

GOD JUST TOUCHED ME - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

Chapter 16 - IT'S ABOUT WARFARE

In the Beginning

In the beginning God made a world that was totally good (Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:31). He created humankind to be like Himself (Genesis 1:26&27), and intended that we should have an eternal peaceful relationship with Him (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37). The perfect place He created for us to live had everything in it that we needed, plus two exceptionally unique trees smack in the middle (Genesis 2:9). Life was truly simple then because God provided everything needed, and there was only one commandment to either obey or to break. That one commandment was to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil because that would usher in an experience God did not intend for His children; death (Genesis 2:16&17). The problem humanity had was that there was an enemy spy in the camp (Genesis 3:1). He was the original source of evil. But for him there would not have been any evil to know about.

Although Eve had everything she needed, the enemy convinced her to focus on the one and only thing forbidden. Being tempted is not a sin but turning temptation into action is. God does not hold us responsible for what we do not know (Romans 5:12-14) and Jesus told us that (John 15:22). There was only one sin possible, and Eve fell. However, we are also under the same temptations as Adam and Eve, and we have not fared any better than them (Ecclesiastes.7:29, Hosea 6:7, Romans 3:23). In fact, humanity today has outperformed Adam and Eve (Romans 3:10-18). The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil has proven to be deadly poisonous to the spirit (Genesis 3:22&23), and it has separated humanity from the tree of life.

A fact of life is that we cannot truly love God unless we have the option of choosing to do so, or to not do so. God has given us a clear choice (Deuteronomy 30:19&20). We each have to continue to make decisions, and for us the time of battle will be life long (Luke 21:34-36). It is still God's intention that we have eternal life with Him (John 3:16, John 6:44&47, John 17:1&2). It is still the enemy's intent to destroy us.

Know Yourself

Before we began any endeavor we need to take an honest look at our own capabilities and limitations. There are always some things we are capable of doing and some things we are not capable of doing. We do know that as descendents of Adam and Eve we are prone to sin and failure and we are no match for Satan and His demons. However, who we are does not matter so much as whose we are. Christians belong to Jesus; we were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19&20) and we have God within us. Although our own strength and determination are not sufficient, the power of God within us is more than enough (Zechariah 4:6). Once there were seven brothers who thought they were something special because of their family. Though they did not know Jesus or belong to Him, they tried to invoke His name in spiritual warfare. It did not work, and they fled naked and bleeding (Acts 19:13-16). All of us were first born of the flesh. To be effective we need to be reborn of the Spirit (John 3:3-12, 14-18). We are God's children (John 1:12&13) and we are united with Christ in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). We are members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) and we do not stand alone. We have been delivered, redeemed and forgiven (Colossians 1:14), free forever from condemnation (Romans 8:1&2). We can never be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39). God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). We have been called by God to be ministers of reconciliation for Him (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). The promises of God come with strings attached, and we must fulfill our parts of those promises. Believe,

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because the promises come through faith (Galatians 3:14). We need to repent (Acts 2:38), humble ourselves (Matthew 18:3), and be obedient (Acts 5:32). God wants us to love Him. Jesus said that if we love Him we will obey Him (John 14:15). As children of a heavenly Father we have a family. As members of the body of Christ we should be invincible. Jesus gave His disciples authority over the demons (Matthew 10:1) and that authority belongs to those of us who are His disciples today (Acts 2:39). We need to always be aware of who God has called us to be and what authority our Father has given us through Christ.

Know What Is In Your Arsenal

The weaponry available to us seriously influences how we fight, and seriously affects the outcome of the battle. It makes a big difference whether we have clubs, swords and shields, automatic rifles, or heavy artillery and a fleet of bombers. Whatever is available, we will want to use the most effective weapons, both offensive and defensive, for the enemy we face and for the situation at hand. The battles we are talking about, however, are in the spiritual realm, not physical battles. None of the above mentioned physical weapons are of any use (Ephesians 6:12&13). Since it is God's intention that we spend eternity with Him as members of His family, He has provided us with the spiritual armament we need to become more than conquerors. Among other things, His armory includes:

