



Week 5: Recognizing Spiritual Warfare

Scripture for the Week

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. (Ephesians 6:12)

Overview

Challenge Feedback

Ask if anyone is willing to share if the Holy Spirit showed them what fear is preventing them from being the man God wants them to be.

Main Focus

Understand, we are in a war. This is not figurative, it's not just a euphemism about an internal struggle with our conscience – it's an all-out military campaign with generals, soldiers, spies, propaganda, and casualties. We have grown up in a combat culture and are not even aware of sounds of battle being waged around us. The moment you asked Christ into your life, you stopped being a civilian. You are a full-fledged combatant operating behind enemy lines without even knowing you have been drafted. It's time to join the Special Forces and make a difference.

Daily Topics

1. **Battle for the spirit**

It is critical to believe in the reality of spiritual warfare, in its raw sense. While we can't ignore the flesh can act on its own accord, there are spiritual components which need to be understood in order to have a complete battle picture.

2. **Knowing the enemy**

Satan is real. In order to recognize how he assaults us, we need to know his names.

3. **Knowing what rulers authorities and powers are**

Aside from Satan, there are demonic spirits at work in the world. These have the power to influence and infiltrate our surroundings in a way that subtly manipulates behavior. When there is unresolved sin or strife in our lives, we become susceptible to these influences.

4. **Recognizing modern spiritual warfare**

Ancient enemies are at work in our modern society. The influence of mammon, Baal, and Asherah make up three components in sex trafficking – love of money, power, and lust.

5. **Identifying strongholds**

There are areas in our lives where we have agreed with the lies of the enemy. Over time, these become strongholds and a way of life. As long as they remain, the enemy has a foothold and avenue of attack against our spirit.

Discussion Questions

- What temptations do you struggle with the most? Why?
 - Talk about the indicators of attack and how they can be used to find the source of sin.
 - What kind of places seem to have a heavy or “evil” atmosphere?
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Take Aways

Spiritual warfare is real. By knowing the enemy, we can start to see more clearly where he is at work in our lives.

Leader Next Steps

Nest week, we will start addressing how to become combatants in this war. This might be a good week to start group communication as people are able to identify attacks and campaigns in their lives. Ask each other for support and prayer.

Challenge

Strongholds hold an unhealthy influence over our lives. Sometimes, they have become so ingrained and part of who we are they are difficult to discern, and even more difficult to breakdown. Ask the Holy Spirit to search you and point out areas you need delivered from. Be ready to discuss this with the group.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, now that we are aware of the battle raging around us, we bow in worship and praise you. Thank you that we fight from victory, our enemy has already been defeated. We cover ourselves in the bold of Jesus as protection and authority to act in this war.

We cast aside Satan and demonic influences in our lives. We invite the Holy Spirit to fill us, our homes, and our workplace. We renounce the lies of the enemy and stand strong in faith and on the Word of God. We pull down every thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ and submit ourselves to Your will.

We renounce the areas in our lives (name them) that we have not fully surrendered to our Lord, Jesus Christ. Lord, forgive us of compromise. We also ask for the courage to pull down strongholds of sin within us.

By the mighty weapons of the Spirit and the Word, we proclaim that each stronghold in our life that supports and contributes to sex trafficking – mammon, Baal, and Asherah, are brought down. We purpose, by the grace of God, to have only one stronghold within us: the stronghold of the presence of Christ.

Thank you Lord, for forgiving and cleansing us from all of our sins. By God's grace, we commit ourselves to follow through in these areas until even the ruins of these strongholds are removed from our minds. Thank You, Father.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Understand, we are in a war. This is not figurative, it's not just a euphemism about an internal struggle with our conscience – it's an all-out military campaign with generals, soldiers, spies, propaganda, and casualties. We have grown up in a combat culture and are not even aware of sounds of battle being waged around us. The moment you asked Christ into your life, you stopped being a civilian. You are a full-fledged combatant operating behind enemy lines without even knowing you had been drafted. It's time to join the Special Forces and make a difference.

