

Chapter 15

Spiritual Warfare

Let's Go 

SIM
Interactive
Missionary
Training

Spiritual Warfare

As Christians we are in a spiritual battle against the ruler of this age. Satan is actively at work blinding non-believers to the truth, and, in the lives of Christians, he tries to weaken them. This is even greater in the lives of those who are stepping out in faith to reach people for Christ. Satan is not interested in someone who is just living his own life – he already has them. And he doesn't waste his time with a Christian who is not evangelising or changing lives – they are no threat to his reign. He is more interested in those who are working hard to see people come to Christ. He is concerned with the faithful who are showing others how to be faithful. He is anxious about the lives set free from addictions or past issues, when he wanted them to stay there. He is disturbed seeing restored lives and restored families who will now give the honour and glory to God. And he is preoccupied with YOUR part in all this.

You may feel an increase in the battle or some days you may not "feel" it, but it is there. Satan works in those tangible ways we have heard reports about. Or maybe you have seen the spiritual darkness in visible ways. However, don't be ignorant to the fact that he also works in subtle ways, in ways where you might not give him credit, but he is able to discredit you or the God you serve.

Objectives

- ◆ To understand the war Christians are in.
- ◆ To understand the victory we have in Jesus.
- ◆ To understand what God has given us to fight this war.
- ◆ To be prepared and know how to protect ourselves.

Activity checklist



Tick off when you have completed each one of these activities.

- Mentor: Spiritual Warfare
- Reflection: Spiritual Warfare and Your Christian Life
- Mentor: Spiritual Warfare and your Christian life
- Mentor: Warfare in Our Ministries
- Bible Study: Understanding the Enemy
- Activity: How to Approach Spiritual Warfare
- Activity: Our Sword
- Reflection: Being Effective in Spiritual Warfare
- Mentor: The Battlefield of the Mind



Spiritual Warfare

Think about the following questions and share your responses with your mentor:

1. What do you think about when you hear the term "spiritual warfare"?
2. When do you think it is most evident?
3. How does it affect Christian witness?
4. How does it affect the Christian's life?
5. What experiences have you had that you think could be called "spiritual warfare"?
6. What do you think you need to learn more about in this area before going to the field?



Spiritual Warfare and Your Christian Life

Reflect on the following verses from Psalm 139:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (139:23-24).

Spend some time with God. Let Him talk to you about your life and anything that seems to be a struggle for you. On the mission field this could become an even bigger hindrance.

Spiritual Warfare and Your Christian Life



Talk with your mentor honestly and openly about what God has shown you in your time of prayer and reflection. Ask for assistance and advice, and finish this time in prayer.

Spiritual Warfare Does Exist!

We cannot deny that spiritual warfare exists... and it's not just in those tribal places throughout the world where we have heard of some weird manifestation. We can quickly jump to the extraordinary—and the somewhat scary— but God also wants us to be aware of all the strategies Satan uses to attack and detour His people.

Sometimes we recognize what happens to us as spiritual warfare, but at other times we might just say that it is stress or culture shock or give some other excuse. The



Bible confirms that spiritual darkness exists; preventing people from seeing the truths of the Gospel and it can cause chaos and havoc amongst believers.

This attack on Christians can be summarised as:

- Struggle against inner sin (personal sin);
- Conflict at social level (sin from outside);
- Conflict from above (direct demonic attack).

“Spiritual warfare for the Christian is about truth and falsehood, love and hate, good and evil, and the integrity of God's Word. These aspects are experienced in the realms of the world, the flesh, the devil and his evil spirits. Our weapons of warfare are found in the Wisdom of Christ: God's Word & Holy Spirit.”