- The gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10), which is spiritual military intelligence that reveals the enemy and his plans.
- Body armor (Ephesians 6:14-18) that protects us from the enemies attacks. See lesson 12. Note that it protects everything but your back side, so it is important to always face your enemy.
- The Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), which was used by Jesus in the wilderness.
- Prayer (Matthew 7:7&8, Matthew 26:41, Luke 18:1, Philippians 4:6, James 5:16), all of which is a most powerful weapon. See lesson 14. It upholds us, strengthens us, keeps us safe, and puts big lumps all over the enemy's head.
- Fasting (Matthew 17:21) a forgotten and neglected but powerful weapon when dealing with demons.
- Renewing of you mind (Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:8&9) so you stay sharp, alert, and mentally healthy.
- The name of the Lord (Proverbs 18:10, Philippians 2:10), that provides shelter and strikes terror in the heart of the enemy.
- Resting in the Lord (Hebrews 4:9-11) to keep your strength up.
- The peace of God (Philippians 4:7), which gives you the confidence to stand your ground.

Basic Training

No one is sent into battle without first being trained. We usually call that training boot camp, or basic training. That training has several goals, the first of which is to get us in sufficient physical condition that we can survive the rigors of combat. For spiritual warfare we need to be spiritually strong. Strength comes through spiritual discipline and exercises in obedience, both of which build up our faith. We must be watchful (Luke 12:37&38) and be sober, not asleep (1 Thessalonians 5:6-9) lest we be caught unawares. Give the struggle all diligence (2 Peter 1:5&6) and make no provisions for the flesh (Romans 13:14). We must walk in God's ways (1 Kings 3:14) or face spiritual death (Proverbs 19:16). We must obey God and not men (Acts 5:29) and we will be blessed (Luke 11:28). Our faith needs to be strong enough that we can stand fast (1 Corinthians 16:13). When we are under attack (2

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Corinthians 4:8,9,13,16-18) we need to resist (1 Peter 5:9). We must practice all these things until they become a permanent part of who we are. The second goal of training is to teach us how to effectively use the weapons available to us. We have to know what our weapons are (2 Corinthians 10:4-6), and practice using them. When we are under attack is not the time to start learning. Finally, it is important to become skilled at teamwork, so we are able to effectively work in association with others for a common goal. In real life individual warriors do not go into battle alone; trained teams go into battle. Jesus always sent His disciples out with companions. It is necessary to develop a bond of trust between our comrades in arms and ourselves (Psalm 133:1, Ephesians 4:3,13), and particularly with our captain (Psalm 36:7, Psalm 40:4, Proverbs 29:25). Basic training is a concentrated time of preparation for the struggles ahead. However, basic training is just that, basic. It needs to be followed by continuing education, honing of skills learned, and learning new skills. These same goals, critical in physical warfare, are just as necessary in spiritual warfare.

Recognize the Enemy

If we are involved in a war we had better be able to recognize our enemy and know what to expect from him. In spiritual warfare our enemy is not other people. Our enemy is a horde of powerful evil spirits (Ephesians 6:11&12). They are not divine in nature. They are all created beings like we are (Nehemiah 9:6, Colossians 1:16). The leader of the evil spirits, Lucifer, had a problem common to humanity, a really enormous ego (1 Timothy 3:6). He wanted to sit on God's throne and rule, and he still covets that role (Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 8:13-17). Powerful as he and his demons are, they cannot read our thoughts. Only God has that ability (1 Kings 8:39, 2 Chronicles 6:30). They are observant and good at analyzing our reactions, and they try to temp us to go against God, just as the devil did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He even tried repeatedly to temp Jesus (Matthew 4:1). However, without first getting permission from God, all that demons can do is mess with our minds (Job 1:9-12), which in itself has proven to be an effective technique with most people. The scary movies out of Hollywood that show the devil as an invincible power that can control the physical world is another of the lies intended to mislead us into thinking we cannot fight them. Demons can only operate surreptitiously through willing humans like reprobates and terrorists to have people do their foul work. The demons are presently being restrained from having their own way with the physical world (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8). They are murderers and liars (John 8:44), and can never be trusted. Their one goal is to kill, steal, and destroy us (John 10:10). There is nothing kind or nice about them. They are purposely vicious and mean (1 Peter 5:8). Evil spirits are treacherous (Judges 9:23) and promote lies (1 Kings 22:21-23). They will not easily give up, and when they are beaten, they will return with reinforcements (Matthew 12:44&45). However, with all their power and predilection to destroy, they are not, and never will be, a match for Jesus (Ephesians 1:20&22). People sometimes seem to be in agreement with them, but those people are usually also victims.