Scripture for the Week

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. (Ephesians 6:12)

Day 1: Battle of the spirit

The first thing a soldier does before engaging in battle is determine where it will take place because location dictates the type of warfare employed, equipment used, and tactics needed. So, we need to know where spiritual warfare takes place.

To get a clear concept of how this world and the spiritual world interact, read Daniel 10.

- Daniel had a vision he alone saw, but others with him were physically impacted.
- There were physical manifestations of the encounter, sights, sound, and touch.
- The angel who appeared to Daniel had been delayed by a battle with the prince of the kingdom of Persia – and had to be relieved by the angel Michael.
- The angel said when he left Daniel's presence, he would return to battle the prince of Persia, and the prince of Greece will come.

So what things can we learn from this?

- Angels are fighting in the spiritual realm.
- Demons have been assigned as princes over cities, and there are angels assigned as guardians.
- Angels can interact with the physical world directly. We can infer demons are able to do the same since they are fallen angels.
- Demons support one another.

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. (Ephesians 6:12 AMP)

The best definition for wrestling in this context is from dictionary.com: “to contend, as in a struggle for mastery.” This means we are in contention for mastery of something. If it is against the rulers of the world, then Paul's admonition to us should take on a new meaning when he says, *Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the (entire) **renewal of your mind** [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and*

acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]. ... Do not let yourself be overcome by evil, but overcome (master) evil with good. (Romans 12:2, 21 AMP)

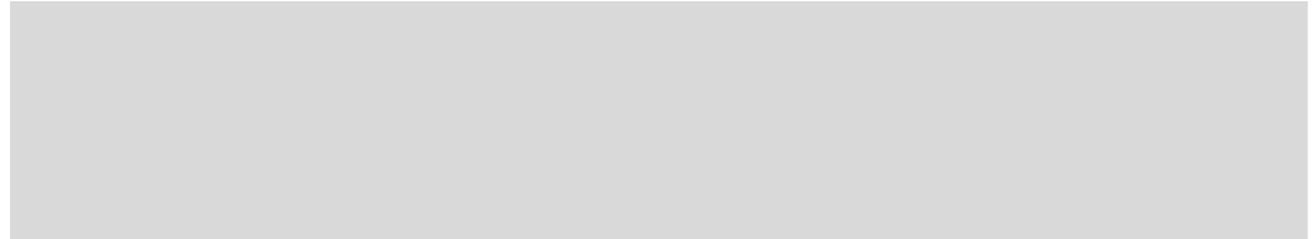
What does this mean to you?



Spiritual warfare doesn't get us off the hook for our actions. The flesh plays its part, but we cannot ignore the spiritual.

Satan and demons are the rulers of this world. Our flesh is also of this world. Through our flesh, demons have access to our spirit. There may be various temptations used to find one that works. Much in the way a fisherman uses different lures and techniques to catch fish. Once we give in to sin, and stay on the sin cycle, the pressure to continue actively sinning and increase the level of the sin may be demonic.

Write Luke 11:35



“There is a light in you. *The spirit of the man is the lamp of the Lord (Proverbs 20:27)*. Your spirit illuminated by the Spirit of Christ, becomes the “lamp of the Lord” through which He searches your heart. There is indeed a holy radiance surrounding a true Spirit-filled Christian. But when you harbor sin, the “light which is in thee” is “darkness.” Satan has legal access, given to him by God, to dwell in the domain of darkness. Thus we must grasp this point: The devil can traffic in any area of darkness, even the darkness that still exists in a Christian's heart.”³³

As long as we have the desire to sin, there is darkness. Where there is darkness, the door is open to the demonic. Remember, temptation leads to desire. Temptations are the lures, it's giving in to the temptation and internalizing the desire that changes things. Any trophy fish hanging on a wall can tell you, it only takes one bite on the lure to change your life.

