

What Is Spiritual Warfare?

This is an important question, because "spiritual warfare" means different things to different people. The term itself is not found in the scriptures, but the concept is taught. Two of the most commonly associated passages were written by the Apostle Paul.

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor 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 heavenly realms." Eph. 6:10-12

Our ministry's stress upon spiritual warfare is an attempt to bring about a proper balance in Christian lives. So many Christians have become passive and fearful. Some are satisfied just to believe the right things and attend church services and activities each week. This type of lifestyle is quite different from that which Jesus had called believers. Like the apostles (Lk 9:1-2) and the seventy (Lk 10) who were told by Jesus to go out and preach and teach about the kingdom of God, and he also said they were to heal the sick and set the captives free. In Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus commissioned the disciples.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The new converts were to be discipled and taught that God wanted them to be doing the things that Christ's disciples had been doing. And Jesus would be with His people to the end of the age, doing His works through them as they were yielded to Him in faith.

The reason ministries like ours exist at all is because of the failure of the Church to obey all of Christ's commission to His people. Working in the power of Christ to do extraordinary things in His name has been reasoned away, saying, "God does not work like that today." But we, and ministries like us, are reminders that God continues to work the way He did with the first century Church.

Spiritual warfare is a pro-active approach to our faith. We actively resist the devil when his hosts harass us. We actively pursue spiritual disciplines that will make us stronger and better prepared. We actively engage the enemy when people are in spiritual bondage.

We utilize prayer as a weapon to penetrate strongholds that cannot be reached in any other way. Spiritual warfare is the putting aside of passive attitudes towards faith which keep us from commitment and cause us to pursue only those things that will benefit us. Instead of seeking our own agenda, we submit our will to God and accept the sacrifices He calls us to make.

There is not one area of Christian ministry that has not become a battleground, but often there is not discernment that some form of spiritual resistance is in place. It has become common to attribute a natural or human explanation to most problems and leave it at that.

The one who has a spiritual warfare perspective will be inclined to test the situation to ascertain whether or not there is something more than natural influences involved. For instance, when my daughter started having a series of painful bone cysts develop at the base of her spine, we challenged them with prayer and spiritual authority and they disappeared. When people enter our office for ministry, they often develop headaches or experience overwhelming fear. A command of spiritual authority immediately brings relief.

A spiritual warrior has an alertness to the activity of the enemy. This alertness is by no means fear or paranoia. He does not go around crediting Satan and his hosts for everything wrong under the sun. The Apostle Paul was a good example of a spiritual warrior. He didn't go out of his way to look for demonic activity, but when he encountered it, he quickly recognized it and then he confronted it with spiritual authority victoriously.

A spiritual warrior knows he must bring discipline to his thought life and to his actions. If he allows these areas to be compromised, he will not be affective in resisting the enemy. He takes sin very seriously, because he knows that sin always gives the adversary an advantage. He must always be on guard against comparing himself with others and being entrapped by the subtlety of religious pride. The true warrior knows that he can do nothing that is affective in his own strength. His strength, authority, wisdom and discernment are dependent upon his close walk with his Lord. He should always remain focused and guard himself against distraction caused by problems and troubles that appear. These are designed to get his eyes off the Lord and lure him into working in the flesh.

Understanding spiritual warfare provides a new perspective on parenthood. Parents are entrusted with children by the Lord to nurture, cherish and protect. In the parent, the child needs to see a reflection of God's attributes of unconditional love, faithfulness and holiness. The parent should become a steward of God's grace in the home and be on guard against the enemy's assaults on any member of the family. A godly parent can exercise great authority in the name of Christ to resist the enemy and fight on behalf of the children. Like Job, a parent is also the priest of the home, bringing the sins of the children to God so that the enemy cannot establish strongholds in their lives.

Spiritual warfare awareness can also be very effective in witnessing and evangelism. You learn to recognize the barriers and strongholds in advance and prepare the way through prayer, spiritual authority, divine appointments and ministry.

A spiritual warrior knows his inheritance in Christ. He knows God's promises and is not easy prey to the lies and deceptions of the enemy⁶, who tries to call these promises and inheritance into question. He understands the lie is the enemy's language and his most effective weapon. Therefore, the warrior seeks constantly to fortify himself in an understanding of God's truth which he wears like armor for protection.

To summarize what I have been talking about, a commitment to spiritual warfare means:

1. A New Attitude - You begin to think like an overcomer with a victorious attitude. You walk according to your inheritance of grace in Christ. You no longer have an attitude of playing it safe or seeking not to rock the boat. You realize you want to be on the front lines for God, not trying to live the comfortable life with as few problems as possible.

2. A Greater Focus - You carefully guard against the attempts to distract you or to push your buttons. You recognize that the enemy likes to entangle God's people in the cares of this world or provoke us to react in the flesh. You understand the importance of keeping your eyes on the

Lord and standing in faith upon God's character, not in your abilities.

3. A Necessary Discipline - You have begun to discipline yourself on all levels. You are setting more time aside for study and prayer. You are spending more time being alert and obedient to the leading of the Spirit.

4. A More Balanced Biblical World View - You take very seriously the Biblical warnings to God's people about an enemy that is real.

Personal Accountability

This ministry's work is centered in deliverance counseling, which God called us to a number of years ago. Many of the truths we teach in our seminars and apply in this ministry have been sifted through this laboratory of life experience as we used the instruments of God's Word and His Holy Spirit to guide and direct us.

Deliverance counseling is surely not a cure-all by any means, but it is an effective way to address a pervasive problem that most other kinds of counseling do not consider or attempt to address. It is a ministry of last resort for many who have been through countless tests, medication and treatment as well as all sorts of counseling and therapies with little or no results.

We have had to plunge into God's Word and spend much time seeking His guidance in order to maintain the proper balance and perspective in such a controversial and dynamic area of ministry.

Because of continued abuse in this area by some, as well as the confusion and misunderstanding on the part of many, we seem to always be dealing with a credibility gap in the Christian community. It is hard for people to relate to the spiritual dynamics that are experienced in this kind of ministry, when so little is practically taught in Bible schools and seminaries or from our pulpits. There is a great deal of theological resistance and intolerance in our midst that makes it difficult to even dialogue.

One of the major concerns directed toward this type of ministry is that we relieve people of personal accountability for sin in their lives. As far as this ministry is concerned, personal accountability is the very foundation of our approach when dealing with demonic oppression. I do realize that there are ministries that have neglected this very crucial area and that is unfortunate. But we truly believe that if there is demonic activity in a person's life, it is there because some sort of ground has been given to Satan through personal consent. Satan's work is built on the foundation of the sins of the flesh.

We seek to identify sin areas and call people to accountability, repentance, confession and renunciation. Then we administer God's grace.