

In Jesus Steps

Disciples for Life

Unit 2: Christian Leadership

How to positively influence the attitudes and actions of others for Jesus Christ.

Lesson 15 Spiritual Warfare

Day One

War: Physical and Spiritual

As we progress from lesson 14, *Knowing God's Will*, to Lesson 15, *Spiritual Warfare*, there are two things to remember. *First*, we can pray for ourselves and others to know God's will. God delights to answer these prayers because He wants everyone to know Him and follow His plans and purposes.

The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians that his fellow worker, Epaphras (EP uh frass), is always wrestling in prayer for them. Wrestling is a strenuous and demanding activity and thus to wrestle in prayer denotes struggling and exerting effort. The Greek word *agonizomai* (ἀγωνίζομαι), translated *wrestle* in English, is also used in the sense of doing one's best and not giving up.

Read Colossians 4:12 and answer questions 1–2:

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. Colossians 4:12

1. What is Epaphras' prayer for the members of the Colossian church?
2. Have you prayed for others to stand firm in all the will of God? Yes No (Underline One)
3. Commit to wrestle in prayer for one person this week. Pray in the spirit of Epaphras' prayer, *that this person may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured*. Make notes and share about this prayer experience with your discipleship team.

Accountability: Be prepared to share #1–3 with your team.

The *second* thing to remember about knowing God's will is that He wants us to be holy. Holy is defined as being pure, perfect, good, and righteous. It also means being separated from sin and anything that sets itself up against God. As holy believers, we belong to God and His church.

Being part of God's family and church automatically puts us into a state of war with the devil and his forces. The more we seek God's will and holiness, the greater our opposition. Even though the enemy has no real power over believers, he can cause trouble. I think theologian and English Puritan John Owen (1616–1663) was correct when he said:

“There is no duty we perform for God that sin does not oppose and the more spirituality or holiness there is in what we do, the greater the enmity (hostility) to it. Thus, those who seek the most for God experience the strongest opposition.”

Definitions: *War* is a state of open and armed conflict carried on between nations, states or other parties. It is a concentrated effort or campaign to put an end to something considered harmful. A *battle* is an encounter or skirmish (fight) between the opposing forces.

World War II (1939–1945) began with Germany's invasion of Poland. It was the deadliest war that our world has experienced thus far. Over 100 million military personnel were mobilized across continents and over 70 million people died. The majority of the dead were civilians.

The forces or nations were divided into two opposing groups, the Allies and the Axis. For example, the United States joined with the Allies, and Germany was part of the Axis group. They fought against each other in numerous battles and in different countries. There was one war, but many battles.

World War II appeared to be only a physical war—taking place in time and space. However, WWII and all physical wars are also being waged in the spiritual realm. This is a sphere or dominion that lacks material substance—it is not limited by time and space as we know it. The spiritual war that affects nations and individuals is being waged between the forces of God and the forces of Satan.

4. Read Revelation 20:10. In the future, what happens to the devil and his leaders?

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
Revelation 20:10

God has already won the war. Jesus Christ defeated the devil when He died on the cross for the sins of the world. Satan's future is sealed. In spiritual warfare, it is critical to remember that we are fighting against a beaten enemy. However, God allows Satan to do battle and fight until his time on earth is over. Therefore, as a Christian leader and disciple you will encounter many battles against the devil's forces during your lifetime. They may occur individually, nationally, or internationally. No matter the level of your involvement, be on guard—*the battle is real*.

5. What is the longest length of time that a physical war may affect a person's life?

6. How long will a person's life be affected by the spiritual war between God and Satan?

Even if people grew up in a war-torn country, the longest time the physical war could affect them would be their individual life span. According to the United Nations, the average global life is 72.6 years.¹ Barring accidents or illnesses, once we live out our life span—it is over. Death will take a person out of a physical war. However, the spiritual war has ramifications for eternity. The outcome for choosing Jesus is eternal bliss while taking the devil's side is eternal suffering.

Experiencing physical war may seem like hell. Satan is an evil and vicious foe—he unleashes his hatred and hostility whenever and wherever he can. Cambodia's killing fields is a modern-day example.

Sokreaksa S. Himm, author of "Tears of my Soul" shares his story of living in Cambodia during the rule of Marxist dictator Pol Pot and the Khmer communists. A few days after the Khmer Rouge (Red Khmer) claimed victory over capitalism April 17th, 1975, they invited all those associated with the former government to appear before them. All were murdered. This was only the beginning of the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror, turning the "land of paradise" into "killing fields."²

Soon the Khmer Rouge came knocking on everyone's door. Himm's family was moved to a new village where they and everyone else were watched carefully. Spies would lurk around listening to anything they could use to incriminate others. There was little to eat and cruelty—torture or death surrounded them every day.

Himm writes, "It was hard to imagine what could have made ordinary men so cruel, but one young soldier arrested after the war explained how they became so violent."³ When his parents were killed at age nine, the Khmer Rouge soldiers took him in and told him the opposing side had killed his parents and he was to avenge their deaths. At first, he was ordered to kill and did not like it, but after a while he began enjoying it. He killed more than one hundred people.⁴

Pol Pot's plan to create a new master race based on a classless agrarian society resulted in the deaths of 1.7–2.5 million or up to one fourth of all Cambodians. Satan was out to destroy this country and its people. He has acted in similar ways inflaming dictators Mao Zedong (1893–1976), Chinese communist with 49–78 million deaths of his own people, Josef Stalin (1878–1953), Russian communist, 23 Million deaths, and Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), dictator of Germany and leader of the Nazi party with 17 million deaths (six million of these were Jews).⁵

All of these evil dictators were stopped. They are all dead and awaiting God's judgement. Could God have stopped the killing and suffering sooner? Yes—God is sovereign and in control of all. However, we know God is good and these battles and the killing stopped in God's appointed

¹ Max Roser, *Our World in Data, Twice as Long—Life expectancy around the World* <[² Sokreaksa S. Himm, *The Tears of my Soul*, \(Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2006\), 13–14.](https://ourworldindata.org/lifeexpectancy#:~:text=THE%20UNITED%20NATIONS%20ESTIMATE%20A,ANY%20COUNTRY%20BACK%20IN%201950>(ACCESSED 5/21/2022)</p></div><div data-bbox=)

³ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵ Juan Carlos, *Top Ten Most Evil Dictators of All Time*. <<https://www.jcpe.tv/top-ten-most-evil-dictators-of-all-time-in-order-of-kill-count/>>(accessed 5/25/2022).

time. What has transpired in the spiritual world in regard to these physical wars, we do not know. But heaven was not standing still.

