his katana out of the scabbard, execute his most famed technique, “*tsubame gaeshi*”, and return the sword to the scabbard in the blink of an eye.

Musashi, was a master of strategy and, knowing of Kojiro’s pride in his sword, carved a bokken (wooden sword) from the boat’s spare oar during the trip to the island. In order to further unnerve his opponent Musashi kept Kojiro waiting for three hours before he arrived at the island.

The duel didn’t last too long. Kojiro, impatient from waiting so long, unsheathed his sword and tossed his scabbard aside. Musashi faced him with his carved bokken and said “You won’t need that anymore, you have already lost”.

After a long time simply facing each other in absolute stillness, Musashi moved to position himself so that the sun was at his back and in Kojiro’s eyes. This resulted in a brief burst of swordplay in which Kojiro cut Musashi’s headband off and Musashi, with his makeshift bokken, hit Kojiro and cracked his skull.

In this famous battle I see an illustration of the value of patience and the folly of impatience. Mas Oyama, a Korean martial arts legend, gained his inspiration from Miyamoto Musashi. Of all the lessons he gained from him, perhaps his greatest lesson was self-control. At the heart of patience is self-control. Both patience and self-control are listed as fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

We would all do well to grow in patience. I encourage all of you to meditate on the Scriptures I provided above. Pray for patience. You will not need to wait long before your patience is tested.

BE POLITE

This principle is so important and yet so misunderstood. Although it appears second in my review of the six principles, we often say it first in our recitation. It is closely tied to patience. If patience has most to do with our attitude and temperament, politeness has most to do with our speech and communication.

David prayed to the LORD, "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3). Why would this greatest of kings pray in this way? It is because the tongue is such a powerful and potentially dangerous member of our bodies. James writes,

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell (James 3:6).

Today, the tongue finds expression not only in what is said but also in what is written (e.g. emails, texts, social media). Therefore, the principle of politeness must cover both spoken and written communication.

Now, politeness is not the same thing as political correctness; nor is it apathy; nor silence in the face of error or wrongdoing. Polite communication has more to do with how something is said than what is said. The word "polite" is not found in Scripture, but the principle of courtesy and well-mannered speech, as defined by the dictionary, is captured in many passages of Scripture:

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:6).

Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin (Proverbs 13:3).

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19).  
  
A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).  
  
Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29).  
  
But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned (Matthew 12:36-37).

Being polite means refusing to use coarse and obscene language. Polite communication avoids shouting matches, email rants, and character assaults via social media. Politeness involves listening much more and speaking much less. Being polite means seriously considering the feelings and well-being of the other person. Being polite may often mean silence and choosing words with care, so that what is communicated both honors the Lord and edifies the other person.

People sometimes misunderstand politeness for weakness because the polite show a preference for gentleness over force. But as I showed how patience is stronger than impatience, politeness is wiser than coarseness.

I remember a scene from the movie "Enter the Dragon", where Bruce Lee was harassed by one of the competitors en route to Han's (no relation) island tournament. This competitor was the epitome of impoliteness. He was willing to break tournament rules, which strictly forbade competitors from fighting outside the tournament. He was forward and pushy and unwilling to respect Lee's refusal to fight. Finally, he demanded that Lee fight with him and demonstrate what he meant by "fighting without fighting".

Bruce Lee acquiesced and suggested they fight on a near-by island. As the competitor got into a row boat to go to the island, Lee pretended to get in with him but then released the boat to drift behind the ship. As the competitor in the little row boat struggled to keep from sinking, Lee commandeered the boat by an attached rope, then gave the rope to some crewmen, whom this competitor had been harassing earlier. Bruce Lee won this fight and demonstrated his way of fighting without fighting. (See video clip here: [link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8H-FiCIMh20))

To be impolite is to be irrational and unwise. Impoliteness shows a lack of self-control. Like impatience, impoliteness arises out of pride. Impoliteness tends to cloud real issues and incite defensive reactions. Impoliteness is incongruent with gracious speech. And like impatience, impoliteness can cloud wise judgment.

