

ART OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle" (Sun Tzu, The Art of War, Chinese General 544–496 B.C.). "The soldier is the Army. No army is better than its soldiers" (George S. Patton, Jr.). "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (Apostle John). "I have overcome the world" (Jesus Christ).

- OVERVIEW:** battle plans for spiritual warfare include six stages—(1) training (Bible study), (2) mobilization (recruiting believers to pray, fight, and help you win), (3) confrontation (coordinated attack with armor and offensive spiritual weapons), (4) victory celebration (together praising God), (5) demobilization (standing down because the battle is over), and (6) peace (enjoying the results of victory). Defeat, however, ends in enslavement and suffering (2 Pet 2:19). It must be recognized that battle scars (unpleasant memories, emotional damage) may continue for the rest of your life, but they can be successfully managed through spiritual maturity and living in the Spirit (1 Pet 4:6).
- 1. Three Spiritual Enemies:** (1) "desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph 2:3), (2) desires, standards, worries, and defilements of the world (Mt 13:22; Eph 2:2; Tit 2:12; 2 Pet 2:20), and (3) "schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11-12; 1 Pet 5:8).
 - 2. Temptations of the Flesh, the World, and the Devil:** there are three steps in overcoming temptation, (1) *Prayer and Meditation:* for courage and strength to make the hard choices to do God's will to be victorious over temptations: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Mt 26:39). (2) *Choice:* in temptation, just say "No!" ("No!" is implied in the three responses of Jesus to Satan in the wilderness, Mt 4:4, 7, 10). (3) *Quote Appropriate Scriptures:* to give the biblical reason for your choice; e.g., Jesus quoted three verses from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:6, 13) at his temptation to explain, show firmness, and to add authority to his decisions.
 - 3. Authority:** Church Age believers have delegated authority over Satan and his minions. Positionally we're seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father: "But God . . . made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:4–6). This is a position of authority far above our enemies (Eph 1:20–23; Phil 2:9–11)—and we have it now! One day we will even judge angels (1 Cor 6:2–3).
 - 4. Armor:** put your spiritual armor on for protection; *viz*, loins girded with truth, breastplate of righteousness (which is confession of sin, 1 Jn 1:9; relative righteousness, compare 2 Pet 2:7–8 with Rom 3:10; and living a righteous life, Tit 2:12), "preparation of the gospel of peace," shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:10–17).
 - 5. Armory:** choose and take up appropriate offensive spiritual weapons to fight and overcome the enemy ("weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left" 2 Cor 6:7; cf. 10:3–6). The "weapons of our warfare" are all mind control weapons: love (elicits love), good works (elicit love, "overcome evil with good" Rom 12:21), command (elicits obedience and submission), reproof and rebuke (elicits fear, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" Mt 16:23), admonition and warning (elicits fear, Acts 20:31; Rom 15:14; Col 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thes 5:14; 2 Thes 3:15), the gospel (brings conversion), Scripture (produces conviction, guilt, and correction), prayer (for help and success in battle), imprecatory prayer (elicits fear, 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20). Satan also uses mind control weapons, such as pride (1 Pet 5:5), jealousy (Acts 13:45; 17:5), fear, intimidation, ostracism, confusion, lies (Jn 8:44; Acts 5:3), worldliness (Rom 12:2; Tit 2:12), deception (Gen 3:13; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14; Rev 19:20; 20:10), false doctrine (Mt 7:15; 2 Cor 11:13; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Pet 2:1–3; 1 Jn 4:1; Rev 2:2), false gospels (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6), false miracles (Mt 24:11, 24; 2 Thes 2:9; Rev 19:20), accusations (Job 1:11; 2:4–5, Zech 3:1; Rev 12:10), slander (Isa 32:7; Mt 5:11), guilt (Ps 32:5), anger (Gal 5:20), bitterness (Heb 12:15), hatred (Rev 17:16), unforgiving spirit (Mt 6:15; 18:35), worry (Mt 13:22), persecution (Mt 13:21), fear of death (Heb 2:15), murder (Jn 8:44), temptation (Mt 4:3; Lk 4:13; 1 Thes 3:5), promise of power or supernatural powers (Gen 3:5); making deals, alcohol, drugs, sickness (Lk 13:11), occult, religion (Col 2:20–23; Rev 13:11–18), demon oppression (Acts 19:16), and demon possession (Lk 8:27; 22:3).
