Spiritual Warfare



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How to Use This Course for a Group Study



This course can be used for individual or group study.
If you intend to lead a group study, follow these simple suggestions:

- Make copies of the Participant Guides for everyone in the group. Or if you would like them to have more information, you can give everyone a copy of the Leader's Guide instead. You have permission to make up to 1,000 copies for your church or group as long as you do not charge for them.
- Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting people to open up.
- When working through the questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for your group to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.
- End the session in prayer.

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Leader's Guide

Welcome to the War

All Christians are involved in a supernatural struggle against the forces of evil and are called to stand in God's power.



Satan is after you; if you are not facing conflict from the enemy, it's because he already has you! If you are a child of God—chosen from the foundation of the world, adopted into God's family, redeemed through his blood and sealed by his Spirit, you can be sure that Satan is after you. If you are walking after Christ, are being filled with the Spirit and submitting to other believers, seeking peace in all relationships—in the church, in your marriage, with your family, and in your workplace—you can be sure that Satan is after you.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10–20

Based On: The sermon "Welcome to the War," by Coy Wylie, PreachingToday.com

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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: *Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

Ephesians 6:10–20 is about the believer's warfare. Watchman Nee said that Ephesians could be summed up with three verbs: we *sit* in heavenly places with Christ, we *walk* in a worthy manner in love, light, and wisdom, and we *stand* against the scheme of the evil one.

Spiritual warfare is not an option in the Christian life. If you are a believer, you are involved in the struggle. No one else can fight the battle for you. There are no elite Christians who specialize in rebuking the devil. There are no spiritual Special Forces, Green Berets, or Seal Teams. I am in the battle. You are in the battle. Like it or not, we must fight. We cannot ignore spiritual warfare.

There is a cosmic, invisible struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan. The casualties are men, women, boys, and girls. In this war there is no ceasefire, no truce, no time out, and no prisoners. But Ephesians tells us about our power and our protection.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] Have you ever heard of spiritual warfare? If so, what do you know about it?

[Q] How do you know whether or not you are winning the battle?

[Q] What do you think Satan most often uses to attack you?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To help us identify our misconceptions about Satan.*

Activity: *Ask the group to name the things that pop into their minds when they think about Satan. Record their answers on a whiteboard or poster board. When you've finished this study, go back to the list and see if the things mention line up with what you learned in this study.*

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Our struggle in spiritual warfare is real, personal, and supernatural.

1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." People's ideas about Satan usually fall in one of two extremes. On one extreme are those who do not believe in the supernatural. They are purely materialistic and cannot envision any life beyond the physical plane. They see Satan as a symbol of evil, not the embodiment of evil.

On the other extreme are those who blame the devil for everything. These folks see a demon behind every bush and around every corner. They routinely cast demonic hordes out of crashed computers and faulty traffic lights.

Somewhere in the middle is the biblical reality. Satan and his demonic legions are alive and well on planet Earth. Satan is the enemy of God, and because he cannot do anything to God, he chooses to attack what is precious to God—us.

[Q] Where do you fall between the two extremes described? How do you view the devil?

Read Ephesians 6:10–20.

This struggle is personal. Notice the word "struggle" in verse 12. It means hand-to-hand combat, *mano a mano* as the Spanish would say. It does not portray arrows, artillery, or long range bombing, but rather being down in the dirt, fighting with blood, sweat, and tears. This is a personal fight for each of us.

Our enemy fights to cause you to be proud instead of humble, divided instead of unified, lustful instead of loving, in darkness rather than light, foolish instead of wise, angry instead of self-controlled, bitter instead of joyous, drunk instead of filled with the Spirit, and self-serving instead of mutually submissive.

[Q] What does it mean that the struggle is personal? How does that affect your life?

Our struggle is also supernatural. Paul says that our fight is not "against flesh and blood." This hand-to-hand combat is not fought by conventional means. We cannot fight the enemy like we would fight a mere person. That's why verse 10 says we are to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."

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You cannot control a flood with a flame-thrower. Flames have no effect on a wall of water. You cannot put out a forest fire with a floodlight. Shining light on a fire will not stop it. In the same way we cannot fight a spiritual fight with earthly tactics. One of the reasons we lose the fight so often is that we try to win in our human strength.

Here is a great truth: If you try to resist evil in your human strength, you will lose.

Our struggle is against powerful enemies. The latter part of verse 12 describes the "spiritual forces of evil" who are the invisible but deadly army of Satan. We not only fight against Satan, but against his legions of fallen, evil angels.

Here, as in other passages, Paul describes the ranks and organization of these unseen supernatural evil forces. There are "rulers, … authorities, … powers of this dark world" and "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." They inhabit the "heavenly realms," that is, the invisible spiritual realm. They do not have run of the highest heaven where Christ is seated, but they do run roughshod over creation.

[Q] Can you give some examples of how Satan and his legions run roughshod over creation?

Ephesians 2:2 says we once "followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air." These designations of ranks suggest that Lucifer's forces are organized in a vast, effective hierarchy. The Greek word behind "powers" is *kosmokratos*, or *cosmocrat*, meaning "world rulers." This may refer to high-ranking fallen angels such as the princes of Persia and Greece who hindered the angelic messenger sent to Daniel (see Daniel 10:12–13, 20).

Whatever these titles mean, we can be assured that we have powerful enemies arrayed in a defined and disciplined army. They are constantly in battle against you and me. They want to hurt and destroy us. If they can't do that, they will settle for ruining our lives with broken homes, addictions, bitterness, despair, depression, violence, and so on.

Our spiritual struggle has serious implications for us. First, Satan is terribly powerful. He is not as powerful as God is. God is Creator. Satan is a creation. Yet he is a powerful creation. He temporarily dominates the world. Unlike God, he can only be in one place at a time. However, his immense order of demons, or fallen angels, do his bidding around the world. First John 5:19 says, "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."

Jesus called him "the prince of this world" in John 12:31. 2 Corinthians 4:4 describes him as "the god of this age" who has "blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." Ephesians 2:2 calls him "the ruler of the kingdom of

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the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." Acts 26:18 gives us Paul's commission, "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." In Revelation 9:11, he is described by the Hebrew word *Abaddon* and in Greek as *Apollyon*. Both words translate as *destroyer*.

[Q] Can you give some examples of how Satan has "blinded the minds of unbelievers" or is at "work in those who are disobedient"?

[Q] How did Christ "open [your] eyes and turn [you] from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God"?

Second, Satan is terribly evil. Romans 1–3 teaches us that man by heredity is totally depraved. No one has to teach us to sin. Every part of our nature is tainted by sin. However, this does not mean we are as bad as we could be. We can become worse. Some humans fall to a deeper level of depravity and become murderers, rapists, child molesters, and so on. Yet no one has fallen to Satan's level. He is utterly evil. He has no conscience, no compassion, and no remorse. He feeds on pain and suffering. He delights in anguish and filth.

[Q] Can you give examples of how sin is part of our nature from the beginning?