Source: www.battleinchrist.com

Warfare in our Ministries

The following are examples of the visible and invisible ways that we might encounter spiritual warfare as we seek to do ministry:

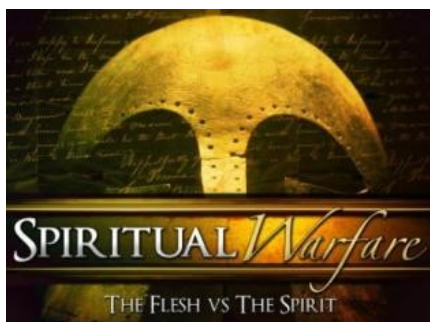
- A young lady in a small tribal village had a miscarriage. Her family took her to the shaman to ask what could be the problem and he told them that it was because her brother, a chief in a neighbouring tribe had recently accepted Christ and was sharing Christ with his tribe. Two of her family members killed the chief to ensure that this young lady would be able to have children in the future.
- "A man who lived down my street was so violent that it took several men to control him. He was screaming worse than any wild animal or any portrayal on a horror movie. God increased my faith and strength just when I needed it to cast out this demon from this man."
- Nightmares plague several families in the same church. Even the children report seeing ghosts and demons standing outside the church waiting for the congregation to leave the "protected" area.
- Peter Wagner tells about an incident that a professor experienced on a flight when he noticed the man next to him earnest in prayer. On enquiry, it appeared that the man was a Satanist and he was commissioned to pray for the fall of Christian leaders (and for the collapse of their marriages) in New England. In the same book Wagner writes about a minister in Ontario who spoke about

the many Satanist attacks on ministers while he was there. One particular Satanist cell was honoured because, during the previous year, they were instrumental in making five prominent spiritual leaders fall into immorality, thus contributing to the breakup of their marriages.

- "In my case I tend to work too much to the point of getting exhausted; then I neglect my communion with God and the spiritual disciplines then I am more susceptible to sin, discouragement and exhaustion."
- "I thought my calling was sure. But I arrived on the field and started doubting it. I didn't seem to be able to get the language. The other missionaries on the team seemed to be better at me at everything. I am sure they looked at me as inferior. I began to ask myself if I was going to be useful at all or if I was just wasting my supporters' money. But God showed me that these doubts and inner struggles are a subtle form of spiritual warfare and I needed to cling to God's truths. He brought me to the field and I can serve Him with His strength."
- "(As a public speaker) I quickly discovered the emotional and physical toll speaking demands. But why? It's because there's an unseen conflict taking place.

The Apostle Paul reminds us "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). Paul then proceeds to use a warfare analogy,

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"Our battle is not against human forces but against the principalities and powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, the evil spirits in regions above."

Ephesians 6:12

Warfare in our Ministries

.....Continued

exhorting us to put on the full armour of God in preparation for this struggle. And warfare language is [appropriate].

When I speak, I'm not just giving students a pep talk. There are "spiritual forces of evil" at work. The "powers of this dark world" are setting up strongholds against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). False ideas are trying to take captive young minds. It's spiritual warfare. I received a stark reminder last month in Nebraska.

I landed in Omaha on a Friday afternoon and proceeded to give 11 talks in two-and-a-half days. After my final talk on Sunday, the youth pastor drove me to the airport. I was ready to crash, exhausted once again. But during the drive we talked about the weekend. The youth pastor reflected on the students who attended the Saturday youth conference and some sobering facts emerged. One young man in attendance had been struggling with an extremely serious addiction to pornography. One of the freshmen girls had been sexually abused for much of her childhood. Another student lost her mother at the hands of her father, murdered a couple of years ago.

I was stunned. I had been aware that Saturday's events felt like a real struggle, but I had been oblivious to the brokenness—physical, emotional, and spiritual—surrounding me. I remember returning to my hotel that night completely worn out, even declining the opportunity to enjoy some food and football later on. But in that conversation on the way to the airport, God gave me a clear reminder of the nature of my work. It's not just intellectual. It's not just academic. It's nothing less than a spiritual struggle for the very souls of our youth."

Source: Our Struggle is not against flesh and blood by Brett Kunkle, www.str.org



Understanding the Enemy

The war is between God and Satan, and he makes himself an enemy of those who follow God.

