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Introduction

Spiritual warfare. What is it? If it is real how do you fight it? Many Christians do not believe there is an unseen enemy and therefore have left themselves vulnerable. Others have over-spiritualized their ideas to where there is a demon behind every bush and are caught up in all kinds of weirdness. Still others are bound in fear from superstition and mysticism.

The Bible declares Jesus came to destroy the works of the enemy. Although His death on the cross atoned for your sins, He also willingly suffered so you could be emotionally, physically, and spiritually whole (1 Thess.5:23). Jesus has provided the way of freedom from false religions, demonic powers, sickness and hurts that hold people captive.

Jesus declared, "...if you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32 NKJV) As you go through these studies it is my hope you will find the freedom in Jesus that you are looking for.

Eric Ahlstrom

Providential Victory

Before beginning a study on spiritual warfare, it is important that you know God's providence (His sovereign, foreseeing guidance and care) has already determined victory over all His enemies. What happens in the interim of the battle and the final victory is what you must understand to fight the good fight of faith.

1. Is there such a thing as chance in God's plan for mankind? (Prov.16:33; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:26)

God is not an advocate of gambling, nevertheless even before the Holy Spirit came to live inside man, people knew God was in control of even the smallest matters of "chance."

2. Who runs "nature?" (Psalm 147:8-9)

3. What power does God have over matter? (Col.1:17; Heb.1:3)

4. What control does God have over life? (Psalm 147:8-9; Matt.10:28-31; Acts 17:25)

5. What control does God have over man's activities? (Job 12:23; Dan.2:21; Acts 17:26)

The idea of a self-existing "Mother Nature" springs from Deism. Deism is the belief that God is an impersonal, ambivalent, and passive being. In the 1970's movie trilogy Star Wars, the "Force" represented a form of Deism. The Force, a supernatural law and power, supposedly operated the universe. The movie characters find either well-being or misfortune depending on how effectively they "use the force."

Carrying this thought to its fullest extent results in self-determinism, a belief that man's destiny is the result of cause and effect from his choices alone without the divine intervention of God. On the other hand, fatalism is another extreme belief where man has no control over his destiny, a view usually seen as negative. Neither of these beliefs represents reality.

Consider life itself, it seems so fragile. Look at the complexity of the various ecosystems with all the symbiotic relationships and environmental conditions that had to be just right at the same time for life to even exist. It seems impossible that it could even have come together, let alone stay together.

Then look at the myriad of viruses and bacteria that appear to be competing to wipe each other off this planet (an evolutionist's nightmare!). Toss in mankind who often tends to upset the balance of creation where ever he goes and you have to marvel that you are still even here.

The thought that the whole universe is under the watchful care of one Being is indeed mind-boggling! Yet God tells you in His Word He is good and holds life together in His hand. He does not rule the universe by cold, distant laws because He Himself is Law, the embodiment of the Word (John 1:1, 14). He is intimately involved in the smallest of details.

Then again mankind has taken for granted God's constant, unchanging character to provide order to the universe. Some people have gone so far as to generalize or reduce God's activities to impersonal laws or principles.

However, God does not allow Himself to be placed in a box. Does He violate His "law" when He lets a man walk on water or causes an ax head to float (2 Kings 6:5-6)? No! Instead He has just decided to do something different, what we call a miracle. Nor does this mean God runs the universe capriciously; instead we can trust in His covenant regularity by which He operates the cosmos.

6. Why does God allow evil in the world?
(Deut.30:15-19)

7. Does Satan have the freedom to do whatever he wants to you? (Luke 22:31, Job 1:9-12)

8. What is God's response to men who make plans against Him? (Psalm 2:1-4)

9. What does God do with the events in your life? (Rom.8:28)

10. What is the relationship between man's plans and God's control? (Prov.16:9)

11. What influence does God have over leaders? (Prov.21:1)

12. Does God's control over the affairs of man make Him unjust? Why or why not? (Rom.9:19-21)

All the wrongs and injustices that have occurred in history cannot be blamed on God. God created man in His image with the ability to make decisions within His boundaries. Only the choices ensuing from mankind's fallen nature have brought evil on the earth.

At the same time, no event or evil thing has occurred out from under His administration. For example, God was perfectly just to withhold His grace and influence to allow the Pharaoh of Egypt's heart to harden against Israel in order to show His glory and might (Ex.10:1-2; Rom.9:17) and still bring judgment upon him.

In reality, true justice apart from the mercy of God is that every man, woman, and child ever born stands condemned of sin, deserving eternal punishment in hell. Only by an extension of God's mercy is a person able to receive salvation. Mankind's natural inclination is towards seeking self-gratification instead of God.

Truly, God's greatest punishment on earth is to withdraw His grace and mercy from man. History has shown that men and societies self-destruct when God's grace is absent. However, God in His mercy has limited the damage that mankind and Satan can do to His creation. Further, He has extended redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ. It is God who initiates a person's desire to seek Him resulting in the victory that He offers.

13. What does God know about Israel and about you? (Jer.29:11)

14. What is God's plan for the believer? (Rom.8:29)

15. Who initiates salvation? (Phil.1:6)

16. What is your responsibility after the born again experience?
What part does God take? (Phil.2:12-13)

17. How are you to pursue God's plan for your life?
(Phil.3:12-14)

18. By what source of strength are you to labor for Jesus?
(1 Cor.15:10)

Following Jesus requires effort on your part to believe in and to hold onto His promises. Concurrently it is God's ability that upholds you as you cling to Him (Ps.63:8).

