



EXPLORING THE MEANING BEHIND THE WORDS

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Gospel Martial Arts Union

# The True Meaning of Budo



## GOSPEL MARTIAL ARTS UNION

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### What is the True Meaning of Budo?

<sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness in this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup> Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup> And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup> Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; <sup>19</sup> And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:10-20

Written by:  
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## What is the True Meaning of Budo?

*Known as the “Way of the Spiritual Warrior,” what is the way of the spiritual warrior in today’s world? What are the biblical principles? How do we apply it to everyday life?*

“I will gladly lay down my life for another.” In my best understanding of the word, this is the true meaning of Budo. However, that short definition requires some explanation for in that short phrase is a world of meaning. It must be understood in many contexts. The Gospel Martial Arts Union (GMAU) student creed states, “I shall gain understanding by tasting the true meaning of Budo, which is the way of the Spiritual Warrior.” Reflecting further on our bow-in ceremony, in our pledge we affirm that Jesus Christ is the Supreme Master of Life, King of Kings, Lord or Lords, and Savior of the World. This begs the question: What would Jesus Christ want to see in us as Spiritual Warriors?

What does Budo mean in everyday life? We may not ever find ourselves in a situation where we need to substitute our lives, as spiritual warriors, in the place of a victim to protect them from an assailant. I believe that there is a mundane, ordinary, daily life aspect to this term. In this paper, I will explore this perspective because I believe that this is our greatest opportunity to demonstrate the true character of a Spiritual Warrior.

### Laying Down One Life for Another

When I think of the martial arts, I often think of Budo as inserting myself in the position of one who cannot protect her or himself. I think of an assailant that must be responded to in a way that will let the victim escape harm and take that threat

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to myself. But, when I was pondering this concept, my thoughts moved to the person who provides us the supreme example of the Budo warrior: Jesus Christ.

It is Jesus himself who most clearly demonstrates Budo but not just against an outside assailant. Jesus came to earth to save us from our personal sin, not just against an outside threat. While all of mankind was ravaged by the consequences of sin, Jesus had compassion on us. He had compassion on those who could not help themselves, and he responded by sacrificing his life – stepping into our place of judgment. What does this mean for the Budo warrior? I believe that it means that we are not only to look for situations where there is an outside assailant, but also to look for situations where people are their own worst enemy. We can see when people are hurting and when they need to be encouraged or just listened to. Many of us in ministry are very busy. We have volunteered to be a part of any number of ministries in order to serve our Lord, but sometimes, Budo may require us to stop doing things for Jesus and sacrificing that effort in order to see and to respond to people who may be assaulted by an assailant that isn't quite so obvious.

The young, single mother who is beaten down by the responsibilities of the world may need a man to insert himself into the life of her young son in order to provide a father figure. God uses men and women in the effort to raise children up in the way they should go. Neither is optional.

The man who is struggling with alcoholism and is watching his whole life self-destruct around him may need someone come along side him – someone who will sacrifice their interests in order to fight through all the difficulty of breaking the bonds of addiction. A true brother – or in this case a Budo warrior – will be there as this man fights to get life back on track.

I do not mean to neglect the more obvious situations however. We may see situations where an assailant is physically oppressing another person. It is our responsibility to respond. First, we pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us and to guide us. Then, we use our skill as warriors to diffuse the situation if possible by inserting ourselves. If we can't diffuse the situation, we must gladly sacrifice ourselves so that the victim may live. This isn't to say that we seek death – quite the opposite. If we can, we seek not only to save the victim but also the assailant. However, we must always be aware that anything can happen in such situations, and we must be prepared to make the necessary sacrifice if it is required.

The Budo warrior should be concerned about the mental and physical battlefields in this life. However, the name itself causes me to think about the spiritual realm. Matthew 16:18 says that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. This

implies that the church should be assaulting the domain of hell. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says that we should pray continually. Ephesians 6: 10-20 describes the armor that the Budo warrior must don in order to fight the evil one and to defend against his devices. This is our duty, our goal – our calling. The sacrifice may cost us everything we have. Jesus made this clear when he called for us to lay down our lives for Him in Mark 8:35. He said that if we seek to save our lives, we will lose them. But, if we lay down our lives, we will save our souls for eternity.

The Budo warrior must be prepared to do battle, to lay down her or his life on many different battlefields: physical, mental, and spiritual. We must be on the lookout for the assault as it may come from fronts that we do not expect or are easy to overlook.

## Character of the Budo Warrior

Budo is defined as the way of the Spiritual Warrior. How do we measure the maturity of a spiritual warrior? In the martial arts, one measurement is based on skill in martial techniques and philosophy. In order to achieve a yellow belt, I completed certain requirements and demonstrated some level of capability in them. In the GMAU, I expect that I will continually learn. I will never achieve knowledge. Rather, it is a journey of learning and not a destination. But, I expect that I will become more capable as time passes, and I have dedicated myself to learning. There is something to be said for measuring growth to evaluate how well we're doing. Are we growing or decaying? So, how does one measure the spiritual growth of the Budo warrior?

