

Mat Time: ***Making a Lasting Impact***

By Ginny Tyler

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What is "mat time?" one might ask. This is the time that we carve out of each class to accomplish our true goal – planting seeds of Biblical truth into our students, and tying together the physical lessons they learned throughout class to God's Word to make for an enriching experience that challenges everyone to grow in a way that they would

not expect when walking into a martial arts class. This is my time to give the students something that they will take with them when they leave our dojo that will only help them as they develop their own worldview and learn how to best interact with the world around them.)

I take a seat in a spot in the circle and open up my copy of *Mat Time*, which I aptly named because we had already used the phrase long before the book was written. Ironically enough, we currently hold classes in a rented space where I cannot store our equipment, so rarely do we have this time on an actual mat. When we do need the mats for take-downs, break falls, or rolls, the students squeal with delight, knowing we will "have our mat time on the mat!"

Utilizing my *Mat Time* publications makes this portion of class easy, but it hasn't always been so. Truly, this aspect of our classes has been a progressive journey in





and of itself since our school, Disciples Making Disciples Tae Kwon Do (DMD Tae Kwon Do) officially “came to be.” When my husband and I decided to turn our backyard classes into an actual school, I knew that this was something we had to turn over to the Lord, to do with as He saw fit. We wanted everything we poured into this school to be for His glory, and we wanted to teach our students how to not only learn how to fight their physical battles, but their spiritual ones as well.

This promise and act of obedience snowballed into something so much bigger than we imagined over the years, and the more we invested in the Kingdom, the more clearly we saw God’s hand at work in what we were doing. I began incorporating Biblical character-building lessons into each of our classes, in addition to implementing a “Kingdom Warriors Program”, which is an optional program to incentivize students to add memorized Scripture to their testing criteria, along with their existing rank requirements. In this program, students can earn special patches for their uniforms to represent not

only their inclusion in the program, but also additional stars to symbolize their memorization of various other aspects of the Bible, including the Ten Commandments in order, the Lord’s Prayer, Psalm 23, the lineage of Jesus beginning with Abraham, the books of the Bible in order, and more.

Soon after beginning this program, I got a very clear message from the Holy Spirit: What about the students you cannot reach in your classes? The answer was very natural to me: write books! I prayed that God would give me the words to say, and as the inspiration for each Kingdom Kicks book surfaced, I would simply type it out when “I got the call” to write. For me, it was a matter of listening to the words the Lord gave to me, and I knew that each book was intended for a special purpose. Isaiah 55:11 reminds us, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” I firmly believe that was the case with these books, and I praise God for the inspiration given to me to play

a small part in His will.

While writing the Kingdom Kicks series, I would utilize these books in my own classrooms, including the supplementary materials I put together to go with the series. I would also glean age-appropriate ministry material from various curriculums, websites, and articles to have plenty of items on hand at all times. The challenge was to then then tweak the additional materials that I found to apply to what we were doing in class (sans my own books). As a homeschool mom of four, this was relatively easy for me to do, but it could easily be time consuming. In the back of my mind, I knew this was likely a problem with other schools that may have wanted to do what we were doing, but my feeble human brain hadn't made those connections yet to come up with a solution.

In the meantime, the Lord opened up doors to get the word out about the Kingdom Kicks series in an amazing way. The VP of Century Martial Arts happened to be touring around the country, and I had invited him to visit the Tae Kwon Do class I was teaching at our homeschool co-op at the time, and he made a stop in to visit our

school. During the visit, I was able to show him the first couple Kingdom Kicks books I had published and explain our goals for the books. Not long after, we got a message from him that Century wanted to not only carry our books, but also feature them in their catalogs, which would help schools all over the world get exposure to the series!

Century carried the Kingdom Kicks books for about three years, and it was always exciting to not only see the books in their catalogs, but also to get repeat purchase orders from them for hundreds of books at a time. As my husband and I packed those boxes of books up to send to them, we were awed by the impact we knew they were making for people all over the world.