- What is your earliest memory of sinning?

Third, Satan is cunning. Verse 11 speaks of the schemes of the devil. The idea of Satan's cunning comes from *methodia*, meaning methods or strategies. Satan has been honing his methods for millennia.

Let's look at three of his schemes. Scheme 1 is diversion. The devil is a master at hiding behind the scenes. When he attacks us, we often don't even realize that it is him. We blame others or circumstances, and don't always think that it could be Satan doing battle with us.

[Q] Can you give an example of when Satan used diversion in your life?

Scheme 2 is division. Satan's motto is "Divide and Conquer." We need each other to defeat him.

[Q] Can you give an example of how another Christian helped you defeat Satan in some area of your life?

Scheme 3 is deception. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says, "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." He doesn't attack our weaknesses so much as our strengths. He gets us to rely on our own talents or giftedness instead of on the God who gave them to us.

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[Q] Can you give an example of a time Satan used deception to fool you?

Teaching Point Two: Our power and protection in spiritual warfare is God's power.

The enemy defeats us when we rely on our own power. If you are trusting in your own power and strength, you are issuing the devil an invitation to beat you up. The stupidest thing we can do when we face some difficulty, temptation, or struggle is to try to deal with it on our own. If you are thinking, *I can handle it on my own*, you are beaten and don't even know it.

[Q] What does it look like to resist evil in human strength? Can you give an example?

We defeat the enemy when we rely on God's power. Paul says, "Be strong in the Lord." Why? Because God is greater than Satan! Satan is powerful, but he is not even in the same class as God. 1 John 4:4 says, "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

[Q] What does it look like to resist evil in God's strength? Can you give an example?

Jesus ultimately defeated Satan at the cross. Colossians 2:14–15 speaks of how Jesus took our guilt of sin, "nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." That's a picture of a Roman victory parade.

At the name of Jesus, the hosts of hell quiver. James 2:19 says, "Even the demons believe that—and shudder." When the disciples saw the ravages of the demoniac in the region of the Gadarenes, I'll bet they drew back in fear. However, the demons in that man feared Jesus.

Martin Luther wrote of that in *A Mighty Fortress is our God*:

> For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
>
> His craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate
>
> On earth is not his equal.
>
> The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
>
> His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure;
>
> One little word shall fell him.

Satan took his best shot at Jesus and lost. Because we are in Christ, we have ultimate victory. We just have to fight. Don't trust you own strength. Be strong in the Lord. Go to your knees. Find your strength in him!

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[Q] Why does going to our knees in prayer give us victory that nothing else can?

Teaching Point Three: Our protection in spiritual warfare is the armor of God, which enables us to take a stand against the enemy in battle.

Our protection in spiritual warfare requires our making a stand. This is a military term that refers to holding a critical position in battle—making a stand. Here are three keys to making a stand against the evil one.

Remember that we have been delivered. Colossians 1:13 says, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves." The only hold Satan has on you is what you give him. The victory is already ours.

[Q] Why does knowing we have been delivered help us in the battle? If you can, give an example.

Remember we can't just send demons away. Saying "in Jesus' name" won't necessarily make everything easier. We defeat the hoards of hell by being filled with the Spirit and living in holiness and peace. James 4:7 says: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

[Q] What does it mean to resist the devil in our everyday lives?

Remember, we are strongest when we are weakest. When we rest in the Lord, we are most secure. God said to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul then said, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. … For when I am weak, then I am strong."

[Q] Why do you think God's power is made perfect in weakness?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

A pastor, who was also a veteran, shared the story of how, at the end of boot camp, he was assigned to a platoon with an experienced sergeant. He said the sarge deployed the green recruits in a trench on a battlefield. He took his bayonet and scratched marks in the dirt on either side of each man. Then he said, "Soldier, your battle exists between these two marks. Your sole task is to defend your 24 inches of battleground.

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Don't worry about everything and everyone else. That's my job. Don't worry about the whole battle, that's the brass's job. You just worry about your 24 inches; that's your battlefield." Sometimes we can get so overwhelmed by the titanic clash between righteousness and evil that we forget our personal battlefield. Wars are fought and won in small skirmishes.

Romans 16:20 says, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

Action Point: Are you holding your 24 inches? Are you making your stand? If not, ask the group to pray for you in the area you are struggling.

—Study by Coy Wylie, with JoHannah Reardon

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Participant's Guide

Welcome to the War

All Christians are involved in a supernatural struggle against the forces of evil and are called to stand in God's power.



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Scripture: Ephesians 6:10–20

Based On: The sermon "Welcome to the War," by Coy Wylie, PreachingToday.com

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The casualties are men, women, boys, and girls. In this war there is no ceasefire, no truce, no time out, and no prisoners. But Ephesians tells us about our power and our protection.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Our struggle in spiritual warfare is real, personal, and supernatural.

Teaching Point Two: Our power and protection in spiritual warfare is God's power.

Teaching Point Three: Our protection in spiritual warfare is the armor of God, which enables us to take a stand against the enemy in battle.

Remember that we have been delivered.

Remember we can't just send demons away.

Remember, we are strongest when we are weakest.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

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Leader's Guide

Preparing for the Battle, Part 1

All believers should prepare for spiritual warfare by putting on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shoes of peace.



All believers are caught up in a great war between God and Satan, and have been given full armor—the spiritual equipment needed to defeat the enemy. Paul describes our salvation and our sanctification as pieces of armor. Six specific pieces are mentioned. We will look at the first three in this study.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:13–15

Based On: The sermon "Preparing for the Battle, Part 1," by Coy Wylie, PreachingToday.com

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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: *Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

Satan, our enemy, wants to "devour" you. When you speak harshly to your wife, he gains ground. When Christians divorce, he pushes farther ahead. When a Christian leader falls into sexual sin, a battle is won. When a church becomes fractured and splits, he pours salt into the wounds of the Savior.

All believers are caught up in a great war between God and Satan. He has two weapons. The first is the world and its lies, the external weapon. The second is the flesh and its desires, the internal weapon.

Jesus has already won the war. He rose in victory from the grave, but that doesn't stop Satan from fighting us today. That's why Paul tells us to stand (vv. 11, 13, 14). To stand is to fight. The opposite of making a stand is giving in.

Paul was probably chained to a Roman guard as he wrote this letter. Though the guard wasn't in full battle gear, Paul had known many Roman soldiers. He used the metaphor of a soldier's equipment to explain the spiritual equipment God has given us to defeat the enemy.

We are to use the "full armor." We can't pick and choose our gear. We need every piece. We need this armor so that "when the day of evil comes, [we] may be able to stand [our] ground." When is the day of evil? Every day that we struggle with sin and wrestle with the forces of hell.

Christ has won the ultimate victory. Yet we must struggle. We must be able to say that we have "done everything." When Martin Luther was condemned as a heretic before the Diet of Worms for proclaiming that faith in Christ alone brings salvation, he said, "My conscious is captive to the Word of God … Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." Neither can we.