19. For what is God looking for? (2 Chron.16:9)

Throughout Church history there has been a dynamic tension between man's understanding of the sovereignty of God and man's ability to choose. This balance in tension appears to shift on different occasions and the reasons for which are likely to remain a mystery. Just as a puzzle piece has meaning only in its relation to the whole puzzle, the part you play in God's plan for victory can only be understood within the context of God's overall plan for mankind.

An excellent manual to study examples of God's influence and plan in the affairs of man is America's Providential History by Mark Beliles and Steve McDowell. What's important to understand is that God ultimately has everything under His control. The Bible (Prov.16:9) says man plans his ways but God directs his steps. Your responsibility is to act in faith and follow God, trusting He will lead you into His plan for victory.

Digging Deeper

Ps.22:28; Prov.21:1; Isa.45:9; Heb.12:2; Phil.1:6, 2:13; Matt.6:25, 11:12; Jer.29:11-14; Ezek.22:30; Isa.59:16; Rom.8:28-31; Eph.1:4-5

The Two Kingdoms

You are a citizen of one of two kingdoms at war. Whether you realize it or not, you are in a battle at this very moment. Before you can effectively enter into the fight you must know who your enemy is and who is on your side.

1. What kingdom were you formerly a member of? (Eph.5:8; Col.1:13)

2. Where is God's kingdom established and what attitude does it promote? (Luke 17:20-21; Rom.14:17)

3. Who is your enemy? (1 Pet.5:8)

4. What else is the devil called? (John 12:31, 16:11; Eph.2:2)

5. What is Satan's objective? (John 10:10)

Even though God is Lord of all, He has given stewardship of the earth to man (Gen.1:26; Psalm 115:16). Satan usurped rulership of the world system when sinful man (Adam) neglected the responsibility of stewardship. As a born again believer you are no longer under Satan's system, even though you may still feel its influence. Furthermore, you have a mandate from God to reclaim forsaken territory.

The devil's rebellion on earth is coming to a close; there is little time left for him to vent his hatred of God and loathing for mankind. Since Satan cannot directly hurt God, he tries to hurt the people God loves. The devil knows he is doomed to the lake of fire, so he wants to drag as many people with him as possible. Contrary to what many believe, hell is not the devil's headquarters. Satan and his minions are more terrified of hell than most people (Matt.25:41; Luke 8:28, 31; Rev.20:1-3).

Read (Isa.14:12-15, Ezek.28:12-19).

6. What was Satan like before he betrayed God?
(Ezek.28:12-13)

7. What position did Satan hold? (Ezek.28:14)

8. What did Satan do to lose his position in heaven before the fall of Adam? (Isa.14:13-14; Ezek.28:17)

Satan (Lucifer) covets the worship that belongs to God. Before his pride caused him to lose his position in heaven, Lucifer was one of the chief angels standing before God's throne. Today the devil inspires perverted forms of worship through sensual music, the occult, false religions, and the blood sacrifices of murder and abortion. Each of these evils expresses Satan's nature and promotes his false glory among mankind.

9. What is one of Satan's tactics? (2 Cor.4:4)

10. In what form can Satan disguise himself? (2 Cor.11:14)

11. What is Satan like? (1 Pet.5:8)

Satan may pretend to be a lion, but his only power is in deception.

12. What happened when Jesus released His authority to His followers to cast out demons? What did this indicate?
(Matt.12:28; Luke 10:17-18; Rev.12:7-10; John 12:31)

Before the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the devil could freely roam the earth and approach the throne of God (Job 1:6-7; Zech.3:1-2). Jesus reestablished authority by extending it to the believer in order to advance His kingdom and to begin the tearing down of the kingdom of darkness.

13. What are your weapons like? (2 Cor.10:3-4)

14. Who are you not to fight? (Eph.6:12)

15. What are you to fight? (Eph.6:12)

You must realize that people are not your main enemy.

You are at war with an unseen enemy who manipulates people to do his bidding. Though unseen, Satan is not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent like God; rarely does an individual actually encounter the devil himself. The devil can only rule via hierarchy. Principalities are Satan's demonic rulers set up in hierarchies over geographical areas. Powers are the demons operating under the principalities with authority over two groups in Satan's hierarchy.

The first group, rulers of darkness, involves the demons exerting force to afflict and blind mankind. The second group, spiritual wickedness, encompasses the demons wielding influence behind the scenes in the unseen world.

16. Who protected Elisha? Who delivered Peter from prison?
(2 Kings 6:17; Acts 12:9)

17. What else did the angels do? (Acts 8:26; 10:3-7)

18. How do angels help you? (Psalm 34:7; 91:11)

19. What is one of the functions of angels? (Heb.1:14)

20. How should the knowledge of angels affect your actions?
(Heb.13:2)

21. Why was there a delay for Daniel in receiving an answer to his prayer? (Dan.10:10-13, 20-21)

God has provided His unseen messengers, His angels, to watch over you and to fight on your behalf as you seek God's will.