In battle it's important to know your enemy. So let's start to study the enemy by looking at how he is referred to in the Bible.

1. Look through the following verses and write down what you learn about Satan and his schemes.
Matthew 13:28, 39; John 8:44; John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:9; Revelation 12:10
2. Does Satan work alone? No. He uses people of this world to come against Christians trying to weaken them. Read the following verses to see how Satan uses people to hinder God's people and work. Who are they? What do they do?
2 Peter 2:1; 2 Corinthians 11:13 (read verses 1-15 for the context); Galatians 2:4
3. What is Satan's goal? Read the following verses to identify Satan's goal.
2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 5:19



Warfare in Our Ministries

Talk with your mentor about the previous examples of spiritual warfare. Are some easier to see the spiritual battle than others? Why?



How to Approach Spiritual Warfare

It is important to properly understand how Satan tries to impede God's work in order to appreciate how we must approach spiritual warfare.

It is also important to understand what our role is, so as not to waste time on the unnecessary or unbiblical. We need to have a balanced view of what spiritual warfare is and how it is described in the Bible. Take time to read the document *Tilting at Windmills* in the resource folder and reflect on it. Discuss the following questions with your mentor or pastor:

1. Can you relate with the way the author describes spiritual warfare and power encounters?
2. How does this affect your understanding about Spiritual warfare?

Satan and Demons in Scripture

For further insight on Satan, demons, and their involvement in our world, it would benefit you to set aside some time to read the following passages of Scripture.

- Genesis 3
- Isaiah 14:1–23
- Zechariah 3:1–2; 13:1–2
- Matthew 4:1–11, 23–25; 7:21–23; 8:14–17, 28–34; 9:32–34; 10:1, 8, 24–25; 11:18; 12:22–37, 43–45; 13:37–39; 15:21–28; 16:22–23; 17:14–23; 25:41
- Acts 5:1–11, 16; 8:4–8, 9–25; 10:38; 13:9–10; 19:11–22; 26:15–18
- 2 Corinthians 2:10–11; 4:2–4; 6:15; 11:1–15; 12:7–10
- Ephesians 1:19b–2:3; 2:10–11; 4:17–32; 5:8–21; 6:10–20
- Colossians 2:13–15
- 1 Timothy 1:18–20; 3:6–7; 4:1–2; 5:11–15
- James 2:19; 4:1–12
- 1 Peter 5:8–11
- 1 John 2:15–27; 3:4–15; 4:1–6; 5:18–21

Spiritual Warfare and Your Ministry

Just as Satan wants to bring you down in your walk with God, he also wants to impede the ministry God has for you. It is important to remember that the work you do is not your own. Just like our salvation is not our own doing, the work God calls us to do is His work. He ordains it and He completes it, using us as His servants. He is control. However, Satan will try to impede God's work. He prevents man knowing the true God through:

Enslavement – Ephesians 2:2-3

To Sin

To Satan

Blindness – 2 Corinthians 4:4

Lies and the prevention of hearing the truth

Being held captive – Colossians 2:8

Being under control of – 1 John 5:19

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN ACTS

"There is One greater in you than there is in the world."

1 John 4:4

Misinformation—Acts 2:13 - at Pentecost, the disciples were accused of being drunk.

Arresting leaders—Acts 4:3 - Peter and John were arrested and threatened.

Torture—Acts 5:40 - the Apostles were whipped.

Factions—Acts 6:1 - Greek-speaking Christians "complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food, as compared with the widows of those who spoke Hebrew."

Slander—Acts 6:11-12 - those who opposed Stephen "persuaded some men to make the charge that they had heard him speaking blasphemies against Moses and God."

Inciting a riot and murdering a Christian leader—Acts 7:54-60 - a mob went berserk, and stoned Steven to death.