We were elated to find out that the Kingdom Kicks series were Century's 2018 best sellers, and in that same year, I was inducted into the USA Martial Arts Hall of Fame in recognition of the Kingdom Kicks series and given an award for "Author of the Year." To all of this, I credit God, who gave me the inspiration and talents to be able to serve Him in a way that I would not have been able to otherwise. I tell people all the time, "this is not a story about what I



Century and Kingdom Kicks Catalog

did. It is a story about what He did through me.” We each are given gifts, and we are not called to bury them away, but use them for His glory. 1 Peter 4:10 reminds us, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms”, and I take this verse to heart.

After four years and 11 Kingdom Kicks books later, in 2021, the Holy Spirit spoke very clearly to me, and I remember thinking I had not had such an overwhelming “assignment” thus far, which really is saying a lot. This time, I heard, “What about all of the other instructors who want to do what you are doing with their own classrooms but don’t know how to integrate Biblical teachings the way you have?” As mentioned above, I knew putting lessons together came easily for me, but it just hadn’t clicked that other instructors *couldn’t* do the same. Perhaps they didn’t know where to look for quality materials. Maybe they had exhausted what they can do with the Kingdom Kicks series, and they needed something with more meat on it for their older students. And it is very possible that they, too, were thirsty and needed something to not only help them to reconcile their own faith with the lessons in the martial arts – but that they needed something that was already laid out for them to pass on to their students. As mentioned above, it could be a time-consuming process, and for someone new to this concept, they would likely need something already laid out and ready for them to utilize.

That’s where *Mat Time* came in. This book was released in 2022 and laid the groundwork for everything I wanted to accomplish, not just for other students, but for the instructors as well. It covered the foundations of the Christian faith, utilizing martial training as the doorway for taking what we learn as martial artists and applying it to something *so much* more meaningful.

The book was simple to use and straightforward. Each day had a key Bible verse (or key verses), along with a simple martial-related devotion to go along with it. Instructors could use the book as a personal devotional, or utilize it as a tool in their own classrooms. All they needed do was read straight out of the book by day. In addition, there was empty journal space for their own thoughts, experiences, etc. to make each day’s content more meaningful for their own dojo. Taken at a one devo per week approach, *Mat Time* contained over a year’s worth of devotions.

As I neared the end of *Mat Time* with my own classes, however, I wondered if God intended for there to be a sequel. Life had been incredibly hectic for us in the latter part of 2022, and as DMD Tae Kwon Do continued to grow to 50 students, we were well on the path to outgrowing our current rented space and needed to move forward with building our own permanent school for our martial arts ministry. Despite having a realtor on the lookout for reasonably priced land, God quite suddenly told me one evening to get online and search what was in our area. My flesh side thought, “this is silly. Our realtor would have told us if she had found something”, but my spirit side knew quite well to jump when He calls us to. Sure enough, a quick search online revealed a piece of property right next door to our current space that had just gone on the market. We made an offer, the owner accepted, and it was done.

Navigating the building process over the last year has consumed much of our time, financial resources, and emotional energy, but both my husband and I know that this is what the Lord intends for DMD Tae Kwon Do: To own a space where we can offer outreach opportunities for not only our students, but for the entire community. With our new building, we intend to expand our class offerings, hold Kingdom Kicks character building sessions, offer continued education opportunities for our students, weekly Bible studies for the



Mat Time at DMD

community, regular self-defense seminars, and so much more. This building is going to mean so much, not just to the credit of the martial arts, but for what God can do through the martial arts.

Deep in the heart of communications with architects, civil engineers, city officials, and the like, the message came in loud and clear that it was time to write *Mat Time 2* in 2023. I prayed and hoped that I could do this book justice, but the Lord was incredibly faithful to again give me everything I needed to write this book. Physically, I became hyper-focused and clear-headed, and I was given a very clear direction to focus on Old Testament prophecies and Judaic traditions as a means to dig deeper and build on the foundation that *Mat Time* laid. If *Mat Time* was the spiritual milk, *Mat Time 2* was the steak and potatoes to take the reader to a deeper level in their faith.