☞ *What temptations do you struggle with the most? Why?*

The best way to understand the link between the demonic and the flesh is to see it as a relationship. Demons want to be your friend. They will talk to you and tell you things you want to hear. They will flame your desire with tales of success and magnify the exploits you can achieve. Just like the friends we've all had who stir up trouble and incite fights, the demon will use flattery, bribes, lies, and half-truths to get you to sin. Ultimately, it is you who sins, but it's because you bought into the lie. Exactly the same way we saw Mary lured Katarina into sex trafficking during week one.

³³ The Three Battlegrounds pp. 14-15

The flesh is a gateway for the demonic. Demons can't just enter at will ... they must be invited, and our flesh is the invitation. Once we succumb to temptation, our flesh opens the door and they have authority to harass us. If you aren't ready to let go of your bondage, you haven't broken the tie to the spirit binding you. For example, if you aren't willing to give up lust, even if you are delivered (by casting out all spirits of lust, addiction, etc.), you leave the door open for not just that demon, but seven more of his friends to come into a nice clean house to live in. This is because once the spirit leaves, it must be replaced by something else. If it isn't the Holy Spirit, Luke tells us:

When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. (Luke 11:24-26)

You can read Galatians 5:19-21 to find the indicators something is of the flesh:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

If we have any of these things in our life, the flesh has a hold on you and there may be a spirit lurking in our darkness. That is why we must crucify our flesh and be dead to sin (Romans 6:11)

This isn't a physical crucifixion of our flesh, Jesus did that for us, it's submitting our will to God which empowers us to control the flesh.

Once again – it's a control issue. If we stay in control, the flesh wins. If we let God have control, the flesh is crucified and Jesus wins. At no point in this process do we win, it's Jesus who wins!

Day 2: Know your enemy

At this point, we should be able to agree spiritual warfare is real. It takes place not on the physical plane, but in the spiritual – however, it can influence and have effects on the physical world. We are actively engaged in this battle and have been told we should be able to discern what is right and good according to God. In fact, our minds have been renewed so we are no longer conformed (under lordship) of this world.

Now we know where the battle will take place, our next step in preparing for battle, is intelligence gathering. No military organization can operate without intelligence. We need information to identify where and who the enemy is. By carefully evaluating and understanding indicators the enemy creates, we are able to fine tune our tactical plan.

The Bible abounds with examples of intelligence gathering, sometimes in the physical (Numbers 13) other times the spiritual (Genesis 41). It doesn't take a great leap of imagination to consider the entire book of revelation to be an intelligence report. Since we are warriors, and will soon learn about the capabilities of our enemy in details, let's focus on ways we can discern what is happening around us. More simply put, how can we read the indicators to recognize an attack is happening? Since we use the names of God to discover his promises to us, let's do the same for Satan. By looking at his names, we can discern where he is going to attack and see the signs an attack is happening.

- *Satan*: “Adversary” (Job 1:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 2:18). He opposes God’s agenda, he works against God’s plan, he violates God’s character, and he assaults God’s people. He makes it a point to get in the way.
- *Devil*: “Slanderer” (1 Peter 5:8). One of his schemes will be to say false things about people and ruin their reputations. He loves to stir up false witnesses and juicy gossip in order to discredit a servant of God.
- *Lucifer*: “son of the morning” or “shining one” (Isiah 14:12). This means he is not going to come to you transparently ugly and scary but will appear beautiful and winsome. You’ll be attracted to his agenda because he’ll dress it up and seduce you with it.
- *Beelzebub*: “lord of the flies” (Matthew 12:24). It was a pagan idol supposed to protect from swarms of flies. Jews understood it as “the god of filth,” which is an apt description of Satan. “Ba'al-ze'bub was the form of the name of Baal who was worshiped at the Philistine city of Ekron. Baal, under this aspect of worship, was viewed as the producer of flies and therefore able to control this pest so common in the East.”³⁴
- *Belial*: [a term used to commonly refer to idolaters or worthless men] (2 Corinthians 6:15). Anything Satan can do to divert worship from God and direct it toward himself interests him. [Several extra-Biblical texts equate Belial directly with Satan.
- *The evil one*: In Greek is the word for absolute corruption (1 John 5:19). He will influence anything he can to corrupt and make it as evil as possible.
- *The tempter* (1 Thessalonians 3:5) will exploit our perfectly good desires and entice us to fulfill them with artificial means. That is why all good gifts from above – food, rest, sex, ambition, and work, for example – have distorted and twisted variations that are far from the will of God.
- *The prince of this world* (John 12:31) is a master of false systems. He crafts entire school of thought that can suck us in and destroy us. He’s working to create an image of what is attractive for young girls, convincing them if they don’t look like the cover of *Seventeen* or *Cosmopolitan*, they’re not