Harassment and terrorism—Acts 8:3 - Saul "entered house after house, dragged men and women out, and threw them into jail."

Another murder of a Christian leader—Acts 12:2 - Herod beheaded James.

Dissension and controversy—Acts 15:2 - this controversy about circumcision and salvation was probably the greatest spiritual attack on the early Church.

Source: www.presentationministries.com



Recommended Reading

Biblical Christianity in African Perspective by Wilbur O'Donovan

Demonism on the Mission Field by George W. Peters

God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict by Gregory Boyd

In Demon Possession by John W. Montgomery

Quest for Power: Guidelines for Communicating the Gospel to Animists by Robert Blaschke

Spiritual Warfare and Missions: The Battle for God's Glory Among the Nations by Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer

The Authority of the Believer by John A. MacMillan

Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare by Arnold Clinton

War on the Saints by Jessie Penn Lewis

Feels like Black Magic Bearing Down on Me by Terry Louis Schultz (In Folder)



Our Sword

Activities

Understanding

and embracing our identity in Christ through the assurance of the Scriptures is essential.

We need the sword of the Spirit, which is the Bible, to remind us who we are. Look at the document, God's Word for

Spiritual Warfare in the resource folder. Choose a few verses that you especially need in your life and memorise

them. Having them in your heart will help you when Satan tries to cast doubt on who you

are in Christ or the ministry

you are doing for Him.



Areas of attack in mission (not exhaustive!)

- health problems
- sexual temptations (especially pornography)
- emotional problems exposed
- anger, fear, condemnation
- marital issues magnified
- parenting approaches
- misunderstandings
- family issues
- Transport stresses and dangers

Putting on the Armour of God

The phrase “armour of God” comes from Ephesians 6:10-18:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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. Therefore put on the full armour 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. (Ephesians 6:10-13)

Ephesians 6 describes the spiritual equipment that God gives us to combat the attacks of Satan. With these we can be “strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” To be protected, we must put on this armour, but this is not a passive activity like wearing clothes; instead it requires that we train ourselves to use it well. The armour and weapons of old were heavy, but even modern soldiers train to use their equipment well.

The first piece of armour is the “**belt of truth**” (v. 14). Satan is called the “father of lies” (John 4:44) and he specialises in counterfeits. We will easily distinguish lies and counterfeits when we have a good knowledge of the true God and the ways that he works in the world. Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

The second piece of armour is the “**breastplate of righteousness**” (v. 14). The breastplate protects the heart and lungs. Righteousness means that we have been accepted by God because of the work of Christ. When Satan would try to bring guilt, shame and condemnation, we can be assured of God’s forgiveness and love. To use this breastplate well, we must confess our sins regularly and repent of our sinful ways.

The third piece is “**shoes of Gospel witness**” (v. 15). Satan seeks to distract us or make us lazy or apathetic. But the Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16). To strengthen our Gospel witness, we need to know God’s message of salvation and communicate this with others.

The fourth piece of the armour is the “**shield of faith**” (v. 16). The shield of faith protects us from all the troubles, frustrations, fears and worries that Satan might throw at us. It is a dependence and trust in the faithfulness of God. Prayer and worship develop our faith as well as obedience to God’s calling.

The fifth piece of armour is the “**helmet of salvation**” (v. 17). This protects us from the doubts we have about God and insecurities about being saved. Assurance of salvation is strengthened as we study God’s promises in the Bible.

The final piece of the armour is the “**sword of the Spirit which is the word of God**” (v. 17). Jesus used the word of God to counter the temptations of Satan in the desert (Mat. 4). The Psalmist says: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (119:11).

In addition to the armour, we are told to pray at all times and to keep alert (v. 18). God has provided us all that we need to live a godly life (cf. 2 Peter 1:3), but we need to actively take up this armour and become proficient in its use to overcome Satan’s attacks and temptations.





Being Effective in Spiritual Warfare

Read the document “**Being Effective in Spiritual Warfare**” in the resource folder. Share your thoughts with your mentor about what you feel you need to do.