22. What has God said about His kingdom? (Dan.7:14)

23. How will God's kingdom be advanced? (Luke 13:20-21; 17:20-21)

24. What pleases God? (Luke 12:32)

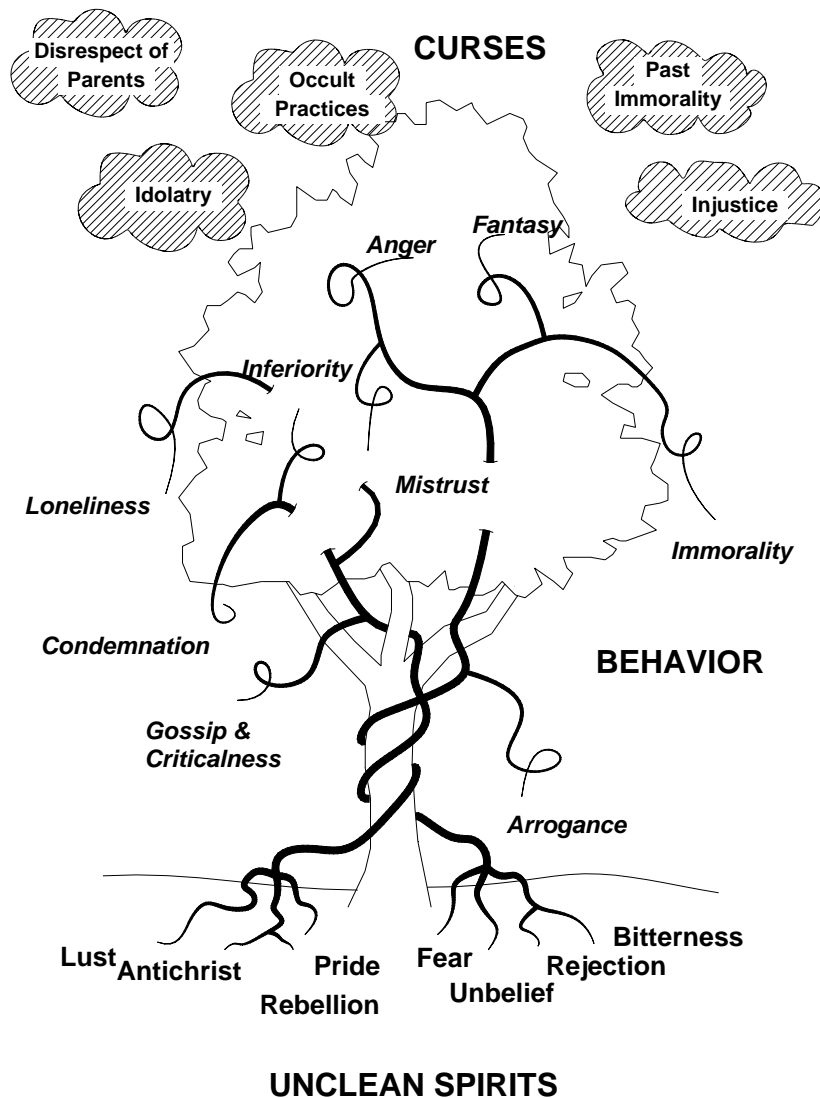
25. What will be one of the final victory shouts? (Rev.11:15)

The war you are in is a spiritual one. Your enemy is unseen to the natural eye. To compensate for your weakness in the flesh God has given you powerful weapons to regain an advantage. The remainder of this study book reveals God's provision for you to share in His victory over the enemy.

Digging Deeper

Dan.6:26; Matt.25:41; 1 Chron.21:1; Luke 22:31; 2 Tim.3:13; 1 John 1:4-11; Matt.5:5; Rev.12:7-9

The Unseen Influences



When self-discipline is not enough to stop unholy behavior, there could be curses and demonic forces in operation. Demons are unclean spirits that attempt to choke out the Christian life through unseen influence. They act like vines that bind and weigh people down in their sins. Curses are like clouds that block the light of God's blessings and provide cover for demons to manifest. The following studies will help you understand Jesus' provision of freedom from that which can hinder you from godly living.

Authority Over the Enemy

Now that you know the kingdom of God will overpower the kingdom of darkness, is that enough for you to experience victory? While it is true Jesus did win the victory with His blood, your freedom is not automatically handed over to you. You must play an active role in order to receive His gifts and promises and to obtain freedom; this is a freedom you cannot earn and do not deserve.

1. Where is Jesus seated and how long will He be there?
(Psalm 110:1-2) _____

2. Who has all authority? (Matt.28:18; Eph.1:18-23)

3. To whom has Jesus delegated authority on earth? (Eph.1:22)

4. Whom is God going to use to judge the enemy? (1 Cor.6:2-3)

Jesus has in His hand the scepter (the symbol of royal authority) and has chosen to exercise it through the Church. God has judged the devil (John 12:31) and has delegated certain spiritual authority to the Church to strip away the influence of the kingdom of darkness and enforce His judgment. As a member of His Church, you are called to use His authority.

There are varying concentric spheres of authority: self, family, local church, community, and world. Your authority in these spheres extends out of your ability and capacity to love. In most cases, your ability to lay down your life in love for others diminishes the farther out from the center spheres of family and church.

Therefore, you must start with the central areas of your life before moving outward. It is God's intention to expand the love of His people and to promote them by moving them from the family and local church into civil and business affairs in order to expand and advance His influence among men.

5. Who is greater than the devil? (1 John 4:4)

6. What gives you the victory over the world? (1 John 5:4)

7. What do you have to do to be this overcomer? (1 John 5:5)

8. What have you received that can give you victory in life?
(Rom.5:17)

God has secured victory for those who will dare to believe Him at His Word.

9. What did the Roman Centurion recognize in Jesus? What did Jesus recognize in the Roman Centurion? (Matt.8:5-13)

10. What happened to several unbelievers when they tried to cast out a demon? (Acts 19:13-16)

Saying the right words or imitating the actions of an experienced Christian is not enough to push back the forces of darkness.

If there is no authority to back up the spoken words then any commands against demons will be ineffective (1 Cor.4:20). The authority to cast out demons comes by faith. For you to exercise authority effectively you must also be under authority; a position of faith. Even Jesus, though He is God the Son, submitted to the authority of God the Father.

11. By what authority can you as a believer cast out demons?
(Mark 16:17; Acts 16:16-18)

12. What must happen at the name of Jesus? (Phil.2:9-11)

13. What must demons do at the name of Jesus? (Luke 10:17)

14. What authority has Jesus given His followers? (Luke 10:19)

The name of Jesus is the symbol or scepter of authority God has given every believer so that we may experience victory in life. However, not everyone takes advantage of what God so freely gives. You must choose to believe in order to receive His authority.

