

# Ward: A Champion After God's Own Heart

Andre Ward beats people up for a living. But just because he is a born-again Christian doesn't mean he has to repent for his fighting.

As the undisputed WBA/WBC/*Ring Magazine* Super Middleweight boxing champion of the world, and as a child of God, Ward knows his motives are pure every time he steps into the ring. He is simply doing the job with which the Lord blessed him.

"It's a heart condition," said the 28-year-old Ward, who defended his titles against light heavyweight champ Chad Dawson in Ward's hometown of Oakland, Calif., in September to run his professional record to 26-0. "If I truly was honest with myself and I intentionally and permanently wanted to hurt someone, then that would be a problem.

"If I did that, I don't think God would be pleased with me at all, and I know he certainly wouldn't bless me if I had that attitude. It may sound like an oxymoron, but I don't have a heart to hurt anyone in the ring. I always pray for myself, my opponent and for our families' sakes that neither one of us gets hurt during a fight. That's only one of the reasons that God has blessed me so much in my life."

## **A Unique Nickname**

Ward has myriad reasons to feel that way. Not only is he on top of the boxing world in his division with three titles around his waist, he is undefeated as a professional. The former Olympic gold medalist also was named *Sports Illustrated* and *Ring Magazine's* Fighter of the Year for 2011.

More than anything, however, he cherishes his status as a successful athlete that has allowed him to become an effective witness for Jesus Christ and a role model for youngsters. His

mantra S.O.G. (Son of God), which is prominently displayed on his trunks, is something he borrowed from Galatians 3:26, which states: "For all of you are sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ."

"That is only one of the Scriptures that I use to base my nickname from," Ward said. "It's self-explanatory because it releases your faith in Jesus, that you can be a son of God, irrespective of gender. Terminator or Destroyer weren't names that were going to fit me. S.O.G. was simply a natural fit.

"As far as the Scriptures go, however, I would say that 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 is the story of my life. I never felt like I was the most-gifted or most-talented athlete. But I feel like if I put the work in and I do my part to keep God first, His grace would always be sufficient for me. His power shows up in my weakness. That's a factor that really keeps me humble."

### **Strong Fatherly Influence**

Ward has been a child of God since he was 9. His father, Frank, himself a former light heavyweight boxer, introduced him to Christ.

"My dad took me to church and he explained to me what it meant to be saved," Ward said. "I accepted Christ into my heart. At that time, I was a young kid and didn't know how often you had to do it. I'd go up periodically in children's church just to make sure it stuck.

"But, early on in life, my dad did a tremendous job of giving me and my brother Jonathan a foundation for Jesus. It has truly stuck with me."

### **A Burgeoning Career**

Ward started boxing at age 10 in 1994 and fashioned a record of 115–5 as an amateur. From 1998 to 2004, he didn't lose a match, becoming the U.S. National middleweight champion in 2001 and 2003.

Frank Ward, however, didn't get to see Andre win his gold medal in the Olympics in Athens, Greece, in 2004. He didn't get to see his son fight professionally, either. He died in 2002 at age 46 of a heart attack.

"My dad was the strongest man in the world in my opinion. So, I wondered how he was gone," Andre said. "In my mind, he is supposed to be here."

Determined to carry on his father's legacy as a strong Christian, Ward dedicated his life and career to the Lord. In his professional debut in December 2004, he defeated Chris Molina in the second round by a technical knockout.

Ward was so impressive in his next 14 fights that he secured a WBO/NABO Super Middleweight title bout with Jerson Ravelo in June 2008. He won by a TKO in the eighth round.

"When you first get that call that you're going to get a title shot, it's pure joy because it means you've finally broken through," Ward said. "To accomplish that goal and then actually win the title, man, it's amazing. It's something that can never be taken away from you no matter what you do the rest of your professional career."

After four WBO/NABO title defenses, Ward earned an opportunity to fight for the WBA Super Middleweight championship. In his own hometown in November 2009, he defeated Mikkel Kessler to win the crown with an 11th-round technical decision.

He went on to win the WBC and *Ring Magazine* Super Middleweight championships in December 2011 in the SHOWTIME Super Six World Boxing Classic Final with a 12-round unanimous decision over Carl Froch.