Be on the Offense

Finally, spiritual warfare is not only a defensive war. We don't just prevent or survive an attack. We are called to attack the gates of hell (see Mat. 16:18), resist the devil and make him flee (Jas. 4:7), and bring down his strongholds (see 2 Cor. 10:4). We should be active in evangelisation, reconciliation, healing, prayer, and fasting. We will be "more than conquerors because of Him Who has loved us" (Romans 8:37). We "will quickly crush Satan" under our feet (Romans 16:20).

The Supremacy of God in Missions through Prayer....

“Life is war. That is not all it is. But it is always that. Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world. Prayer gives us the significance of front-line forces, and gives God the glory of a limitless Provider. The one who gives the power gets the glory. Thus prayer safeguards the supremacy of God in missions while linking us with endless grace for every need.”



Practical Advice for Spiritual Struggle in Missions

Experienced missionaries offer you the following advice in preparing and living in the battle:

- Maintain a daily time to pray and meditate on God's Word. You need to know how to manage God's sword on the field.
- Be fully convinced of the victory of Christ for us, that He will defeat the enemy and strip him of all authority (Eph. 2:6b).
- Don't be afraid of the enemy. We shouldn't live in anguish or fear. God is and will always be more powerful and nothing escapes His hand. With Him we're in the safest possible place.
- A powerful weapon is God's righteousness and knowing who we are in Christ.
- We need to have a prayer team; warriors that are struggling with us in the battle. Keep them updated about prayer requests as well as about the victories achieved by their intercession.
- Don't fall in the trap of neglecting your family by being excessively busy in the work. Take care of your emotional and physical health. The enemy takes advantage of any area to attack us.

The Battlefield of the Mind



The enemy's favourite battlefield is our mind. The Word tells us to not conform to the way this world thinks but let God renew our minds. We need to continually ask Him for help and direction before we start each day or enter each battle.

A missionary who works in the Dominican Republic went to research voodoo in Haiti. One day, when he was going to have lunch with a voodoo priest in order to learn more about their practices, he had doubts if he should go. "A struggle began in my mind about what my reasons were to investigate something so mysterious and obscure. Then I started praying: God is this your will? Is it okay for me to go or is

it a bad idea? Teach me, I want to have pure reasons, and not just do it for adventure or curiosity. Then the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart very strongly and gave me the conviction that it was His will, that He did want me to learn about what will help me in ministering to those stuck in this religion."

Satan fights for your mind because it is intimately connected to your heart. Here are some ways that Satan might attack our minds.

TEMPTATION:

Sin starts in our minds. It's Satan's way of getting you to fall and then he can accuse you and condemn you and weaken you. Each time we fail and sin, it is important to quickly turn from those sins and repent so that we can be forgiven and restored. "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8).

CONDEMNATION and ACCUSATION:

We need to know how to distinguish between conviction of sin and condemnation. If we have sinned, let's ask for forgiveness because His blood cleanses us (1 John 1:9). Conviction by the Holy Spirit brings us closer to God. However, the devil's condemnation makes us move away from God because of shame and feelings of rejection.

FEAR and DOUBT:

Fear is one of the strongest weapons of the enemy, and too often this weapon is enough to distract and detour us. John Ortberg, in his book, *You Can't Walk on Water until You Get Out of the Boat*, says that God wants to direct our lives with his Holy Spirit. However Satan wants us to let fear direct our lives. Fear steers us from doing what we should be doing and living the life we were called to.

Doubts are based on a fear that we misunderstood the instructions or that God will do what He says he will do. Worry is based on a fear that God will not take care of what we need. Cling to truth! "Do not fear" or "Do not be afraid" is in the Bible 366 times (once for every day). In every decision ask yourself: "Am I letting God lead me or is fear leading me?"



The Battlefield of the Mind

Talk with your mentor about the previous reading. What are some points you want to be sure to remember?