



November 12, 2017, Westminster Church, Pastor Matthew Ruttan

What is spiritual warfare?
Why you're already in battle and what to do about it.

Key takeaway: You + Jesus = A Majority

In *National Lampoon's Vacation*, the father falls asleep at the wheel of his car and his family (also sleeping) careens through neighbourhoods putting everyone in danger. In life, if we don't know about or take spiritual warfare seriously, it's like we're also asleep at the wheel—and that puts us and those around us in danger.

This is a subject that not many people have learned much about. According to one Canadian professor, spiritual warfare is taken seriously in most parts of global Christianity and we in Canada are naïve if we don't do so. Most of us are so heavily influenced by the secular/-non-Christian views of society that we easily discount the realm of the divine as presented in the Bible, including any talk of angels, evil spirits and Satan. *But since Jesus takes Satan seriously so should we.*

What is spiritual warfare?

"The primary battle is between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God, between the Antichrist and the Christ, between the father of lies and the Spirit of truth; and we are in that battle whether we like it or not. The primary location of that battle is our minds. Either we believe the lies that keep us in bondage or we believe the truth that sets us free. So we define spiritual warfare as the battle for the mind." -Neil Anderson & Timothy Warner, *The Essential Guide to Spiritual Warfare*.

Spiritual warfare is a truth battle (not a strength battle). In John 8:44 Jesus calls Satan (the Devil) "the father of lies." Flowing from this, a key takeaway, as stated by Neil T. Anderson is this: "**You + Jesus = A Majority.**" Take Jesus out of the equation and you lose the battle for the mind as it relates to truth. "In general, Satan doesn't control us with fang marks on the flesh," writes Tim Keller, "but with lies in the heart." There are other dimensions of spiritual warfare, but this is our focus today.

Why you're already in battle

The world, as described in the Bible, is a world where God is the ultimate authority and power. In this world, there are angels, and also evil spirits and Satan himself. Then there are people like us who are limited by time and space. This picture applies to everyone. You can't be exempt from this reality simply by wishing it wasn't there.

What to do about it

1. Acknowledge that spiritual warfare is real

The battle is real. Satan would love to deceive and unplug you from being effective in God's kingdom. He does this primarily through deception. Do you ever feel unable to focus when praying, or find it hard to come to church, or get lazy reading the Bible, or become apathetic toward others, or find it easy to go along with the shifting values of our society? Why do you think that is? Welcome to the battle!

2. Know who you truly are as a follower of Christ

Satan is "the father of lies." Therefore, in the battle for the mind he often tries to weave lies into your thinking about who you are. If you are who the Bible says you are, why in the world would you ever allow even the smallest thought of self-deprecating and self-defeating discouragement to enter your head? (See Satan's capacity to influence Peter in Matthew 16:21-23). If you are a Christian you are a child of God, a member of his very own body, loved, a citizen of heaven, salt of the earth, God's co-worker, God's temple, valuable, chosen to do good works, redeemed and forgiven, seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, able to access God directly through the Holy Spirit, able to do all things through Christ who gives you strength! *God encourages. Satan discourages. Who are you going to listen to?*

3. Pray for protection for yourself and those around you

In Jesus' name, ask God to protect you and those around you. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus himself encourages us to pray for deliverance from evil (or, as more modern translations put it: "deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13).

4. Audibly speak biblical truth into your life and the lives of those around you

In Ephesians 6:10-17 (a famous biblical passage about spiritual warfare and putting on the armour of God), the only proactive weapon mentioned in our invisible spiritual armour is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This means the truth of scripture. Have you ever noticed that when Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness he always warded him off by quoting scripture? (See Matthew 4:1-11) Here's what you can do: a) Speak Bible verses; b) Speak the Lord's Prayer; c) Sing hymns or praise songs, especially during times of trouble and when you sense evil or untruth.

Summary

The good news is that, in Christ, there is nothing to fear. Remember that "You + Jesus = A Majority." As the 17th century monk Brother Lawrence said, "We must go about our labors quietly, calmly, and lovingly, entreating Him to prosper the works of our hands; by thus keeping heart and mind fixed on GOD, we shall bruise the head of the evil one, and beat down his weapons to the ground." My fervent prayer is that unlike the father in *National Lampoon's Vacation*, we won't be asleep at the wheel when it comes to spiritual warfare. As Neil Anderson and Timothy Warner write, "The only question is whether we will fight well, poorly, or not at all."