Be Aware of the Enemies Course of Action

Satan and his demons have a goal to permanently separate humanity from our creator. The devil detests God because the devil wants to be God and can't. The devil despises people because God created people in His own image, and God loves us. The devil's strategy includes plans "A", "B", and "C". Plan "A" is to make us believe there is no God, so nothing matters and there are no real rules. If that doesn't work, plan "B" is to convince us that God is an impersonal force that does not care one iota about us, so do whatever pleases self. If plan "B" doesn't work, plan "C" kicks in. That is to make us lose all confidence in God and ourselves, and bring us to such a point of despair that we just give up.

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What the devil desires is our eternal damnation, and, if he is successful, any of his plans can accomplish that. If we are ignorant of his designs he can gain advantage over us (2 Corinthians 2:11). His tactics include messing with our minds. He will manipulate our feelings and emotions, and put thoughts in our minds. The battlefield is within our souls, which consists of our wills, our emotions, and our minds. He has an assortment of procedures he uses, most of which are types of deception. Demons delight in tormenting people, confusing people, and discouraging people. They will try to make us believe we are not worthy of God, which is only a half-truth. The whole truth is that the love of Jesus makes us worthy. They try to steal our joy and hope and peace of mind, and make us believe that all originated within ourselves. They lead people to lie (Acts 5:3). What else would we expect from the father of lies (John 8:44)? The devil lied to Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:4) and twisted the scriptures when speaking to Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:5&6). When the truth is twisted just a little bit it isn't always easy to detect the flawed logic used. Deceiving spirits are against Christ (2 John 7) and deny that Jesus is of God (1 John 4:3). They will try to make us believe that lie, or at least have doubts about who Jesus really is. The originator and source of evil often puts evil thoughts in our minds (Genesis 6:5, Matthew 15:18&19) with the intent that we should think the thoughts originated within ourselves. Demons want us to accept these thoughts, dwell on them, and then act on them. Demons are constantly trying to tempt us to violate God's law of love (1 Thessalonians 3:5). They know that we were told to love God and neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40), to love other members of the Body of Christ as He loved us (John 13:34&35), and even to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). They can go a long way toward accomplishing their goal of confusing us and separating us from God and each other by attacking our spiritual leaders (Matthew 26:31).

The devil and his fallen angels know that for us humans, reality is whatever is perceived by the mind. What our senses tell us is our link to the physical world. When the mind is deceived our bodies react to that deception as if it were real. Pain, sickness, and a variety of disabilities can be caused by what the modern world calls psychosomatic illnesses. If the enemy can cause us to actually believe we have some disability, we physically react as if we did. Just some of the demon caused troubles Jesus confronted included insanity (Matthew 8:28), blindness and inability to talk (Matthew 12:22), and seizures (Matthew 17:14-18). Demons claim multiple generations of some families (Exodus 20:5, Jeremiah 32:18). While it is true that everyone answers for their own transgressions (Jeremiah 31:29&30), it is also true that demons can convince the children to believe the example they have been given is normal acceptable behavior, and those children then make it their own. Research has shown that many abusive, cruel, alcoholic, or otherwise wicked individuals had a parent and probably a grandparent with the same sins. Present day terminology refers to this condition as a generational curse. Demons also claim territories and people of influence. We refer to that as a stronghold. That word, stronghold, has a variety of meanings. A stronghold can be a fortified place with strong defenses, or a concentrated group of individuals with common views and attitudes, or a stranglehold, a vice-like grip. Demonic strongholds exist in terrorist training camps, in individuals with reprobate minds, and over territories like the 10-40 window (Daniel 10:12-14), where persecution of Christians is severe. Unclean spirits (Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:11, Luke 8:29) can also establish an iron grip on individuals leading them into pornography, sexual perversion and abuse, and sodomy. Many modern translations of the bible call them "evil" spirits, but the Greek word, "akathartos", used throughout the New Testament, means impure, lewd, foul, and unclean. We should be watchful lest our minds be corrupted (2 Corinthians 11:3). Satan and his demons are trying to lead the whole world astray and will continue to do so until Jesus returns (Revelation 12:7-9).

