

# Five Stances of Christian Martial Arts

by Sensei Mark McGee



# Chapters

Stance 1- Watch

Stance 2 – Stand Fast

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Stance 5 - Love

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that you do* be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

The Apostle Paul concludes one of the most amazing Books of the Bible by sharing five stances of the Christian life. These are also “Five Stances Of Christian Martial Arts.”

1. Watch
2. Stand fast in the faith
3. Be brave
4. Be strong
5. Let all that you do be done with love

# Chapter 1 - Watch



Paul begins his final exhortation to the Corinthians with the Greek word *gregoreite*. It is the idea of watching through alertness and keeping awake. Paul uses it in his letters for spiritual alertness. The NIV translates the word as “be on your guard.”

Γρηγορείτε στήκετε ἐν τῇ πίστει ἀνδρίζεσθε  
κραταιοῦσθε

It's the same word Jesus used the night He was arrested in Gethsemane.

“Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even to death*. Stay here and watch.” Mark 14:32-34

Ἔδε καὶ γρηγορεῖτε – “Stay here and watch.” Jesus told the disciples to remain where they were and be alert. It was a very difficult and dangerous time and Jesus wanted Peter, James and John to be on guard physically and spiritually.

Teachers and students of martial arts understand the idea of being alert and “on your guard.” That is the

first lesson we learn in self-defense class – be alert, be aware. If we are aware, we don't have to be afraid. Awareness is what we do instead of being afraid. Women, children, all of us should be alert and on our guard at all times. Why? Because we can be attacked by anyone, anywhere, at any time.

Alertness, awareness, being on guard, is what we should do all the time. Why? Because we can be attacked anywhere at anytime by anyone. What is the most important 60 seconds in self defense? The 60 seconds before an attack. Everyone has 60 seconds before they are attacked. Would they have seen the attack coming if they had been on guard? In many cases the answer is “yes.” Awareness can be our best defense against attack because we may “sense” (see, hear, feel) the danger before it gets to us.

I did a dumb thing when I was 18. I was with a group of friends late at night in a city far from my home and someone we didn't know came up to us and asked for a lift home. I said sure, so we all jumped into my car and I drove the man to where he said he lived. He said his house was down a long driveway to a building that was behind a stand of trees. I had a funny feeling that something wasn't right about it, so I told the man to get out of the car. He tried to talk me into driving him down the driveway, but I sensed something was wrong and insisted he get out of the car. He got out and walked down the driveway. I pulled back onto the road and drove away. We later heard about a gang of thieves that was using that same tactic to get people to drive into a remote area where they would attack them and steal anything of value. I can't say for sure that the man we drove "home" was part of that gang, but I responded to what my mind and body were telling me to do.

I was in that “60-second self-defense zone” where we can either listen to our intuition and training or go against what we think and feel. Awareness often leads us to physical safety. If we’re talking or texting on a cell phone, listening to music on headsets or just not paying attention, we can be attacked and defeated easily. If we’re in a “watch” stance (physical on-guard), we will sense the danger and evade the attack.

That is also true spiritually. For every spiritual attack we face there is a “60-second zone” where we can hear God’s warning before the attack begins. If we are in a “watch” stance (spiritual on-guard), we will hear His warning and evade the attack.

“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober.” 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6



# Chapter 2 – Stand Fast



“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

We now move to the second “stance” in Christian Martial Arts – “stand fast in the faith” (στηκετε εν τη πιστει). The word “stand” (*stekete*) comes from

the verb *histemi* and is used figuratively here in the sense of standing firm in faith and duty. It is the idea of persevering, continuing, enduring, persisting in “the faith.”

In martial arts training students move from “awareness” (Stance 1) to “on-guard” (Stance 2). We use the Japanese word *kamaete* in class for the idea of moving to a defensive, on-guard stance. *Kamaete* in Yon Ch’uan begins with the principle of **Yield and Clear**. We “yield” to oncoming force and “clear” the midline. At the same time we are yielding and clearing, we are also initiating **Contact, Control and Counter**. We yield and overcome aggression through the redirection of force, restraints and submission holds, evasion, absorption, reflection and escapes.