In Galatians 5:22-23, we learn that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-discipline. On the surface, some of these characteristics seem at odds with being a martial artist, but I don't believe that to be the case in reality. In fact, I believe we should examine the fruit that we exhibit to measure the growth of our individual character.

**Love** – Love is foundational. Only love allows us to lay down our lives for another. We must love the victim in order to take their place. We must love the assailant in order to use pain giving techniques rather than seeking the quickest way to cause death or damage. Love is what saved us from our own situation. In John 3:16, we learn that God loved us so much that he was willing to let his son, Jesus, suffer and die for us so that we might be reunited with Him forever.

**Joy** – Joy and gratitude are inseparable to me. We have been given eternal life with God when we deserved eternal death and darkness. When we examine this, we cannot help but be filled with joy. It is this inner joy that gives us perspective as

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Budo warriors. We can see how much we have been given and how much God wants to give to those who are lost.

**Peace** – Already, I have learned of the value of a mind at peace as a martial artist. A peaceful mind allows us to take advantage of opportunity. As spiritual warriors, turbulent thoughts keep us from being effective because hearing the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit becomes difficult. As spiritual warriors, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit and led in every action by Him.

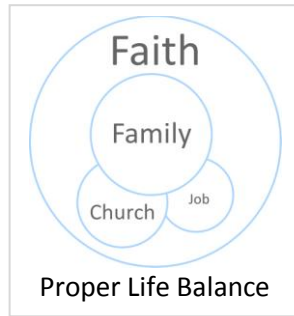
**Patience** – Skill in all things comes with training, experience, and time. Patience comes with perspective and seeing the big picture. Impatience leads to turbulent thought and brings frustration which steals joy. Impatience is one of the most visible indicators of immaturity in a spiritual warrior.

**Kindness** – Budo warriors exhibit kindness to victims, but they also extend great kindness to assailants. Instead of trying to damage the assailant, the Budo warrior causes great pain at the leading of the Holy Spirit. This opportunity is being given to the assailant to turn away from the evil that they've been doing. Even more, this is a chance to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to someone who may have never heard the news. What greater kindness is there than to give someone an opportunity to accept the gift of eternal life?

**Goodness** – Budo warriors should lead a life that is marked by goodness. They should be of good character – making good choices over evil ones even when no one would know the difference. Their words should be edifying and positive. They should be willing to say and do what is needed even when it is the more difficult path.

**Gentleness** – Gentleness, in particular, may seem at odds with what martial arts is all about. On the surface, martial arts seem to be the study of combat and violent acts – it is. However, the Budo warrior has choices to make that can demonstrate gentleness of spirit. Correction and discipline can be meted out with gentleness or roughness. A gentle spirit will more likely turn away wrath with gentle words without having to resort to more martial acts.

**Self-Discipline** – The essence of martial training is self discipline. The purpose of kata is to teach balance, fluidity, speed, power, and discipline to create the maximum effect. Extending this concept to the whole warrior, self discipline covers all aspects of the individual leading to balance, fluidity, speed, power, and discipline in spiritual and mental aspects as well leading to a truly effective Budo warrior.



**Balance** – Budo warriors must maintain a proper life balance. Everything in life must fit within the sphere of faith in Jesus Christ. Within that sphere, proper priorities include family, church, and job – in that order. A life without proper balance will result in a mind, body, and soul spinning out of control and becoming at odds with the Holy Spirit who desires to nurture us and guide us in the way that we should live our lives.

Budo warriors must grow in all aspects of character, and we can measure that growth by examining the fruit that their lives bear. It is often said that people are growing in some of the fruit and still struggling in others. I do not believe that this is what was taught in scripture. The fruit is a whole. Warriors that are struggling with Self-Discipline are struggling in Love, Joy, and Peace as well. I believe that God made the fruit this way so that we can understand the maturity of each other.

I understand that this can be a sensitive area. The Fruit of the Spirit is not intended to show how “saved” a person is. It is a measure of maturity and how much the person is allowing the Holy Spirit to work in their lives. No human on the planet today can be called mature. No one has arrived and everyone must struggle on the path to maturity. This is not offered as an excuse to allow people to stay where they are, nor is it intended as condemnation. Examination is a tool that those in leadership can use to determine when others are ready to take on more responsibility.

## The “Everyday” Budo Warrior

Many of us will rarely come across the situation where a victim is being assaulted by an assailant. In fact, some of us who are seeking to become Budo warriors may never find themselves in that situation. However, I do not believe that we have received this calling to no end. I think that is obvious by some of the things I’ve previously written about. I believe that there is such a thing as an “everyday” Budo warrior.

