

Boxing Champ 'Pac-Man' Pacquiao a Fighter for the Faith

Philippine boxing champ Manny "Pac-Man" Pacquiao is now telling the world about the true champion of his life: God.

The Boxing Writer's Association of America named Pacquiao "Fighter of the Decade." In his 17-year career, he fought his way to the top, becoming the first eight-division boxing champ of the world.

But fame and fortune didn't come easy for "Pac-Man."

His parents separated when he was in elementary school. And extreme poverty forced him to leave home and find a job in Manila at age 13 to support his family.

For a time, Pacquiao lived on the streets. He sold flowers and worked in construction sites just to survive.

But his difficult life dramatically changed when, at age 16, he landed a spot on the Philippine national amateur boxing team.

A Great Fall

The world soon witnessed Pacquiao conquer every opponent in the boxing ring. But as his boxing career soared, he succumbed to temptations that pounded heavily on him.

"I went to church on Sunday, but from Monday to Saturday, I was in the bar drinking," he recalled. "I was gambling. Careless words came out of my mouth. I committed adultery. I didn't care."

Pacquiao said he felt the guilt of his sins when he started reading the Word of God. He also remembered hearing God's

voice in a dream several years before.

"I remember that night when I received a letter from my mother saying that my sister stopped going to school because I was not sending them money," he said.

"And I was crying, blaming myself for spending all my money on alcohol," he said.

"On that night I heard the voice of God in my dream. His voice was 10 times louder than thunder and he said to me, 'My child, my child, why have you gone astray?'" Pacquiao continued.

He said he forgot about the dream until he read in the Bible how God talked to man through dreams.

"So I realized, 'Wow! My dream was real,'" Pacquiao said.

Champion for Christ

From there, Pacquiao started a deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now, he studies the Bible everyday, memorizing verses because he believes the word of God is his weapon against temptation.

"The old Manny Pacquiao has gone. The new Manny Pacquiao has come," he said. "I have the Word of God in my heart. I want to obey his commands."

Pacquiao said he believes Jesus is coming soon. He said he grabs every opportunity to spread the gospel because he believes God uses him and other famous Christian athletes, like Tim Tebow and Jeremy Lin, to draw people to God.

"This is the right time to spread His words. People are idolizing us. Whatever words come out from our mouth, they will listen, they will believe," Pacquiao said.

Pastor Jeric Soriano is Pacquiao's spiritual mentor.

"These men—Tim Tebow, Jeremy Lin, Manny Pacquiao—these are

God's billboards for the world to watch," Soriano said.

"God is saying these men's lives have been touched by the kingdom for the good, for the better," he continued. "What about you? You like what's happening in their lives. They're honoring God with what they're doing. Fine, but what about you?"

I really believe we're in the last days and God is using these world champions to reach out to the lost," Soriano said.

Fulfilled Life

Pacquiao may retire from boxing soon.

"I'm OK because I am satisfied," he said of his career ending. "I'm happy right now to read His words and meditate on it day and night."

Pacquiao said he feels this will help him win his ultimate fight: conquering evil and glorifying God in his life.

"In Matthew 10:22 [it says], 'You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved,'" Pacquiao said.

"When you accept Jesus Christ in your life as your Lord and Savior, you have eternal life," he added. "And you obey. You obey His commandments."