Our martial artists must always be polite, by which I mean considerate of others, gracious in communication, and careful to edify others and honor God with their words. Saying "yes sir" and "yes ma'am" is but the tip of the iceberg in regard to politeness. Being polite touches all aspect of our communication, and as words have the power to destroy, they also have the power to do great good. Being polite means that we wisely wield this weapon of words.

BE ALERT

We've looked at two of the six principles: "Be Patient" and "Be Polite". I've just added a few new emails to this WYWRA leaders' list. If you'd like me to send you my three previous emails in this series, please reply to this email with your request.

This week, we consider the principle: "Be Alert". In Martial Arts parlance this principle seems most self-evident. In a fight, if you are not alert, you can receive a sudden and effective hit. If you are not alert, you can miss an opportunity to deliver such a hit to your opponent. But this principle goes beyond blocking and hitting in combat.

Consider the following Scriptures:

**Be alert** and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

**Watch**and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41).

*Other passages for further study: Psalm 39:1; 130:6; Deuteronomy 4:9,15; Proverbs 8:34; Micah 7:7; Matthew 7:7,15; 24:4,42; 25:13; Luke 12:15; 17:3; 21:8,36; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:17; Galatians 5:15; 6:1; Philippians 3:2; Colossians 4:2; 1 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:2; 2 John 1:8*

Being clear-headed is a prerequisite to being alert. If your mind is filled with anxiety, anger, fatigue, drunkenness, strong emotion, or addiction, you cannot be as alert as you ought to be. Just as a drunk or sleepy watchman cannot be effective, one cannot be alert without sobriety. Proper diet and proper rest are essential for the body to be alert. Prayer and meditation on God's Word is essential for the spirit, mind and heart to be alert.

Being alert means understanding the difference between what is important and what is insignificant. When a speeding train is about to run you over, you don't worry about the bothersome fly that has just landed on your nose. Thus, being alert means being focused. An alert listener can filter out excess noise to hear what is important. An alert businessman can see through the marketing facade to grasp the true value of a business opportunity. An alert martial artist will not try to block everything the opponent throws but just enough to gain the advantage.

Notice that being alert is not without preparations. Being alert does not come automatically. In fact, just the opposite is true. We are prone to follow any and every distraction. Our media-rich culture precludes concentration, focus, and depth of understanding. Oftentimes, to learn to bealert, we have to turn off our media, get away from distractions, and even close our eyes.

To train this principle, I encourage you to simplify. What is most important. What is next important. And so on. Take time to find a quiet place, free from distractions, to meditate on these things. Remove any insignificant distraction. Focus. Don't try to do too many things at once. Give ample time to train your spirit and mind to focus on what's important. It may take days, months, years. Oftentimes, alertness in whatever discipline, including the martial arts, does not come without an ample investment of time and effort.

When I think about this principle, I am reminded of a classic kung fu movie from 1979 called "The 36th Chamber of Shaolin." In one of the final chambers, the Shaolin student learns to train his eyes to focus. He finds himself in a pitch black room, two smoldering wicks appear just inches from his face. He has to follow a giant metronome with only his eyes. If he moves his face, he gets burned. I thought this clip might provide a nice visual to encourage you to train to be alert: [link to video clip](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vla8ilGijzg).

BE BRAVE

We've considered now three principles: Be patient, Be polite, Be alert. Each of these are uniquely challenging because they go against the grain of our human nature. Like a lump of clay before a potter, like a slab of stone before a sculptor, our natural state has no beauty or worth. Born with a sinful nature, we are naturally impatient and reactive, naturally proud and crude, and naturally distracted and unfocused. Similarly, at the beginning of our martial arts training, we are uncoordinated, unfocused, and unskilled in our techniques. But with disciplined concentration, practice, and time, our coordination, focus and skill improve. The slab becomes a masterpiece. The clay becomes a useful vessel. The integrity of our character becomes more sound, as we grow more patient, polite and alert.

Yet, fear, insecurity, and anxiety can derail progress. This brings us to our next principle: **Be Brave**. This principle is companion to another popular saying we have, namely, "Never give up!". Consider the following Scriptures:

* Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them (i.e. the enemies of Israel), for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6).
* Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power (Ephesians 6:10).

