

Eddie, The 25 Year Reunion

Chapter Five Self Defense

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The next Sunday, the entire tribe gets together to hear Adekunle Akinmola's sermon on self defense. Eddie and the tribe, however, all knew ahead of time exactly what Adekunle is going to talk about.

Walking through the door into the narthex, Eddie asks those around him, "does anyone see McCutchen?" Looking into the sanctuary, Mark replies, "there he is. He's sitting right up in front." Eddie suggests, "let's sit on the other side, a few rows behind him." Kathy agrees, stating, "yeah. I don't want to sit anywhere near him." Echoing the sentiment, Paula replies, "you got that right, girl." Paula never did like McCutchen, and probably never will. And, she has absolutely no problem expressing it.

Just then, the organist can be heard playing the prelude to the service, Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, composed by J.S. Bach. Mark comments, "the organ sounds really good." Kathy replies, "Milana really likes Bach. It's hard to get her to play anything else on the organ. On her keyboard, though, she plays all of her generation's music." Mark asks, "does she play any of our music?" Kathy replies, "at first, no. But, she's rediscovered the music of our generation."

Following the prelude, Adekunle Akinmola walks up and, standing in front of the altar, opens the service by announcing, "good morning, my brethren." The congregation responds in unison, "good morning." Adekunle replies, "it looks like we have standing room only today. Will the ushers please find some folding chairs so that everyone may have a seat." Apparently, Adekunle was not expecting such a grand turn out this morning. The ushers get to work procuring additional seating as the first hymn is sung.

Following the opening hymn, Dr. Akinmola opens the service with a prayer. As a few announcements are made, Eddie looks over at McCutchen, whose wandering eyes catches Eddie's eye. Eddie smiles, and McCutchen turns back around.

Adekunle announces, "our scripture reading for this morning comes from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Please turn in your Bible to Ephesians, chapter six. I will begin reading at verse ten."

Adekunle reads, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Following Adekunle's reading of scripture, the elders approach the altar, obtaining the offering plates. On the organ, Milana plays a hymn, accompanied by a soloist. During the hymn, Kathy whispers to Eddie, asking, "who is the soloist? She's really good!" Eddie looks at the Order of Worship, and whispers back, "her name is Veda Galanis. Hmm. I wonder if she's related to Angelo." Kathy replies, "no! It can't be. It just can't be." Eddie asks, "what are you talking about, Katarina?" Kathy whispers back, "Veda is the name of the girl from the University that Athena beat when she applied for a scholarship." Eddie asks, "how old is Athena now?" Kathy replies, "she's in her mid sixties." Eddie replies, "that would be about right. I mean, like, there's not a whole lot of women named Veda in the world." Kathy whispers to Eddie, "I'm definitely going to find out after the service."

During the offering, as somewhat expected, Mark whispers to Eddie, "check it out, bro. McCutchen is looking through the offering plate again." Looking in McCutchen's direction, Eddie sees McCutchen examining what was placed in the offering plate. Eddie whispers to Mark, "he's probably taking something out instead of putting something in." Glad to see that the offering plate has already passed by McCutchen, Eddie gives his offering knowing that, this time, it will not be inspected by McCutchen.

The elders walk up the center aisle, and place the offering upon the altar. Next, taking the bread and wine for communion from the altar, the elders distribute the elements to the congregation. Once the elders return to their position in front of the altar, Adekunle proclaims, "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'this is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" The congregation eats the bread, followed by Adekunle proclaiming, "In the same way He also took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" Finishing Holy Communion, Adekunle proclaims, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

The service eventually comes to the sermon, with many interested to hear what Adekunle has to say today. The word has gotten out to many of the infrequent attenders that the sermon will address self defense. Sounding like a departure from the normal Sunday morning sermon, today's topic has spawned a lot of interest.

Adekunle begins, preaching, "today, my friends, I am going to instruct you in the art of self defense. Many of you need to hear what I am going to say today, some of you more than others. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, be rest assured that Satan and his army wants to destroy you. If you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, well, my friend, Satan doesn't need to waste his time attacking you because you already belong to him. That presents even a bigger problem, which I will be speaking about tonight.

In the book of First Peter, in chapter 5, verses 8 through 10, we read, 'Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.'