The enemy wants to stop you from using the Name of Jesus by attacking your faith with doubt and unbelief. Demons use condemnation (1 John 3:21) and accusation to keep you from exercising authority. Satan wants you paralyzed with fear. You must persevere in hanging onto God's promises in order to overcome the enemy.

15. How is authority exercised? (Matt.21:21; Mark 11:23)

16. How does the kingdom of God operate? (1 Cor.4:20)

17. What power do your words have? (Prov.18:21)

Mountains are obstacles, areas of resistance that you must overcome. Praying to God to remove the obstacles in your life is not always going to work. God is waiting for you to exercise the authority He has given you on earth. You must learn to speak to your mountains with the authority God has given you.

Words have impact. Jesus said He would judge every idle word (Matt.12:36) because words release power. Confessing God's Word over your life not only places you in the position to receive His promises, it also frees your mind from fear, doubt, and unbelief.

Digging Deeper

Deut.30:11-15, 19; Ps.20:7; Prov.29:2; Mark 11:27-33; Rom.16:20; Luke 4:36; 10:19; John 14:14; Rom.10:6-10; 1 Cor.15:22-26

Deliverance

How do you fight an enemy you cannot see? Sometimes you can only observe where demons are or have been by the devastation left in their wake. Has God left you helpless? No, on the contrary God has given you what it takes to drive the enemy out from the areas He wants you to reclaim.

This study is designed to sharpen your awareness of the spiritual forces surrounding you and to help minimize the element of surprise and stealth the enemy may have held over you.

1. What did Jesus come to do? (1 John 3:8; Acts 10:38)

2. What did Jesus promise to believers? (John 14:12)

3. What examples did He leave you? (Mark 1:21-27; Matt.15:22-28; Luke 13:11-12; Matt.8:16, 17:14-18)

4. What happens when demons are cast out? (Matt.12:28)

5. What sign can follow a believer? (Mark 16:17)

6. What gift can help you cast out demons? (1 Cor.12:10)

7. What might be necessary to help discern a demon's stronghold before casting it out? (Mark 9:28-29; Isa.58:6)

8. What are you not to do? (Eph.4:27)

9. How should and shouldn't you address demons? (Jude 8-10; Zech.3:2; Acts 16:15; 2 Pet.2:10-11)

Taking wild shots at an enemy you are not sure is there or have improperly discerned is futile. You need the Holy Spirit to give you discernment to identify the unclean spirits in operation. It is your faith in God and in the authority He has given you that will drive out demons. Raising your voice or speaking abusively towards demons will not get them to leave any sooner. God wants you to deal firmly with demons, yet also judiciously for though in rebellion they are still His creation.

A common question is, "Can a Christian be possessed by a demon?" There is a difference between possession and oppression. Possession implies ownership. Unbelievers can become possessed depending on how much they have given of themselves to demonic influence. Oppression on the other hand is the application of external force to influence behavior.

A Christian cannot be possessed by a demon because a Christian is a child of God bought with a price (1 Cor.6:20) by the blood of Jesus. However, a Christian can be oppressed by demons that have found an entrance to the soul.

10. What can bring demonic oppression? (Matt.18:32-35; Prov.25:28; John 5:14)

How do you know if you are oppressed by a demon? Here are four symptoms:

- 1) Discipline does not work.
- 2) Prayer seems to be ineffective.
- 3) Counseling is unsuccessful.
- 4) The behavior is compulsive.

Demons look for open doors to the soul to begin their attacks. Unforgiveness (see "Forgiveness" in Growing in Victory), sin, generational curses, the occult and other activities contrary to God's Word are openings that can leave you vulnerable to oppression. You must guard your soul from the enemy by keeping yourself free of ungodly thoughts and actions.

11. What must you do to evict a demon? (Matt.12:29)

12. What does a demon desire to do after being evicted? (Matt.12:43)

13. If the "house" is clean yet unoccupied, what will happen? (Matt.12:44-45)

14. What held off demonic oppression from King Saul? (1 Sam.16:23)

15. What is God's strategy to drive out the enemy? (Ex.23:27-30)

16. What happens when you do not drive out your enemy? (Num.33:55; Ex.23:32-33)

If God drove out all of your enemies at once, the void left unfilled by the life and power of God would be overrun once again. After demons have been evicted, you must fill the vacancy with the Word of God. Praise and worship can also put pressure on the enemy in your endeavor to reclaim spiritual ground.

17. What must you admit before you can be delivered? Why? (1 John 1:8-10; Rom.10:13; Heb.4:15-16)

Feelings of shame and condemnation should not keep you from seeking help from the Lord. The enemy will try to deceive you and to draw you away from getting help from others by telling you, 'you are the only one who is struggling' in a particular area of oppression. Demons do not want to be brought into the light of God's Word. When the enemy's schemes are brought to light, often with the help of another Christian, freedom is not far off.

18. What has God promised to those who love Him?
(Psalm 91:14-16)

God is the source of your freedom. Your responsibility is to receive the freedom Jesus bought with His life. If you are unsure on how to get freedom in an area of your life, get with your pastor or another believer who has proven experience in deliverance to help you gain back areas of your life the enemy has sought to dominate.

Digging Deeper

Matt.4:23-24; Mark 1:26; 5:3-13; Luke 7:21; 8:2; Acts 19:12-17;
1 John 4:1

Freedom From the Past

Elephant trainers in India begin training young elephants by chaining one of the animal's legs to a stake in the ground. The young elephant would tug at the chain to get loose only to eventually give up the challenge. Though the elephant continues to grow in strength and could easily pull the stake out of the ground, it has long since conceded to the 'power' of the chain.