Bravery is not the absence of fear. It is the willingness to press on in spite of fear. Likewise, the opposite of bravery is not fear but surrender. When a person surrenders, or "gives up", that is the end of their progress, whether progress in the principles or progress in training. Insecurity is the enemy of bravery, because the insecure person will not try what is uncomfortable, difficult or challenging, even when these very things are most needful to grow.

Now, bravery must be grounded in truth and wisdom. Just as no one would consider jumping in front of an oncoming truck as an act of bravery, so true bravery understands what battles to fight and what principles to uphold. Bravery just for bravery's sake is folly. Although bravery does not require a certain outcome, it always achieves a worthy purpose, whether that purpose is to glorify God, to bless others or to improve oneself.

So how does one grow in bravery? It is one thing to simply say, "Be brave" or "Never give up", but the principle is more than just a mantra. Being brave has everything to do with knowing faith. When a trapeze artist knows her craft, she can be brave as she flings herself hundreds of feet above the ground. When a martial artist has practiced his skill, he can be brave in a sparring match. When Christians know their Lord, they can be brave when facing torture or death for their faith.

Our dear brother Ray was brave as he faced his test for master this past weekend. But on what was his bravery based? He practiced. He did not come to the test in ignorance. He also prayed and received prayers from his friends. So, before, behind, above, and below Him were the presence and power of Almighty God. When God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31). As I love to declare in Christ: "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

I saw bravery beautifully illustrated in a movie, "Prince Caspian", which was based on the story by C.S. Lewis in the *Chronicles of Narnia:*

The army of King Miraz is coming against the small Narnian force. They are separated by a bridge. Young, little Lucy steps forward on one side of the bridge and takes out her small dagger to face the enemy. The scene seems laughable as this little girl seems foolishly to step forward to confront a formidable army. But then, Aslan, the great Lion, the representation of the Son of God, slowly comes and stands next to her. Suddenly, the tables are turned. Lucy's bravery shines forth while the folly of the army of King Miraz becomes increasingly clear.

Like David's bravery against Goliath, when we have God as our strong foundation and source of strength, we can be truly brave in any and every circumstance. So, dear friends, be brave to embrace great challenges and pursue lofty goals, all the while training hard and trusting the One in whom and for whom we hope.

DO YOUR BEST

The principle most often repeated and embraced by just about every discipline, whether Christian or otherwise, is this one: Do your best. Most people understand this to mean "try my hardest". On the most basic level this would be fine as simply a measure of general effort. Yet, for the Olympic runner, who wants to add 1/10th of a second to his time, doing his best means more than simply trying harder. It may involve unlearning years of practice doing something one way in order to find a better way. For the Olympian, then, doing his best is not only trying *harder* but also training *smarter*.

*Doing* our best means *being* our best. Our best involves focused concentration (mind), physical strain (body) and persevering faith (spirit). In the Bible, this is what the Lord required of His servants:

Love the Lord your God **with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind** (Luke 10:27).

**Do your best** to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).  
  
Whatever you do, work **heartily**, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:23-24).

Doing one's best for God involved ones's whole being. When our whole spirit, mind and body is directed toward a singular purpose, we are doing our best.

Moreover, just as being brave for bravery sake is foolish, so indiscriminately doing one's best in everything can be dangerous and vain. One man excels in theft, another in promiscuity, and still another at killing other men. What worth is the best idler in the world? Wrongful effort can multiply evil, entrench bad habits and hamper true progress.  So right motivation, proper instruction and meaningful goals are necessary. Consequently, the power to truly do our best(Acts 17:28; Philippians 4:13) and to attain the best possible outcome comes from the Lord (Psalm 1:2-3; Romans 8:28).

So, how can we encourage and practice this principle?

1. We cannot and should not do our best at everything; therefore, we must be selective. It is wise to choose those things that most glorify God. Then our efforts will be truly meaningful, and God's providence will ensure ultimate success.
2. Applying this principle involves endurance, concentration, and determination. We say, "Push yourself!"
3. Your mind, body and spirit must work in harmony to achieve your best outcome. So,**learn** well, **practice** hard, **adapt** wisely, **excel** humbly, **repeat** the process.