³⁴ http://www.bible-history.com/resource/ff_baal.htm

worth very much. He has a system that has convinced guys they need ripped abs and a chiseled physique to be cool, all so they'll become self-absorbed or take steroids and ruin their health. He's convinced millions that until they get a certain kind of watch to wear and a luxury car to drive to their beach house, they haven't really succeeded yet. He's behind false religions, false philosophies, false doctrine, false morality, and every system of thought that cannot lead anyone to God. He has infiltrated governments, economies, educational institutions, and anything that has influence in this world. The conclusion John came to is sobering: "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

- *The accuser of the brethren* (Revelation 12:10) will condemn you. He points out your sins – the sins God has paid for in blood and forgiven – and reminds you of them constantly. "You're a terrible Christian, a bad dad, a no-good wife, a worthless human being," he'll whisper. If you ever hear that voice, it does not come from God.³⁵

By knowing the names of Satan, we can see areas in our lives being influences, which should be interpreted as smoke from a fire. If there is a fire in your life – it's time to put it out.

☞ *Talk about the indicators of attack and how they can be used to find the source of sin.*

Dale Forehand points out a sobering fact, "The truth is that you are attacked in your strengths, not your weaknesses."³⁶ God has gifted each and everyone one of us in a way which allows us to fulfill the destiny he has created for us. Satan's goal is to prevent us from coming into our strength, because if we do, we become true warriors in the fight.

Ask Yourself: Can you identify an area which might be under attack? If so, share it so the group can help you overcome.

³⁵ *The Invisible War* pp. 50-51

³⁶ *Often Told, Rarely Trained* p. 113

Day 3: Rulers, principalities, authorities, and powers

Ancient cities sometimes incorporated the name of gods into their name to identify it as their local deity. This was very common for Baal. As the ancient Israelites moved into the Promised Land, they adopted the local Canaanite rituals of worship and were punished numerous times for this. References to high places and Asherah Poles (a sacred tree or pole to honor the Ugaritic mother-goddess Asherah, consort of El³⁷) are replete with death, destruction, and retribution. As we have previously discussed, there are demons assigned to specific regions (prince of Persia and Greece). Today we recognize different spirits (demons) have personalities as we pray about spirits of fear, anger, lust, etc.

The basic principle involved here is Satan was given dominion over the earth. It is in fact under his lordship. A third of the angels in heaven followed Satan to earth when he was cast down – they are now called demons. The Bible explains a hierarchy has been established in the heavenly realm by these demons.