### **Trainer Virgil Hunter**

When Frank Ward passed away, Virgil Hunter, Andre's trainer, took it upon himself to become Andre's mentor, both athletically and spiritually. Hunter wanted to ensure that

Frank's hopes and dreams for his son would be realized, and that he stayed on a straight path.

"Without a doubt, Andre's father laid a strong spiritual foundation for him to follow," Hunter said. "As a Christian, it was given for me to add to the foundation that Frank was building. By the time he passed, the mold was set, and Andre continued to blossom from there.

"Andre truly loves God and has a desire to please Him. That desire is overflowing from his heart and his soul. That's what makes him special at this stage in his life. You can see it in him as a parent; you can see it in him as an athlete; and you can see it in him as a future leader. He will be a leader in the future no matter what capacity he is in."

### **Going to the Well**

Ward and his wife, Tiffiney, and their four children, Andre Jr. (11), Malachi (9), Amira (3) and their new baby, Micah (born in June) faithfully attend The Well Church in Dublin, Calif. The church is pastored by former Oakland Raiders running back Napoleon Kaufman, who went into the ministry in 2003 after retiring from football.

Among other capacities, Ward serves as an usher and an altar worker at The Well Church.

"Dre is such a blessing. The media really needs to promote a guy like him because he is such a great example for kids today," said Kaufman, who spent six seasons with the Raiders and rushed for nearly 5,000 yards during his career. "In the eight years that I have known him, I have seen him mature tremendously as a Christian, as a man, a husband, a father and a servant of God. He's a tremendous blessing to our church."

As a former athlete, Kaufman knows well the lure of worldly pleasures that are available to him. Ward has been able to skirt the temptations just as Kaufman did.

“He has such a great support system around him,” Kaufman said. “Dre has a lot of advisers, including Virgil Hunter, that keep him grounded. He listens, and he understands that there is no bigger star in this world than Jesus.

“Dre is a God-fearing man that refuses to compromise his character. Being in the limelight hasn’t gotten to him. He’s letting his light shine before men. He is very confident in his identity.”

Indeed, humility appears to be one of Ward’s stronger characteristics. While the world may think he has every reason to be cocky and arrogant, he has not allowed his fame and fortune to go to his head.

Even high praises from boxing great Sugar Ray Leonard, one of the greatest the sport has ever seen, weren’t enough to make his ego swell. Leonard has been quoted as saying, “Without question, Andre Ward is a winner.”

“I really appreciate that,” Ward said. “I haven’t accomplished a fraction of what Ray has as a professional. For him to give me some sort of positive feedback, it really means a lot. I cherish those words, but I have to keep pushing forward and working hard.”

### **A Proud Olympian**

Ward recently spent time in London at the Olympics. No American fighter won a gold medal in London, and Ward remains the most recent American to win gold.

“For me, that’s bittersweet,” Ward said. “It’s obviously sweet that I’ve won my gold in representing my country in 2004. It was a 10-year goal just to reach the Olympics, and to get there and win was unbelievable. I don’t think it’s anything that will ever be superseded, even in my professional career.

“But, it’s bitter because I feel like the United States of America has some of the best talent in the world. We need to

figure out where the holes are in our game and tighten those things up so that the U.S. can be a force to be reckoned with in boxing as it once was.”

### **Temporary Setback**

After winning the undisputed super middleweight title in 2009, Ward tore his ACL in a pick-up basketball game. His first thoughts were filled with the fear that his boxing career was finished.

But, realizing that God is the ultimate healer, Ward turned to Isaiah 53:5: “But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for iniquities ... And by His stripes, we are healed.”

“I knew God wasn’t finished with me yet,” Ward said. “We found a great surgeon, and I was back in literally five months. I didn’t lose anything; any agility, any speed. Obviously, I’m here for a reason, and that’s what fuels me to keep doing what I’m doing.”

### **Quiet Time With God**

Ward doesn’t have any pre-fight rituals. As a Christian, he doesn’t believe in superstition; he doesn’t have a rabbit’s foot nor does he carry a four-leaf clover.