Although people cannot normally see what is occurring in the spiritual world, sometimes God allows it. For example, about 850 BC the king of Aram was at war with Israel. In order to help Israel, God would tell His prophet Elisha the king's battle plans. Elisha would then go and tell the king of Israel so that the Israelites were always prepared for battle. The king of Aram learned of the prophet's ability to warn his enemy Israel and immediately sent men to capture him.

Read 2 Kings 6:15–17 and answer questions 7–9:

When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. ¹⁶"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 2 Kings 6:15–17

7. What did Elisha's servant see in the physical realm when he got up in the morning (v. 15)?

8. What did Elisha pray for his servant (v. 17a)?

9. What was the spiritual reality of the battle Elisha and his servant were facing (v. 17b)?

Elisha was operating from a deep, spiritual awareness, and intensity. God allowed him to see what was going on in the spiritual realm so that he was not afraid of the physical army that was coming to his door. God had spiritual forces surrounding and protecting Elisha and his servant.

The spiritual war is between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. If you are a believer in Christ, you are a warrior engaged in this epic war. The powers of darkness have a primary mission of thwarting God's purposes on earth for nations, groups, and individuals. Yes, there are spiritual beings who will cause you problems. They want to keep you from being an effective Christian leader and advancing the kingdom of light, God's empire. The members of this dark world also work hard to prevent non-believers from placing their faith in Christ and becoming soldiers and carriers of His light themselves.

Himm was just a boy when his country, Cambodia, was being ravaged by the Khmer Rouge. One day as he was going to the fields to work, he met a man about sixty-five years old. The man had not eaten in a long time and asked Himm to share his lunch. It was not much of a lunch, just a little rice and fish, but Himm gave it to him. After he ate it, he shared things only God could know.⁶

⁶ Himm, 42–43.

The man told Himm he was going to face a bad situation in the next six months. “Your family are all going to be killed, but you’ll survive in the jungle. You won’t die, but you will have to endure a lot of pain. You’re a special person in your family and someone has been protecting you since you were born.”⁷

Himm knew nothing about God at this time or the underlying spiritual causes of what was happening in his country. The man’s words were disturbing, and he did not want to hear anymore. But he would never forget this incident nor the man’s words.

God has many ways to unveil or reveal spiritual realities to us. We may not even realize what we are seeing or hearing at the time, but God will help us to recognize it later. We need to be aware of the spiritual realm and open to God’s powerful assistance.

Action Step

Read and meditate on Ephesians 6:12:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

10. Is your struggle against another person who has hurt you, either physically, or emotionally?
Yes No (Underline One)

11. Who are you really fighting against?

12. How will this change the way you view other people and circumstances?

13. How will this change the way you view and pray about physical wars?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #10–13 with your discipleship team.

—End Day One—

⁷ Ibid., 43–44.

Day Two
The Enemy

Spiritual War (God vs. Satan)

(Four summary points to remember as we engage and follow God in spiritual warfare.)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

1. Jesus defeated Satan at the cross (Hebrews 2:14–15) but individual battles continue.
2. Satan is a created being and has no power outside of God’s sovereign will (Job 1:6–12).
3. God has allowed Satan rule over the evil powers and systems of this world (Ephesians 2:2). In other words, the devil is leading the opposition against God but does not rule over the whole world.
4. Battles range from individual souls to whole nations turning against God. Satan desires to be exalted in the place of God (Isaiah 14:12–15).

From reading Ephesians 6:12, it appears the kingdom of darkness has set up a hierarchy (chain of command) with territories to make sure that the earth is blanketed with deadly pressure and influence. Who is ruling the dark world and rallying the troops against us? Who is this archenemy that is responsible for so much evil?

Although he goes by several names, he is most commonly called Satan or Devil. The name Satan is the English transliteration⁸ of the Hebrew word *satan* (שָׂטָן). The Hebrew word means adversary, opponent, or accuser. The Greek word *diabolos* (διάβολος) is translated devil in English. It also means accuser and slanderer. A slanderer makes false and damaging statements.

Satan is a real spiritual being who blames God’s people for wrongdoing and maliciously lies about us to God. He is our enemy and opposes us in battle. A most cruel opponent, he thrives on destruction.

Satan’s origins are not completely evident in the Scriptures. In the fourth century, Augustine of Hippo proposed that Satan was originally created good, like all the other angels. However, he wanted to be like God with supreme authority and rebelled against God out of pride. This is how evil entered the world. He caused other angels to rebel also.⁹

There are two passages of Scripture that support Augustine's proposal: Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:11–17. The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel are referring to the earthly kings of Babylon and Tyre, but there are elements about the kings that are not literally true. In addition, the

⁸ Transliterate means to represent by letters in one’s language that of another language with a different alphabet.

⁹ McGrath, Alister. *Christian Theology An Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing, University of Oxford, 2001.

wording and description encompass a much more powerful individual. Many scholars have agreed with Augustine and believe these passages are referring to both earthly kings and Satan.

Read Isaiah 14:12–15 and answer questions 14–9:

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! ¹³You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. ¹⁴I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” ¹⁵But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Isaiah 14:12–15

14. What did Satan say in his heart (vv. 13–14)?

15. Does the triune God ever yield or give His glory or rule to anyone else (See Isaiah 42:8)?
Yes No (Underline One)

16. When Satan tried to make himself like God, what happened (v. 15)?

Scripture tells us that Satan has angels in his army (Matthew 25:41). Like humans, angels were also given “free will” and some chose to sin against God (2 Peter 2:4). From Scripture, some fallen angels are held for judgment while others are in our midst. You or other Christians may not be tempted by Satan himself, for he is *not* omnipresent, but you can be assured some wicked, spiritual being is opposing your devotion to the Lord.

