

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

THIS SECTION IS DESIGNED TO HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE KEEP OUR UNDERSTANDING ROOTED FIRMLY IN SCRIPTURE, BECAUSE **WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO USE THE WEAPONS THE LORD HAS GIVEN US WITH AUTHORITY AND EXCELLENCE.**

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

What we will learn in this section:

1. The battle we fight is not against flesh and blood.
2. How we give the enemy jurisdiction in our lives.
3. How we take territory back in our lives.
4. Temptation.
5. Personal Application: What are we fighting? And what are we defending in our lives?

UNDERSTANDING OUR REAL ENEMY

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.

[EPHESIANS 6:12 \(NASB\)](#)

Scripture uses many different names for Satan that illustrate the character of and the tactics used by the enemy. Look up the following verses:

- *The father of lies (John 8:44).*

- *The god of this evil world (2 Corinthians 4:4).*
- *An angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).*
- *The enemy of the avenger (Psalm 8:2).*
- *The evil one (Matthew 6:13; John 17:15).*
- *The adversary (1 Peter 5:8).*
- *The destroyer (Job 15:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:3).*
- *The accuser (Revelation 12:10).*
- *The tempter (Genesis 3:1; Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5).*
- *The deceiver (Genesis 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:3).*

Satan's greatest strategy has been to convince the world that he does not exist. It is so easy to believe that people are our enemy. Meanwhile, our real enemy, Satan, continues to destroy, steal, and deceive. Satan and his kingdom of demons operate to oppose the advancement of the kingdom of God. Jesus clearly took all authority from Satan on the cross, but now as Christians we must exercise his authority to advance the kingdom of God here on earth.

Let's examine two simple definitions:

Spiritual Warfare: The kingdom of God is one of conflict and conquest over the kingdom of Satan.

Revival: Revival is an outright invasion of Satan's kingdom. Satan is occupying space He does not own.

When Jesus came to the earth, he came as the fullness of the kingdom of God. There was nothing missing in him; he was the total kingdom. What he was in heaven had now come to the earth.

As a result, the healing of sickness and disease occurred wherever Jesus went. Demons shrieked and were cast out as the kingdom of hell fled at the presence of Jesus.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE: The enemy always wants us to believe that the real battle is with people instead of with the demonic kingdom of Satan. The temptation is to continually blame people and allow the strongholds of the enemy to be built in our lives so that we can never really enter into the real battle. We want to unite and declare that our battle is not against people, against flesh and blood, but against the enemy. Take a moment and declare that you are for each other, and serve notice to the enemy that we stand against him in the power of Jesus Christ.

SATAN DESTROYS, BUT JESUS RESTORES

Acts 10:38 (NASB): You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

This verse explains that Jesus went from place to place restoring and healing those who were oppressed by the enemy. The word oppressed means:

1. To exercise harsh control over one, to use one's power against another.¹
2. The basic meaning is "to make a slave," "to enslave."²
3. Dominate; be under the power of.

In some commentaries, oppressed means to have your foot on someone's neck, like a conquering king would do to a king he had overcome. It is a sign of domination and power.

Acts 10:38 helps us to understand the diabolical nature of the demonic kingdom. He can hinder and oppose us only as we give him the authority to do so. It is critical to understand that we cannot escape or avoid warfare. We are at war whether we want to admit it or not. This

class is designed to give us the tools to fight the battle that surrounds us every day.

HOW DO WE GIVE THE ENEMY JURISDICTION IN OUR LIVES?

Strongholds are built by allowing the enemy to have a place or opportunity in our lives through sin. The Greek word *topos* is translated place, opportunity, or foothold in the Scripture below. It is a word with a broad meaning, but it is fundamentally defined as "territory, land; in the oldest clear use in the singular it means a defined place."³

"BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN." DO NOT LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOUR WRATH, NOR GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL.
[_EPHESIANS 4:26-27 \(NKJV\)](#)

BE ANGRY AND YET DO NOT SIN; DO NOT LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOUR ANGER, AND DO NOT GIVE THE DEVIL AN OPPORTUNITY.
[_EPHESIANS 4:26-27 \(NASB\)](#)

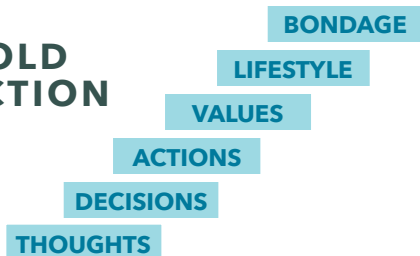
"IN YOUR ANGER DO NOT SIN." DO NOT LET THE SUN GO DOWN WHILE YOU ARE STILL ANGRY, AND DO NOT GIVE THE DEVIL A FOOTHOLD.
[_EPHESIANS 4:26-27 \(NIV\)](#)

FOR THOUGH WE WALK IN THE FLESH, WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH. FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CARNAL BUT MIGHTY IN GOD FOR PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS, CASTING DOWN ARGUMENTS AND EVERY HIGH THING THAT EXALTS ITSELF AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, BRINGING EVERY THOUGHT INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.
[_2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5 \(NKJV\)](#)

A stronghold is made up of sin expressed in a person's thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, philosophies, actions, and values. Strongholds oppose the truth of God.