Notice that Peter states, 'After you have suffered for a little while'. Peter does not state, 'should you happen to suffer.' or 'in the event that you suffer.' If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, at some point, you will suffer. Make no mistake about it. You will suffer for His name's sake.

We will also, at this moment, look in the book of James, chapter one, verses 2 through 4, which reads, 'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that

you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.’ A little farther down in the chapter, in verse 12, we read, ‘Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.’

Please take note that James, the half brother of Jesus, states ‘Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials. James does not say, ‘if you should encounter various trials.’ Just like Peter indicated, you will encounter trials in your life.

Also, in the book of Philippians, chapter 1, verse 29, we read, ‘For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.’ What could be more clear? To you, it has been granted to suffer for Christ’s sake. Consider it strong evidence of your salvation when you suffer for His sake.

My point is this, my friends. If you are a Christian, trials are inevitable. If you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, suffering is inevitable. The good news for you today is that Jesus has already won the battle through His death and resurrection. All we have to do is believe God and stand firm in that victory.

When we are under attack physically, we must defend ourselves physically. If you’ve ever been in the position of being physically attacked, you probably did not just stand there and take it. If you are to be successful during a physical attack, you will have to deliver to your attacker greater force than was delivered to you. If you have any question about that, please ask our resident expert, Brother Mitchell, who is now a sixth-level black belt.”

McCutchen comfortably sits back, now expecting that Akinmola’s sermon will be on physical self defense. Perhaps McCutchen will finally learn how to defend himself against Mark’s witty attacks.

Akinmola continues, stating, “likewise, my brethren, when we are under attack spiritually, we must defend ourselves spiritually. When Satan attacks it is usually a deliberate and calculated attack to stop us from accomplishing God’s will in and for our lives. Satan’s objectives are well defined. Satan wants to draw us away from God in any way he can, thereby preventing us from accomplishing God’s will in our lives.

But, you have a problem. You cannot defeat Satan and his army on your own. You don’t have that power. Let me explain something. In the book of Revelation, in chapter 7, verse 1 we read, ‘After this, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the Earth, holding back the four winds of the Earth so that no wind would blow on the Earth, or on the

sea, or on any tree.’ Let me ask you this. Can you hold back the winds of the Earth? Let me help you with the answer. The answer is no. If you can’t hold back the winds of the Earth, which is a trivial manner to God or the angels, how do you expect to defeat Satan and his army on your own? Today, I will instruct you on how to defend yourself during a spiritual attack.”

McCutchen sits back, realizing that Eddie was correct in the sense that Akinmola will be talking about self defense today. McCutchen turns around, sternly looking at Eddie. Never really expecting McCutchen to attend church today, Eddie smiles. Eddie now is quite certain that McCutchen is still investigating him for something. Or, perhaps, while McCutchen is sitting in church monitoring Eddie’s every move, Brad Evans is over at Eddie’s Service Station, figuring out a way to break in and steal the monthly stock tips report.

Continuing with his sermon, Adekunle states, “now, my friends, exactly how do we handle a spiritual attack? The answer can be found not only in the verses that we’ve already read today, but also in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, in chapter 6, verses 10 through 13, which was read during our scripture reading this morning. I will now go through these verses one by one, giving you the tools you need to resist Satan’s attack.

Paul begins this passage in Ephesians by stating, ‘Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.’ The first thing I want you to notice is that the armor Paul is speaking of is not your armor. It is God’s armor. What can be better to resist a spiritual attack than God’s armor? And, this verse states, ‘be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.’ It is the Lord’s strength, not your own strength, that will get you through any trials.

Now, to be successful in a spiritual attack, you must also know who your enemy is. Paul stated, ‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.’ Your true enemy is in the spiritual realm, and not walking on the face of the Earth. When a person attacks you, my friend, or opposes your Christian beliefs and lies about you, you must recognize the real enemy behind these attacks. The enemy is Satan, and Satan and his army are working through the person attacking you.”

Suddenly in anguish by something Akinmola said, McCutchen makes his way through toward the aisle, clearly ready to leave the service.

Akinmola ignores McCutchen, and continues with his sermon. Finally making it to the end of the pew, McCutchen makes his way toward the rear of the sanctuary.