Definitions: *Rebellion* is open, armed, and organized resistance to a government (political system); it is also an act or a show of defiance toward an *authority* or established convention. *Authority* is the power to enforce laws, exact obedience, command, determine, or judge.

God is the supreme ruler, authority, and judge. Satan rebelled against God and His command—he was not willing to serve under God’s rightful rule and authority. His rebellion was the start of the war between God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom. When God made Adam and Eve in His image, Satan set out to destroy God’s new creation.

Read Genesis 3:1 and answer questions 17–18:

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”
Genesis 3:1*

17. How did the serpent change God’s command (See Genesis 2:16–17)?

18. Who disguised himself as a serpent (See Revelation 12:9)?

19. What do you think Satan's hidden agenda was in talking with Eve (See Genesis 3:4–5 and John 10:10)?

20. What is Satan's agenda (plan) regarding *you* (1 Peter 5:8)?

Satan is an aggressor (attacker). He went on the offensive (attack) when humankind was created. He went into the garden with the explicit intention of getting the man and the woman to rebel against God and defy (go against) His authority. The devil won that first battle against humanity and continues to assail people with vicious and brutal intensity.

Satan is a dangerous enemy and Christian leaders should not underestimate his military aptitude. He uses subtle and deceptive means to provoke rebellion. However, his tactics to incite rebellion will fail if we keep alert with our focus on Jesus. We need to ask for and depend on Jesus and His unparalleled power and authority.

21. Read Colossians 1:15–16. How did all things, including a powerful being like Satan, come to exist?

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. Colossians 1:15–16

22. Read Job 1:12. Who has power, authority, and control over Satan?

The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. Job 1:12

Satan is a created being, and his activities are limited by God. He has been judged by God for his pride and rebellion but has not yet received his full punishment (1 Timothy 3:6; Revelation 20:10). Therefore, Satan continues to tempt people to follow his arrogant and conceited ways. God could just remove the devil and his evil cohorts (allies) from our lives—and He will. However, it will be in His plan and timing. In the meantime, God uses the devil's schemes to help us seek and depend on Him, become more like Jesus, strengthen us, keep us from becoming conceited, and test our hearts and motivations (Luke 22:40; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).

23. Review the above paragraph. Share a time when God used the devil's schemes against you for your good?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #23 with your discipleship team.

The Bible does not tell us specifically why God allows Satan certain privileges of authority on this earth. We know that God created Adam and Eve and put them in charge of the world. The enemy entered and won this first battle by tempting them to disobey God. They chose to believe the devil over God and lost dominion of the world to him. Satan's effect on the world has been devastating to its inhabitants, bringing sin, war, disease, pain, and death.

Himm and his family lived under pain and the fear of death in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime. They never knew when it would be their turn to be tortured or taken to the killing fields. They had no escape from an evil that seemed to have no boundaries.

Six months after Himm's encounter with the man who predicted his family's death, the Khmer Rouge came to his home. They pushed the family toward an open, mass grave and made them kneel before it. To save bullets they used hoes, axes, and clubs to bludgeon them without mercy. Himm fell on his father, and his younger sister and brothers including the baby, fell on him.¹⁰

In Himm's words. "When they'd finished butchering, slashing, and axing, they climbed out of the grave. I heard one of them say, 'I think that one's not dead yet.'" One man jumped down into the grave again and pulled a body off me and hit me with the hoe one more time. It was a heavy blow, but not hard enough to end my life. "I knew enough then to lie still. If I'd moved at all, they would have finished me off." Someone began to throw earth on top of us, but then I heard a voice say, 'don't bury them yet: we've still got some more to be destroyed.' They left the grave open and went off to find other victims."¹¹

Himm checked each member of his family for breath, but discovered they were all dead. He cried and screamed and then promised them he would avenge their deaths. An hour later while still sitting by the grave, he remembered the stranger who had predicted that he would not die. When he heard a singing bird, he turned and followed it into the jungle just minutes before the men returned.

Surviving in the jungle was difficult. After four days of living off bamboo shoots and wild fruit, Himm found a farm and talked to one of the workers who gave him some rice. The worker had a hard time believing his story of surviving the Khmer Rouge *and* the jungle. *Was Himm a ghost?*

The villagers were afraid of bad spirits, and they believed a particularly bad spirit lived in the area of the jungle where Himm was living. Himm declared, "I'm not afraid of evil spirits. Evil spirits don't hit you from behind with a hoe like the people who killed my family."¹²

The bad spirits would be none other than Satan and his demons. Evil spirits may not hit people over the head with hoes, but they do instigate, incite, and prompt men, women, and children to

¹⁰ Himm, 65, 72.

¹¹ Ibid., 73.

¹² Ibid., 75, 85.

perform these evil actions. Although demons were overrunning Cambodia, people were still responsible for their actions.

God has made His presence plain to all people (Romans 1:17–21). We all have the choice to do what is right or do what is evil. The young man we referred to in Day One who had killed one hundred people, had a choice. He knew killing was wrong and at first did not like it. But instead of resisting and following his conscience, he allowed his heart to be hardened and followed evil.

God's righteous wrath is against the wickedness of Satan's forces and people who suppress the truth. We know the final ending of the wicked—they will appear before God's white throne of judgment. Nevertheless, God prefers for people to repent of their evil actions (Ezekiel 33:11; Jonah 1:2, 4:1, 2, 11) and for victims to be rescued from heartaches (Psalm 34:8–20).