Optional Activity: *From the 2003 movie* Luther*, show the scene where he stands firm during the second day of the Diet of Worms (elapsed time: 01:15:20–01:20:41).*

Discussion Questions:

[Q] If you have ever been in physical combat, tell us about that experience.

- Can you see any spiritual analogies from your combat experience that will help us understand how to fight Satan's attacks?

[Q] When have you felt you took a stand for Christ? Tell us about it.

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[Q] When you've had a victory over sin, what gave you that victory: will power, determination, admitting you were powerless, etc.?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: To defeat Satan, we must cinch on the belt of truth.

Ephesians 6:14 says to buckle on the belt of truth. Roman soldiers wore wide, thick leather belts, or girdles. The belt held the soldier's sword and other equipment, much like the web gear of the modern infantryman. It also cinched up his tunic and kilt to allow freedom of movement in battle. When he tightened his belt, he was ready to fight. This belt was an indispensable, essential piece of his armor.

In much the same way, truth is the essential centerpiece of the Christian's armor. We must be rooted and grounded in truth, or our lives are meaningless. Truth is *essential*. The Bible continually speaks of the indispensable nature of truth.

[Q] How do the following verses show that truth is essential: Proverbs 3:3; 23:23; 1 Corinthians 13:6; Philippians 4:8?

Second, truth is immutable. *Immutable* is a high-sounding word that basically means "not subject to change," or "changeless." New discoveries or new information never change that which is true. All truth is God's truth. Truth is immutable because God is immutable. Jesus is the essence of truth.

[Q] How do the following verses show that truth is immutable: Hebrews 1:11–12; 13:8?

Third, truth is *unchanging*. It cannot be improved or perfected. It is perfect just as it is!

[Q] How do the following verses show that the truth is unchanging: 2 Samuel 22:31; Matthew 24:35?

Fourth, truth is *objective*. To say that truth is essential, immutable, and incorrigible is to say that truth is absolute. It is objective. It is verifiable. Jesus said in John 8:32, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

When Satan, disguised as a beguiling serpent, spoke to Eve, the first thing he did was to question the objective truth of God. Speaking of the forbidden fruit, Eve said they were not to eat of it, or

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touch it, or they would die. Satan responded: "You will not surely die. … For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4–5). He's been twisting the truth into lies ever since.

If we are to stand firm in spiritual warfare, we must be immersed in objective truth, which is the Word of God. Paul describes God's Word as "the sword of the Spirit." It is not only an offensive weapon, but a defensive weapon as well.

Do you recall the temptation of Jesus? Every time the enemy made an empty, boastful promise, our Savior quoted Scripture back to him. He said, "It is written … ." Good strategy!

Ever notice how hard it is to get started studying the Bible? Know why? It's a war. The enemy attacks you every time you even think about picking up your Bible. This is why Scripture memorization is so important. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

[Q] Read the following verses and explain how memorizing each one might help you avoid the sin listed after it:

- Psalm 101:3 (lust)
- Romans 1:16 (denying Christ)
- Ephesians 4:25 (lying)

Fifth, Truth is *practical*. Not only are we to know truth objectively, we are to exhibit truthfulness as a lifestyle. We are to be known as truth-tellers. In John 8:44, Jesus said that Satan is a liar and the father of all lies. When we tell lies, any lie, we are imitating and acting on the behalf of the prince of darkness.

When we lie, we take off the belt of truth and drop it in the dirt. Now what will you hang your sword on? How can you wield the sword of truth when it is sheathed in a scabbard of deceit? When we lie, we hang ourselves. The truth will eventually be known. Satan encourages us to lie and then laughs at us when the consequences of our deceit come out in our lives.

Want to win your personal battle against the devil? The first step is to belt on truth. Immerse yourself in the truth of God's Word and deal truthfully with others. When you tell the truth even when you feel like lying, you slap Satan across the face!

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Teaching Point Two: To defeat Satan, we must strap on the breastplate of righteousness.

The breastplate was a vital piece of armor that covered the chest and the back, like a modern policeman's body armor. Its purpose was to defend a soldier from arrows, spears, or swords being thrust at the vital organs—namely the heart. The Christian's heart is the devil's primary target. That's why Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." What protects our hearts from the attacks of the enemy? Righteousness!

The righteousness in Ephesians 6 does not refer to self-righteousness. It is not the keeping of legalistic do's and don'ts. It is not a pharisaical smugness that feeds the fleshly ego. In fact, Isaiah 64:6 says, "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags." Self-righteousness is one of Satan's greatest deceptions.

Instead, this is talking about practical righteousness. Applying practical righteousness means living in minute-by-minute obedience to the Father. This means joyful living. John wrote, "We write this to make your joy complete" (1 John 1:4).

[Q] How can righteous living be joyful living? Give an example.

Applying practical righteousness means bearing fruit. Jesus said in John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

[Q] What does it mean to abide in Jesus?

[Q] Practically speaking, how is abiding in Christ different than striving to accomplish good works in our own strength?

Applying practical righteousness brings rewards. In many passages, the New Testament teaches us that believers receive rewards in heaven for faithfulness now. Colossians 2:18 says, "Do not let anyone … disqualify you for the prize." Satan would love to do that!

[Q] What do you imagine our reward will be for living righteously?

Applying practical righteousness brings glory to God. Titus 2:10 suggests that practical righteousness will "make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."

[Q] Give an example of how your righteousness (from bearing fruit, not self-righteousness) can give glory to God.

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Teaching Point Three: To defeat Satan, we must lace up the shoes of peace.

Ephesians 6:15 tells us to put on the shoes of the gospel of peace. Today we have specialized shoes for every conceivable activity. The shoes of a Roman soldier were specialized, too. They were boots/sandals called *caliga*. The historian Josephus said that they were "thickly studded with sharp nails," like cleats. These war boots enabled infantryman to dig in and make a stand in hand-to-hand combat.

When Paul speaks of the gospel here, he is not talking about taking the good news to the world, but about standing firm. He is not talking about witnessing, but about a spiritual battle. Because we have received the gospel, we have peace with God.

[Q] Read Romans 5:1. How has this been true of you? Can you remember the first moment you sensed peace with God?

[Q] If we receive peace with God the moment we are born again, why must we "put on" the peace of God daily?

Leader's Note: *Because of "the gospel of peace," we are now at peace with God and can rest in that peace with confidence. We have the peace of God because we stand in his strength, not our own. This is the kind of confidence Gideon had when he went up against a force of 32,000 Midianites with only 300 men armed with trumpets, torches, and clay pots (Judges 7). This is the kind of confidence that Jehoshaphat had when he sent Judah's choir out in front of the army and a great victory was won without a weapon being raised (2 Chron. 20:21–26).*

If we look at Philippians 4:6–7, we see that we have eternal peace with God, but we must daily put on the peace of God. If we don't, the evil one will eat us for lunch.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Jesus is the truth. He is our righteousness. He is our peace. To put on spiritual armor is to put on Christ every day. It is to breathe each breath and seize each moment in service to him. When we do so, we are invincible before our enemy! Take time this week to think about which of the three pieces of armor we discussed you most need to "put on." Tell your answer to someone else in the group and ask them to pray for you in this area.

