

Spiritual Warfare –

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Intro

There can be a tendency in some places and people to blame everything on spiritual attack. While we often need to look at ourselves, or even God's hand disciplining his children, spiritual attack is a very real thing. Many people working in Africa or African communities will speak of the realities of the spiritual world that we don't always see visibly. So how do we confront spiritual attack?

Below are some points that I saw from a conference on GOD TV and thought would be useful to share! The talk was given by Lt Gen (Ret) WG Boykin - so credit goes directly to him. I have expanded on some of what he said.

The essence of the talk is spiritual warfare, comparing it to military warfare. The classic book about warfare is 'On War' by [General Carl Von Clausewitz](#). He was a Prussian General in the 19th century but remains one of the most quoted and modern thinking military strategists. His classic book is 'On War' in which he looks at What Is War, Military Strategies, Theory of War, Combat, Military Forces, Defence and Attack.

Why is this relevant to Christians?

First of all, we are in a war. What does Paul say in Ephesians 6.12?

NIV - 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.

AMP - For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere

So we know that this is a struggle, a battle. The enemies are powers, spirits of wickedness. We know they are under the power of the evil one. We know that they control evil and they are located in the spiritual / heavenly realms. This doesn't mean they're in 'heaven' with God!

We know that the evil one is very real:

1 Peter 5:8 - *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

We get a great description of the difference between God and the evil one, between good and evil when we read the words of Jesus in John 10.10:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Three Heavens

Many people believe that there are 3 heavens: the heavens we see, a second heavenly evil realm, with God's heavenly kingdom the third and highest realm. How do people come to this conclusion? From the words and experience of the Apostle Paul...

2 Corinthians 12.2 - *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.*

Paul tells us a bit about this heaven, saying he was, *"was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."* So we know that this 'third' heaven is heaven with God. If there is a third 'heaven' then there must be a first two...

In Daniel 10.12-13, we find that an angel arrives to bring Daniel understanding of a vision he had.

"Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia."

If there is a third heaven with God, then clearly this is where angels are. The angel was an incredible and powerful being, yet had needed the help of another angel, Michael to overcome the 'king of persia' who many believe was a very powerful demonic being. Scary stuff, but it suggests that to get the message to Daniel, the angel was halted likely in a 'second heaven'.

The final 'heaven' is the one we see in the day and night:

Psalm 19.1 - *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

Let's not be shy to realise there is a spiritual realm out there and an enemy.

Jesus has won!

Before we go any further it's important to realise that Jesus has already won the victory!

Ephesians 6.10 says, "Be strong in the Lord and in his **mighty power**." The Lord has got mighty power that created the world, every angel and is the King of kings and Lord of lords! He is head of everything and one day every knee will bow at the name of Jesus.

Ephesians 1.19-23 - *"and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."*

Colossians 2.15 also tells us that God has already won over these powers and authorities:

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Jesus on the Cross did a perfect work, saying *"It is finished!"* So we know that Jesus will overcome. In Revelation, we see the 'victorious Christ' with a flaming sword in his mouth and shining, radiating with light, power and judgement! So don't be afraid. Jesus says to us in John 16.33, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

The War described in Ephesians 6.10-18

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 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

God has given us weapons of defence and offence, that we need to use. This is a complete arsenal, a complete and total body, heart and mind system to protect us and to enable us to attack in Jesus name! The Bible describes this as the 'full armour of God'.

1. Belt of truth - the truth protects us
2. Breastplate of righteousness - we're the 'righteousness of God in Christ'
3. Feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace - Beatitudes
4. Shield of faith - to extinguish flaming arrows. Faith comes from Word.
5. Helmet of salvation (the 'hope of glory' as 1 Thessalonians reveals).
6. Sword of the Spirit, Word of God. Know, speak out, believe the Bible
7. Prayer! All the time, all ways, for young people, leaders, church

Two of these weapons are offensive: the Word of God and prayer on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests (God can't be tied down to one way of praying!!)

Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual Warfare - from principles of war (from Lt Gen (Ret) WG Boykin, taken from 'On War' by General Carl Von Clausewitz)

1. Objective - what is the objective?

What is your objective? You can't hit a target that you haven't identified. Aim at nothing and you'll hit nothing!! In the Iraq War there was an objective which all aims led towards. This has to be the same in our lives, youth ministries, churches.

2. Offensive

Have some sense of enemy's abilities, start praying ahead of it. 'Know thy enemy' is the famous phrase. In any battle, understanding the enemy is key. When Wellington beat Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, when Rommel was beaten by Monty in 1942 at El Alamein - each victory came with knowing the opposition and preparing. Spiritually we can do this through prayer.

3. Mass

Mass means using combat power in the right place at the right time to give a lethal blow to enemy, all together. A number of military battles have been lost because of one thing - forces spread too thinly / not enough concentrated firepower. Military groups from the army through to special forces like the SAS use concentrated and incredibly heavy firepower to overcome the enemy. Without this mass, battles can easily be lost. In your spiritual warfare, assess where the spiritual firepower needs to be concentrated and do it quickly and with determination.

4. Manoeuvre

When necessary, be agile and ready always, take advantage of opportunities, to exploit enemy's weakness, know what the enemy is doing. An oil tanker takes a long time to stop and turn around. In the same way, huge organisations sometimes take long time to make decisions. However, the Bible tells us to 'be vigilant' (1 Peter 5.8) and to 'make the most of every opportunity' (Ephesians 5.16, Colossians 4.5). Jesus told his disciples to 'travel lightly' - we need to be agile enough as people and in youth work, churches to be able to be agile and move quickly.

5. Unity of command

Jesus is the head of the church, but obviously we need to work together as we have the same commander. Jesus tells us that people will know we're his people by our love for one another (John 13.35). We also know there is huge power in agreement that is deep and real (Amos 3.3, Matthew 18.19) where we can ask God for anything (that he wills) and he will do it. You can't have division and have a victorious army or church, youth ministry. Sometimes we need to humble ourselves, sometimes love, sometimes agree to part in love. But there must be unity of command.

6. Security

Be watchmen 24/7, just as Nehemiah did on the walls, watching the spiritual leaders especially, plus accountability. When Nehemiah was threatened while rebuilding the walls, he decided to arm some people at the exposed points of the wall (Nehemiah 4.13), posting them by the families. Note how we do have to take action to defend, and especially defend the families. One leader in our church recently wrote about how his wife and family were his priority. This is absolutely true. If you're a leader neglecting your wife/husband and family because of 'church stuff', stop right now. Your family is more important! Prayer is one way we bring security. A youth work and church needs to be covered in prayer and if you're a leader you have a responsibility to pray for those you care for and lead.

7. Economy of Force

Using the smallest element of your ministry against the secondary target, stay focused on objective. Don't be drawn into doing things you don't need to do, or investing huge resources into small things. Keep focus on the objective and invest in proportion to the job at hand. You don't need an entire division of the army to blow up one anti-aircraft placement.

8. Surprise

Don't always let people know all your plans, don't give enemy opportunity to counter. The evil one can't read your mind, so just be wise sometimes what you say and speak. Sometimes keeping things confined in a small group is essential. It may be about accountability, protecting people and maintaining a strong core. Just be wise!

9. Simplicity

Make plans and concepts that everyone can understand, a clear 'commander's intent' that everyone knows and knows what to do. Not everyone has a degree, not everyone can read so have a plan that everyone can see, agree to and be able to repeat. And don't take too long doing this. One church I know of had endless discussions, committees, teams and experts come in to help them. At the end it made no difference to anything. So be clear, focused and concise!

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