Read Ezekiel 22:30–31 and answer questions 24–28:

"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. ³¹So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD." Ezekiel 22:30–31 (The land is Israel circa 593 BC)

Definition: *Stand in the gap* is a metaphor for interceding on behalf of a person, group, or nation. The word picture painted in Ezekiel 22:30 "is that of a wall with a hole or gap in it. A wall was the best means of protection in ancient times. A breach in the wall would let the enemy through. If there was a breach in the wall, defenders would have to swarm to that location and hold the breach. The gap would need to be repaired as soon as possible. If a breach were left unattended or unrepaired, the city would fall."¹³

24. About 600 years earlier, what prophet *stood in the gap* for the Israelites (Exodus 32:9–14)?

25. During Ezekiel's day, was there anyone to *stand in the gap* for Israel (v. 30c)? Yes No (Underline One)

26. How did God follow through with His destruction on the wicked (See Ezekiel 33:21)?

27. How do you think your country rates on God's righteousness meter?

28. What nation will you intercede for, and plead for God's mercy?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #24–28 with your discipleship team.

¹³ *What does it mean to stand in the gap* (Ezekiel 22:30)? | GotQuestions.org< (accessed 6/11/2022)

Although there are Christians in the US, there is still much wickedness. This country needs righteous leaders to stand in the gap. There is evil elsewhere in the world too. As of September 2021, civil wars have been ravaging Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mali, Saudi Arabia and terrorist insurgency¹⁴ permeates Iraq, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Tunisia. There are the drug wars of Mexico and Colombia and on February 24, 2022, Russia began a military invasion of Ukraine.

There are 195 countries universally recognized in the world—all in need of intercession. Was someone interceding for Cambodia? Perhaps. The Vietnamese Army invaded Cambodia in 1979 and removed Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge from power—stopping the genocide.¹⁵

The subject of evil and suffering is addressed in Unit 1: Who Is God? Lesson One: God Is Good, Day Five. Please review as needed. We may never totally understand why Satan has power and why evil exists, but we do know that Christ won the victory over sin at the cross (Colossians 2:15) and that the devil's time is short. Satan stands judged and condemned (1 Timothy 3:6). He will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur and tormented day and night for ever and ever (Revelation 20:10). The wicked will also be sent to hell (Matthew 23:33) and the righteous in Christ sent to everlasting life (Matthew 19:29). In the end God will wipe away every tear for believers (Revelation 7:17, 21:4).

Although the pain and suffering that we and others experience is difficult, the duration is nothing compared to the joy that awaits us for eternity. God is just and will work out everything for our eternal good (Romans 8:28–29). He has a perfect plan that does not call for Satan's rule to end until sometime in the future. Until then, we live by faith in God's purpose and plan for our earth and its people. We also join in the fight against our archenemy in battle after battle, claiming the complete victory that our Savior has won.

29. Read Job 38:1–4. Could a mere human understand the design and workings of the universe that God has created? Yes No (Underline One)

Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: ²“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? ³Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. ⁴Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.”
Job 38:1–4

30. Action Step: Memorize Psalm 144:1–2: *Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. ²He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.*

Accountability: Be prepared to share your memory verse #30 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Two—

¹⁴ Insurgency is an active revolt or uprising against a government but less than an organized revolution. The individuals participating in the revolt are called insurgents or often, guerrillas. They tend to use tactics known as guerrilla warfare such as irregular bombings, hit and run, kidnapping, hostage taking, and hijacking.

¹⁵ Genocide is the deliberate killing of large numbers of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group.

Day Three

Spiritual Weapons and Evil Tactics

God trains us for spiritual battle. Our training involves knowing the tactics of the enemy. Satan, the leader of the enemy forces, has strategies for thwarting God's purposes and usurping (seizing) His authority. The devil still wants to be honored above God—he is still prideful, ambitious, and unrepentant. His evil forces, including fallen angels or demons, and rebellious humans follow his methods and schemes.

Definitions: *Tactics* is defined as the science of organizing and maneuvering forces in battle to achieve a limited or immediate goal. It is also the art or skill of employing available means to accomplish immediate or short-term goals. *Military tactics* is a plan against one's foe. *Offensive* is defined as an attacking military campaign.

Before looking at some of Satan's tactics, we need to understand our weapons. Knowing and applying spiritual weapons helps us to effectively counter his attacks with purpose and power. In fact, our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:3–4). Recall from lesson one, a stronghold is anything that sets itself up against God.

Seven Spiritual Warfare Weapons for Entering Battle

1. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit resides in us and empowers us to enter the battle with truth, wisdom and strength (John 14:16–20; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit keeps us in contact with God, our Supreme Commander, glorifies and confirms Christ, teaches us how to pray, intercedes for us, and reminds us of Jesus' teachings (Zechariah 4:6; 1 Corinthians 2:11; John 16:12–14; Romans 8:26; John 14:26).

2. Use the Word of God. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17) and it's alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus showed us by example how to use the Word of God against Satan when He was in the wilderness for 40 days (Luke 4:1–13). Know the Word—proclaim and confirm its truth in battle. The truth is—*the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.* 2 Thessalonians 3:3

3. Pray in the Spirit for God's will. We seek God in all matters and at all times. God is our Commander-in-Chief and has the battle plans which include what and who we should be praying with and for. The Holy Spirit leads in prayers for other Christians (Ephesians 6:18) and for unbelievers to repent and receive Christ (1 Timothy 2:4–6). The Holy Spirit also guides believers so that our prayers are wise, effective, and laser focused.

4. Praise and worship God. God is not only worthy of our praise, but our worship reveals our devotion and commitment to Him. He is above all. God comes near and the enemy flees (Psalm 22:3; 2 Chronicles 20:22–13; Acts 16:25–26). Praise and worship are based in faith and confidence in God. This pleases God and invites His manifest presence.