In Grace Martial Arts classes we train students to yield, clear, contact, control and counter in less than two seconds. The ultimate goal is to perform all five defensive movements in two seconds or less. Why so fast? Because responses to attacks that take longer than 2-5 seconds often result in serious injury to the person being attacked. We say that the most important 5 seconds in self defense are those seconds immediately following the beginning of an attack.

The idea of “standing fast” in self defense does not necessarily mean a set position with no movement. Standing fast is the process of persevering and enduring an attack. We want our students to escape from danger effectively and efficiently – with the least chance of defeat.

The ability to “stand fast” spiritually is to have the strength to face opposition to your faith and not be

moved. Opposition may come from family, friends, neighbors, co-workers or strangers. **Stance 1** (alertness, awareness, being on-guard for possible attack at all times) is the best spiritual defense, but when we do come under attack we need to be ready to persevere and endure.

With that in mind, let's look at some of Paul's advice about standing fast.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you

received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Galatians 5:1

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand

in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Ephesians 6:10-20

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” Philippians 1:27-28

“Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.” Philippians 4:1

“Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Colossians 4:12

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Here’s Paul’s list for **Stance 2**. We encourage you to print it, tape it where you will see it several times a day, and ask God to give you the courage to do it.

- Stand in God’s Grace
- Stand in the Gospel
- Stand in Faith
- Stand in Freedom
- Stand against the Tricks of Satan
- Stand in the Evil Day
- Stand in Truth and Righteousness
- Stand in One Spirit
- Stand in the Lord
- Stand in Maturity and Completeness
- Stand in Paul’s Teaching



# Chapter 3 – Be Brave



“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

We now move to the third “stance” in Christian Martial Arts – “be brave” (ἀνδρίζεσθε). The word “brave” (*andrizesthe*) means “to make a man.” It’s

the present imperative middle in the Greek and means God expects Christians to conduct themselves in a manly or courageous way. Aristotle used the word to indicate someone who displayed courage between fear and confidence.

That's a good description of what it means to defend yourself against a sudden and vicious attack. To feel fear is normal when you're attacked, but the training we undergo as martial artists also builds confidence so we can quickly rise to the need to be brave and defend against the enemy.

In martial arts training students move from "awareness" (Stance 1) to "on-guard" (Stance 2) to "self defense" (Stance 3). As we **Yield** to oncoming force and **Clear** our midline from the direction of the attack, we also initiate **Contact** (blocking, stopping), **Control** (redirecting force) and **Counter** (striking,

kicking, trapping, throwing) as one movement – like a great wave of water moving anything in it and on it to a place of least harm.

Martial artists spend months and years learning many ways to stop or redirect an attack. In Christian martial arts our goal is to defend bravely, efficiently, effectively and compassionately. The best defense is not to be attacked in the first place, but if we are attacked we want to escape to a place of safety. Our first lessons include learning how to escape from danger using whole body techniques. As we grow in knowledge of specific self-defense techniques we also learn how to apply them quickly and powerfully. Ending an attack before the attacker can mount a strong offense means being brave to mount a strong defense. Since attackers are usually larger, stronger and meaner, bravery is at the core of our ability to defend effectively.

Christians in our country are under attack in ways we haven't seen in a very long time. Our spiritual enemy is raising an army of hatred against God's people that will soon demonstrate itself in physical violence that most of us have never experienced. That may be hard to believe, but if we are "aware" and "on guard" we will see the dust clouds of the enemy forces coming toward us.

Now is the time to "be brave." We must prepare ourselves for the spiritual and physical battle ahead and be ready to respond as the Holy Spirit directs. Remember that spiritual attacks can come at anytime from any direction. We remember the words of the Apostle Paul who when speaking of Satan said, "for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Even as we learn self-defense techniques and practice them so we do them quickly and effectively, so we must learn techniques of faith defense so we can speak clearly and bravely in the times of great trial that are surely coming.