Your past greatly influences the way you are today. Curses are the chains of past hurts and disobedience. God's desire is for you to be loosed from the curses and events in your past that keep you chained and prevent you from being all that God wants you to be.

1. Why are people often troubled? (Hosea 4:6)

2. What does Jesus want you to know? Why? (John 8:32)

3. What will capture and place you in bondage? (Prov.5:22)

4. What can bring you woe? (Isa.5:18)

5. What can cause you problems? (Prov.28:13)

6. What has God set before you? (Deut.30:19)

You may be in bondage because of wrongs committed against you or even by you. In either case blame shifting or self-condemnation will not help you in your quest for liberty. Before you can be free, you must decide to take responsibility for your actions and reactions.

7. How does God want to deal with your sin? (Ps.103:10, 12)

8. How has God chosen to deal with you? (Psalm 103:13)

Sin will place you in the bondage of darkness and keep you away from the blessing of God. God's plan is for you to repent of sin and to walk with Him in the light of freedom. You must also guard your thought life because thoughts release emotions, feelings, and actions. God expects you to replace the thoughts that dominate your attention with godly thoughts.

9. How far can curses go back in your family? (Ex.34:6-7)

Curses can be upon families, communities, tribes, and nations. An example of how sin can affect one's descendants can be seen in King David, a man after God's heart. David committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam.11:1-5; 12:7-12) which brought a curse upon his sons. David's sons later committed various sexual sins that cost them their kingdoms or their lives (2 Sam.13:2-29; 16:21-22; 1 Kings 11:1-9).

Below are several common curses:

Deut.28:20-28, 59-65 – Humiliation, barrenness, miscarriage, mental & chronic physical sickness, family breakdown, poverty, defeat, oppression, failure, God's disfavor, suicide, proneness to accidents, and unnatural deaths in the family because of disobedience and not serving God with thankfulness.

Deut.18:10-13; 27:15 – Resistance from God because of involvement in the occult and idol worship.

Deut.27:16 – Loss of blessing because of disobedience to parents.

Gen.12: 2-3 – Loss of blessing because of reviling God's people.

Zech.5:1-4 – Loss of blessing because of thievery.

Deut.27:20-23 – Loss of blessing because of immorality.

Deut.27:17-18, 24-26 – Loss of blessing because of injustice.

Jer.48:7-47; Isa.16:6-14; Jer.17:5-8; Ps.119:21 – Loss of blessing because of pride (curse of Moab) and self-sufficiency.

Deut.23:2 – Rejection because of illegitimate birth. Fatherless men under this curse lack approval and are hindered in the ability to hear God's call to leadership and service.

Isa.29:11-13 – Spiritual dullness because of false religion or justifying disobedience with something religious.

10. When does a curse have influence on your life? (Prov.26:2)

11. What must you do to experience God's compassion? (Prov.28:13)

12. What does God want to do for your soul? (Psalm 23:3)

13. What does Jesus want to carry for you? (Isa.53:4)

14. What did Jesus do for you? Why? (Gal.3:13-14)

Jesus took on the shame of mankind to deliver you from the shame and condemnation of your past. Your responsibility is to respond to God's provision of freedom.

15. What power is there in words? (Prov.12:18; 18:21)

16. What does God require of your speech? (Titus 3:2; James 4:11)

Negative words from parents and friends can be bound around your neck from childhood (Prov.22:6). Your own words can create hindrances to your growth as a Christian. These destructive words are hard to shake and nearly as hard to discern apart from the help of others. You will need discernment to separate the way God made you from the curses that have bound you. God will replace the feelings of disapproval and rejection resulting from these words with His unconditional approval and acceptance as you replace the word curses over your life with His truth.

17. How many times did Peter deny Jesus and how many times did Jesus make Peter confess his love? (Mark 14:66-72; John 21:15-17)

Healing

With compassion and with Peter’s own words Jesus healed the memory Peter had of rejecting Him. Peter received grace when he renounced his past statements of denying Jesus. Peter used this grace to strengthen his brothers in their walks of faith. God’s plan is to change your thinking about the past.

He does not want you replaying your past over and over again in your mind. He does not want you shackled with a ‘victim mentality’. As Joseph had found (Gen.45:5-8; 50:20), God wants to give you His interpretation of your past. God redeems memories though rarely removing them.

A Christian, like an athlete in sports or a soldier in war, must learn how to stay in the contest while wounded or in pain. As God is in the process of healing you, He can use the wounds of past memories to help you relate to others and encourage them to find freedom.

18. What determines the type of person you will be? (Prov.23:7)

19. What is good for you? (Prov.15:13, 15; 17:22)

Thoughts release memories, feelings, and emotions that lead to actions. God wants you to replace the negative thoughts that will dominate your life with positive, godly thoughts (Ps.19:14; Phil.4:8).

Blame shifting will only keep you bound to the past. Even though past hurts may not be your fault, it is your responsibility to deal with them before God. You must break out of the habit of replaying and rehearsing thoughts that are contrary to God (see “The New Life” in Beginning in Victory).

For your children’s sake you must break the chain of generational curses so they can build upon a foundation better than what you had. With an attitude of thankfulness, gratefulness, and forgiveness, make the choice to let God’s joy fill your heart as you claim your freedom.

Digging Deeper

Deut.28:1-68; Prov.6:2; Isa.58:12; Eph.4:17-19; Heb.12:1-2

In the Lord’s prayer (Matt.6:10) Jesus taught you to pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” What is it like in heaven? Is there sickness, crime, or oppression? Yet on earth there are many afflictions that have come since the fall of Adam. It is God’s desire that you receive the benefits of His promises, including healing so that His will can be done on earth.

