

CONNECTING KIDS TO CHRIST WITH KARATE

Story by Carol Savage
Photos by Dominic and Greg Silva



Sensei Anthony Alberti instructs Delilah Mendoza during a weekly lesson offered by Calvary Chapel Visalia, CA. At the classes, up to 85 students are trained in the Bible as well as their back-kick drills.

“About six years ago, Anthony Alberti—a seventh-degree black belt from our fellowship—approached Pastor Bob Grenier with a desire to use his karate skills to reach at-risk kids with the Gospel,” explained Mike Buford, pastor of missions outreach at Calvary Chapel Visalia, CA. “Believers from the church enthusiastically

supported Anthony’s vision and formed karate classes as an outreach,” Mike continued. “Through the Lord’s provision, we were able to launch a ministry that is still going strong.” The fellowship’s martial arts classes, which are instructed by Anthony Alberti and Junior High Pastor Josh Bruno, have an average weekly attendance of 85.

At the lessons, which are held at the city’s Manuel Hernandez Community Center, “We present quality karate instruction,” Mike added. “We also devote a large segment of class time to teaching the Bible and prayer. ... Many kids and adults have been either saved or greatly encouraged through this ministry.”



Bibles in hand, children listen to their weekly Bible study. Many students have come to Christ or been encouraged in their faith.

One of those kids is Damian Rivera, who shared, “I started attending the karate class about two years ago. I had heard about it through my cousin who worked at the Manuel Hernandez Youth Center. After attending for a while, I was invited to the youth group where Josh Bruno is the junior high pastor. I accepted the Lord at a youth retreat. ... Christ has changed my life.”

The Monday night classes, in which three instructors and six volunteers serve, are inspired by a vision to “present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to scores of underprivileged kids right in their own neighborhoods,” Mike explained.

“It is awesome to see God at work,” Josh Bruno said. “I see parents of students come up and ask for prayer because they recognize the saving power of Christ and the destruction in their own flesh. After class, there is a small group of about four to six students who come for prayer every night and one or two students a week who request Bibles. It’s all praise to the Lord.”

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Sidney Anderson bows her head in prayer before class begins.



David Gonzales leads a pre-class warm up at the Manuel Hernandez Youth Center.

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