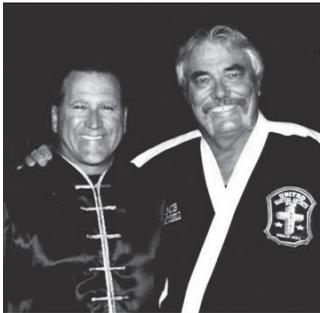


BEING TOUGH WASN'T TOUGH ENOUGH

**From Mastering My Own Life to
Surrendering to the Master Over All**

Bob Mitchell is founder of United Martial Artists for Christ, a Christian fellowship and ministry that provides youth and family-based outreaches. Although Professor Mitchell has earned many trophies, he says none will ever compare to the trophy he was awarded the day he received Jesus Christ. For He is the only true Master. (Bob resides in Garden Grove, CA, with his wife, Diane, and two sons, Vincent and Robby. You can visit his Web site at www.martialartistsforchrist.org.)

So, you think you're tough? Well, I thought I was. With



*Pastor Raul Ries
with Bob Mitchell*

my childhood, I had no choice but to become one big brute. Although I had a mother who was spiritual, my father was not. He was an alcoholic...the abusive kind. Here's my story. It shows how God is in the business of transforming lives.

FORCED TO BECOME TOUGH

When I was a child, every Friday night before my father came home, my mother told me to stay in my bedroom and not come out, and not say a word. When Dad finally arrived, he was so drunk, he didn't even see me. His first objective was to begin beating up on my mom. As a child, this was what I had to look forward to regularly. At an early age I was forced to become tough and hardened—and burdened with the fact that I had to raise myself. I soon learned that life was what I made it out to be. And that wasn't very good.

MY MOM'S MIRACLE

My mom was very religious and always praying. She was a good person, but lenient with me and perhaps a little gullible. When she was a young mother, my mom had polio and hepatitis. She was not supposed to survive. The doctors put her into the hospital, not believing she would ever come out. But one day, after many weeks in the hospital, she pleaded with God to heal her so she could raise her children. There in the dim room of that San Bernardino hospital, she saw an amazing flash of light. Instantly she knew God had heard her.

Mom jumped out of bed, turned on the light, and removed her leg irons and straps. She walked to the nurses' station and informed them that she wanted her clothes because she was going home! They couldn't believe their eyes. She had been healed by the grace of God. The next day, the doctors ran many tests and found no traces of polio, no traces of hepatitis. This was the first miracle I'd ever heard of. But it would not be the last, by any means.

THE PIER PREACHER

In high school, I became involved with the wrong group for a while. I started drinking at sixteen, partied a lot, and experimented with some crazy things. I didn't know it at the time, but the Lord kept me alive back then. I could have been killed many times. My friends and I often drove to the beach. There was a guy who used to preach at the Huntington Beach pier. He wore a big straw hat, held his Bible, and walked all over the beach preaching to anyone within earshot.

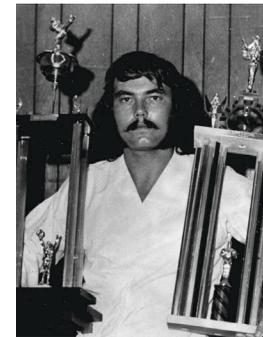
On many occasions, my friends and I would get to drinking and then go watch "the Preacher." We waited for someone to make fun of him. Then I'd step in and beat him up. When curious bystanders gathered, I disappeared into the crowd. But half an hour later, I'd come back and listen to the Preacher again, patiently waiting to knock out the next heckler.

We called it "fighting for the Lord" to justify our actions. I felt so sorry for the Preacher because he didn't want any violence whatsoever. I will never forget that Preacher. He was a nice guy, reaching out to a lost generation.

FOLLOWING IN DAD'S FOOTSTEPS

Later on I became involved in martial arts competition. I started drinking a bit more and winning a few tournaments. I drank when I won, and I drank when I lost. The thing is, I was intimidating and crazy. I became known as the "Intimidator." I became like a crazy man when I drank. But when I didn't drink, I was a nice guy. I didn't know how to control my drinking. It's ironic. I was fast on my way to becoming a full-blown alcoholic, just like my father.

The leader of American Chinese Kenpo Karate nicknamed me "Animal." (And I don't eat raw meat!) Believe me, I lived up to my nickname. I had lived as my own god for so long that it transformed me into someone I didn't even know or like. The more that people called me crazy, the crazier I became.



TOURNAMENT TROPHIES

During my competitive years in martial arts, I was disqualified many times for excessive contact. In the 1970s, I was awarded the title of Fighter of the Year at the International Kenpo Karate Association's awards banquet. In 1975, I was honored by *Black Belt* magazine with a cover shot on their annual yearbook edition.

After I retired from competition, I continued to intimidate others. I felt that if I showed kindness, people would take advantage of me. I became a professional bodyguard for some of the best protection specialists in California.

In 1983, I came out of fighting retirement and took first place at the International Karate Championships in team competition. I still pushed my way around with intimidation, holding fast to my tough-guy image. Only my family and close friends knew I had real feelings. To everyone else, I was an aggressive mean machine.