5. Call on the name of Jesus and rely on His blood. Satan stands condemned by Jesus' effectual work on the cross (John 16:8–11). Life is in the blood; Jesus shed His blood on the cross to buy us back from the devil's power. Jesus is Lord of all to the glory of the Father (Philippians 2:9–11) and there is no other name by which people are saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus will do whatever we ask in His name if we are obedient and our requests glorify God in His will (John 14:13–15); 1 John 5:14). Evil spirits must flee (Mark 16:17) and healing takes place (Acts 3:6). We overcome Satan because of the blood of the Lamb and especially when we share this truth and give our own personal testimony (Revelation 12:11). Simply, we have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57)

6. Thank God in all circumstances. Thanking God, like praise, is based on our faith and confidence in Him (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We honor God when we trust His perfect will and do not grumble or whine—our labor will not be in vain (Philippians 2:14–16). When we engage in sinful complaining, worry, and anxiety, we give Satan a foothold in our lives. *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.* 1 Chronicles 16:34

7. Submit to God and resist the devil. We must subject or place ourselves under the control of God. In other words, we voluntarily obey God. Then we resist, stand firm and refuse to yield to the devil and his temptations (James 4:7–8).

Read James 4:7 and answer questions 36–37:

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

Definitions: *Submit* means be subject to, obey, be under the authority of; take a subordinate place. *Resist* means to oppose, withstand; hold one's ground. Both words, submit and resist, in James 4:7 are imperatives (commands).

31. What is one effective counterattack against the devil and his army of demons?

32. What does it mean to resist the devil and how do *you* personally resist evil?

God is the King and Commander-in-Chief of His heavenly and earthly army. We willingly place ourselves under His authority and rule. We are subject to Him and obey His commands. Anything that goes against God's truth is a lie. We resist or oppose such deceit with the seven spiritual weapons listed above. When we hold our ground and do not give in, the evil one must take flight—he must leave us alone. But he will be back, so keep your weapons handy.

33. Review the *Seven Spiritual Warfare Weapons* above. Which weapon do you use the most and why?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #32–33 with your discipleship team.

Lies, Lies, and more Lies: Enemy Tactic # 1 of 4

Read John 8:44 and answer questions 34–35:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44

34. Jesus told some of the Pharisees and Jews that they belonged to their father and were carrying out his desire. Who does Jesus say their father is (v. 8:44a)?

35. Name two of Satan's characteristics (8:44b)?

The devil wanted to stop Jesus and His disciples. Although many of the religious leaders had come to believe Satan's lies, there were still people repenting and following Jesus. Lives were being impacted. Thus, Satan was working furiously to make Jesus' mission fail.

I do not think Satan knew God's plan of redemption. He knew Jesus was God's Son, but did he know Jesus would die for our sins? If he did, he would have been trying to keep Jesus away from the cross rather than inciting Judas to betray Him. After all, the cross meant Satan's total defeat. Perhaps, like the Jews, he thought the Messiah was going to set up an earthly kingdom.

36. How do you suppose Satan *was a murderer from the beginning* (Genesis 3:1–24)?

Satan was the cause of Adam and Eve's physical death (Hebrews 2:14–15). It did not come about immediately but when they took the devil's bait (lie) and ate the forbidden fruit, their bodies started to age. They were sent from the Garden of Eden into a now, decaying world. The devil felt he had disrupted God's purpose for humanity in the Garden by causing open rebellion. But God had a redemption plan (Genesis 3:15) that would give humans an opportunity to be restored and to be with Him forever. God's plan rested in sending His Son into the world to die for our sins (John 3:16). His plan calls for trust and obedience in His Son, Jesus.

Just like Satan lied to Eve in the Garden, he continues to lie to us and those who would serve God. He spoke words that he knew were not true. Since that time, he continually and deliberately tries to get people to believe things that are not correct. He is the great Deceiver (swindler, fraud, con artist). He does not want anyone to trust God and His Word because the truth sets captives free from His murderous grip.

Satan spoke his lies directly to Eve in the Garden and he spoke lies directly to Jesus in the desert (Luke 4:7–8). Exactly how he speaks his lies to us is not completely clear. But Scripture reveals he has some kind of power to bring his lies into hearts and minds.

37. Read Acts 5:3. What does Peter tell Ananias about his heart?

Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?” Acts 5:3

Satan was behind the first recorded sin in the church and so filled Ananias’ heart that he lied. Maybe the enemy can speak to a mind inaudibly and, like radio waves, the subconscious detects the thought. Again, we do not know exactly how Satan fills hearts or tempts us, but the Bible tells us that he has this ability.

Satan, or one of his demons may also fill our hearts with lies about ourselves. *You are no good. No one likes you. God does not love you. You are depressed. You will never be happy. You are a failure. You are ugly. There is no hope. Nothing will ever change.* Sound familiar. They are all lies. This is not the truth of who God says that we are.

Do we believe such lies? Yes, we do. This is an effective tool in Satan’s arsenal (weapons storehouse). It keeps us distancing ourselves from God and makes us weak and ineffective in battle.

38. How do *you* recognize Satan’s lies?

Definitions: *Counterattack* an attack made in response to one by an enemy or opponent. Similar words or synonyms are counteroffensive, counteraction, and counterstrike. *Counter* means to act in opposition.

39. Once Satan’s tactic of lying is discovered, how do you counterattack?

When Ananias’ had the thought of keeping back some money for himself but telling the church that he was giving it all to them, he should have recognized Satan’s signature tactic. He should have said, *Wait a second, what am I thinking? That would be a lie. I belong to God, and I don’t lie.* The devil would have been defeated at once.

In the same way, when we start feeling badly about ourselves, we need to look to God’s Word (Jeremiah 29:11–13, 31:3; Romans 8:28–29; 2 Corinthians 5:17–20). Concentrate on who you are in Christ Jesus; do not listen to demon lies. God loves you and you are wonderful in His eyes.

Using Others with Wicked Intent: Enemy Tactic #2 of 4

Read Matthew 16:23 and answer questions 40–41:

Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” Matthew 16:23

Definition: A *stumbling block* is an obstacle, something that stands in the way of achieving a goal or of understanding something.

40. How was Peter being a stumbling block to Jesus (Matthew 16:21–22)?

41. How has someone been a stumbling block to you?

On the surface Peter was being lovingly protective of Jesus; he certainly did not want His friend and Lord to be placed in harm's way. However, Jesus saw through the sentimental emotion for what it was. Peter did not have his eyes fixed upon God but on earthly relationships and comforts.