When you do your best, your best will improve, so that you become better. When you do a speed punch, and you try to punch faster than your fastest punch, in time your fastest punch becomes even faster. Doing your best means constantly improving. It often means doing more, and it always means doing better. If you are in the habit of doing 50 push-ups, attempt 55, if 55 then 60. Change your position to make it harder: army dips, diamond push-ups, handstand push-ups, etc.

Doing your best is mostly an attitude. It requires you to possess a teachable spirit, a determined will, and a meaningful cause. When I think about this principle, the song "Burning Heart" from the movie "Rocky IV" comes to mind:

I love the footage of Rocky Balboa training for his match against the Russian champ, Ivan Drago, who had killed Apollo Creed, his coach and best friend, in the ring. The primitive setting, the sweat, the strain, the music - it makes you want to train and to train your hardest. I love the lyrics to the accompanying track:

In the warriors code  
There's no surrender  
Though his body says stop  
His spirit cries - never!  
Deep in our soul  
A quiet ember  
Know it's you against you  
It's the paradox  
That drives us on...

([link to video clip/song](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL3lJfpenAc))

RESPECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

"Respect yourself and others" caps our list of six principles. This principle reminds us to look both inward and outward when applying the principles. The Bible teaches,

Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:17).

Notice that while Scripture teaches respect for everyone, the expression of that respect will be different for different groups of people. The apostle Peter identifies three groups: the family of believers, God, the emperor. Toward fellow believers, we respect one another by showing love, even the love of Christ toward one another (John 13:34-35). Toward God, we respect Him through reverent obedience (Philippians 2:12; Ecclesiastes 12:13). Toward authorities, werespect leaders by honoring them for the position and responsibilities they hold (Romans 13:1).

Peter does not give an exhaustive list. Other passages speak of the respect husbands and wives should have toward one another (Ephesians 5:21-33) or the kind of respect children and parents should have for each other (Ephesians 6:1-4). Other passages address the respectowed to elders in the church (1 Timothy 5:17). Throughout Scripture, even when the word "respect" is not specifically used, the principle is found relating to every person, relationship, and even evil angels (cf. Jude 8-10).

Respect is a universal principle. Biblical respect is not "earned," but commanded by God. Therefore, we ought not to withhold respect from anyone because we don't think they "deserve it" or because they have not, in our minds, "earned it". We ought always respect everyone, Presidents we don't like, leaders that rub us the wrong way, parents that misunderstand us, because we honor God's command.

So we ought to always refrain from "name-calling", cursing, or other types of character assassinations, because these do not reflect the kind of respect we are commanded to show everyone. We can dislike in our hearts, disagree in our minds, refute with our tongues, but we ought always to show respect. In showing this kind of respect to others, especially when it seems to some as undeserved, we demonstrate our self-respect as servants of the Most High God.

Finally, respecting ourselves and others means that we pursue all things for the ultimate good of all. To put it another way, the principle to respect ourselves and others simply restates the "Golden Rule":

So in everything,**do to others what you would have them do to you**, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12).

Let us not wait to receive respect to give respect. With our self-respect from God intact, let us initiate and demonstrate respect for all. When we do this, we demonstrate maturity in all the principles. One of my favorite Martial Arts movies is "Best of the Best".

My favorite scene is the final fight between Tommy Lee and Dae Han Park at the World Championship. Dae Han had killed Tommy's younger brother in a previous tournament many years back. At the present tournament, Dae Han taunts Tommy and takes illegal shots to gain advantage.

Near the end of the fight, Dae Han has a slight advantage, but Tommy has the upper hand for a knockout win. But to do so could kill Dae Han. Tommy wrestles within his soul as Dae Han can barely hold himself up. In the end, Tommy refuses to knock him out, loses the fight, and loses the tournament for the U.S. Team. However, after the awards were given to the victors, Dae Han removes his medal, stumbles over to Tommy, and places it on his head, asking for forgiveness for killing his brother and giving himself as a new brother in his place. Wow! ([link to clip](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdblWwVpFbE))

Tommy Lee respected Dae Han. Dae Han respected Tommy Lee. Enemies became friends. This is how powerful this principle can be.