Let's closely examine some key ingredients that make up a stronghold:

SATAN'S STRONGHOLD CONSTRUCTION



HOW DO WE TAKE BACK TERRITORY IN OUR LIVES?

THE FOUR RS AND SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

1. REPENT OF THE SIN.

Call it what it is. It is sin. It may be a heart attitude, like bitterness, rebellion, or pride; or it could be a behavior, like alcohol abuse, immorality, or stealing. It could even be a feeling, like rejection, inferiority, or shame. No matter what it consists of, it is still sin—your sin. (Note: In the instance of abuse or wounding, the initial sin is not yours. That is not your fault. Your sin, however, is your response—the anger, fear, unforgiveness, bitterness, shame, etc. Recognize this sin and confess it.)

REPENT, THEN, AND TURN TO GOD, SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED OUT, THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE LORD. [_ACTS 3:19 \(NIV\)](#)

2. RECEIVE GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING.

Ask God to fill you anew with his Holy Spirit; to strengthen you in your thoughts, behaviors, and emotions.

THE LORD IS COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER, ABOUNDING IN LOVE. HE WILL NOT ALWAYS ACCUSE, NOR WILL HE HARBOR HIS ANGER FOREVER; HE DOES NOT TREAT US AS OUR SINS DESERVE OR REPAY US ACCORDING TO OUR INIQUITIES. FOR AS HIGH AS THE HEAVENS ARE ABOVE THE EARTH, SO GREAT IS HIS LOVE FOR THOSE WHO FEAR HIM; AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST, SO FAR HAS HE REMOVED OUR TRANSGRESSIONS FROM US. [_PSALM 103:8-12 \(NIV\)](#)

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST AND WILL FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND PURIFY US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. [_1 JOHN 1:9 \(NIV\)](#)

3. REBUKE THE ENEMY'S HOLD ON YOU BECAUSE OF THIS SIN.

Take your rightful place of authority through the power of Jesus' death and resurrection, renouncing any comfort or "payoff" received from this sin.

JESUS SAID TO HIM, "AWAY FROM ME, SATAN!" [_MATTHEW 4:10 \(NIV\)](#)

SUBMIT YOURSELVES, THEN, TO GOD. RESIST THE DEVIL, AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU. [_JAMES 4:7 \(NIV\)](#)

4. REPLACE ALL LIES WITH GOD'S TRUTH.

Declare old attitudes, actions, and emotions dead and "paid for." Fill your heart and mind with truth that is consistent with the character of Jesus Christ and God's Word. Walk out your repentance with action. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and empower you to do it.

I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST AND I NO LONGER LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME. THE LIFE I LIVE IN THE BODY, I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME. [_GALATIANS 2:20 \(NIV\)](#)

WHAT ABOUT TEMPTATION?

NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN; AND GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU ARE ABLE, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION WILL PROVIDE THE WAY OF ESCAPE ALSO, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ENDURE IT.

_1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 (NASB)

LET NO ONE SAY WHEN HE IS TEMPTED, "I AM BEING TEMPTED BY GOD"; FOR GOD CANNOT BE TEMPTED BY EVIL, AND HE HIMSELF DOES NOT TEMPT ANYONE. BUT EACH ONE IS TEMPTED WHEN HE IS CARRIED AWAY AND ENTICED BY HIS OWN LUST. THEN WHEN LUST HAS CONCEIVED, IT GIVES BIRTH TO SIN; AND WHEN SIN IS ACCOMPLISHED, IT BRINGS FORTH DEATH. *_JAMES 1:13-15 (NASB)*

Examine James 1:13-15.

Verse 13: Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

The same word trials used in James 1:2-12 is translated temptation in verse 13. James helps Christians realize that difficult challenges and circumstances are part of every person's life. Each of us has a choice to grow from the challenge or to give into the sinful temptation. James tells us that God is unable to tempt anyone, as his nature is pure holiness. And Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God always gives believers a way to escape every temptation. Sometimes it is as simple as running from the situation itself.