1. What did God require from Israel to receive the promise of divine health? (Ex.15:26)

2. On what basis does God revive the afflicted? (Ps.119:107)

Even though God is not obligated to heal when there is need, out of His compassion He has given promises of healing to be claimed by faith.

3. What should you do when you are sick? (James 5:13-16)

4. What can God do for the sick through a believer? (Mark 16:16-18)

5. What is healing from God? (1 Cor.12:9; James 1:17)

You cannot earn nor do you deserve healing, you can only place yourself in a position to receive God’s provision of healing.

6. What did God use as a sign to bear witness to the Gospel preached by the Church? (Mark 16:20; Heb.2:3-4)

A sign only points the way to something else. The sign itself is not to be glorified. God heals to bring glory to Himself and to confirm His Word.

7. What did Jesus take on Himself for you? What benefit can you receive from His suffering? (Matt.27:26; 1 Pet.2:24; Isa.53:4-5)

8. What did the early believers ask from God? (Acts 4:29-30)

It takes bold compassion to pray for others to be healed.

9. What did the woman have that allowed Jesus to heal her? (Luke 8:43-48)

10. What can demons cause? (Mark 9:20-27; Luke 13:11)

11. What did Jesus come to do? (1 John 3:8)

12. What hindered people from receiving healing from Jesus? (Matt.13:58)

13. What did Jesus tell a man after healing him? (John 5:5-9, 14)

14. How does God want you to prosper? (3 John 2)

The condition of your soul is important in receiving healing. A poor attitude will only produce poor results. With an attitude of faith and gratitude, you can expect good from God. In contrast to faith, pride can hinder healing. For example, Naaman, though not an Israelite, was a man willing to trust God, nevertheless almost missed his healing because of pride. Only after Naaman humbled himself in obedience to God's will did he receive healing (2 Kings 5:1-15).

15. What is your body? (1 Cor.6:19-20).

The condition of your body is important to God because it reflects His glory. Exercise, diet, and medical help are a few ways to counter the sickness resulting from exposure to this fallen world. Doctors are a blessing from God and many of the world's best have come from a society with a Christian heritage. Christians established the majority of the early hospitals, too. However, your faith for healing should be in Jesus, the Great Physician.

16. What was God's response to Paul's request for healing? (2 Cor.12:7-9)

17. How did Paul receive God's response to his request? (2 Cor.12:10)

Paul had been divinely healed before (Acts 28:8-9) and had seen others healed. However, when God has another plan, He is not obligated to heal immediately. Some healings are gradual. If you do not receive healing as soon as you ask for it, don't quit believing. Stand firm on God's promises and fight the good fight of faith. Even if you are not healed here on earth, God has reserved a glorified body for you in heaven.

18. What response did the apostles give after performing a healing? (Acts 14:15)

19. Has Jesus changed since the time of the first believers? (Heb.13:8)

Some people contend that the apostles were more than just mere men and that after they had died healing disappeared. But God's Word declares that it is He who heals, not man, and He still heals people today.

Digging Deeper

Gen.20:17; Ps.6:1-10; Acts 9:36-42; 14:8-10; 19:11-12

Preparing for Warfare

No one would go into battle without first counting the cost and making the proper preparation. It is no accident that the greatest victories come to those who are the most prepared. God is not one who arbitrarily respects one person over another in distributing victory. However, He has set before you your own battles to wage. It is your choice to equip yourself that determines how well you will fight to obtain the victory.

1. What does God want to do with you? (Psalm 18:34; 144:1)

2. What must you do if you are not spiritually sharp? (Eccl.10:10)

3. Why does God allow enemies to remain in your life for a while? (Judges 3:1-2, 4)

4. Why do some people not prepare themselves for battle? (Prov.29:18)

Freedom is not free. The American patriot Thomas Paine stated, "That which we obtain too easily, we esteem too lightly. It is dearness only which gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price on its goods." Frequently it is only after fighting the good fight of faith when you appreciate and cherish the freedom God gives.

5. What is God's strategy to conquer the enemy? (Ex.23:29-30)

6. Does God give you victory because of personal righteousness? Why or why not? (Deut.9:1-7)

Trusting in your ability to keep God's law to gain favor and blessing is self-righteousness. You obey God because He is worthy, yet He blesses you out of mercy and grace.

You cannot limit your obedience to simply keeping rules. The purpose of God's law is to spotlight the areas in your life not yet yielded to His will and to lead you to grace. Petty distinctions and criticalness can spring up among God's people when customs and traditions are created for the gray areas not directly covered in God's Word. However, God's law purposely does not cover every detail of life. You need the Holy Spirit to lead you into the truth and application of the Word to the uncharted areas of life.

7. What did Jesus do before beginning His public ministry? (Luke 4:1, 14)

8. What is often necessary to discern demonic strongholds? (Isa.58:6; Matt.17:21)

9. How are you not to fast? (Matt.6:16)

The desires of your flesh can distract you from God's will. God has provided fasting as a means to focus your attention away from your flesh to sensitize your soul to spiritual things. Fasting is more than going without food; to fast is to humble yourself before God and to submit to His will. Fasting is not a means of manipulating God to do your will.

Physically fasting renews your health and promotes healing. During a fast your body begins directing its energies to eliminate toxins that have accumulated. The unpleasant feelings, bad breath, and the occasional headaches are all effects of the cleansing process.

10. Why are you to fast? (Isa.58:6-7)

11. What will God do for you when you humble yourself before Him with fasting? (Isa.58:8-9)

You can fast in two ways: the normal fast and the partial fast. The normal fast is one during which you abstain from all food, solid or liquid, but not from pure water.