Satan will try to influence us through others and vice versa (others through us). For example, someone may feel God calling them to a mission or task and share this news with a parent, relative, or friend. The person responds, *Don't go on that mission—it's much too dangerous. There are other ways to serve God.* Again, it seems so caring, but is it? Trying to keep someone out of God's will is one of the least loving things we can do.

There are many ways that others can adversely affect the calling on our lives, even though they may not realize it. Remember this devilish tactic of using others with wicked intent so you can be on guard. As a leader you must weigh what people say very carefully. Is this God speaking or is it the enemy? Of course, the person is not your enemy but is unwittingly (unknowingly) being used for the purpose of wrecking God's plan for you. We, too, should be careful so we are not used for evil and disrupting God's plan for others.

Unforgiveness: Enemy Tactic #3 of 4

42. Read 2 Corinthians 2:10–11. What tactic of Satan is the apostle Paul warning against?

Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. 2 Corinthians 2:10–11 (Outwit is to outsmart.)

43. Read Matthew 18:33–35. How deeply are we supposed to forgive others?

'Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart." Matthew 18:33–35

Jesus tells us that we must forgive from our hearts. We must really pardon our offenders from our spirit. That is, we hold no grudges or thoughts of revenge. We do not withhold love or affection from the person, nor do we withhold kind and responsible actions toward him or her.

Make no mistake, this is spiritual warfare. Satan knows that if we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts, we will be out of God's will. The devil will give us plenty of reasons why our thoughts do not matter as long as we pretend to forgive by our outward actions.

Understanding that Satan can be the force behind the offender and our own self-righteous feelings will help us outsmart him. *We outwit the devil by forgiving others from our hearts.* Whenever it gets difficult, we think of Jesus on the cross and His prayer for the Father to forgive His killers (Luke 23:34).

In concentrating on the devil's tactics, do not miss the heavenly Father's reaction to the sin of unforgiveness. He has forgiven us for innumerable sins and continues to do so. Therefore, He expects us to react the same towards our fellow humans. If we do not forgive, we will be under the righteous anger of Almighty God.

Himm had promised his dead family revenge on their killers. He wanted revenge for himself also. He was alone and struggling to survive. His contact with the farm workers led to his meeting a man who periodically left him rice and medicine by the edge of the forest. With that and other survival means, he lived undetected by his enemies for 4 months.

When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and ended the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror Himm was 13 years old. Two members of his immediate family survived—his older sister and her husband. Living with them did not make his nightmares and trauma disappear. He was in a state of constant stress and relived moments of fear and pain such as hearing the crack of the club on his baby brother's head, climbing out of a mass grave covered in blood, and the loneliness, hunger, and sickness surviving in the jungle.

Five years later, on April 16, 1984, Himm left Cambodia for Thailand. He felt there was nothing left for him in the country of his birth. He had a cousin in the United States and hoped to eventually make it there. In Thailand he was placed in the Khao Dang camp where he lived for five years. However, leaving Cambodia did not alleviate his distress and trauma.¹⁶

Among the 120,000 people in the camp, there was a group of Cambodian Christians. Himm writes, "They moved around the camp, telling everyone who would listen about Jesus Christ's love and forgiveness. I wasn't interested. All I could think about was going to the United States to live with my cousin and start a new life. Buddhism hadn't helped me in my distress, so why should any other religion help me? I didn't want the lifeline of faith: I wanted to survive on my own. I didn't have time or energy for God; I didn't want to be led in his way. I preferred my own way, even though that meant anger, and helplessness, and misery. I closed my heart to everything they said. 'If God is so good and powerful, why did he allow the Khmer Rouge to kill my family?' I would ask."¹⁷

But when his application for entry into the US was denied, he finally admitted to God he needed help. He wrote letters to the Canadian embassy in Thailand and prayed for entry. When he was accepted and arrived in Canada, he was helped by Christians. They loved and prayed for him.

¹⁶ Himm, 99, 100, 101, 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

They gave him a Bible and taught him about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It was at this time Himm committed his life to Christ.

Although he began healing from his wartime trauma, Himm was still angry and revengeful. It was like a ball of fire within him, and he realized that he would never have true peace until he forgave his enemies. He knew this was a difficult challenge to forgive the people who killed his family. He also knew that forgiving would not be in forgetting. Those images would not be erased from his memory.

He struggled and struggled with forgiving those who had brutally killed his family. In the end he knew he had to face up to his grief, fury, and anger. He walked through all the trauma and rage listing all he had experienced and felt. He prayed and worked with God to dig out his hatred and bitterness. In the process he realized that even if he could kill hundreds of them, it would not be enough to satisfy his rage. Slowly he gave up his desire to inflict pain on those who hurt him.

Although forgiveness seemed impossible, with God's help and his decision to forgive, Himm forgave his enemies completely. He was released from his emotional torment. In addition, he discovered God's peace and His power supernaturally working his life.¹⁸

44. How has Himm's story of forgiveness encouraged you to be more forgiving?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #44 with your discipleship team.

Takes away the Word: Enemy Tactic # 4 of 4

45. Read Mark 4:15. When the word or gospel is preached or shared, what can Satan do?

Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Mark 4:15

Satan can take away the words of the gospel by keeping people from believing. He has the ability to blind some of the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the truth of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). In the same way, Satan can block gospel teaching to shallow hearers of the word, making them fruitless and eventually ruined. Some of the devil's schemes to take away the word—use distractions, worldly desires such as prosperity and comfort, fear of ridicule, and animosity toward the message or the messenger. We need to be vigilant (watchful) and pray against the wiles (tricks) of the devil and for the truth to be heard, accepted, and acted upon daily.

—End Day Three—

¹⁸ Ibid., 108, 121, 123–126.

Day Four

Wisdom, Courage, and Strength in Warfare

We all live within the war zone or spiritual combat area between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom. Everyone is subject to attack. We looked at some of the devil's tactics so that as a Christian leader you are not unaware of his schemes and can take appropriate action. Before studying God's tactics in battle, we are going to give you an opportunity to practice identifying the devil's tactics.

