

Andre Ward's Fight for God

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

As a child of God—who just happens to be the undisputed WBA/WBC/*Ring Magazine* super middleweight boxing champion of the world—Ward says his motives are pure every time he steps into the ring and that he's simply doing the job with which the Lord blessed him.

"It's a heart condition," says 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.

"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."

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 has yet to be defeated as a professional. The former Olympic gold medalist also was named *Sports Illustrated* and *Ring Magazine's* Fighter of the Year for 2011.

Above all these accolades, however, Ward is grateful for how his status as a successful athlete has allowed him to become an effective witness for Jesus Christ and a role model for youngsters. His mantra, . (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."