—Study by Coy Wylie, with JoHannah Reardon

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Participant's Guide

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: To defeat Satan, we must cinch on the belt of truth.

First, truth is *essential*.

Second, truth is *immutable*.

Third, truth is *unchanging*.

Fourth, truth is *objective*.

Fifth, truth is *practical*.

Teaching Point Two: To defeat Satan, we must strap on the breastplate of righteousness.

Teaching Point Three: To defeat Satan, we must lace up the shoes of peace.

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—Study by Coy Wylie, with JoHannah Reardon

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Leader's Guide

Preparing for the Battle, Part 2

All believers should prepare for spiritual warfare by using a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.



Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood." If God would just give us a glimpse of the enemy, if we could just for a moment see Lucifer and his legions of demonic forces, we would forever give up fighting him in our own strength. We would run to God's armory and take up the "whole armor of God" so that we might stand and fight in the evil day.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:13–15

Based On: The sermon "Preparing for the Battle, Part 2," by Coy Wylie, PreachingToday.com

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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: *Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

The soldier who stepped out of the ranks and issued the challenge was an incredible sight. He was over nine feet tall—a giant among men. His weight was easily over 400 pounds, and beneath his skin one could see the ripple of bulging muscles. He wore a "coat of mail"—armor that weighed over 125 pounds. He carried a spear that was 14 feet long and its iron point weighed about 15 pounds—that's like putting a collegiate shot put on the end of a pole-vaulter's pole. Altogether, the great spear probably weighed 30 pounds. His name was Goliath.

When the shepherd boy, David, proposed to fight him, King Saul offered his royal armor. Saul was a size 52, but young David was a size 38. The armor was too big. You know the story. David used different weapons and a different strategy. The result was one very surprised and very dead giant. David set aside the conventional armor and chose dress and weapons suitable for his unique battle.

We fight an enemy much greater and much more intelligent than the giant Philistine. Like David, we cannot use conventional means to fight such an imposing enemy. Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood." If God would just give us a glimpse of the enemy, if we could just for a moment see Lucifer and his legions of demonic forces, we would forever give up fighting him in our own strength. We would run to God's armory and take up the "whole armor of God" so that we might stand and fight in the evil day.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] What is your favorite part of the David and Goliath story?

[Q] Have you ever had an experience that you thought was spiritual warfare?

[Q] What are some things that confuse you about spiritual warfare?

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: To defeat Satan, we must hold high the shield of faith.

Of the men who survived prisoner of war camp in the Vietnam war, almost all had two things in common: they developed a mental shield and they held on tenaciously to what they knew as truth. Every day, the North Vietnamese would pump propaganda into their cells via loudspeakers. They told these Americans that their government was corrupt, that the military had abandoned them, or that their wives had divorced them and remarried.

These brave prisoners developed different ways to block out the lies. One was a pianist; he played concerts in his mind. Another was an architect; he designed hundreds of buildings in his head. Still another was a golfer; every day he played mental rounds of golf on the courses in his memory. They blocked the lies of the enemy with their mental shields and combated the lies by reminding themselves of the truth. They had ceased to fight a physical battle, but never stopped fighting a battle of mind and spirit. That's what every believer does in spiritual warfare.

The believer's shield is his or her personal confidence in Jesus. Roman soldiers used two types of shields. One was small and light. It was employed in hand-to-hand combat. The other, called a *scutum*, or war shield, was about 4.5 feet tall and 2.5 feet wide. It was the size of a small door. The old saying was, "You either return from battle with your shield or on your shield."

The shield was made of laminated wood covered with hardened leather and lined around the edges with metal. Usually, there was an iron ornament decorating the front. These shields were so large a man could kneel down and put his entire body behind one. These shields also could be linked together to form a moving wall. To storm city gates, they were linked together to form a "tortoise" that provided protection from the top as well.

The Bible uses such a shield as a metaphor of faith. Paul says that "above all" or "in addition to" the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shoes of peace, you also need the shield of faith.

What is faith? The subject here is not "the faith," as in the body of Christian beliefs, but rather personal faith—our confidence in God, believing what God has said and being committed to it.

Everyone, Christian and non-Christian, practices faith. We have faith that a bridge will not collapse beneath us, that food in a restaurant is not poisoned, that a chair will hold our weight, or that a plane will not crash.

Our shield against the devil's attack is our faith that God will keep his promises and that he will be faithful to us. In several passages the Bible says, "The just shall live by faith." Second

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Corinthians 5:7 says, "We live by faith, not by sight." The image is that the Lord is like a shield for those who trust him; it is seen in many, many passages. Here are just a few:

[Q] Read Genesis 15:1. How was the Lord Abraham's shield? Give examples.

[Q] Read 2 Samuel 22:31. How is the word of the Lord a shield to us? Give examples.

[Q] Read Psalm 3:3. How is God, himself, a shield to us? Give examples.

Psalm 5:12 says, "For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield." Psalm 91:4 says, "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart." Psalm 119:114 says, "You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word." Proverbs 2:7 says, "He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless." Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."

The shield of faith protects us from the enemy's arrows, which are temptations to disbelieve Jesus. Ephesians 6:16 also says that with the shield of faith we will be able to "extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

[Q] What are these flaming arrows? What does it mean to "extinguish" them?

In Paul's day, archers' arrows were often wrapped in cloth and dipped in pitch or a tar-like substance. This pitch was set aflame before the arrow was shot at the enemy. On impact, the pitch would spatter and burn anything that wasn't fire retardant. The large Roman shields were especially effective at thwarting flaming arrows. It is said that in the heat of battle the shields often bristled with smoking arrows like roasted porcupines.

Every day, Satan and his evil minions launch dozens of fiery darts at us. In our lifetimes as believers, we face hundreds of thousands of flaming arrows from hell. Let's consider examples:

[Q] Give an example of how Satan shoots the arrow of disappointment at us.

[Q] Give an example of how Satan shoots the arrow of lust at us.

[Q] Give an example of how Satan shoots the arrow of doubt at us.

[Q] Give an example of how Satan shoots the arrow of others' criticism at us.

[Q] Give an example of how Satan shoots the arrow of pride at us.

As we raise the shield of faith, as we refuse to believe the evil one's lies and instead rely on God's

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truth, the flaming arrows are harmlessly deflected. 1 John 5:4 says, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

[Q] Our faith becomes stronger when we are united. When the enemies of Rome saw those wide columns of shields they often broke rank and escaped in terror. How can Christians unite against Satan?

Teaching Point Two: To defeat Satan, we must put on the helmet of salvation.