Routinely, once he has taken care of his pre-bout media obligations, Ward returns home from training camp to spend time with his family and with the Lord. His most relaxing and enjoying time is taking simple walks and talking with God.

“I just let Him know how dependent upon Him I am, and how much I need Him,” Ward said. “I want Him to know how thankful I am to be doing what I’m doing. I encourage myself in the Lord by reading His Word daily. That’s very important to me.”

### **Leaving a Lasting Legacy**

Ward believes he still has not hit his prime as a professional boxer. But he also knows that his championship reign—and his

career—are in God’s hands and that that both could end at any time.

“I believe Andre has much more to go. This is just the beginning,” Hunter said.

No matter what happens on Saturday, however, Ward believes God is firmly in control of his destiny.

“I know my career is still going strong. But I also hope that people can say, when it’s all said and done, that I fought and was successful against the best in the world while never doing anything to disrespect the sport of boxing,” Ward said. “I would hope that people would say that I was a class act inside and outside the ring. I never want to be a fighter that anyone can say never reached his potential because he didn’t give it all he had.

“But most of all, I want to be someone that God is pleased with daily. I’m not a perfect individual and I truly want to do things the right way, God’s way. I want to be someone who gives his best and does everything in his power to live according to the Word. If I do that, then I won’t have anything to apologize for.”

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## War with the Word

**While culture wars may rage, the new *Spiritual Warfare Bible* helps to equip believers for engaging in the true battle**

America is more divided than ever. How often have you heard that declaration in recent months? From the presidential election to the aftermath of Trayvon Martin’s death to heated debates over health care, the cultural mantra has become that

we are a divided people—politically, racially, economically and spiritually. As a result, we make certain public figures out to be Enemy No. 1.


Discerning prayer warriors, however, know that we fight an unseen enemy whose tactics extend far beyond political, social or moral divisions. Ephesians 6:12 tells us, “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.”

Like it or not, spiritual warfare surrounds us—and the enemy is on the attack. We see the aftermath of his assault throughout our nation: an epidemic of pornography and sexual addictions; nearly 55 million babies legally murdered since 1973; radical same-sex agendas that have legalized gay marriage in six states and made homosexuality a cultural norm; increasing restriction on religious freedom.

For many Christians, however, the most pressing war in the spirit realm is fought less on a national front than on the everyday battlefield of the mind, heart and home. We need every weapon and tool we can find to combat the raging spiritual warfare that inundates our daily existence.

Ron Phillips, senior pastor of Abba’s House, a Spirit-filled Southern Baptist church in Hixson, Tenn., has found an effective tool for every Christian in defeating Satan’s lies and deception: the *Spiritual Warfare Bible*, a unique study Bible released by Charisma House and specifically crafted to address the unseen battle of the spirit realm.

“This Bible is the first to address the invisible spiritual conflict that all believers face,” Phillips says. “It is without a doubt the best new study Bible for serious praying believers. This wonderful work instructs every believer in how to wield the sword of the Spirit.”

Using the New King James translation, the *Spiritual Warfare Bible*  is designed to help individuals use the Word to access the power of the Holy Spirit against demonic strongholds and activity including addictions, anger, anxiety, bitterness, confusion, deception, depression, fear, greed, grief, mental illness, the occult, rebellion, sexual sins and unbelief.

Jim Raley, senior pastor of Calvary Christian Center in Daytona Beach, Fla., and a contributor to the study Bible, says he frequently uses his for his Sunday sermons.

“Spiritual warfare is a reality that we deal with every day,” he says. “What’s amazing is that many Christians don’t acknowledge that it does exist. This Bible gives you sound strategies that enable you to overcome the enemy and equips warriors for spiritual warfare.”

### **This Means War!**

Though spiritual warfare was downplayed for years in western churches as something only priests or ministers engaged in, God’s Word teaches us that every believer should enlist in the battle. In Mark 16:17, Jesus commissioned believers to cast out devils in His name. In Luke 10:1-19, the 70 disciples—representative of all Christians—were dispersed and armed with that authority. In John 16:13, Jesus reinforced that the Holy Spirit has been sent to lead us and guide into all truth. In 1 John 4:1-3, we are taught how to identify spirits that are not of God. And 1 Peter 5:9 instructs us to resist the devil and stand firm in our faith.