Before we go further, we need to see what God says:

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the **cravings** of sinful man, the **lust** of his eyes and the **boasting** of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17)*

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the **wisdom of the world**? (1 Corinthians 1:18-20)*

*For the foolishness of God is wiser than **man's wisdom**, and the weakness of God is stronger than **man's strength**. (1 Corinthians 1:25)*

*Do not follow **other gods**, the **gods of the peoples around you**; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God. (Deuteronomy 6:14-15)*

*Be careful, or you will be **enticed** to turn away and **worship other gods** and **bow down to them**. (Deuteronomy 11:16)*

*They knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up **foolish ideas** of what God was like. As a result, their **minds became dark and confused**. Claiming to be wise, they instead **became utter fools**...As a result, they did **vile and degrading things with each other's bodies**. They **traded the truth about God for a lie**. (Romans 1:21-25 NLT)*

It is entirely possible people are actively worshipping demons. They may not recognize it as a demon, but the Bible is clear they exist and have authority in this realm.

Once we understand the concept there are spirits/demons/princes established as lords and gods over cities or activities, then we can start see the underlying trend and understand who the "prince" might be. Look at cities or regions where sex, money, pride, or other un-godly activities seem to run rampant, and come to the realization we are standing in the middle of a battlefield we are just beginning to perceive.

³⁷ Sarah Iles Johnston, ed. Religions of the Ancient World, (Belnap Press, Harvard) 2004, p. 418

Rulers

*For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despots, 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. (Ephesians 6:12 AMP)*

Rules are a higher ranking Principality. Essentially they work the transnational level – think of these as the equivalent of empires.

Principalities /Authorities

*[The purpose is] that through the church the complicated, many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and **authorities (principalities and powers)** in the heavenly sphere. (Ephesians 3:10 AMP)*

The word used in Greek is Arche, which means, “beginning, government, rule.” It is used to describe Satan’s hierarchy of demons and are the equivalent of arch-angels. If these beings are the governmental authority of Satan, we can assume they rule over powers and “lesser” demons.

The importance of principalities is their position over continents, countries, regions within countries, even states, and major cities of importance and influence. This is supported by Daniel’s account of the prince of Persia and Greece in Daniel 10.

Sometimes, when it seems a city or country is acting in a way that appears mad, don’t discount the spiritual.

Powers

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Matthew 24:29 AMP)

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“Working with principalities, but apparently subject to them, are what the Bible calls “powers.” The term powers represents both a specific class of ruling spirits and it is also a general term used to describe the entire range of ruling demonic powers, as in Matthew 24:29: *The powers of the heavens will be shaken.*”³⁸

Frangipane describes them as radio broadcast towers. The concept is these powers are able to influence large areas with their flavor of evil. They would be the opposing force of virtues.

☞ *What kind of places seem to have a heavy or “evil” atmosphere?*

To understand how they influence people, think of swimming in a pond. If you have a small scratch (an area of weakness or unresolved sin), the water in that pond is able to gain access and slowly begin to infect you. Over time, and with greater exposure, the infection becomes worse. As your immune system breaks down, you become prone to other diseases. Your unresolved sin leaves you vulnerable to other attacks and temptations. For example, if you neglect the Sabbath and work too hard, you become tired. As you get tired you become irritable. This causes fights with your wife. Eventually, there is a woman at work who doesn’t seem to mind you are grumpy, in fact, she lets you vent which makes you feel better. This leads to building an unhealthy relationship which leads to an affair. All because you neglected to do one thing God asked – rest.

³⁸ The three Battlegrounds

The importance of understanding this level of spiritual warfare is to understand the influence of the world. There are forces acting in direct opposition to God's will. While we are of the world, they are more like background noise. As we mature and grow deeper in faith, attacks may strengthen and become more direct. Rather than the occasional IED or land mine, full frontal assaults may occur. It is also important to understand the influence these spirits have in sex trafficking – which operates at the trans-national, national, state, and local level. The influence of these spirits infects and permeates entire regions to make it an acceptable practice and entice those not involve into participating.