Making a sudden stop on his trek to the door, McCutchen points at Paula, screaming out, “she’s the enemy! It’s her! That’s the one! Get her out of here! She’s the enemy!” Everyone in the congregation turns toward the outburst, as Akinmola announces, “will some of the gentlemen in the congregation please address this interruption.” Akinmola, obviously, was referring to the tribe, who quickly goes into action, quietly apprehending McCutchen and escorting him out of the sanctuary.

Grabbing McCutchen’s arm, and placing it into an arm lock, Mark whispers to McCutchen, “we’re going for a walk, junior.” Mark, along with Eddie and Bobby B., escort McCutchen to the rear door. Fighting with Mark, McCutchen is heard screaming, “it’s her! Get her out of here!” Mark tightens the arm lock, causing McCutchen to scream out in pain.

Kathy whispers to Paula, “if I had to take a wild guess, I’d say McCutchen definitely has a problem with you.” Paula replies, “and, if I had to take a wild guess, I’d say McCutchen is demon possessed.” Paula never liked McCutchen from the day she met him. Aware of that fact, McCutchen always watched Paula closely.

Once McCutchen is removed from the service, Akinmola continues his sermon, deviating from his original outline, stating, “that was a perfect example, my friends, of what I was speaking about. Can you identify the enemy? The enemy is not necessarily the gentlemen that was just escorted out, but satanic and demonic forces working through him.”

In response to Akinmola’s last statement, Kathy whispers to Paula, “yeah. I’d say. There’s just something not quite right about McCutchen.” Paula whispers back, “yeah. Like I said, he’s demon possessed. And, that’s on a good day.” Kathy comments, whispering, “it’s all the drugs he’s been taking over the years.” Paula whispers back, “it’s more than drugs, girl. That guy is seriously deranged.” Kathy whispers to Paula, “maybe he grew up on Second Street.” Paula, who as a child, used to think the boogie man lived on Second Street, whispers back, “stop it, girl! We’re in church!” Kathy smiles, knowing where every one of Paula’s buttons are.

Outside, behind the church, Mark asks McCutchen, “what was that all about back there, junior?” McCutchen exclaims, “let me go!” During McCutchen’s temper tantrum, Mark asks Eddie, “where are we taking

him?” Handing over McCutchen, Eddie tells Bobby B., “restrain him for a minute.” Bobby B. takes hold of McCutchen, placing him in an arm lock, as Eddie and Mark step aside to discuss the plan.

Returning with three stones to form a makeshift portal, Eddie is true to his word about taking care of certain problematic people in an esoteric manner. Eddie carefully positions the three rocks, surrounding Mark, Bobby B., and McCutchen, then entering the portal himself. In the portal, Mark tells Bobby B., “hold him there. I’m going to knock his scrawny ass out. Then, Eddie is going to use his gyrophone and implant memories in his brain.” Eddie tells Mark, “you’re beginning to sound like Braden.” Mark comments, “the only problem I see here is that McCutchen ain’t got no brain. How’s that for sounding like Braden?” Mark then pretends to give McCutchen a solid uppercut to the jaw, as Eddie announces to the portal, “my senior year at the high school track, behind the storage building, during the track meet with Centerville.”

McCutchen, along with his three escorts, are transported back in time to the Spring of Eddie’s senior year. During this meet, Eddie was not competing on the track, for he left school due to an altercation with Mr. Crum. Eddie’s counterpart from that time could be found standing next to the storage building, and later in the stands, watching the meet.

Mark tells McCutchen, “if you make a sound, junior, you’re dead meat.” Suddenly alarmed at his new surroundings, McCutchen screams out, asking, “where are we?” Mark replies, “Eddie used his gyrophone to bring you back in time and plant memories in your head. We’re at a track meet. That’s you, getting out of the bus and headed to the Centerville bench with the rest of your losing team.” Not taking Mark’s advice to be quiet, in shock, McCutchen asks, “what? How did I get here?” Mark tells McCutchen, “I knocked you out, you idiot. You’re unconscious. You’re not allowed to talk. When you’re unconscious, and you talk, you could end up in a coma. We do the talking, junior, not you. Your job is to just stand there, and do nothing. Got it?”