With the release of groundbreaking spiritual warfare books such as *This Present Darkness* by Frank Peretti, American churches began to open their eyes to the realities of the supernatural realm. Though hundreds of books have since been penned on spiritual warfare, the *Spiritual Warfare Bible* is the first of its kind and features more than 250 declarations

and prayers to help believers stand on God's promises when the "enemy comes in like a flood" (Is. 59:19). Along with character profiles, interactive studies and topical warfare prayers, the Bible includes more than 220 "Warfare Basics"—Scripture-based tips that can be applied during everyday spiritual battles.

Among the highlights are study materials from charismatic leaders and best-selling authors including John Bevere, Jentezen Franklin, Francis Frangipane, Judy Jacobs, Fuchsia Pickett, Chuck Pierce, John Eckhardt and Bill Wiese.

Biblical counselor Kristine McGuire of Caledonia, Mich., has used the *Spiritual Warfare Bible* since its release and is already recommending it to others as a "wonderful resource ... that is definitely an important edition to own and use."

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) user Mike Harris took his accolades a step further: "This Bible is a masterpiece, well put together in dealing with spiritual warfare. Its notes and cross references are very well intertwined. This will be a welcome edition to many seminary students and those who follow Jesus day by day in a world that is truly involved in warfare."

It's true: While our nation seems more engaged now than ever in a culture war, the spiritual war between the kingdoms of light and darkness is also escalating. As warriors of God's kingdom, we are assured a day in which we can say "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord" (Rev. 11:15). Until then, tools such as the *Spiritual Warfare Bible* equip us with the "weapons of our warfare" to help in the present-day battles of "pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

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# Saint Street

**(Bridgestone Multimedia Group)**

Personal redemption isn't an original concept when it comes to Christmas movies. *It's a Wonderful Life*—the king of Christmas films—and the original *A Christmas Carol* were the forerunners for movies with such a message. However, Bridgestone Media's new *Saint Street* is a Christmas tale about second chances that can serve as a solid complement to your Christmas turkey and pumpkin pie.

The film stars Mark Webb as Percy, a man so caught up in the rat race of life that he begins to neglect what should matter to him most: his family. (Again, not a new concept, but the movie progresses well. A car accident tragically takes Percy's family and leaves him paralyzed. Adding insult to injury, he then loses his job and house, forcing him to re-evaluate his life—now as a homeless person—and lack of faith in God. Like Ebenezer Scrooge before him, Percy finally sees the light and changes his ways, with a little danger and intrigue along the way. Jasen Wade co-stars as a mysterious stranger that appears from time to time in Percy's life to help get him on the straight and narrow path.

Like *It's a Wonderful Life* and *A Christmas Carol*, the movie ends on a familiar feel-good note. Then again, films about faith, hope and redemption usually do.

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# Kenny Luck Ignites Sleeping Giant Movement to Wake Up Christian Men

For years, Kenny Luck has witnessed Men's Ministry in local churches leaving men unengaged and unfulfilled. The best-selling author's heart is to see that trend cease.

Luck, an ECPA platinum award-winning author of the God's Man and Every Man Series and pastor of Men at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, has launched the definitive website for Christian men in conjunction with the Sleeping Giant Total Solution, a proven Men's Ministry model.

[EverymanMinistries.com](http://EverymanMinistries.com) has ignited a grassroots movement from within that equips the local church to use modern technology to create a spiritual phenomenon: Strong men of God who will look to impact their families and the culture around them.

"Men's Ministry in the church has been broken for years," Luck said. "It has left a church body suffering from absentee men or those involved in merely token attendance. Ultimately, the missing men of God have left a deep hole in culture around the world.

"With the emergence of the Sleeping Giant Total Solution, we are now watching the global evolution of Men's Ministry, which has been dormant for too long. Thankfully, once again, Men's Ministry is becoming culturally visible.