Salvation equips us with a calm assurance. Roman soldiers wore helmets made of thick leather that were often covered with metal. There were thick bands to protect the forehead and the cheeks. The metal cover extended down the back to protect the neck. When it was tightly strapped on, the only exposed areas were the eyes, nose, and mouth.

Helmets were invaluable in battle. Imagine standing in the midst of flaming arrows, swinging swords, and thrusting spears without something to protect your head. A hard blow to the body might maim or seriously injure, but a hard blow to the head would kill instantly.

Paul says we are to put on "the helmet of salvation." This does not refer to being born again. Remember, Paul is talking to people who already had been saved (cf. chapters 1–3). Rather, it means resting in the assurance of the salvation that is already ours.

Ever watch an 8-year-old put on a football helmet? They become instant kamikazes! Why? Because they feel invincible in their helmets. In the same way, the helmet of our salvation gives us confidence because we know that no matter what happens, we will ultimately win the victory. Salvation infuses us with the optimism that victory is assured!

Let the enemy attack. Let the forces of hell rage against us. Let them shoot their fiery darts. We may be wounded. We may suffer momentary defeats. We may falter and stumble. However, because of the Cross, victory will ultimately be ours!

[Q] As believers clothed in our spiritual armor, what promise can we claim from Romans 8:31, 35–39?

[Q] Salvation commits us to a blessed hope. What hope do we find in Galatians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 2:13; and Hebrews 6:11?

I not only have assurance that I can make a stand in this present battle, I have a "blessed hope" that one day the battle will be over. The wonderful preacher E. V. Hill preached a message called "This Ain't It." Don't let this battle get you down, because one day it will be over!

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What hope means is this: when we are discouraged, when we are troubled, when we have sinned, when we feel like giving up, when we think we can't go on, we remember that we have an eternal salvation. This lifetime is but an instant compared to eternity.

Teaching Point Three: To defeat Satan, we must unsheathe the sword of the Spirit.

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God—a spiritual, powerful, and necessary weapon. First, the Word is a spiritual weapon. The "sword" from which Paul makes this analogy was the short sword of the Roman army. It was about 18 inches long and dual-edged. It was a close-quarters weapon. Paul calls it the "sword of the Spirit" and likens it to "the Word of God." Because the Bible is "of the Spirit," it was not designed by human authors but inspired, or God-breathed. It is not merely a book, but a spiritual weapon!

Scottish pastor Thomas Guthrie wrote, "The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible, and our sky has lost its sun."

Second, the Word is a powerful weapon. Jesus used the "sword of the Spirit" to parry Satan's attacks in their duel in the desert. He said each time, "It is written …."

[Q] Read Hebrews 4:12. Explain how you have seen God use his Word to do all the things mentioned in this passage.

Third, the Word is a necessary weapon. Almost all of us would say "Amen" to that. But people clamor to hang the Ten Commandments in a courthouse, yet can't recite five of them. They plead for prayer in schools but don't pray. They insist they know God but couldn't tell you three of the four Gospels. You don't really know God until you know his Word!

This sword of the Spirit is only useful if it is read, meditated on, studied, and memorized.

[Q] Why isn't it enough to just read the Word? Why must we go beyond to meditate, study, and memorize it?

Optional Activity: *To illustrate how we combat Satan's lies, ask the group to call out what some of those lies are. Record their answers on a poster board or whiteboard. Then ask them to come up with a verse from the Bible that refutes each lie. Write the reference next to the lie it refutes.*

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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Young David had the right equipment and the right strategy to defeat Goliath. He shouted up to Goliath, "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:47). Pray this week that you will have the kind of courage David had as you battle Satan's temptations and attacks. Try this:

• Start each day by giving it to God. Ask him to make you aware of Satan's temptations and attacks so that you can battle them.

• Commit one verse from this study to memory and use it throughout the week in your battle.

• Close each day by reflecting on how you did in the battle. Commit any area you struggled in to God, and ask him to show you how to do better in this battle in the future.

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Participant's Guide

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Leader's Guide

Staying in the Battle

We battle spiritual powers through mercy in Jesus' name.



There are several admirable qualities in a soldier: courage, strength, self-sacrifice, perseverance, and faithfulness. Those are the qualities we want to have when we are in the midst of the battle all Christians are engaged in.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 11:1–12:31

Based On: The sermon "Warriors on Their Couches," by Peter Hiett, PreachingToday.com

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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: *Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

We can actually learn a lot about some of Satan's strategies in spiritual warfare by studying the military strategies of the warriors of old. In his book *Head Game*, author Tim Downs writes:

> Psy-ops stands for Psychological Operations, a form of warfare as old as the art of war itself. An early example of this can be found in the battle strategies of Alexander the Great. On one occasion when his army was in full retreat from a larger army, he gave orders to his armorers to construct oversized breastplates and helmets that would fit men 7 or 8 feet tall. As his army would retreat, he would leave these items for the pursuing army to discover. When the enemy would find the oversized gear, they would be demoralized by the thought of fighting such giant soldiers, and they would abandon their pursuit.
>
> Satan likes to play head games with us, too, often leaving us demoralized by fear or doubt.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] Can you think of some head games Satan has played with you in the past? Tell us about them.

[Q] How did such head games make you feel like abandoning the fight?

[Q] What helped you get back in the fight

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: To stay in the fight, we must realize how wicked the enemy is.

In 2 Samuel 11, all of Israel is at war. Everyone, that is, except David; he stays home. Israel was besieging Rabbah of the Ammonites, who were worshipers of Molech. Historians say this religion included cultic child prostitution and the sacrifice of children through fire. Rabbinic writers described a bronze statue in human form with the head of an ox. It was hollow and heated from below. Children were placed in the bronze statue, where they were consumed as drums drowned out the sound of their screaming.

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Most scholars think Molech means "King of Shame." In other words, Israel was battling the King of Shame—a demonic principality that consumed human life. Jeremiah prophesied that one day Molech would be sent into exile, but that God would restore the fortunes of the Ammonites. You see, Israel wasn't really battling the Ammonites (flesh and blood). They were at war with Molech (the principality and power). The problem was, they couldn't extract Molech from the Ammonites.

We face a similar battle today. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12 that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the ... spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." We battle Satan, the Accuser. He sounds a lot like Molech—King of Shame. You were made to be a warrior, and this is a war worth fighting.

[Q] When you think of Satan, what comes to mind? Why?

[Q] Name a few of the most evil things you can think of that happen in the world. When you think of Satan being behind those things, how does it affect your view of him?

[Q] Read 2 Corinthians 11:14–15. According to these verses, why do we often fail to recognize Satan's methods? Can you give an example of when he has masqueraded as an "angel of light"?

Teaching Point Two: To stay in the fight, you cannot let your guard down.

