ESSAY · SEPTEMBER 7, 2017

How to Win the Fight for Your Heart

Written by Bill Perkins

A real fight isn't Tae Bo. It's not like hitting one of those four-foot-tall inflatable punching bags that looks like a clown and makes a weak punch look like a hay-maker. Stepping into a ring and fighting for three minutes turns out-of-shape arms and legs into wet noodles. To keep that from happening, boxers train endlessly. They run miles every day. They spar against tough opponents and relentlessly beat on a punching bag.

No Bell

The battle described in 2 Samuel 23:9-10 wasn't a ten-round bout—there was no bell at the end of three minutes so everyone could rest. The Israelites and Philistines were fighting each other with swords, spears, and knives. Sensing the tide turning against them, the Israelites retreated. But one man, Eleazar, refused to run. Gripping his sword, he swung it like a wild, mechanical man—left and right and up and down. The enemy continued to advance and he continued to cut them down.

Froze to the Sword

Eleazar's legs and arms burned as lactic acid rushed through his veins. The biblical text says his "hand grew tired and froze to the sword" (2 Samuel 23:10). His courage and strength rallied the rest of the people, who followed him and gathered plunder from the fallen army.

Before the Battle

Unlike the rest of the men engaged in the battle, Eleazar didn't retreat. He refused to surrender to his pain. He resisted the urge to give into exhaustion by surrendering. How could he do this? I'm convinced that long before the battle Eleazar prepared himself by training his body. And I'm equally convinced we must do the same thing. If we're going to win the war for our heart we must get ready before the battle begins.

Lead Us Not

Nothing will prepare us better than following the advice of Jesus who taught us to pray like this: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). By these words Jesus didn't mean God could or would lead us into temptation.

Instead, he wanted us to ask God never to give us the *inclination* to sin when we have the *opportunity* to sin. Why? Because when inclination and opportunity come together, we'll probably sin. That's why it's crucial *during times of strength to protect ourselves from times of weakness by fortifying our mind and removing all triggers from our surroundings.*