 - 6. Assessment:** Know your enemy's strengths and weaknesses and know your own positional strength "in Christ." Satan and his fallen angels are invisible, have been observing men for 6000 years, and are good at predicting our thoughts and behavior. But in the Bible we have stories of godly men and women who have beaten the flesh, the world, and the devil—including how they did it! In addition, we are allied with Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence—the infinite power of God—through adoption, sonship, fellowship, faith, knowledge, prayer, the indwelling Spirit, and positional truth. Pray for God's help in finding and exploiting your enemy's weaknesses. And press your own advantage: To defeat rebels in church when you control the pulpit, for instance, apply "those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning" (1 Tim 5:20).
 - 7. Faith:** have faith in the promises of Scripture and the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit: e.g., promises of protection such as "A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; *But it shall not approach you*" (Psa 91:7) and the indwelling power of the Spirit, "You . . . have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 Jn 4:4).
 - 8. Boot Camp and Officers Training:** you are a "soldier of Jesus Christ" (*stratiotes Christos Iesous* 2 Tim 2:3) called to "fight the good fight (*strateuo kalos strateia*)" (1 Tim 1:18) or "fight the good fight of faith (*agonizoai kalos agon pistis*)" (6:12). Epaphroditus and Archippus were fellow soldiers (*sustratiotes*) of the apostle Paul (Phil 2:25; Phm 2). So learn how to fight before you engage the enemy.
 - 9. Past Experience:** review (meditate on) previous battles and learn from your defeats and victories. For future reference I like to write down the ebb and flow of spiritual battles while they're still fresh in mind.
 - 10. Evasion:** avoid a fight if possible, e.g., pray "do not lead us into temptation" (Mt 6:13; cf. 26:41; Lk 11:4; 22:40) or as Jesus "let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Mt 26:39). But recognize that the Holy Spirit may lead you into temptation like Jesus in the wilderness (Mt 4:1). When confronted by angry crowds Jesus "slipped away through the crowd and left them" (Lk 4:30 NLT) and "eluded their grasp" (Jn 10:39).
 - 11. Recruit:** enlist prayer warriors, mature believers who understand spiritual warfare, and seasoned veterans to confront the enemy. This is a call to arms.
 - 12. Battle Exhortation:** key participants are often defeated, discouraged, offended, resentful, angry, stubborn, and operating in the flesh. They need a military pep-talk. Rebuke their ungodly attitudes and encourage them to confess their sins, be filled with the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and do such hard things as being defrauded, forgiving, restoring fellowship, being peacemakers, restoring the unity of the brethren, treating others as more important than yourself, and showing love to one another. Encourage them to be overcomers—to overcome the desires of the flesh and the mind (Eph 2:3)—and to earn eternal rewards. The Bible is full of military exhortations such as "be strong" (Josh 10:24–25; 2 Sam 10:12; 2 Chr 32:6–8), "do not fear" (Ex 14:13; Num 14:9; 21:34; Dt 1:20–21, 29–31; 3:2; 31:7–8; Josh 8:1; 10:8; 2 Kgs 6:16; 2 Chr 20:14–17; Isa 41:10; Rev 2:10), and "stand firm" (Eph 6:14). The introduction to the armor of God is a battle exhortation: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might" (Eph 6:10).
 - 13. Attack or Counteroffensive:** plan (strategy and tactics), organize, implement, and coordinate your battle plan (both defense and offense), keeping your lines of communication open with frequent updates. Give your battle a name such as "the Battle for Glendale" or "Operation Wolf in Sheep's Clothing."
 - 14. Perseverance:** resist, stand firm, and endure the swings of battle until victory is won (Eph 6:11, 13–14; Heb 12:2; Jas 4:7). Such endurance is richly rewarded: "If we endure (*hypomone*), we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim 2:12a).
 - 15. Praise:** give thanks and praise God for the victory (both on earth, Ex 15:1–21, and in heaven, Rev 15:2–4).
 - 16. Homework:** read books about famous generals (George Washington, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, George S. Patton, Douglas MacArthur) and military history to learn more about leadership, tactics, strategy, and warfare. Many principles of human warfare can be adapted to spiritual warfare since there's often little difference in overcoming people and overcoming demons. The more you know about human warfare, the better you'll be at spiritual warfare.
 - 17. Pass It On:** freely receive, freely give. Share these principles of spiritual warfare with others so the Church Militant can be the Church Triumphant.