Let's begin with a quick look at "being brave" from some of the great people of faith in the Bible. They are our examples of what to do in the face of great spiritual danger.

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:5

“And David said to his son Solomon, ‘Be strong and of good courage, and do *it*; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—*will be* with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.’” 1 Chronicles 28:20

“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They

wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens* and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” Hebrews 11:32-40

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.” Philippians 1:27-30



# Chapter 4 – Be Strong



“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

We now move to the fourth “stance” in Christian Martial Arts – “be strong” (κραταιουσθε). The word “strong” comes from the Greek word *kratos*, which means “strength, force, might.” *Krataiousthe* carries the idea of “prevailing” by a strength other than your own. That strength is God’s. We prevail through the power of Jesus Christ.

How do martial artists gain strength to prevail in training and self defense? Through weeks, months and years of building internal and external strength. Martial artists combine good nutrition and rest with the right kind of exercise to develop bodies and minds that can endure the kind of intense training that it takes to excel in the art of self defense.

When I became a student of Shotokan Karate as a teenager, I was introduced to the teachings of Meijin (Master) Gichin Funakoshi. Funakoshi was a school teacher on the Island of Okinawa and an expert in Karate, having been the student of Masters Azato Yasutsune and Ankō Itosu. Funakoshi died in 1957, just a few years before I began my study of Japanese martial arts. He was the Founder of Shotokan Karate and introduced the art of Karate to the Japanese mainland. Many martial artists call him the Father of Modern Karate.

I was very interested in learning about Funakoshi and his training methods on the Island of Okinawa. It was different than my training as a young *karateka*. Training in the United States in the early 1960s was legal and available to anyone at almost anytime of the day or night. Funakoshi did not have that freedom.

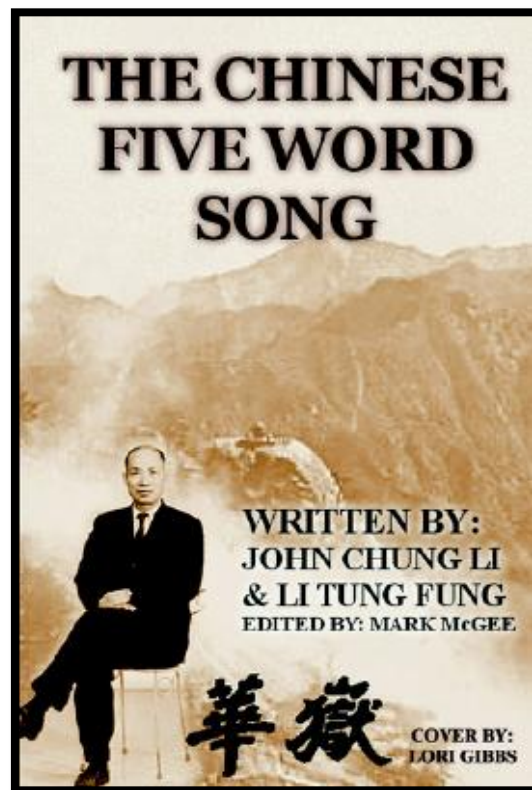
“At that time the practice of karate was banned by the government, so sessions had to take place in secret, and pupils were strictly forbidden by their teachers to discuss with anyone the fact that they were learning the art ... It was after a couple years’ practice that I realized my health had improved tremendously, and that I was no longer the frail child I had been. I enjoyed karate but—more than that—I felt deeply indebted to the art for my increased well-being ... Night after night, often in the backyard of the Azato house as the master looked on, I would practice a kata (“formal exercise”) time and again, week after week, sometimes month after month, until I had mastered it to my teacher’s satisfaction. This constant repetition of a single kata was grueling, often exasperating and on occasion humiliating. More than once I had to lick the dust on the floor of the dojo or in the Azato backyard. But

practice was strict, and I was never permitted to move on to another kata until Azato was convinced that I had satisfactorily understood the one I had been working on.” *Entering the Way*, Gichin Funakoshi, *The Overlook Martial Arts Reader*, pp. 223-224, Edited by Randy F. Nelson, The Overlook Press, 1989

Most of my martial arts training was in the “external” or “hard” arts until 1997. That’s when I began learning Yon Ch’uan and Hwa Yu T’ai Chi, both “internal” or “soft” martial arts. Yon Ch’uan and Hwa Yu use strength and power differently than Karate. My teacher’s teacher, Grand Master John Chung Li, explained that the way to use internal strength was “yield to heavy attack.”

