

gotten secret of the Ancient Greeks that shows us how to keep our teenagers out of trouble by teaching them to fight!

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By Rev. David B. Smith

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To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-3)

Four of the boys at training tonight are preparing themselves for their first fight at our forthcoming Christians vs. Lions promotion, scheduled for only three weeks hence. All of these lads are boxers.

Three of those four – Joel, Daniel and young Dave – are friends, finishing their last year of school together. They are a great example of how guys from different ethnic backgrounds (Australian, Latin American, and Lebanese respectively) can still be the best of mates. The fourth guy, Louis, is an enormous Islander man. I'm not sure whether he's Tongan or from the Cook Islands, but he's a gentle giant really. He reminds me of Mahendar – a regular here at the Youth Centre. They're both big, black and burly, but with gentle hearts. Louis has a few years on the other boys who were there tonight. He's a natural in the ring, and plays the role of the older brother very well indeed.

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These four boys are the cream of our crop in the fight club at the moment. They are all capable pugilists, but more than that, they are each a good embodiment of what our club is on about – courage, integrity, self-discipline and teamwork. This isn't to say that none of them have ever been troublemakers. Indeed, I've got a court appearance coming up with one of the boys, scheduled for shortly after his fight, and he's on quite serious charges. Even so, I've seen nothing but positive growth since he joined the club, and I'm hoping for positive results both in his fight and in his court case.

What is it that makes fight training such a powerful tool in the molding of young lives? There was a time when I thought of

fighting as just another form of sport. I have come to believe though that fight training taps into something deep in the male psyche, in a way that no other sport does.

When I used to talk to my old girls in the church about the problems we had with our young people, they often used to say 'what we need is another war'. I always thought that that was a terrible thing to say – that a war was the last thing that anybody wanted. And of course the girls didn't really want a war. They had just experienced the benefit of being part of a community that had learnt to pull together through difficult times. And they had seen the positive effect that soldiering could have on the lives of young men.

I believe that men were made to fight. It's part of our genetic makeup. We may have managed to emerge from the jungle, but there's still a bit of the jungle in each of us, and pugilistic activity keys right in to those ancient impulses – releasing the wild man within.

This theory isn't original to me of course. It's part of the fabric of the Bible – there behind every great warrior-king who showed himself to be a 'mighty man of God' in battle, and behind Jacob, who went toe to toe with God Himself and yet lived to talk about it (Genesis 32)! These were men who knew how to fight and pray and bleed and serve.

For a more philosophical exposition on the significance of fighting, we need look no further than Plato's Republic.

For those who haven't read it, in the Republic Socrates explores

the concept of justice through examining both the just society and the just individual, and then he goes on to delineate their common elements. On the societal level he notes that a just community is made up of a number of vital components parts: rulers who govern, workers who labour, and an army that functions to protect them both. In the individual he finds a similar configuration – the mind that governs the body, the limbs that do the work, and the `themos' (which is often translated as `temper' or `aggression') that plays a parallel role in protecting the individual. Justice in the Republic consists in having all of the component parts (in either individual or society) being present and working together properly.

In the wisdom of the ancient Greeks then, the `themos' is the vital third component in the human constitution, along with the mind and the body. Without the `themos', no individual is complete, and at a social level, no society will ever achieve a true state of justice.

It is my opinion that one of the negative legacies of feminism in Western culture has been an attempt to deny the `themos', which seems to be more strongly present in men than in women. This has been for the most understandable of reasons – because of the excesses of male violence. But perhaps it's time that we realised that trying to eliminate `themos' from society altogether is like trying to eliminate spiders and snakes because we find them distasteful. We soon discover that the created order needs all of its creatures – even those that some of us find ugly – if it is to function properly.

My experience with a vast number of men is that they tend to be either functioning as doormats to their wives and girlfriends, or they're beating up on them. This is a reflection of the same crisis in dealing with the `themos'. When we attempt to repress the `themos', it often spurts out in the most horrible and destructive of forms. When we successfully repress it, we emasculate our men, so that they're no longer able to stand up for anything. Ironically, of course, such modern day men are not only unable to offer any strength to society. They're no longer even attractive to the women they sought to please.

The only constructive alternative is for us to reharness the `themos' and channel it creatively. We need to get in touch with that distinctive male energy – recognise it, affirm it, and then learn to bring it under control so that it can be put to good

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use. Perhaps when we are able to do this, then we will see this country produce leaders of the calibre of Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Theresa, or Mahatma Ghandi – strong people of principle who stand up powerfully for what they believe in. As it is, our leaders always seem to come across as being either 'wooses' or criminals or both. God knows we need some real men in this country who know what it means to love their women, to be fathers to their children, and to serve God and their community with their strength!

Fight training, I do believe, is a means to getting at that 'themos' and learning to bring it under control. When done in the right way, fight training can help a young person to discover who they are and can help them to bring their futures into focus. They can then come to see their role as warriors in this society who will stand up and use their energy to build a better community and to fight for things worth fighting for.

What about these boys who I watched training with me tonight? Will they go on to become 'mighty men of God'? I don't know. But they're on the right track, and they're further ahead now than when they first started their training..

'Fighting' Father Dave Smith – Parish Priest, community worker, professional fighter, father of three. Dave is the only Australian in Holy Orders to turn pro boxer to help fund his work. He is Parish Priest in Dulwich Hill, Sydney, and has received numerous awards for his work with young people. Get a free preview of his book, 'Sex, the Ring & the Eucharist' when you sign up for Dave's newsletter at www.fatherdave.org

The meaning and symbolism behind popular butterfly tattoo designs

By Sam Smith

Butterfly tattoos are among the most popular tattoos today and the most frequently requested tattoo designs especially among women. This shows the major growth of women in the tattoo industry as a whole. Butterfly tattoo designs of course are popular among females just for their beauty! There is also a deep symbolism behind the butterfly that comes from its short and amazing life.

A butterfly of course starts life as a caterpillar and goes through a major change as it becomes a butterfly. It makes a chrysalis or cocoon and then emerges as a beautiful butterfly. This led many ancient cultures to regard the butterfly as a symbol of the impermanence and instability of earthly life. The amazing process of change from a caterpillar to a butterfly also captivated many ancient cultures that believed this was similar to the process of a soul's journey from an earthly body to a heavenly body. In fact the ancient Greeks often symbolized the human soul or psyche with butterfly wings in art.

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It is easy to instantly see the beauty that a butterfly tattoo holds and the deeper meaning and significance of a butterfly and its life process make for a very popular tattoo design for women.

For more information on tattoos check out the following resources. For

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