There are two huge lessons here:

1. Don't let sin go unresolved. There is a reason God constantly tells us to confess and seek repentance. He knows what we did, it isn't about telling Him something He doesn't already know – it's giving us the opportunity to let it go.
 2. Know where you are and where you are going. Once you recognize the flavor of an area, you are better equipped to see attacks as they occur and can be prepared for what lies ahead.
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Day 4: Modern spiritual warfare

The world is running as fast as it can away from God. Public displays of Christianity are becoming taboo, religion is becoming a watered down self-help program afraid to offend anyone, not just tolerance, but total acceptance of things expressly prohibited in the Bible is becoming common, and abortion is not only legal – it's becoming a sacred right. Church attendance is steadily declining and behaviors that would have been considered abhorrent twenty or thirty years ago are applauded and the people doing those behaviors are worshipped. We are not living in a culture on the decline, our culture has already declined. Here is the bullet list of our current depravity:

- We know God, but won't worship him as God or even give Him thanks.
- We think up foolish ideas of what God was like.
- Our minds are dark and confused.
- Claiming to be wise, we instead have become utter fools
- We do vile and degrading things with each other's bodies
- We traded the truth about God for a lie

Even as Christians, we buy into the lies of the world time and time again. If we distill this down to core areas, we re-discover those ancient gods of Canaan – active and well in our society:

- Mammon – spirit/god of possessions (gold/consumerism)
- Baal – god of power (glory/world domination)
- Asherah – god of pleasure (girls/tolerance for whatever feels good)

There is an area of society barely whispered about because it is the embodiment of all of this combined - sex trafficking. It, and the spiritual battleground it inhabits, is a combination of all of these things. Satan uses each of these spirits to influence our behaviors and strip our identity away to blaze a trail to further his destruction of mankind. Remember, without our God given identity, we have no way to effectively resist and the lead the fight against these evils. Later, we will discuss how to fight back and break free, right now it's important for us to recognize them in order to have a clear understanding of the tactics being used by the enemy.

Good warriors study the past to learn lessons from those who have already fought. Let's use this opportunity to do the same:

The battle between God and Baal is well-documented in the Old Testament.

“Baal, one of the sons of El [the chief god of the Canaanites], was the executive god of the pantheon ... also identified with ... vegetation ... fertility... [and] rain ... [included] rituals of imitative magic involving sexual union.”³⁹ “Base sex worship was prevalent, and religious prostitution even commanded; human sacrifice was common; and it was a frequent practice – in an effort to placate their gods – to kill young children and bury them in the foundations of a house or public building at the time of construction: Joshua 6:26 “In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn...”⁴⁰

Baal worship involved sexual previsions, prostitutes, and the sacrifice of children.

Here is what the Bible has to say about these subjects:

³⁹ Magnus Magnusson, BC - The Archaeology of the Bible Lands from, http://www.bible-history.com/resource/ff_baal.htm

⁴⁰ Howard E. Vos, “An Introduction To Bible Archaeology” Revised ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953) pp. 17-19.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. (Matthew 19:14)

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." (1 Corinthians 6:16)

The glorification of sex defiles our bodies which are temples of the Holy Spirit, creates soul ties with those involved, and feeds the spirit of Baal which is responsible for sacrificing children, the result of sexual unions.

Baal and Asherah worship typically went hand in hand. Baal was power; Asherah sex.

We live in a society forcibly removing any mention of God from public life. The normative pressures of our culture are filled with ideas which reinforce not only pleasure and vice, but the instant gratification of those ideals. Add to the mix the idea 'the winner is the one who dies with the most toys', and we must accept the fact our world worships the same gods described in the Old Testament. Unless we step up and be a lamp in the darkness, we can expect to see the same consequences.

Day 5: Strongholds

2 Corinthians 10:5 defines a stronghold as an *argument and pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.*

What does this mean in practical terms? “A stronghold can be a source of defense for the devil, where demonic or sinful activity is **actively defended within us by our sympathetic thoughts toward evil.**”⁴¹

What? We aren’t sympathetic toward evil! “But if we tolerate darkness through tolerance of sin, we leave ourselves vulnerable to satanic assault.”⁴² “All manner of spirits will attack the soul, knowing they are protected by the armor of that persons own thoughts and doctrines.”⁴³

The active defense of an argument or pretension set against God can be clearly seen when we read the Bible and start justifying why it no longer applies to today or the situation we are facing.