Sleeping Giant, which has been endorsed by pastors, churches, denominational leaders and men's ministry organizations representing more than 100,000 churches in North America alone, has four main objectives for men:

- GET IN—Joining other men in a strong and resonating

local spiritual community

- GET HEALTHY—Winning transformation spiritually, relationally and morally.
- GET STRONG—Building a life of faith solid as a rock and developing into a solid spiritual leader and disciple.
- GET GOING—Deploying into service locally in the church and globally to bring justice.

“Men’s Ministry has been waiting 20 years for this,” said Randy Phillips, former president of Promise Keepers and men’s pastor at Life Church Austin in Texas. “Every Man Ministries and Sleeping Giant are providing the flame for the next generation of leadership to ignite a new movement of men within the local church.

“Kenny Luck has produced a transferable and proven model, which is easily accessible and affordable for every church. The Sleeping Giant Total Solution is going to expand the capacity of the local church to reach and develop its men in a strategic and revolutionary way not seen before because it is uniquely built to drive the vision of the senior pastor.”

[EveryManMinistries.com](http://EveryManMinistries.com) includes unique features such as a search function embedded across various sections of the site and in the Media Vault channel to allow men, pastors or lay leaders to search for answers, to ask a question, and to receive and answer. The site also features a blog from Luck, Doug Fields, J.P. Jones and other men’s leaders aligned with the Sleeping Giant movement. Men can also sign up for a weekly newsletter.

To celebrate their launch of its new website, Every Man Ministries is giving away a free video session to anyone interested in being a part of this new movement. For a limited time, men and men’s leaders can claim their free video by visiting clicking [here](#).

In addition, Every Man Ministries has entered into a content

partnership with Charisma Media and its New Man website. Visit [charismamag.com/life/men](http://charismamag.com/life/men).

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## Blind Author Sees Perfectly With God's Grace

Physically, Tom Sullivan has been blind since birth. Throughout his life, however, the well-known 65-year-old author/entertainer has witnessed God's grace and mercy to its fullest extent.

In his latest book *As I See It*, Sullivan explains how God helped him to see things from the inside out instead of the outside in. It has allowed him to find inner peace while coming to grips with his blindness.

"Most people live in a world in which they are looking at how others affect them, rather than how they affect others," said Sullivan, who lists television shows like *M\*A\*S\*H*, *WKRP in Cincinnati* to his acting credits along with a seven-year stint as a reporter on ABC's *Good Morning America*.

"What matters is, am I operating in God's likeness by taking a loving look at other people I meet? That's how I have tried to live. It sounds cliché, but I was once blind and now I see."

Sullivan admits his blindness produced a strong bitterness toward God early on. It disappeared after he was radically saved in 1973, shortly after his then 3-year-old daughter, Blythe, fell into the family swimming pool.

Sullivan, who was distracted by a phone call, dove into the pool but couldn't find his daughter. After crying out to God

for help, he heard air bubbles, then went down nine feet to found Blythe and was able to resuscitate her.

“I just looked up at heaven and asked, ‘How can this happen?’ Sullivan said. “You’ve given me everything—the girl of my dreams, a Harvard education and two beautiful children—and this child is going to die and it’s my fault? I told him if he would grant me this miracle, I would give Him my life.

“I heard the air bubbles. Anyone else wouldn’t have heard them; not because they couldn’t, but because they just wouldn’t. Miracles happen when ordinary people like you and me, through grace, do extraordinary things.”

Sullivan’s bride of 41 years, Patty, helped him to discover his faith.

“Tom is the most extraordinary man of passion, intelligence, and kindness that God could have gifted me with as my husband and best friend in life,” she said.

Sullivan engages in many activities that people of sight take for granted. He regularly enjoys downhill skiing and averages 90 for an 18-hole round of golf.

These days, he can be found on the lecture circuit, where he never misses an opportunity to tell others about Jesus.

“I’ve made the decision to articulate and witness my faith in front of these companies,” he said. “It’s not always favorably received by some companies because they say this isn’t the place for it. But, I’ve chosen to do it anyway. You have to keep putting it out there. That’s front-line faith.”

Sullivan wouldn’t see it any other way.