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God's Battle Plan

God has a plan for us to win, not just the battles, but also the war. Before the universe was created He had prepared His strategy (Ephesians 1:4), and He selected us (2 Thessalonians 2:13&14). His plans include specific assignments for specific individuals (Jeremiah 1:4&5, Jeremiah 29:11). He also provided an instruction manual for warfare that contains everything we need to know in order to survive. We call the instruction manual the Word of God, or the Holy Bible.

There are some basic skills we should have acquired in boot camp. Do not fight alone. You are part of God's army, and there is strength in numbers (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Rest assured the enemy has no qualms about ganging up on you. When Jesus sent His disciples out it was by twos (Mark 6:7), not alone. Whenever we agree together we have power (Matthew 18:19&20). We need to be together as the Body of Christ to strengthen one another (Hebrews 10:25). If you stand-alone and you weaken, you may collapse and become vulnerable to the enemy. When you are standing with brothers and sisters in Christ, they can support you and protect you. We have been given defensive armor (Ephesians 6:11-18). We must use it. Faith is a powerful shield (1 Peter 5:9, 1 John 5:4). We have to pray and study the word of God (Matthew 26:41, Hebrews 4:12). If your weapons and armor are packed away someplace they will be of no use to you when you are under attack. They ought to be part of your everyday wear. We have been given power (1 John 4:4) to use. Without Jesus we are helpless (John 15:4&5), but with Him there are no limits to what we can accomplish (1 Corinthians 15:57, Philippians 4:13). Jesus has reclaimed all authority (Matthew 28:18). He has disarmed the enemy (Colossians 2:5) and has given us authority over them (Matthew 10:1). All this power and authority is of no benefit if we forget we have it and do not use it.

There are some courses of action designed for hand-to-hand combat for our personal battles with sin and temptation. Remember that the battlefield is the mind and be concerned about what is in there. What you are is determined by your thoughts (Proverbs 23:7). You must discern where those thoughts originated (1 Corinthians 12:10) and take control (2 Corinthians 10:5). Jesus said that if we dwell on something so we desire it in our hearts, we are as guilty as if we had actually done it (Matthew 5:21&22, Matthew 5:27&28). Do not allow the world to shape your thinking (Romans 12:2). Rather keep out the bad by filling your mind with the good (Philippians 4:8&9). Submit yourself to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). Unless you actually resist him, he will stay. Jesus asked the Father to protect us from the evil one (John 17:15) and we ourselves pray "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). That will all be of no advantage unless we actively separate ourselves from everything that caters to our weaknesses (Mark 9:43-47). Do not tempt self. Do not tolerate any sin in your life, or even the consideration of sin. Rid yourself of all evil and concentrate on the Word of God (1 Peter 2:1&2). When being assaulted call on the Lord (2 Samuel 22:4). Do not beg and plea, but come fearlessly before your Father (Hebrews 4:16). Do not be apprehensive; simply present your request to God (Philippians 4:6). There are no particular words or elegant rules to follow (Matthew 6:7). Just blurt it out (Matthew 14:30). Remember that Jesus has already disarmed the enemy. Let God work in you (Philippians 2:13) with His power (Ephesians 3:20). The same God works in all of us (1 Corinthians 12:6), and is able to protect our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7).