Read the following verses and list Satan's form of attack. We covered lying, using others with wicked intent, unforgiveness, and taking away the word but you might find others.

46. Read 1 Chronicles 21:1. List tactic of the enemy:

_____.

Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. 1 Chronicles 21:1 (Incite is to stir up or provoke action by somebody. A census is a count of the population.)

47. Read 2 Corinthians 11:13. List tactic of the enemy: _____.

For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ ¹⁴And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:13–14

48. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:18. List tactic of the enemy: _____.

For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. 1 Thessalonians 2:18

49. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10. List tactic of the enemy: _____.

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, ¹⁰and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10

50. How does understanding some of the enemy's ways and tactics prepare you for battle?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #50 with your discipleship team.

Knowing the devil's tactics will help us recognize when and how he will attack—and prepare us for resistance and counterattack. Our spiritual weapons are being filled with the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, Prayer, Praise, Jesus and His blood, and thanking God in all circumstances. We are also going to look at godly tactics in warfare, but first we need to be reminded that the battle is the Lord's. There are seven truths to remember about the battle being the Lords.

The Battle is the Lord's

Do not be afraid or discouraged because the battle is not ours, but God's.

1. Keep our eyes on God. *Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*

2 Chronicles 20:12

2. Face the enemy firmly, with a solid front. *You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.* 2 Chronicles 20:17

3. Fear not. *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

Joshua 1:9

4. Thank God for our victory in Christ and pray we always give ourselves fully to the Lord. *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁵⁸*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:57–58

5. Expect and accept peace in battle. *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

John 16:33

6. Jesus gives us authority over the enemy. *And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;*

Mark 16:17

7. No condemnation in Christ. *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.* Romans 8:1–2

Fearing the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10) and carries us forward in becoming skilled in spiritual warfare. War calls for wise, courageous, and strong Christian leaders. Notice wisdom comes before strength—we must be wise in order to use power correctly and effectively. Because the battle is the Lord's, does not mean that we have no responsibility in warfare.

Wisdom in Warfare: Godly Tactic #1 of 4

Read Proverbs 8:12–14 and answer questions 51–56:

“I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.¹³To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.¹⁴Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power. Proverbs 8:12–14

51. When people have wisdom, what other three characteristics will they possess (v. 12)?

Three characteristics of having wisdom are prudence, knowledge, and discretion. Jesus was wise and displayed all three traits in His earthly ministry. Let us look a little closer at the meanings of these three characteristics.

First, those in command should think strategically or deliberately. They do not act rashly and run into battle without any foresight. A wise commander acts carefully, prudently. This is not to say that a leader does not act quickly when necessary.

Second, those in God’s kingdom must possess knowledge of God and the world around them. Christian leaders must have information to act and proceed in a wise manner. This would include knowing *Military Science* (principles of military conflict and warfare), as it relates to spiritual warfare. The Bible is the handbook for *Spiritual Military Science*.

Third, a wise manner calls for good judgment. One needs to think out a plan and act upon it. This is what is meant by discretion. It can also mean showing caution in behavior. For example, Jesus acted cautiously and did not allow Himself to be taken until it was His time to die.

52. To _____ the LORD is to _____ evil (v. 13).

We do not embrace evil, sin, or wickedness. We detest all acts and works against God. However, we are not free to hate our physical enemies. They are captives of the evil one and we pray that one day they will be freed to serve the Lord.

Jesus had a plan and a purpose for being among sinners and never veered (changed) from it. He was not among them to be one of the gang but to bring them the words of God. Each sinner had a choice, he either accepted God’s way or went away like the rich man in Matthew 16:19–24.

53. If Jesus had compromised on kingdom principles, what kind of disciples would He have attracted?

54. What are some ways that you can witness and befriend sinners without condoning or giving the impression that you approve of their evil behavior?

55. What kind of behaviors does God hate (v. 13b)?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #53–55 with your discipleship team.

God hates pride, arrogance, evil behavior, and perverse speech. These are part of Satan's repertoire (catalog). Do not fall into the devil's clever traps in regard to these sins. For example, the sin of pride could have you judging sinners and forgetting that you, too, are saved by grace.

56. What are four other characteristics of wisdom and of a wise leader (v. 14)?

As others recognize that God is with you, they will seek your advice. Or you may need to give advice or instruction even when not sought. This is known as *wise counsel*. Take time to listen to the person or group carefully and make sure that you understand their problem or dilemma.

As you carefully observe and listen, you will discover the truth of the situation. Just think about being a captain on a physical battlefield. Would you tell your troops to advance without finding out what lies ahead? No, you would seek as much information as you could in order to make a *sound judgment* for your next move. Life and death hang in the balance.

Assessing (reviewing, evaluating) information calls for *insight*. The wise leader needs keen perception to know how to read signs and make right decisions. We need the right way of thinking that comes from a steady and faithful reliance on God.

When we pray intelligent and accurate prayers, God will give us the strength and power to lead with wisdom and success. *Power* is used in the sense of the might of God. He has the unlimited capacity to control and influence all things and all people. Almighty God delights to use His power to answer wise prayers in His will. He does not delight to answer foolish prayers.

Courage in Warfare: Godly Tactic #2 of 4

We all admire brave, valiant, and noble men and women who overcome frightful circumstances for a greater good. In spiritual warfare, we must be that brave and courageous leader with the ability to control our fear even when facing extreme danger. Satan tries to make us afraid to do what is right. Remember, no matter how formidable our satanic foe, God is stronger.

Read Joshua 1:9 and answer questions 57–58:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

57. Does God *command* leaders to be strong and courageous? Yes No (Underline One)

58. What is the reason God gives for being strong and courageous?

Read Isaiah 41:10 and answer questions 59–61:

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

59. Why does God say, “do not fear”?

60. Why does God say, “do not be dismayed” (lose courage)?

61. How does this knowledge of God being with you comfort and encourage you?

Strength in Warfare: Godly Tactic #3 of 4

When Joshua took over leadership from Moses, God commanded him to be strong and courageous. God commanded him three times (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9) to be strong. He did not mean that Joshua was supposed to take up physical training and build up his muscles to be a strong man. Although getting and staying in good physical shape is beneficial, God had something different in mind.

