

Our Adversaries

Lesson 01 of the series, "Spiritual Warfare"

A. We are all involved in a spiritual war.

"Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:10-12 (NLT)

"When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. 'Oh, sir, what will we do now?' the young man cried to Elisha. 'Don't be afraid!' Elisha told him. 'For there are more on our side than on theirs!' Then Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!' The LORD opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire." 2 Kings 6:15-17 (NLT)

Life Application: We must use God's methods and weapons to win spiritual battles.

"We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NLT)

B. We must know our adversaries.

1. The devil. ("Satan" = "adversary"/"enemy")

a. The devil is very real and out to destroy us.

"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." 1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

b. The devil is a liar and a master of deception.

"...the devil ...was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies."

John 8:44 (NLT)

"Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:14 (NLT)

Life Application: We do not battle the devil for victory but from a position of victory.

"So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7 (NLT)

"Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Revelation 20:10 (NLT)

2. The World. (The ways of culture and society that oppose God.)

a. The World is hostile to God and his people because Satan is the god of this world.

"Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God." 2 Corinthians 4:4 (NLT)

"You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God."

Ephesians 2:2 (NLT)

b. Jesus is always with us and he is greater than any opposition we face.

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (NIV)

"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." 1 John 4:4 (NKJV)

Life Application: We must not love the world or the things it offers us.

“Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.” 1 John 2:15-17 (NLT)

3. The Flesh. (our fallen, sinful nature)

“I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.” Romans 7:21-25 (NLT)

Life Application: We can overcome the desires of the flesh by surrendering every part of our lives to the control of the Holy Spirit.

“The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions... When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.” Galatians 5:17-25 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. What do the words "spiritual warfare" mean to you?
2. Have you ever sensed you were in a spiritual battle? If so, what happened?
3. Read 1 Peter 5:8. What would you say to someone who told you they don't believe the devil exists?
4. In his book *The Screwtape Letters* C.S. Lewis said, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors..." Do you have a tendency to give Satan too much credit or not take him seriously enough?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4, 11:14, John 8:44. What is the greatest danger to you personally from the devil? ...to your family members? ...to our church?
6. Discuss Romans 7:21-25. Can you identify with this passage? Does it surprise you that the Apostle Paul wrote these words?
7. Ask someone in your group to look up the homepage of Voice of the Martyrs (persecution.com). Why are God's people being persecuted all over the world?
8. Discuss the following quotations:

"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing: For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal. Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing: Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same, And He must win the battle. And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us; The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure, One little word shall fell him." Martin Luther

"Life is a hard fight, a struggle, a wrestling with the principle of evil, hand to hand, foot to foot. Every inch of the way is disputed." Florence Nightingale

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen, both when we sleep and when we awake." John Milton