One day, Jesus was teaching in the temple courts when the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. This was clearly a sin that was punishable by death in those days. Now, the Pharisees probably couldn’t care less about the woman. They were using her to trap Jesus. Jesus saw through all of this. He didn’t insert himself as a martial artist and defend the woman against all comers. He simply wrote something in the sand. He asked that the sinless one among them to cast the first stone. They didn’t stick around for very long. After

they left, Jesus did not condemn the woman. He told her to leave her life of sin. (John 8:1-11)

As a caution, we must remember that people sin every single day. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn everyone. He came to set them free. I have often had people come to me and accuse another of doing wrong or terrible things like divorce or homosexuality. Of course, those things are terrible sins. We should all hate sin. But, we should also hate the sins of gossip and character assassination. We must, as Budo warriors, be quick to put all sin in the proper perspective for those who choose not to see their own sin as they point it out in others. We all have sinned and fall short of the standard to which we are held except by the grace of God.

On another day, Jesus was teaching and there were some parents that wanted Jesus to touch their children – to bless them. The disciples were all about the business of ministry and discouraged the parents. But, Jesus was full of grace and asked that the children be brought to him. (Matthew 19:13, 14)

Forgive me a short tangent as my two year old daughter just came up and started picking on me as I write this. I had to stop and tickle her until she couldn't breathe – I love her laugh. Children are messy, inconvenient, costly, and sometimes painful little creatures. I should know. I have four of them. But, they are also the greatest blessings I could ever hope for short of my amazing wife and reconciliation with Almighty God. I write about this because Budo warriors must be mindful of the role we play in the lives of children. They receive blessing from us. We are the constant reflection of what Christ is asking of each of us. We must be careful of what we do in front of them for they see everything we do. We must be quick to give blessing – even when we are busy. We must provide direction and discipline, but, sometimes a look of approval for something the child has done well has far more meaning and affect.

On another occasion, Jesus taught a parable that too few follow today. He said that if someone offends you, you should go to her or to him and confront that person about it. If you can't resolve the issue that way, take the right people (2 or 3) with you to try to work it out. If that doesn't work, take the matter to the church family to get it worked out. (Matthew 18:15-17)

I feel very strongly about this third example. I have seen lives of many I'm close to shredded by an unwillingness to follow this simple scripture. Budo warriors must be firmly bound to handling conflict exactly the way Jesus outlined for us in this scripture. He gave this tool to us to keep our relationships with each other from being destroyed. We require these relationships to keep ourselves strong and to



present a united front against the gates of hell. Too many times, we allow ourselves to go to a third party about something someone did to us. This kicks off a destructive cycle of rumor and hearsay that decays into all manner of evil. Returning the conflict resolution to the proper path should be one of the “ways of the spiritual warrior.” Concerning this, there should be no compromise.

I believe that Budo is an everyday thing. Sometimes, we let our guard down just because of the grind of daily life. We all struggle to overcome the sinful nature that is an intrinsic part of us all. Perhaps, though, if we become mature spiritual warriors, we will keep to the narrow path and be a light for others in our everyday lives more often than not.

## **Budo Training**

One of the purposes of this paper is to address Budo training. Much has been said about the laying down of one’s life for another. But, that’s not where you start as a Budo warrior. It begins with training, and that training, I believe, has three components: Physical, Mental, and Spiritual.

Physical training components involve the development of martial skills. I believe that Budo training must include a physical component – first the conditioning and discipline of our own bodies and then the ability to control and manipulate an opponent. The Budo warrior understands how to use pain in life protection. We are called to protect family, friends, others who need it, and even the assailant. In order to accomplish this, we need to understand how to execute techniques that may bring significant pain but without damaging the assailant. The Budo warrior also uses that pain to open the assailant to suggestion and to use that opportunity to teach the gospel of Christ.

A true spiritual warrior must understand the mental component of his training. We must train our thinking and discipline our thoughts. We must understand the mental aspect of what others are dealing with as well. A calm and serene mind is open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We must memorize and understand scripture in preparation of being used by the Holy Spirit. It is helpful to understand the difficulties and challenges others face that are primarily mental in nature – depression, anger, etc.

The most obvious aspect of Budo training is the spiritual component since the definition of Budo is “the way of the spiritual warrior.” I believe that we will be taught in the ways of spiritual warfare even to the point of organizing our efforts to do spiritual battle. If the GMAU is intended to be a ministry, I expect this to be a significant part of what we are to be about. I look forward to learning about

spiritual warfare and what the organization is doing to press on against the enemy and to assault the gates of hell.

I'm sure that I do not understand all that Budo training is about. I am eager to learn more and to travel Budo according to what gifting and calling has been given to me by the Holy Spirit.