All of humanity is tempted to sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). However, the enemy does have other evil schemes he uses. If God calls someone to a particular ministry, demons will try to prevent it from

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coming to fruition by attacking that individual. The demons will try to discourage or demoralize, cause hopelessness, dishearten, and try to initiate all sorts of detrimental emotions. Their purpose is to make the person unproductive and worthless to God. Other people play with sin and place themselves in temptations way, and they can end up in bondage. These individuals are not possessed by demons, but are so spiritually weakened they are at the mercy of evil beings that do not have mercy. These individuals have lost the will to fight. We need to help these brothers and sisters fight the good fight.

Some people give themselves to Satan and permanently separate themselves from God. Those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit have no forgiveness (Matthew 12:31). Those who lived the Spirit filled Christian life and then reject it have no more forgiveness (Hebrews 6:4-6). Those who have accepted Jesus but continue in deliberate sin, claiming it is not sin, have no forgiveness (Hebrews 10:26&27). We are told we should not be concerned for these people (1 John 5:16).

When helping our brothers and sisters we already know that Jesus gave His church authority over demons, and we must never forget that authority. There are some who would have us believe that we need to use intricate prayers and rituals, but that is not true. Jesus simply said, "go" (Matthew 8:32), or rebuked them (Matthew 17:18), or drove them out with a word (Matthew 8:16). His most elaborate recorded words were "come out of him" (Mark 1:25). When dealing with a demon the apostle Paul simply said, "In the name of Jesus, come out." (Acts 16:16). There is no usefulness in getting angry or otherwise emotional. These are things of the soul and are of no benefit in spiritual warfare. Our word and formulas do not help because the only weapon given us, the sword of the Spirit, is the Word of God. That is what Jesus used in the wilderness. There is no gain in shows of strength, because strength is of the flesh (Zechariah 4:6). Know that God works in us (Philippians 2:13) and it is by God's Spirit that demons are cast out (Matthew 12:28). Follow Paul's example and rebuke them in the name of Jesus.

Strongholds frequently come about because someone invited one or more demons to do their stuff. Strongholds are often related to unclean habits, social customs related to sex, drunkenness, and depravity as found in the French quarter in New Orleans, vested interests seen in greedy corporate officers, and oppressive political systems. By definition strongholds are fortified place and are not easily destroyed. They cannot be cast out, but have to be pulled down and demolished, which can only be accomplished by using the weapons of God (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). We need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10&11). The message of the cross is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). Our weapons are prayer, fasting, truth, love, righteousness, and the Word of God. Pray out the kingdom of darkness and pray in the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:10) and pray in righteousness (James 5:16). Know that if when you fall, you fall on your knees in prayer, you are invincible.

Walking In the Spirit

Jesus, the human being born in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, lived His thirty three years without ever falling into sin and never allowing the forces of evil to have their way. The manner in which He achieved that deed was by walking in the Spirit. Jesus told His church to wait for the same power He had (Acts 1:4&5). That was our spiritual champions, the disciples that walked with Him for three years, that He was talking to. We are also called to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:24-26). We should never allow anyplace for demons to operate (Ephesians 4:27), because they will take

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advantage of any opening we offer. We should never dwell on things that have a negative influence, like anger or bitterness, or they may grow until they overwhelm us. If we live by the Spirit we will have inside us the power to overcome everything. When we allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate His fruit within us, we are living as we should be (Ephesians 4:1-6). God does not desire that His children behave like the village idiots, but to be watchful of what is going on around us in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 5:15-18). We are living in enemy territory and we need to be alert (Matthew 10:16). Our goal should be to cultivate within ourselves the same mind that is in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5-7). We are to allow the life of Jesus to flow through us (John 15:1-4). We are called to be imitators of our heavenly Father, in our thinking, our values, and our actions (Ephesians 5:1). It is possible to become like someone you are not if you patiently put into practice being that individual. To walk in the Spirit is to live one's entire life in agreement with the mind of Christ. The popular question that appears on bracelets and other jewelry, "What would Jesus do", is the wrong question to ask. The appropriate question to ask is "What would Jesus have me do?" Remember that the best defense is a good offense. Do not wait to react to evil influences; act first, and never, ever give up.