

# **Tough & Aggressive - Not a Ruthless Angry Brute!**

By

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Today I would like to address a topic that is regularly asked of me. It is expressed in various ways such as:

- “You seem to be a calm, shy person, but I remember you being a very aggressive wrestler. How did you do that?”
- “How could you be a Christian and yet be so aggressive against your opponents?”
- “Isn’t a Christian supposed to be meek and mild?”

To answer these questions note the following factors.

## **Proper Definition:**

Often at the center of this issue is the misunderstanding of the word ‘meekness’. I found that Webster has 3 uses of the word meek. One is ‘submissive, easily imposed on, spineless, spiritless.’ The other meanings are ‘patient and mild: not inclined to anger or resentment’ and ‘gentle or kind.’ I believe the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meanings most fit the use of this word in referring to Bible examples. Bible meekness is not weakness or passivity. Meekness can be looked at as the humble use of power & position for what is good.

## **True and Proper Motivations:**

When we compete we strive to do our techniques right. We do our best to show our determination. After all, we are representing our team, community, family, friends and ourselves. Competing to say ‘thank you’ is a very mature and stable motivation. And our best of actions will put smiles on the faces of those who care about us. There is no need to compete out of anger and spite. I loved and cared deeply about the men that I trained the hardest with and many that I competed against.

## **Accurate Examples:**

Moses was the meekest man in the world, but he sure was not weak or passive. Moses was an incredible leader. He could be both tough and tender depending on the need of the occasion. The Book of Numbers chapter 12 and verse 3 says, “*Now the man Moses was very meek (or humble) above all the men which were on the face of the earth.*” Moses was given incredible power and authority both by God and by the people he led. But he used that power for the good of others not for himself.

The David of the Bible was a gentle shepherd of lambs as well as a poet and musician. He was even called in by the King to play soothing music when the King was troubled. But this sensitive talented musician could kill a bear and lion with his bare hands when they threatened the sheep. And when a 9-foot tall giant scoffed at God and His people, David did what was needed to kill the enemy and cut the man’s head off with the giant’s own sword. David was both gentle and then tough when it was needed.

Another significant Bible example of course is Jesus. Three times the word meek is used in the Gospel accounts concerning Christ. Jesus was gentle but he sure corrected the religious leaders with authority and strength. He is the perfect example of keeping his power under control.

## **Wrestling Examples:**

As John and I were learning this principle, we realized that though we were best of friends, we could compete with each other at the highest level. There is no one I wanted to win more than John. Yet there is no one I desired to outscore more than him. Maybe that was because he was my older brother. Honestly, John and I were still figuring it out when we got to the Olympic

level. I have often kidded that I needed to kill him before he killed me. But to this day we are still best of friends.

I have had several successful high school wrestlers tell me they could not continue to wrestle in college. They related how they competed in anger and their coaches and teammates worked them into a frenzy of hatred before they competed. They told of their recent faith in Christ and that they could not imagine how to compete without their old anger coming back. Rightfully they knew they should not go back into that hateful mindset. I was surprised at first, but after thinking it through it all made sense. The old human nature loves living in spite and hatred. But Jesus Christ teaches us a different and higher plane. And yes I had done enough of hating myself against big rivals like the Soviet Union to identify with their dilemma. Together several of these young men and I fought through this dilemma. We learned to compete to represent those we love and to do our best with the talents God has given us.

It most likely will take time to understand and live in this new mindset. John and I, and every Christian I have known, works through the elements of personal hatred and the desire to belittle others. We confessed to God our anger many times and asked Him to give us His mind. We encourage you to learn this mindset while in the intensity of life and wrestling. Don't run from the battle but learn humility in the battle. Don't expect to learn meekness and strength sitting down. Learn humility and strength while living life at its peak – yes, while competing in the sport of wrestling!

### **Remember Your Setting:**

Remember where you are! When you are putting a bandage on your little sister's 'small cut' be patient and gentle. When you are on the mat it is time to be aggressive and maybe a bit rough. It often takes tough, hard, aggressive work to get the job done. I have learned that God made us to be both tough and tender. And He gave us a mind to determine just the right combination needed for each situation.

The goal of a Christian is to live life on a higher God honoring plane. And as wrestlers that means we train to become a most intense determined competitor. But we do not need to become brutish or take on a hateful or belittling attitude.

My prayer is that these comments will help many wrestlers at all levels that may be struggling with the issue of aggressiveness. Work hard to pour your heart into all your work with a balanced sensible attitude. Yes you can learn to be **Tough & Aggressive and Not be a Ruthless Angry Brute.**

You can find other articles by Ben, John & Andy at their web site. Today The Petersons run Camp of Champs Wrestling Camps. Contact them at: Camp of Champs, PO Box 222, Watertown, WI 53094; Phone: 800-505-5099; E-mail: [info@campofchamps.org](mailto:info@campofchamps.org); Web: [www.campofchamps.org](http://www.campofchamps.org)