Verse 14: But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

The actual Greek word used for "carried away" describes a wild animal enticed by bait in a trap. A trap lures its victim with bait designed specifically for the type of animal for which the trap is intended. Temptation

always promises something "good," but it always leads to death. Lust refers to our sinful nature or "flesh." Each person's flesh craves satisfaction, and so the temptation is directed at what the flesh desires. A sinful thought is presented, and then we have the choice to either give into it or take that thought captive.

Verse 15: Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

It is important to understand that sin does not just happen; it is a process. The thought occurs in the mind and then the desire gives birth to sin.

EIGHT THINGS REGARDING TEMPTATION THAT YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND

1. THE ENEMY TEMPTS US AT THE LEVEL OF OUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.

Imagine for a minute a bar graph representing where you are in the process of sanctification. A person who is just beginning his or her walk with Christ may be tempted in different areas than someone who has been a follower of Christ for years. Each person is tempted at the level of his or her personal growth. What I mean is that temptation usually comes at a tension point in our personal growth. When our spiritual muscles are stretched with new growth, temptation comes to draw us back into old patterns of sin. What are the areas that you are tempted to give into?

2. IT IS IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFY COMMON AREAS OF SIN THAT ARE FAMILY PATTERNS.

For example, if your grandparents and your parents divorced, then the enemy is likely to try to attack you in the same way. The demonic often attacks in places of generational familiarity, thus reinforcing weaknesses generation after generation. As the patterns become more entrenched, so does the pain and the wounds that accompany the repeated sin patterns. Remember that as a Christian you may have little understanding about another person's temptations because you are not tempted in the same way.

List some areas of generational sin patterns below:

3. WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF OUR AREAS OF WEAKNESS.

You need to be prepared for temptation by seeking wisdom from the Lord and more mature Christians about how you might be tempted. When you are aware of how the enemy will try to tempt you, then you are prepared. As long as temptation sits in areas of blindness, then you cannot see it coming. It is important to take time with your small group to determine areas in which you are blind to temptation. (If you do not have a small group, then do this with a trusted friend or mentor.)

4. IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOUR STRONGHOLDS REINFORCE TEMPTATION.

For example, defeat reinforces addiction, while loneliness, sorrow, or depression reinforce immorality. Identify your core strongholds, and discuss the type of temptations that are common for you with a small group, or with your trusted friend or mentor.

5. SIN IS A DOWNWARD SPIRAL.

The enemy always desires to ambush you with even greater temptations after you give into the first one. Sin is a downward spiral, leading you further and further away from the Lord. The enemy always wants to isolate Christians from fellowship, church, and Scripture, setting the individual up for the kill. An example could be when a person is tempted to go to a party where they meet someone and spend the next season of life in an immoral relationship that takes years from which to recover.

6. DO NOT BE TOO CONFIDENT, LEST YOU FALL.

It is important to remember that we are capable of falling fast. We can think we are above others because we are wise and have set up defenses against temptation, but then a stronghold surfaces or life changes. Maybe a sudden accident or traumatic event happens, and then we realize that our heart is capable of almost anything. Attending a church where you have true interdependence with other believers is an important safeguard in this area.

7. TEMPTATION EASILY CONQUERS THE PASSIVE PERSON.

Temptation rolls over the person who functions in passivity and whose hands are idle. Where are areas in your life that passivity still functions? Where do you have a lack of discipline that sets you up for failure? Take time to pray through what you discover.

8. THE BELIEVER NEEDS TO HAVE A SOLID PLAN TO GROW IN THE LORD.

What is your plan? Discuss with your small group leader.

How many layers of defense do true warriors have?

1. They love the presence of the Lord and seek to be in it constantly.
2. They love the Word of God (the Scripture).
3. They get fulfillment from doing good—in fact, they delight in it.
4. Absolute boundaries. Things are black and white, which means certain things are not options. “I won’t go there,” is what they commonly say.
5. They do not live by the standards of others. The standard is set between the believer and the Bible. “I am a follower of Christ and I will not relent, no matter the cost. I will not bow to temptation.”
6. Sin is sin. It should be seen as a poison that grieves God and draws the believer away from his presence.

Basics for being equipped to defeat temptation

1. Be restored to God's original design. These are the people with humble hearts, "Search me, know me...I want you, Lord...I want to know you...I won't stop."
2. Dedication to reading and knowing the Bible.
3. Taking initiative and being proactive in personal growth.
4. A white-hot prayer life.
5. Surrounded by other believers who can help teach, encourage, and help.

ENDNOTES:

1. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964–c1976. Vols. 5–9, edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.). Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI.
2. *Ibid.*