In 2 Samuel 11:1, David was not fighting the King of Shame. David was a warrior who had fought remarkable battles, but he forgot he was at war and instead found his couch. In the following verse, David fell to temptation because he was not where he was supposed to be. He felt shame, but instead of fighting it, he tried to hide it. I suspect you know the story: David sent for Uriah (Bathsheba's husband who was on the battlefront) and arranged for Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba, so the baby would appear to be Uriah's. However, Uriah refused to sleep with his wife when his fellow Israelites were sleeping in tents on the battlefield. Seeing Uriah's behavior caused David to feel more shame. He arranged for Uriah to be killed in the battle against the Ammonites. He sacrificed Uriah to the King of Shame, then took Bathsheba as his own. It would appear that Molech had won. God's child, Uriah, was murdered. God's daughter, Bathsheba, was raped. God's son, David, was imprisoned in shame.

Just as Molech, King of Shame, seemed to defeat Israel, so also he rules in our times through adultery, divorce, abortion, and rape. And just as Molech won in Israel because David was not fighting God's war, so he is winning here because we have failed to stay in the battle. If we're not battling for our Lord, we end up battling for Molech. Jesus said, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters." Bob

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Dylan puts it another way: "You're gonna have to serve somebody, / Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord / But you're gonna have to serve somebody."

[Q] Warriors without a war will be conscripted by someone or something. Can you give an example of how this happens in the spiritual realm?

[Q] Don't answer this aloud, but are you fighting for yourself and your kingdom? Are you fighting to protect your dignity or cover your shame? If so, you're really fighting for Molech. Take a few minutes to think about it.

In order to get David's attention, God sent Nathan the prophet. Nathan told David a story. Read 2 Samuel 12:1–14. David's private life had a powerful public impact.

God does not respect our right to privacy. Read Luke 12:2–4.

Even though David repented, great damage was done. One of David's sons, Amnon, rapes one of David's daughters, Tamar. Another of David's sons, Absalom, murders Amnon to cover the shame. Then Absalom despises his father and overthrows David's rule just as David despised God and overthrew his rule. Then, to demonstrate his victory, Absalom has sex with ten of David's wives on the roof, before all Israel.

Sin has consequences. To know God's mercy, perhaps you have to see your sin and taste its pain. To know forgiveness, perhaps you have to know what you're forgiven of.

[Q] David fell into sin when he left the battle and was alone. How is that true of Christians who isolate themselves from other Christians?

[Q] How can we unite against Satan? Name practical ways.

Teaching Point Three: No matter what, it's not too late to rejoin the battle.

The Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick (2 Samuel 12:15). David prayed for his sick child and fasted for a full week until the child died. When he heard that the child had died, he arose, washed himself, and went to the temple to worship. Wouldn't you like to know what David said in worship that day? It appears we do. Read Psalm 51.

This son died, but the Lord is still gracious to David (and Bathsheba). Bathsheba conceived a son whom they named Solomon, which means *peaceful*. The Lord loved the child and sent a message by Nathan the prophet to call the child Jedidiah—"beloved of the Lord." He was born out of David's sin, sorrow, and shame. He was born out of the dominion of Molech.

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Later, Solomon ascended to the throne and built the temple. He accomplished the greatest deeds in Israel's history. There were two sons of David in this story: one that bore David's sin, and a second that rose from David's ashes and built the house of God. The two sons of David represent the one Son of David who was yet to come to Earth. His name is Jesus.

How do you battle the King of Shame? You can't. But God can, through his great mercy. Jesus was born out of David's failure. He was born out of our failure. When we stop hiding and guarding our shame, and surrender it to the Father, he kisses our wounds. Then he battles the King of Shame through us. Jesus is the Great Warrior, and his battle against evil is our great war. We battle the King of Shame by bearing witness to mercy, preaching the gospel of grace, and offering the kiss of grace.

[Q] Give practical ways we can bear "witness to mercy," preach "the gospel of grace," and offer "the kiss of grace."

It takes courage, strength, self-sacrifice, perseverance, and faithfulness—all the virtues of a warrior. Jesus gives you those virtues when you join his war.

[Q] Can you think of a time when God gave you courage, strength, self-sacrifice, perseverance, or faithfulness that you knew was beyond your own abilities?

In his book *Head Game*, author Tim Downs goes on to say:

> We assume Satan is bigger or greater than he really is. And the quickest way to thwart our Enemy's psy-ops, when we feel like abandoning the fight altogether, is to gaze upon the greatness of our God. Perhaps all it takes is a quick look at Job 38:4–7.

[Q] Why does taking our focus off of ourselves and putting it onto God change the dynamics of the battle?

[Q] Can you think of other biblical characters who demonstrated this?

Optional Activity: *Bring out two Styrofoam bowls. One should be intact, and the other should have holes in the bottom (use a pencil to poke two or three holes). Hold the one with holes over a bucket and pour water into it. As you do, explain that with our own strength, we are like this bowl. We cannot hold what we are supposed to because we are full of holes and flaws. Then pour water into the intact bowl. Explain that Christ fills the holes and makes us useful vessels for his kingdom.*

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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: **We tend to think of spiritual warfare as some strange little corner of the Christian life. No—spiritual warfare is the Christian life. To help you focus on the greatness of God, rather than your own inadequacies, read Job 38–42 this week. Pick a few verses out of these chapters to memorize. Choose ones that will help you to stay in the battle.**

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Leader's Guide

Camp on God's Goodness

Satan comes in disguise and attacks God's character so that we doubt God's Word and his goodness.



You're a Christian; temptation dogs your path and trips you at every turn. The questions you must face are, "How does the Tempter do his work? How does he come to us? How does he destroy us?" Scripture is full of stories about sin and its destructive power, but we find victory as we camp on God's goodness.

Scripture: Genesis 3:1–6

Based On: The sermon "Don't Doubt God's Goodness," by Haddon Robinson, PreachingToday.com

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Part 1 Identify the Issue

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Haddon Robinson shares this story:

> One of the more difficult responsibilities I have as the president of Denver Seminary lies in reading my morning mail. A few months ago I received a letter from a young man in a penitentiary in Texas. He is serving from 10 to 20 years for attempted rape. He was a Christian, and he asked if I would send him a book that was not available for him in the prison. I gladly responded to his request. But his letter deeply disturbed me, because the young man had been a student of mine when I taught at Dallas Theological Seminary.
>
> He left the seminary with great gifts and vision. He pastored two different churches, and both of them, humanly speaking, were successful congregations. In the second church, which I knew better, people were led to Christ as a result of his witness. He was a careful student of the Scriptures, and some said as he stood to speak they could sense the power and presence of God. He had a discipling ministry to the men in that congregation. In fact, when his crime was discovered and he admitted his guilt, men in that congregation raised over $20,000 for his legal defense. And now he is a prisoner in a penitentiary in Texas. In one dark hour of temptation, he fell into the abyss. He ruined his reputation, destroyed his ministry, and left an ugly stain on the testimony of Christ in that community.
>
> When I read that letter and knew what had happened, I found myself wrestling with all kinds of questions and emotions. *What happens in a person's life who does that? What went through his mind? What was it that caused him to turn his back on all that he had given his life to?*
>
> I realized as I was asking those questions that I was not simply about asking about him, but about myself. What is it that lures us to destruction?
>
> It's a question you face. You're a Christian; temptation dogs your path and trips you at every turn. The questions you must face are, "How does the Tempter do his work? How does he come to us? How does he destroy us?" Scripture is full of stories about sin and its destructive power.
>
> Genesis, chapter 3, is a case study in temptation. As a case study, what you want to do is to get rid of the independent variables to study the thing itself. And certainly as Eve is approached by the Tempter, there are many things that were not true of her that

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might be true of us. For example, she has no poisoned blood in her veins. She does not have a heritage on which she can blame her sin. Eve comes, as Adam did, from the direct creation of God, and when God created Adam and Eve, God declared that the creation was very good. What is more, Eve and Adam lived in a perfect environment. They stood in the morning of creation. No sinful heritage, no sinful environment. We have a case study in temptation.