Suddenly walking up to the storage building is Eddie’s counterpart from the past, who just arrived at the meet. Recognizing his future self from his trips to the future, Eddie’s counterpart exclaims, “wow! What’s going on here?” Eddie tells his counterpart from the past, “this is McCutchen, twenty-five years into the future.” Eddie’s counterpart laughs, commenting, “wow! This is McCutchen? It looks like he’s way out of shape!” Mark comments, “he never was in shape.” Eddie’s counterpart laughs, and replies, “good point. My mistake.” While Bobby B. restrains McCutchen, Eddie takes his counterpart from the past aside, explaining the entire situation to him, along with a few other items of interest.

Mark, Eddie, and Bobby B. force McCutchen to watch the entire track meet from behind the storage building, pointing out that, in every race, the Centerville runners lose. When the 100-yard dash is underway, Eddie's counterpart mentions to Eddie, "I never remembered anything like this happening in the past." Eddie replies, "something probably changed along the way." Catching on, Eddie's counterpart replies, "yeah. I totally get it. Back then, Bobby B. didn't know about the portal either."

Sometime after he graduated from the University, Eddie went back in time to when he was in high school, and told his counterpart to explain the portal to the rest of the tribe. That event, in itself, could explain numerous changes in the time line.

Once the sprints are over, Eddie watches as Mr. Crum approaches his counterpart in the stands. Eddie is amazed that the chronically irate principal manages to make a fool of himself at every opportunity. What Eddie did not see 25 years ago is that everyone nearby in the stands momentarily has their focus on Mr. Crum complaining to Eddie rather than on the track meet.

During the one-mile run, Eddie and Mark step aside again, discussing the plan for when they return to their proper place in time. They will fill Bobby B. in, who is busy restraining McCutchen, with the details when they get the chance.

At the end of the meet, Eddie tells McCutchen, "so far, junior, your team has lost every event. Now, you're going to get your ass kicked in the 4 by 440 relay." McCutchen, somewhat in a daze, replies, "I must be dreaming or something." Mark reminds McCutchen, "you're not dreaming, junior. I knocked you out. Remember? How else would you have gotten here?" Eddie tells Mark, "maybe he died when you hit him." Mark smiles, and replies, "that could be." Purely to confuse McCutchen, Eddie tells Mark, "well, one thing's for sure. The gyrophone is definitely working. This new model is far better than the old one." Presented with a serious dilemma, McCutchen wonders whether he is even still alive. After all, the last he knew, he was in church.

Once the meet is over, Eddie tells McCutchen, "okay, junior. We're going to wake you up now. And, remember, you dreamed this whole thing when you got knocked out. None of it ever happened." Escorting McCutchen back through the portal, the group is returned to their proper place in time.

Behind the church, as Eddie disposes of the three stones, Mark tells McCutchen, "maybe it's time that you go home, junior. It looks like you

kind of had a rough day.” McCutchen exclaims, “what happened? How did I get back here?” Eddie asks Mark, “what is he talking about?” McCutchen exclaims, “the track meet! We were just at a track meet at your high school!” Bobby B. asks, “we were? Really? Who won?” Eddie tells Bobby B., “if we were at a track meet at our high school, bro, we won.” Bobby B. replies, “oh, yeah. That’s right.”

Not making any sense at all of the situation, McCutchen exclaims, “hey! Let me go!” Bobby B. releases McCutchen, asking him, “where are you going?” McCutchen exclaims, “I’m going to call the police!” Eddie instructs McCutchen, “go ahead, junior. I’m sure Richard is waiting for your call.” Mark comments, “yeah. With a bus ready to take him off to the psycho ward.” McCutchen runs away, heads to his car, and makes himself scarce. It will probably take McCutchen a few days to make sense out of what happened today, if that is even possible. And, to be sure, the last place McCutchen will ever be seen is walking into the police department.

Walking back into the service, Eddie, Mark, and Bobby B. take a seat with their wives. Not seeing McCutchen return with the guys, Akinmola, in mid sermon, knows that McCutchen has been taken care of.

As Akinmola continues his sermon on self defense, Kathy asks Eddie, “what did you do with McCutchen?” Eddie explains, “we took him back in time, and watched the Centerville meet during my senior year.” Kathy asks, “why then?” Eddie replies, “because I wanted to watch Crum waddle around, wondering why I’m not competing in the meet.” Kathy laughs, albeit very quietly.