Right after telling Joshua to be strong, God tells him to be careful to obey the law and not let it depart from his mouth (v. 8). The new leader is to meditate on God’s law day and night so that he will be careful to do everything written in it. God is using strong in the sense of having the power to resist evil.

God is saying we need to be “strong” so that we do not become broken or damaged in spirit. Joshua needed to be strong in God and in His ways or else he would be in danger of being captured by the enemy. The Israelites, the people Joshua was leading, would be crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land and they would be heavily engaged in warfare.

In the same way, we need strength in warfare to resist evil. We need to be strong so that our spirit is not in danger of being broken or damaged. We are leading people into the promised land of heaven and our enemy Satan and his forces will be engaging us in spiritual warfare.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:3 and Philippians 4:13 and answer question 62:

But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.
2 Thessalonians 3:3

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

62. Why or why not are you a strong Christian leader?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #61–62 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Four—

Day Five

Authority in Advancing the Kingdom

Authority: Godly Tactic #4 of 4

Read Luke 10:18–20 answer questions 63–66:

He replied, “I [Jesus] saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Luke 10:18–20 (Snakes and scorpions represent evil spirits.)

Definition: The Greek word *exousian* (ἐξουσίαν) translated *authority* in English is defined as ability, capability, might, and power. It is also defined as Jesus' divinely given and unrestricted exercise of freedom to act with power and *authority*. *Authority* can be imparted to another person or community to act within the rightful bearer of the control and *authority*. In English, the word *authority* is the right or ability to give orders. The person with *authority* has power to make others obey and the liberty to take specific actions.

63. Where does your authority come from (v. 19)?

Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18) and He is our source of authority. In other words, we have delegated authority. That means that our rights to rule or govern the spiritual world or the physical world come directly from Christ.

64. How do you overcome the power of Satan and his spirit forces?

*In Jesus we have the authority and power to win any battle against Satan and his crew of fallen angels and demons. In fact, as Christian leaders we have a grave responsibility to enforce Christ's victory in this epic war. However, we need to remember two things: *One*, we must be abiding (living) in Christ and *Two*, we must exercise our authority through faith.*

65. Are you satisfied with how you are exercising your authority in Christ Jesus?
Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)

66. How will *you* improve in *your* exercise of authority (Hebrews 11:32–38)?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #63–66 with your discipleship team.

Gradually, Himm learned and practiced the godly tactics of wisdom, courage, strength, and authority. The path was challenging but God was with him—and he persevered. He learned many lessons.

“He writes, “For us, living in a broken world, it’s hard to find an answer to the question of pain, yet we know that suffering is everywhere; it is the texture of the human condition. The universal fact of suffering raises profound questions about the worth of human life, questions that can’t be avoided. I don’t intend to teach about this here, but merely highlighting some experiences of suffering and some thoughts about the problem of evil. Thinking about the nature of evil cannot be avoided if we are thinking about the problem of pain, for the two seem to be inextricably linked. No one who has suffered would suggest that suffering is a good thing—yet I can’t say that it is wholly bad. Painful though my experiences have been, they have made me a stronger person, better able to understand the reality of life.”

“Some people seek to escape pain through pleasure, the abuse of alcohol or drugs; some are driven to despair and suicide. Some seek solace in religion while others blame God for their troubles and reject it all. Yet the experience of pain always has some positive aspects: It can increase our compassion for others, and our understanding of what other people may be feeling, even when their experience is different from our own.”¹⁹

In darkness and utter despair, Himm reached out to Jesus. He learned from the Bible that suffering is part of a bigger picture—creation is fallen from its perfect state and evil is part of the fallen condition. It was evil in the hearts of the men with a political agenda that started the battle that destroyed millions of innocent people.

After arriving in Canada, Himm attended college and became a Christian counselor. Then, after 15 years, God called him to return to Cambodia to help those still struggling from the war. It was a difficult task because the people had unresolved grief, refused to talk about their emotions, shame, and belief that suffering was their own fault. It was a difficult task, but God gave Himm wisdom, courage, and patience to share his own painful experiences and his recovery in Christ Jesus.²⁰

Himm says, “Despite all the difficulties, I have found great joy in serving the Lord in my homeland and helping my own people. I have planted churches in my hometown to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, and I have taught other church leaders to spread the gospel of healing. I’ve given seminar on psychological trauma, and I plan others on anger and forgiveness, so that I can share what I have learned so painfully.”²¹

Action Step

Meditate on Ephesians 6:10–18 and answer questions 67–70:

(Ephesians 6:10–18 is one of the most popular passages on spiritual warfare.)

¹⁹ Ibid., 129–130.

²⁰ Ibid., 131, 153.

²¹ Ibid., 153.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:10–18 (Arrows of the evil one are temptations that can cause spiritual injury or spiritual death.)

67. The pieces of armor are described in terms of truth, righteousness, peace, salvation, and the word of God. What *Person* is described in these terms?

68. How will *you* put on the armor of Christ (see also Romans 13:8–14)?

69. How do you extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (v. 16)?

70. Pray you and your fellow disciples are suited up for battle. I have prayed Yes No (Underline One)

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #67–70 with your discipleship team.

Finally, the apostle Paul gives us a lesson on optimism in the face of evil adversity. When he was imprisoned and in chains, He said it really served to encourage him to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly—and to advance the gospel (Philippians 1:12, 14). When Paul was tormented by a messenger of Satan, he knew that God was using it so Paul would not become arrogant (2 Corinthians 12:7). May we all persevere and be joyful in all circumstances, including spiritual battle. God has the plan, and it is perfect.

—End Day Five and Lesson 15—

Next—Unit 2: Christian Leadership, Lesson 16: The Tender Heart of a Leader

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