As we watch the way the Tempter came to Eve, we recognize that while this story comes to us out of the ancient past, it's as real as the temptation you may be facing. The scene has changed, but the methodology has not.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] Why do you think a person gives into temptation, even if they know it's going to ruin their life?

[Q] When we are in the middle of a temptation, why do you think we fail to recognize that Satan is tempting us?

[Q] How familiar are you with the story of Adam and Eve? Are there any details from that account that has confused you in the past?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: We must recognize how Satan tempts us.

Read Genesis 3:1–6.

The Tempter often comes to us in disguise. The writer of Genesis says that the serpent was craftier than all of the wild animals the Lord God had made. This scene happens before the curse, before the serpent crawls on its belly upon the ground. There are no rattlers here that warn of an approaching poison. There's nothing here that would make Eve feel alarmed. When Satan comes to you, he does not come in the form of a coiled snake. He does not come as the roar of a lion. He does not come as the wail of a siren. He does not come waving a red flag. Satan just slides into your life and seems almost like a comfortable companion.

[Q] Can you give an example from your or someone else's life of Satan coming subtly?

The New Testament says that he comes as an angel of light, as a minister of God—sometimes as a minister of righteousness. One point that's quite clear is that when the Enemy comes to

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attack you, he comes in disguise. As Mephistopheles says in Faust, "The people do not know the devil is there even when he has them by the throat."

[Q] What are some examples in the Bible of people who were unaware that Satan had a powerful hold over them?

Teaching Point Two: We must know our Bibles to combat Satan.

Not only is his person disguised; his purposes are disguised as well. When he comes, he does not say to Eve, "I have come to tempt you." He instead comes to have a religious discussion. He wants to talk theology; he doesn't want to talk sin. He begins his temptation by saying, "Did God really say, 'you must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" You can't argue with that. Satan comes and says, "Look, I just want to be sure of the exegesis. I just want to be sure of the idea God was trying to get across. Did he really say you can't eat of any of the trees of the garden?"

You see, he is a religious devil. He doesn't come to you and knock on the door of your soul and say, "Pardon me, sir, give me a half hour of your life. I'd like to damn you and destroy you." No, all he wants to do is talk a bit of theology. He wants to be sure he understands the Word of God. It is possible, isn't it, to discuss theology to your peril. It is very possible to get into those kinds of discussions in which you talk about God in a kind of abstract way, like a mathematical formula, so that you can construct a theology that leads you to disobey God.

[Q] How can bad theology lead to Satan's influence in our lives?

You're big on grace, very strong on Christian liberty. You know the freedom of the sons of God and you will debate that with anyone who comes along. You can do anything you want, at any time you want, with anyone you want. No restrictions, no hangups; you're free, you know God's grace. Every man who's ever turned liberty into license has done it on theological grounds. You can get to the place where you decide, "Even when I sin, God's grace abounds. Isn't it wonderful that I am serving God's grace because I show his forgiveness?"

You can be big on God's sovereignty. No one will outpace you when it comes to a doctrine like that. God is sovereign over the affairs of men and nations. Not only is God's eye over history, his hand is on history. His hand is upon your life, and before long God is so sovereign that you have no responsibility. After all, in a sense "all the world is a stage, all the men and women merely players." God maps out the action, plans the dialogue. You go through your paces, but it's all of God. Even your sin. And out of that discussion you come away finding good, sound reasons for disobeying God, all because you want to discuss theology with the wrong motive. A Christian can find a lot of reasons for doing wrong while sounding theological in his or her disobedience.

Another thing that Satan does in this conversation, this discussion about God, is focus Eve's attention on that single tree in the center of the garden. He says, "It seems inconceivable to me

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that God wouldn't let you have any of these trees," and then Eve comes to God's defense. She's a witness for God. She says, "No, we can eat of all of the trees of the garden, but we can't touch that tree." God didn't say that. He didn't say anything about touching it. But one of the things people do in defending God is become more righteousness than God, stricter than God. What Satan has done, of course, is to focus her mind on that single tree, the one thing prohibited.

[Q] Give some examples of how we Christians become "stricter than God."

[Q] How does that actually further Satan's cause?

Satan also attacks God's Word. Eve responds, "We may eat from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" Then Satan throws his head back and with irrepressible laughter says, "Surely you don't believe that, do you? That you will surely die? Oh, come now. A bit of fruit? Surely die? That's just a bit of oriental exaggeration that God's using to get your attention, but he doesn't mean that. Surely die? Come now, you're too sophisticated. You're too aware to believe that the God who gave you this marvelous garden, and all these trees, and that bountiful fruit, is going to be that excited about your taking one piece of fruit? You don't believe that, do you? God doesn't mean that. God certainly doesn't mean that."

How easily we fall into the trap. How easily we can come to believe in some doctrine of inerrancy about the Bible as a whole, but on this particular issue—an issue between me and God—he doesn't mean it when he says, "You will surely die."

[Q] How do we as Christians fall for similar attacks by Satan?

Teaching Point Three: We must take sin seriously to combat Satan.

For thousands of years Satan has reused the same methods. It is the plot of many modern novels: the author writes about people who live in deep disobedience to God, but at the end everything turns out well. It's the theme of modern movies: the characters live a life of rebellion against God but live happily ever after.

[Q] Why is God so serious about sin? Why does he hate it so much?

God is serious about sin because God is serious about you. He loves you and knows the devastation sin can cause in your life, relationships, character, and ministry. God is serious about sin as a loving parent is serious about fire, warning his child about it because he knows that it can maim that child for life.

Not only does Satan attack God's Word, but he goes deeper and attacks God's character, which lies behind his Word. The serpent said to the woman in verse 5, "For God knows that when

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you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." What Satan is doing is attacking God's goodness. What he is saying is, "You know why God gave you that command? He gave you that command because he wants to spoil your fun. The reason he gave you that command is that he wants to keep you on a tight leash. He doesn't want you to be free. He doesn't want you to really experience the abundance of life. He wants to deny your pleasures. He wants to show you he is in control. He wants to keep you down. He doesn't want you to have the excitement that life offers other people. He knows that when you eat it you'll be like him and you'll know good and evil. You'll have experiences you can have in no other way. God's got an ulterior motive, a hidden agenda, and it's an evil one."