The partial fast is one during which you abstain from certain foods and drinks for extended periods. An example of a partial fast is Daniel's 21 day fast (Dan.10:3) where he ate only bread and vegetables and drank only water. He had a normal fast in chapter nine.

There are many ways to engage in a partial fast such as juice only fasts, skipping a meal each day for a season, 'no sweets' fasts, TV fasts, etc. The partial fast is a good stepping-stone to normal fasting or for those whose circumstances would not allow a normal fast.

12. What happened during a period of prayer and fasting in Antioch? (Acts 13:1-2)

Fasting on a regular basis, under the leading of the Spirit, with clear direction and vision can accomplish much for the Kingdom of God. For more in-depth study read God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallis.

13. Why did God allow the Israelites to go through the wilderness? (Deut.8:2-5)

14. What can bring defeat and failure to a young leader? (1 Tim.3:6-7)

15. What must you do first to resist the devil? (James 4:7)

16. How will you overcome the devil and his forces? (Rev.12:11)

The Christian life is for service and sacrifice. It is an ongoing journey. You will never arrive at a final destination until you leave this earth. God wants you to share and appreciate His vision for advancing His kingdom as motivation for your preparation for the fight. Whenever one stops believing, preparing, and advancing, defeat will be the end result.

Pastor Steve Murrell said, "If God did not spare His only Son from suffering, why should anyone expect God to spare them?" Growth is often a painful process. Nevertheless God's love and mercy limits the severity of trials, tough circumstances, and warfare to the level you can handle in faith. Therefore yield to God's plan of preparation so that you will be ready for battle.

Digging Deeper

1 Sam.15:23; Eph.4:14; Rom.16:17-18; 1 John 3:7-9

The Armor of God

No soldier or athlete would enter into a contest without first putting on the proper equipment. Part of preparation for war is to understand the equipment God has given you to fight the good fight of faith.

1. What armor has God made available to you? (Eph.6:13-17)

2. What are these weapons like? (2 Cor.10:4)

The armor of God covers your front side from head to toe. When the enemy faces you in battle, it mainly sees your armor. Your backside however is uncovered. Therefore you need other believers behind you for protection. Running away from the confrontation will only expose your backside to the enemy. God wants you to wear the armor by faith to overcome the enemy.

3. Where does God desire truth? (Psalm 51:6)

4. What are the benefits of truth? (John 8:32 18:37; 2 Pet.1:12)

5. What happens when one does not abide in the truth of God's Word? (James 1:23-24)

The girdle or belt holds the uniform together. Deception and lies from the enemy can lead you down the path of destruction and will cause your life to unravel. The truth of God holds your life together.

6. What are the benefits of righteousness? (Rom.5:17; Prov.10:2)

7. What can take away your confidence? (1 John 3:21)

8. How do you take on righteousness? (Rom.3:21-23; 4:5)

9. What are you to protect? Why? (Prov.4:23)

The breastplate covers the heart and other vital organs. Righteousness guards your heart (mind, will, and emotions) from the damage that condemnation can bring. (See "The New Life" in [Beginning in Victory](#))

10. What is the power of the Gospel? (Rom.1:16)

11. What should you be ready to do? (2 Tim.4:2)

12. Why is it important that you preach the Gospel? (Rom.10:15)

One tactic in war is speed and mobility. Wars are won or lost depending on how swiftly an army can move in and take territory and avoid traps and ambushes. God intends for His Church to be ready with the Gospel to claim souls for the kingdom at every opportunity.

13. How do you resist the devil? (1 Pet.5:8-9)

14. What gives you victory? (1 John 5:4)

The shield in Roman times was designed in such a way that a soldier could duck behind it to block arrows shot from far away. Your faith shields you from (see "Faith Toward God" in [Beginning in Victory](#)) the fiery darts of accusation and lies from the enemy.

15. From where does your salvation come? (Psalm 62:1-2)

16. What does the hope of salvation do for you? (Heb.6:19)

17. What are you to do with your salvation? (Phil.2:12)

The helmet protects the head from blows by the enemy that can knock a soldier senseless or even cause death. Salvation protects your thought life with a hope for the future during the tough battles.

18. What is God's Word like? What is it able to separate? (Heb.4:12)

19. How do you gain maturity? (Heb.5:14)

20. What did Jesus use to battle Satan? (Luke 4:3-13)

Where the other pieces of armor are primarily for protection, the sword is used to attack. Gaining proficiency with the sword takes practice. You must exercise the promises of the Word (see "Loving God's Word" in Beginning in Victory) to become the skillful warrior God intends.

21. What else are you to do besides putting on God's armor? (Eph.6:18)

22. What kind of environment does intercession provide for the Gospel? (1 Tim.2:1-2)

One of the promises given to believers is that rivers of living water would flow out from them (John 7:37-39). A river, depending on the volume of flow and the tide, has the ability to push fresh water miles out into the ocean. For example, the Amazon River flows into the salty Atlantic Ocean. Freshwater fish have been found 100 miles out to sea when the tide was going out. Prayer, like a river, is penetrating. When Christians intercede in concert with God's turning of the tide of events, deep advancement for the gospel is made into the world.

Intercession is the positioning of believers both to block and intercept the enemy as the early Church did for Peter (Acts 12:3-12). Intercession requires the exercise of authority to wrestle against the opposing forces and spiritual crosscurrents.

Your authority is only effective when it is exercised in love. You must identify yourself with those on whose behalf you are making intercession as Moses did for Israel (Ex.32:9-14). Because each individual has a limited sphere of influence it takes the concerted intercession of the Church to exercise authority to reach the nations. Intercessors are the unsung and unseen heroes in spiritual warfare; Heaven waits to reveal these champions of prayer.