While there is some merit to this point – we don’t stone sinners for breaking a commandment of God anymore – it’s important to recognize what we are referring to is the liberalization of God’s Word to fit modern culture; this is an argument against God. Want some modern examples? Bill Clinton changed the definition of sex so he could argue against sexual sin with Monica Lewinski. How about it’s okay for two consenting adults to live together outside of marriage – who are they hurting anyway? Or this: What I watch in the privacy of my home can’t effect anyone.

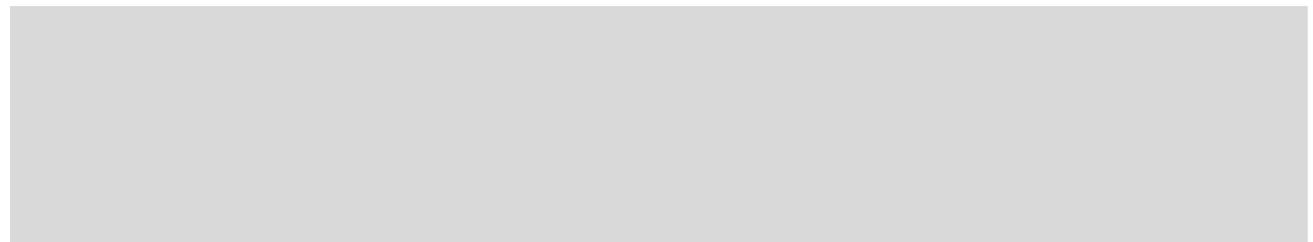
Justification of a sin by changing the definition, minimizing its importance, or reinterpreting its context can only be described as an active defense against a stronghold. It is an activity born and bred in legalism, and we now live in a society bound by the rule of law (and the wheels on the bus go round and round).

Not all sin comes from Satan or demons, there is enough sin in the flesh to last a lifetime - literally. “Your flesh is any part of you that wants to live independently of God. Temptation is whatever the enemy can use to keep you from living in your true identity in Christ. Evil desires are anything void of the presence of God.”⁴⁴

Strongholds are the lies and arguments we have come into agreement with outside of God’s Word. Over time, they become beacons of darkness and can attract other attacks. Sounds an awful lot like sex trafficking.

Sexual sin which remains hidden can fester and lead to violence, relationship issues, drugs and alcohol, prostitution, etc. This can occur with any sin, but remember, sexual sin is against our own bodies so the consequences tend to be more self-destructive.

Write Proverbs 28:13



By keeping our sins secret, we miss out on forgiveness and are targets for other temptations. But there is another danger here. “You may be tempted to surrender just a token sin or some minor fault, while allowing

⁴¹ The Three Battlegrounds p. 28

⁴² The Three Battlegrounds p. 14

⁴³ The Three Battlegrounds p. 29

⁴⁴ Often Told, Rarely Trained p. 105

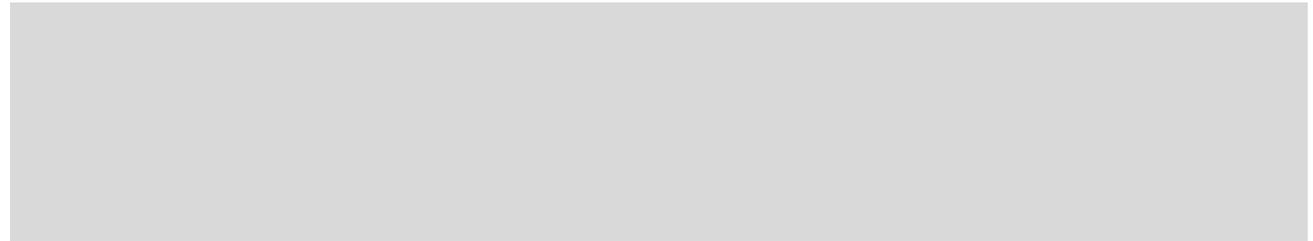
your most serious iniquity to remain entrenched and well-hidden. Let us realize, therefore, that the energies we expend in keeping our sins secret are the actual materials of which a stronghold is made. The demon you are fighting is actually using your thoughts to protect his access to your life.”⁴⁵ Since demons can’t read our minds, this means we are building our own prison by agreeing with the whispers and lies.