What had changed this focus? Something very meaningful that I had noticed while going through *Mat Time* in my classes was that parents were approaching me to tell me that they, too, were learning right alongside the students as I read each day's devotion. They were uplifted, encouraged, and challenged themselves, and this was an audience I did not intend to reach! This is why I truly felt *Mat Time 2* needed to help others connect those rich traditions of the Old Testament to our belief in the validity of the New Testament today. *Mat Time 2*, like its predecessor, also weaves Biblical truth with martial history, physical training, historical figures, Asian culture, and so much more. Needless to say, I was very excited about *Mat Time 2*, and I am incredibly happy with the finished product. I am likely very biased, but I truly believe this book is a game-changer that will challenge even those with established deep-rooted faith.

2023 is year seven for DMD Tae Kwon Do, and I am incredibly excited at what God has yet in store for our humble school. At times it seems it is all a balancing act – navigating our building, teaching, bookkeeping for the dojo, writing, and ensuring I have time to continue to train myself so that I always have something to offer to my students. In addition to teaching Nam Seo Kwan Tae Kwon Do, I am also a student of Kobudo, as well as Wing Chun Kung Fu. This being said, I am incredibly grateful for my husband, who has taken on much of this juggling alongside me, and my extremely patient children, who have given me *so much* grace when I needed it. God has been so good to our family.

It hasn't always been an easy journey, but I am beginning to see the fruit of our investments in the Kingdom. I frequently get messages from other instructors around the world who have told me that they are using my publications in their own martial arts ministries, and oftentimes I get pictures of their "mat times" in action. I recently got a message from one instructor saying that her copy of *Mat Time* goes with her everywhere. Then in April of this year, I met with a couple that run their own dojo in Missouri that are utilizing my books for their students as well. Then from another instructor I see videos he is making of his *Mat Time* devotions, then posting them on Facebook to share with others. It is awe-inspiring, at times, but when that fruit falls closer to the tree, my heart just beams.

In my own classes, I get to see more often the impact that God's Word is making in the lives of our students. I have one student who recently drew a picture of our classroom for me. He had all of the students in their correct belt colors, and myself in the corner, but at the top of the page was an angel above everyone. When I asked his mom about it, she said he believes there is an angel watching over our classes. Then we have another student who has begun witnessing at his

school, and he is getting a Bible study group together for not just those who already believe, but those who want to know more before deciding what they believe.

In addition to this, our dojo recently went to the AKATO annual tournament last fall. We had had a discussion about the perishable vs. imperishable crown prior to the tournament, but I had no idea how far they would take that lesson. During the tournament, I witnessed our students continually encouraging one another, even when they were competing against each other. When one student didn't place in their division, another offered their medal to him. When someone placed first in sparring, he was so humble that he didn't say a word about it – then tried to give his medal away as well. Needless to say, I was astounded at the example our students set that day for the entire circuit to see.

I do want to stop right here and mention that these cases are not a result of solely what we teach at DMD Tae Kwon Do. 1 Corinthians 3:7 reminds us, "So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow." All praise goes to God and God alone. But as instructors, we do need to recognize that when we attack the faulty foundation of a worldly mindset, this shift will invariably overflow into just about every other area of life, from becoming a better student in class to growing into a more grounded, mature adult later on. Planting those seeds now may not be the quickest change, but if anything is worthy of your time and efforts, it is this.

It is my hopes that this article is an encouragement to all of the instructors and parents reading this right now. It is important to recognize that we are all given the great blessing of being in a unique position of influence in what we do, and in what we are given. It is our job to take that talent given to us, invest it, and bring back

what we received plus so much more to lay at the foot of our heavenly father one day.

Many thanks for the opportunity to share our story with the readers of Totally Taekwondo Magazine. We are incredibly thankful and humbled to encourage others with our experiences.

All publications mentioned above are available on Amazon for purchase for your home, dojo, and local libraries.



Author:

Ginny Tyler is the owner and founder of DMD Tae Kwon Do, a Christian martial arts school near McKinney, Texas. Inspired by the endless lessons both God's Word and the martial arts have to offer, Ginny has written multiple publications so that others can also utilize them for the benefit of their dojos and homes. Ginny's passion for teaching, not just her own children and students, is the basis for her books, through which she wishes to inspire children, parents, and instructors to seek Biblical truths in the world around them.

For more information on DMD Tae Kwon Do, who we are, and what we do, please visit www.dmdtaekwondo.com.

