

Biblical Counseling Center publishes eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth.

Winning Spiritual Battles

By Jeff Temple M.A.

Many times we feel we need to defend ourselves from the attacks of others. Sometimes it is from the neighbors; sometimes it is from friends; sometimes it is from our own family. I am not talking about petty squabbles like who was responsible to take out the trash. I'm talking about major conflicts, constant battles and accusations, evil done to another, or trust broken. Paul calls these relational problems spiritual warfare (2Cor 10:4) when someone has broken the commandment to love the other as Christ has loved us (Jn 13:34-35).



What is Spiritual Warfare?

When we hear the term spiritual warfare we often think of situations where someone is possessed or oppressed by an evil being. Instead we should think of it as any intense struggle that is antagonistic to God's purpose and desire (2Cor 10:2-6). Paul contrasts living for the flesh to obedience to Christ and refers to a struggle between two opposing kingdoms. Spiritual warfare is not about demons lurking around corners and pulling the strings as if we were marionettes. Nor is it a psycho-label treatable only with medicine. Spiritual warfare is between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, carried out by the desires of the flesh.

2Cor 10:1-6 defines spiritual warfare as the enemies of God trying to tear down or attack God's kingdom. There are two kingdoms pitted against one another with soldiers in each kingdom called to take up their arms. It's the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of flesh.

Signs of warfare

Paul points out that some have come into the Corinthian church and are trying to draw disciples away from Paul's message to them by attacking Paul's credibility (2Cor 11:2, 9-12). These people are highly critical of Paul, but say they are better suited to lead the Corinthians. There are divisions within the body (1Cor 2:1-4) that indicate an intense battle. This fighting makes each camp proud and demeaning of others who are not with them. Sin is practiced (1Cor 5:1-2; 6:1-6), and the church loses its purity and unity, falling back to what is earthly (Col 3:5).

How to fight

When someone feels attacked they tend to attack in like manner - eye for eye or tooth for tooth. Some want to fight a spiritual war with special language (e.g. "in the name of Jesus I rebuke you") as if it is the secret code that the enemy cannot ignore. Instead Paul calls us to wage war with weapons that have divine power. These weapons in Eph 6:10-20 are key to winning spiritual battles. When perseverance, truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, prayer, supplications and boldness are lived out in your life, there is victory in the battles.

Counselor's Insight: *If you're counseling someone who is dealing with ongoing sin issues, encourage them to consider the reality of spiritual warfare. Are their relationships rooted in God's love? Are they walking according to the flesh or by faith according to the Spirit? The true test is their level of obedience to Christ, motivated by a pure love for Christ and reflected in their relationship to others.*

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