If you find there are multiple strongholds in your life, a deliverance ministry may be a good choice. *It is for freedom that Christ set us free.* (Galatians 5:1) He didn’t die on the cross for us to remain in bondage, especially over a lie.

By confessing with our mouths, we are able to receive forgiveness and brick by brick, remove the walls of the strongholds in our lives.

☞ *Is there any stronghold you want to confess in order to receive forgiveness and begin the healing process?*

Write Psalm 139:23-24



By inviting the Holy Spirit to inspect us, He will point out things which need to be let go. When the light of Christ is shown in the darkness of sin, we see the truth and be in peace.

Keep in mind, this is an iterative process. The closer we get to God, the more the Holy Spirit will show us, because we are stronger, which lets us get even closer. We will see this more clearly next week when talk about the Zoe cycle.

⁴⁵ The Three Battlegrounds p. 32

Take Aways

It is critical to believe in the reality of spiritual warfare, in its raw sense. While we can't ignore the flesh can act on its own accord, there are spiritual components that need to be understood in order to have a complete battle picture.

Satan is real. In order to recognize how he assaults us, we need to know his names.

Aside from Satan, there are demonic spirits at work in the world. These have the power to influence and infiltrate our surroundings in a way subtly manipulating our behavior. When there is unresolved sin or strife in our lives, we become susceptible to these influences.

Ancient enemies are at work in our modern society. The influence of mammon, Baal, and Asherah make up three components in sex trafficking – love of money, power, and lust.

There are areas in our lives where we have agreed with the lies of the enemy. Over time, these become strongholds and a way of life. As long as they remain, the enemy has a foothold and avenue of attack against our spirit.

Next Steps

Get active in your prayer life. When you are tempted, desire seems to be out of control, or you realize you are sinning, start a conversation with God to get relief.

Challenge

Strongholds hold an unhealthy influence over our lives. Sometimes, they have become so ingrained and part of who we are they are difficult to discern, and even more difficult to breakdown. Ask the Holy Spirit to search you and point out areas you need delivered from. Be ready to discuss this with the group next week.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, now that we are aware of the battle raging around us, we bow in worship and praise you. Thank you that we fight from victory, our enemy has already been defeated. We cover ourselves in the bold of Jesus as protection and authority to act in this war.

We cast aside Satan and demonic influences in our lives. We invite the Holy Spirit to fill us, our homes, and our workplace. We renounce the lies of the enemy and stand strong in faith and on the Word of God. We pull down every thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ and submit ourselves to Your will.

We renounce the areas in our lives (name them) that we have not fully surrendered to our Lord, Jesus Christ. Lord, forgive us of compromise. We also ask for the courage to pull down strongholds of sin within us.

By the mighty weapons of the Spirit and the Word, we proclaim that each stronghold in our life that supports and contributes to sex trafficking – mammon, Baal, and Asherah, are brought down. We purpose, by the grace of God, to have only one stronghold within us: the stronghold of the presence of Christ.

Thank you Lord, for forgiving and cleansing us from all of our sins. By God's grace, we commit ourselves to follow through in these areas until even the ruins of these strongholds are removed from our minds. Thank You, Father.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Journal – What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, solid gray rectangular area intended for journaling or writing. It occupies the majority of the page below the question. A thin horizontal line is visible at the bottom of the page, below the gray area.