23. What should you do before speaking a prayer to God? (Eccl.5:1-2)

24. Who helps you pray? (Rom.8:26)

Intercession is not a one sided communication to God; you must first watch and listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Often when praying in tongues the Holy Spirit intercedes on your behalf.

There are no formulas to effective prayer (see "Knowing God" in Beginning in Victory). Success only comes by a willingness to be patient and wait for God's direction. Satan wants to keep you from interceding. The devil wants to deceive you with the thought, "My prayers will not really make a difference." He will let you be busy with activity so long as you do not talk with God or exercise authority.

Therefore put on the armor of God by faith, meet the enemy head on in spiritual battle with authority, and let God lead you into victory.

Digging Deeper

Ezek.22:30; Jer.29:7; Eph.6:19; Heb.7:25

The Inner Battle

There is another enemy that resides within you that resists the life of God. In this study you will discover how to gain “home field advantage” and identify the tactics of the enemy.

1. What wages war against the Spirit of God? (Gal.5:16-17)

2. Where is the battle fought? (2 Cor.10:5)

3. What is hostile to God? (Rom.8:7-8)

4. How does God take dominion over His enemies?
(Ex.23:29-30)

Both in the natural and in the spirit God gives you only the battles you can handle. God gives you victory little by little beginning from within.

5. What is to be said about self-control? (Prov.16:32)

6. What is lack of self-control compared to? (Prov.25:28)

7. Can anyone trust their own heart or feelings for direction?
Why or why not? (Jer.17:9)

8. What are the characteristics of foolishness?
(Prov.12:15; 28:26)

The life of discipline and self-control is not an exercise in will power. It is a placing of self under God’s authority. It is foolish for you to trust in feelings because your heart can deceive you. Because of your natural propensity towards deception, you need to submit your thoughts to the Bible and the wisdom of other believers.

9. What should not be in the Church? (1 Cor.1:10)

10. What happens when there is division? (Matt.12:25)

11. What is Satan called? (Rev.12:10)

12. What damage can backbiting and gossip cause?
(Prov.11:13; 16:28; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20, 22)

13. What has God called you to preserve? (Eph.4:1-3)

Satan’s plan of attack is to create division within the Church. The enemy wants to separate you from other Christians and prevent you from living by God’s Word. When Christians are too busy fighting one another, the enemy can inflict destruction virtually undetected.

Accusation, envy, and jealousy of other’s success are the seeds of division that the host of darkness wants to sow among believers. God wants you to see the whole picture of the Great Commission: there is a tremendous need for workers in the harvest.

You should rejoice in the success of your brothers and sisters as they advance the Gospel. And yes, God is well aware of other Christians’ problems, too. If you cannot actively help another person then trust God that He will. Do not give in to the devil by speaking evil of another person—Christian or unbeliever.

14. What are rebellion and insubordination considered to be?
(1 Sam.15:23)

15. What does rebellion bring? (Prov.17:11)

16. Where do the rebellious live? (Psalm 68:6)

17. What does God do to the rebellious? (Ezek.20:38)

Rebellion against God and His delegated authority will bring you defeat. Being in God's care means being under His umbrella of authority. To submit to God implies a voluntary alignment with God's chain of command. Not only are you to obey God and His Word, you must also submit to the designated authority He has established with parents, husbands, church leaders, civil leaders, business leaders, etc.

Rebellion is the antinomian attitude of rejecting authority out of self-will. The attitude of submission is not the same as unquestioning obedience to the person in authority. Submission is humility towards God and a setting aside of self-interest for His will.

However, when the authority is in opposition to God's will, you need to consider how to respond. Though you should honor the position of the one in authority, you must obey God's Word even if there are repercussions (Acts 5:27-29). Sometimes God will require you to disregard and even resist direction from a leader when it contradicts the Bible, is abusive, or is outside the boundaries He has established.

18. What are you exhorted not to do? Why? (Gal.6:7-8)

19. What are those who live for their appetites? (Phil.3:18-19)

You must decide to yield to God's ability and not give into the path of least resistance (see "Temptation" in Growing in Victory). The habits and sins that start small will not stay small. Lustful appetites are never satisfied. God wants you to take those desires to the cross.

The cross is where God's will crosses with your will. The purpose of the cross is to put to death the power and control of the flesh, not to make you comfortable.

20. What example does Paul give you for mastering your body? Why? (1 Cor.9:27)

It takes faith to change before discipline will work. You must believe what God has said about crucifying the flesh to be true. Fasting is one means of submission to the Spirit as an exercise of discipline. Asking God by faith to help you establish good habits is another means of discipline. Godly discipline is a demonstration of faith not will-power.

21. What should you be concerned about if you think you have mastered all your shortcomings? (1 Cor.10:12)

Pride can manifest with a self-sufficient attitude.

22. Why should you not try to hide sin? (Num.32:23)

23. What does God want to do with you if you are not sure about repenting of sin? (Isa.1:18)

24. How does God want you to view your weaknesses? Why? (2 Cor.12:9-10)

You must know your weaknesses. You master your flaws and failings by humbling yourself and trusting God to be your strength. The apostle Paul describes in the 7th and 8th chapters of Romans the conflict your flesh has with your spirit and how victory is gained at the cross of Jesus. You must also have the personal inner victories before you can have public victories. Make the decision today to live a disciplined life and fight the good fight of faith to defeat the enemies of your soul.

Digging Deeper

1 Sam.30:11-15; Matt.6:17-18; Rom.12:1-2; 2 Cor.11:3; 2 Tim.3:1-5

-Notes-

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