TRIBULATION AND TURMOIL

Everything changed in the blink of an eye. My wife and I helped raise my niece Susan, considering her our own child. One fateful day, Susan suffered a brain aneurism and became comatose. Diane and I were forced to make the extremely difficult decision to remove Susan from life support. Our beautiful little girl was gone. Our world had been rocked, and I could do nothing about it.

Three months later, our nephew, Justin, was informed that he needed a kidney transplant to survive. This would be his second one. I fell into a deep pit of sorrow. Then out of the blue, Diane was diagnosed with advanced uterine and ovarian cancer. The doctors gave her only months to live.

Here I was "Mr. Tough Guy," about to lose the love of my life to cancer. I had already lost my mom and dad to cancer, so I knew firsthand what a devastating disease it is. I had to be strong for Diane. Yet inside, I was in constant turmoil not knowing how long she would live. I began to feel I just couldn't handle it. The black pit of depression was swallowing me up, and I had nowhere to turn. Living as master of my own life couldn't change a thing.

A NEW CREATION

One day I dropped to my knees and began weeping

loudly. I couldn't believe what was happening to my family. One night I found myself at a Harvest Crusade, an evangelistic event at the Anaheim Stadium. I came close to accepting Christ right then and there, but I held back.

Three weeks later, Pastor Greg Laurie from Harvest Ministries was scheduled to speak at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa at a Monday night service. I felt compelled to go hear him preach.

I'll never forget it. When Pastor Greg gave the invitation to come forward and accept Jesus Christ, I was the first person down there. Openly weeping, I surrendered my life to Christ and I asked Him to heal my wife. I told Him that, in return, I would be a soldier for Him the rest of my life. I knew God heard my prayer. From that very moment, He revealed Himself to me as never before. And I kept my promise.

GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS

God's blessings flowed. My nephew received a new kidney, and today he is a pastor. I used my martial arts knowledge to form United Martial Artists for Christ. It's been a privilege to head up this ministry. Through our events, the Lord has radically transformed hundreds of lives. My good friend Pastor Raul Ries gives public invitations to receive Christ at all of our

events. Some of the greatest martial artists, such as Chuck Norris, have participated in this great ministry. There's a long list of champions who have made this organization what it is today.



Bob M. with Chuck Norris

In addition, God miraculously answered my prayer for my wife. Yes, my wife is still by my side today. She's been completely cancer-free for nine years now! All praise goes to God.



Life-changing decisions at a UMAFC altar call

YOUR LIFE CAN CHANGE TOO

The Lord has filled the void in my heart with His love for me. When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, God became my defender. I now have the strength I was looking for all those years. The key to life is His forgiveness and love. You see, He died on the cross for my sins, and for yours too. The Bible says that whoever believes in Christ shall not die, but have everlasting life. God sent His only Son to the cross so that you and I could be saved.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus), that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

If you're walking on that wide road of self-destruction that I once walked and you're finding that being tough isn't enough, I have a message for you. Your life can change, just like mine did. Christ is knocking on the door of your heart right now, and all you have to do is invite Him in. If you ask Him for forgiveness, and place your faith and trust in Him, He will set you free. You will have a new start, a clean slate in life.

A PERSONAL INVITATION

Having our sins forgiven by our Lord and Savior brings new life. The trophy He offers is eternal life. Satan, however, offers one reward: the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). It's your choice, heaven or hell. Our life

on earth is nothing more than a trip around the block. Satan wants to keep our minds on the things of the flesh, such as money, cars, and ownership of things—anything that will pull our minds away from recognizing that our time on earth is limited.

Are you ready for eternity? Jesus loves you. But He can't help you unless you open your heart and ask Him in. If you feel lost and need to change your life, just say this prayer:

A PRAYER TO RECEIVE JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR

"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. But I want to turn from my sin right now. I ask You to come into my life. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I want to follow You, Lord, from this moment forward. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

God bless you. And welcome to the family of God!

Bob Mitchell

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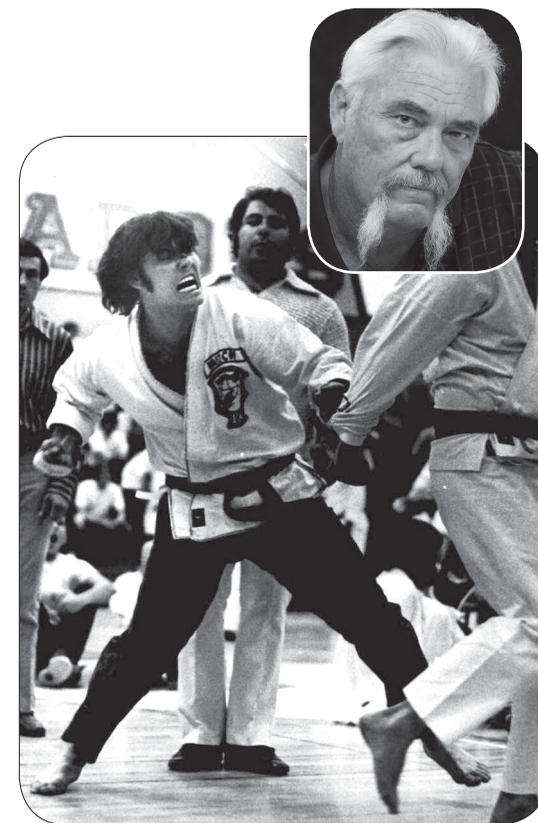


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