## Budo Preparation

Ephesians 6:10-20 summarizes the spiritual battlefield and calls spiritual warriors to prepare themselves. I'm sure that Paul was very familiar with military paradigms and so were the Ephesians. Roman soldiers were a common fixture in their everyday lives, so Paul used them to illustrate how Christians should prepare themselves for the spiritual battlefield.

Our battlefield is primarily a spiritual one. Paul made that clear when he talked about principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness, and spiritual wickedness. None of these are foes that we can cut down with a sword made of steel. They are unseen and use weapons of subtlety and cunning to strike at us or to wear us down.

Extending this concept of a spiritual battlefield to our everyday lives, much of the suffering and conflict we see has its roots in the spiritual realm. The father of all humans is the devil until they receive the spiritual transformation that happens when they accept the sacrifice of Christ for their sins. In many cases, the physical situation that arises when a bully is accosting his victim is just the person following the teachings of his father – the devil. In some cases, Christians who have deafened themselves to the Holy Spirit appear to act in the same way – following the leading of the flesh. As Budo warriors, we must understand what is happening in order to have the proper perspective on each situation where we feel led by the Holy Spirit to respond.

In order to respond properly, we must prepare ourselves to be spiritual warriors as well as physical martial artists. We must become proficient in the use of all our armor as well as our offensive weapons. At the time Paul was writing Ephesians, a warrior on the battlefield wouldn't last very long, no matter his prowess with his sword, if he didn't know how to use his defensive devices – namely his armor. We must prepare ourselves to know the truth, to live righteously so that we may not be reproached, to understand the gospel, to hold our shield of faith, and to be confident in our salvation. But, we are not only required to be able to defend ourselves. We are to storm the gates of hell. To do that we are given offensive weapons we must be prepared to wield. We must be proficient in our ability to

use the word of God and be always in prayer – seeking the will of the Holy Spirit in every situation and asking for His guidance. As Paul said, if we prepare properly, we will be able to withstand in the evil day.

In the martial arts, we also prepare ourselves to be able to respond physically. The techniques and principals we learn are intended to prepare us to be able to control any given situation. Our intent and purpose is to preserve life – to give our opponent a chance to turn away from the evil that they have been pursuing. Joining our spiritual preparation with our physical skill and understanding gives us the ability to get the attention of the assailant through the leading of the Holy Spirit and physical pain. It has often been pointed out that if we are operating at the leading of the Holy Spirit and have the assailant under control in a painful grip, we have his attention. We can tell them that we have the ability to kill them, but God has put us in the position to provide to them an opportunity to turn from their ways. When we are prepared both spiritually and physically, we can bring correction to the children of darkness without causing damage or death. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Our motivation should be the same.

I have one last thought about the passage in Ephesians. Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him that he may be able to speak boldly as he ought to speak. He asked this in order to help him make known the mystery of the gospel. In effect, we are making known the mystery of the gospel when we subdue an assailant and tell him of the grace that God has just shown him. But, I don't think it stops there. Budo warriors should be speaking boldly, not necessarily in the same way that Paul did in front of dignitaries and such, but certainly to people we see every day. We speak boldly by our character and by our actions. May we remember to pray for each other always that Jesus Christ and the mystery of his gospel be demonstrated by our lives – the lives of Budo warriors.

## Budo

Just as the people of Okinawa learned how to use everyday weapons and techniques to live their lives, Budo is an everyday path. It cannot be mastered since it is not a destination.

The path begins at the cross. We see the gift that was given in Jesus Christ. We examine his life. We accept his death in payment for the penalty all humans are sentenced to pay. In gratitude, we, being filled with joy, are eager to lay down our lives for Christ and the gospel. We are just as joyful about laying down our lives, since we know our souls are safe, for those who cannot defend themselves against whatever or whoever may be attacking them. The path ends with our physical death and reunion with God in heaven.

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Along the way, following Budo is to be led by the Holy Spirit. We will receive gifts that we need according to his divine will. We are to grow and exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We are to judge fruit – not the individual – as we strive to grow and to support each other as we grow as a community of believers – as Budo warriors.

Budo warriors do not sit idle expecting that the Holy Spirit will accomplish his will without our participation. We are to be his hands and feet. In order to be capable, we must train. We must prepare our physical beings to be able to accomplish physical tasks. Our minds must be prepared and in a state ready to receive the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our spiritual beings must continually mature so that we may be ready to demonstrate Christ and the Holy Spirit in our lives.

In all these things, Budo is a struggle that leads to warriors being ready to do God's will – to assault the gates of hell and to overcome – to go into the world spreading the Gospel. In the end, may we be called good and faithful servants. May any crowns we receive be cast at the feet of the only one who is worthy to receive blessing and honor and glory and power and praise.

This is my understanding of Budo – The Way of the Spiritual Warrior.