“In hard stuff, force is always used against force, but in our soft exercise we teach how to yield.

Let your attacker advance as he desires. Don't mind how he comes. Yield. Don't be in his way. Guide him towards his desired direction. The more force with which he advances, the farther he will go where you desire. Thus causing him to lose his balance, you guide him into emptiness. When his balance is lost, you move to attack. Only a small force need be used since he is moving without control and with great force."



Martial strength is more than just being able to block, punch and kick. It's having the strength of character to use physical strength in the right way at the right time; sometimes hard, sometimes soft, always with integrity. How long will you have to train to obtain martial strength? How much time do you have?

Jesus Christ is the greatest example of Strength. He created the universe and holds all things together by His eternal power, yet He also yielded to brutal torture through crucifixion. Jesus had the power and strength to easily overwhelm His accusers and escape death on the Cross, but He demonstrated true strength by finishing the work His Heavenly Father had sent Him to accomplish. That "work" was shedding His Blood on the Cross, dying for our sins and rising from the dead.

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26



Many people have made the mistake of viewing Christ's sacrificial death as a sign of weakness, but look at how Jesus chose to defend those who are of the "seed of Abraham."

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid

those who are tempted.” Hebrews 2:14-18

Jesus “through death” destroyed the devil, “who had the power of death.” Jesus “through death” released those who through fear of death were subject to spiritual bondage all their lifetime. This is difficult for us to understand, but it is the method God chose to destroy Satan and release us from the power of sin and death.

John Chung Li used to say, “suddenly revealed, suddenly concealed.” What he meant was a martial artist internalized his or her skills until necessary to reveal them externally, suddenly for self defense. As suddenly as the skills appear they are suddenly concealed, ready to use again when needed. There is no place for pride, anger or revenge in Yon Ch’uan or in life. Like Christ, God calls us to serve others in humility. That includes faith and self defense.

“Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted

Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:1-11

# Chapter 5 – Love



“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

We come now to the fifth and final "stance" in Christian Martial Arts – "love." Love is a primary theme in the Bible, but how does that relate to martial arts?

My first lesson in a martial arts class was about showing **respect** to my teacher and fellow students. We did a lot of bowing from both sitting, kneeling and standing positions. Students bowed to Sensei and Sempai at the beginning and end of every class. Students bowed to each other at the beginning and end of partner drills. We bowed to each other before and after sparring. It became obvious to me quickly that respect was of utmost importance before, during and after class.

I didn't think about respect in class as demonstrating love until I became a Christian. Jesus said, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with

all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This *is* the first commandment. And the second, like *it, is* this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’ (Mark 12:30-31) Jesus went so far as to say, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:43-45) Jesus also told His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:33-35)

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing” ... “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13)

God does not leave room for Christians to define love in ways that are easy to accomplish. He has His own definition and it's tough, very tough to do. “Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not



provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Which sounds tougher to you: martial arts training or living for God according to His definition? Having done both for the greater part of my life, I believe Christian living is more difficult than martial arts. So, why do it? Think about it. How long will your martial arts training last? I began at the age of 13. If I am able to train until I'm 103, that would be 90 years in martial arts. I became a Christian at 23. I'll still be a Christian a billion years from now and just getting started on eternity. Which training system do you think is more important to me? Which one is more important to you?

The 5th stance in Christian martial arts is the final step, but that doesn't mean it's the least important. It's the most important step. Anything else we do fails if we do not have love. So, "Let all that you do be done with love." That's everything: family, work, play, church, Bible study, witnessing, martial arts, everything. Let it all be done with **love**.

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