After the service, the tribe hangs out together outside, where Eddie and Mark explain how McCutchen was disposed of. Should anyone in the tribe see McCutchen in the future, they all agree to ask him if he’s been at any track meets recently.

While the guys are hanging out and talking, Kathy searches for Veda Galanis, today’s soloist. Finding her speaking with Milana, Kathy walks up and announces, “you two were really great!” Milana replies, “thanks, mom.” Introducing herself, Kathy tells Veda, “I’m Milana’s mom, Kathy. I don’t believe we’ve met.” Veda replies, “I’m Veda Galanis. I lived in the area a long, long time ago. I recently moved back from Greece.”

Following a short discussion of the service, Kathy asks Veda, “did you, by any chance, run track at the State University a few miles from here?” Veda replies, “as a matter of fact, I did. Wow! That was a really long time ago.” Kathy lets the hammer down, and asks, “would you then, by chance, know Athena Leighton?” Veda’s eyes brighten up, and

exclaims, "I do! I ran with her at the University! That girl was seriously fast!" Kathy replies, "wow! It's a small world!" Now curious, Veda asks, "how do you know Athena Leighton?" Kathy replies, "we coach track together at the University with George Frazier. I also ran for the University myself about 25 years ago." Veda exclaims, "wow! It really is a small world." Knowing that her mother and Veda will likely have a long conversation, Milana announces, "you guys can talk track. I'm going to get some water." Milana knows that, when her parents start talking track and field, the conversation can go on for hours.

Now that Milana is gone, Veda asks Kathy, "did you ever run under Dr. Braun?" Kathy, who still has a tendency to speak in long, run-on sentences, excitedly explains, "yeah. Dr. Braun was my coach for a few years. And, Dr. Paxton, who you might know, got arrested for supplying performance enhancing drugs and fixing races. Then, after Dr. Paxton got arrested, Dr. Braun retired, and Mr. Frazier was our coach. When Mr. Frazier joined the coaching staff, Coach Herndon, who was a ROTC instructor, resigned. She took the job temporarily, which lasted six years, which is a lot longer than she expected. And so, Mr. Frazier was left with no assistant coaches. That's when Athena stepped in and started coaching." In shock, Veda replies, "wow! Dr. Paxton got arrested. I always thought there was something not quite right about that guy."

Veda asks, "is Dr. Braun still alive?" Kathy replies, "he is. He's like 91 years old now, I think. Eddie keeps Dr. Braun's '56 Chevy running." Veda laughs, and exclaims, "he had that car when I ran for the University! I can't believe he still has it!" Kathy reveals, "Eddie rebuilt that car from top to bottom a few years ago." Veda inquires of Kathy, "do you know where Dr. Braun lives these days?" Kathy replies, "Eddie would have his address. He lives pretty close to Eddie's Service Station, in the area where all the streets are named after colleges." Veda mentions, "I'll definitely have to stop by and see him sometime."

Now quite curious, Kathy asks Veda, "speaking about automobiles, are you, by any chance, related to a mechanic named Angelo Galanis?" Veda replies, "as a matter of fact, I am. I'm married to his brother, George. How do you know Angelo?" Kathy replies, "my husband, Eddie, worked with Angelo a long time ago. When Angelo moved back to Greece, Eddie bought the service station from Angelo." Sounding like a twenty-year old, Veda exclaims, "stop! Shut up! Are you for real? Your husband is Eddie? Eddie, the Mechanic?" Kathy replies, "he is." Showing her excitement, Veda reveals, "Angelo told us some of the stories about what went on over there at the University when Eddie ran track! Some of them were really quite funny. And some were, well, a bit on the unusual side." Recalling her and Eddie's encounters with Dean Grimsby, Kathy replies, "believe me. I know."

Veda asks, "is Eddie here today?" Kathy replies, "he is. He's outside, talking with the guys." Kathy then asks, "would you and George like to go out for lunch with us? We're getting pizza." Veda replies, "George and I would love that!" Kathy and Veda head out, and will certainly have a lot to talk about over lunch.