[Q] Give an example of how Satan comes to us today with the same message.

Optional Activity: *In our honest moments, there may be several activities that we recognize as sinful, but still think would be fun to try. For example, "I've never been drunk, but I sometimes wonder what it would be like to lose control for a little while."*

In your group, pass out a half-sheet of paper to each participant and ask them to write down a similar "sinful" activity that still holds an appeal. Remind them not to put their names on the paper. When everyone is finished, collect all the papers into a hat or bowl, and then pull out one piece at a time and read its contents.

Then ask, "Does anyone have any experience with this activity that can tell us what it's really like?" For example, another group member might say, "I've been drunk plenty of times, and I can tell you that it's no picnic…" then he or she could explain the reality of what it means to lose control to alcohol.

Teaching Point Four: We must be confident in God's love and goodness to combat Satan.

Once the well is poisoned, all the water is destroyed. For example, one of the most beautiful confessions of love and faith in the Bible is the confession Ruth makes to Naomi. She says, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried" (Ruth 1:16–17). Beautiful.

But suppose someone comes to Naomi and says, "Naomi, listen. Ruth's a gold digger. She's a manipulator. What Ruth really wants to do, that Moabitess, is get back into Israel to marry a wealthy Jew, and she knows her passport home is with you. She'll tell you just about anything to get a free pass into Israel." If Naomi believes that, then the well is poisoned and every good thing Ruth does, Naomi will suspect. Every kind word Ruth speaks, Naomi will reject. When you poison the well, all the water is poisoned. When you come to the place where you doubt God's Word because you really doubt God's goodness, then Satan has done his work.

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How easily we do that. All of us have served the Prince of Darkness and lived in his realm, and when we come to the kingdom of God's Son we have a way of bringing our doubts and suspicions with us. Something happens in your life that is difficult, and you find yourself asking why—and that question mark is like a dagger pointed at the heart of God. How easily we begin to suspect that what is happening in our life is really a demonstration that God is against us. We suffer from such a twisted mind that even when good things happen to us, we doubt God's goodness. Something marvelous comes into your life, something unexpected, and you're delighted. Then all at once there is a shadow that crosses your mind, a fear that before long it will be taken away. That God doesn't really want you to enjoy the expansion of his goodness; just as you get to enjoy it, he'll snatch it back like some cruel, sadistic parent. So we knock on wood and smash at the heart of God. When you doubt God's goodness, you'll doubt his Word and you will see God restricting you and holding you back. The work of temptation is done.

[Q] Have you done either of those things: thought a restriction was just God's cruelty, or something good just temporary? If so, how did you work through those ideas?

And so the writer tells us that at that moment, in verse 6, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." It now becomes pleasing to the eye. It becomes desirable because she has listened to the lie of the Tempter and her senses take control. When you get God out of your life, when you come to question God's Word and God's goodness, then suddenly your senses come alive to what is evil, and what was once out of bounds to you becomes the thing you desire—and often the thing that will destroy you.

Adam and Eve were disobedient to God's Word and distrustful of God's character. Whenever you come to deny or doubt the goodness of God, you'll come to deny his Word.

If Satan had come to Eve in that early morning and said, "Look, sign this paper. Say that you are done with God," she would never have signed it. When Satan comes he never comes dragging the chains that will confine us. He comes bringing a crown that will ennoble us. He comes offering us pleasure, expansiveness, money, popularity, freedom, enjoyment. In fact, he never really says there will be any consequences at all, just that we will fulfill all the desires of our hearts. It is there we are destroyed. That's the lesson: the temptations that destroy us strike at the heart of God, at God's integrity and goodness. When we deny his goodness, we reject his Word. When we reject his Word, we do so at our peril.

[Q] Why would doubting God's goodness lead to denying his Word?

Optional Activity: *Take a fairly new $20 bill and show it to everyone. Then wad it up and stomp on it. Pick it back up and ask if they think anyone would still want this bill. Most would say yes, because it's still worth as much as when it was new and clean.*

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You may feel like you've been stepped on, beat up, or kicked around. You may feel dirty, unworthy, or useless. But be encouraged by the $20 bill—no matter what you've been through, you still have value to God! He loves you just as much now as he did when you were born.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Christianity is not mere morality. It's not a matter of toeing the line and keeping the rules. Christianity is a relationship with a God who loves you so much that he gave you his Son and gave you every good and perfect gift. This week, write down all the things that usually cause you to doubt God's love for you. Then find a corresponding verse to write next to each thing, to assure you of God's love.

—Study by Dr. Haddon Robinson, with JoHannah Reardon

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Participant's Guide

Camp on God's Goodness

Satan comes in disguise and attacks God's character so that we doubt God's Word and his goodness.



You're a Christian; temptation dogs your path and trips you at every turn. The questions you must face are, "How does the Tempter do his work? How does he come to us? How does he destroy us?" Scripture is full of stories about sin and its destructive power, but we find victory as we camp on God's goodness.

Scripture: Genesis 3:1–6

Based On: The sermon "Don't Doubt God's Goodness," by Haddon Robinson, PreachingToday.com

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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Haddon Robinson shares this story:

> Genesis, chapter 3, is a case study in temptation. As a case study, what you want to do is to get rid of the independent variables to study the thing itself. And certainly as Eve is approached by the Tempter, there are many things that were not true of her that might be true of us. For example, she has no poisoned blood in her veins. She does not have a heritage on which she can blame her sin. Eve comes, as Adam did, from the direct creation of God, and when God created Adam and Eve, God declared that the creation was very good. What is more, Eve and Adam lived in a perfect environment. They stood in the morning of creation. No sinful heritage, no sinful environment. We have a case study in temptation.
>
> As we watch the way the Tempter came to Eve, we recognize that while this story comes to us out of the ancient past, it's as real as the temptation you may be facing. The scene has changed, but the methodology has not.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: We must recognize how Satan tempts us.

Teaching Point Two: We must know our Bibles to combat Satan.

Teaching Point Three: We must take sin seriously to combat Satan.

Teaching Point Four: We must be confident in God's love and goodness to combat Satan.

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Leader's Guide

Win with Worship

Worship aids us in spiritual warfare.



A longtime missionary worker from Africa related, "In the midst of all the demonic activity and all the pressures on my life, I have one little way to function: I sing the doxology and dismiss the Devil." Paul and Silas won the victory by singing in the depth of the Philippian prison and were freed by an earthquake. Jonah worshiped God in the belly of the great fish and was spewed up onto the shore. Worship brings victory! We learn from examples in the Old Testament, principles in the New Testament, and contemporary applications that worship and spiritual warfare go hand in hand.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 20:1–30; Psalm 44:4–8; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

Based On: The sermon "Worship & Spiritual Warfare," by Coy Wylie, PreachingToday.com

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Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: *Provide each person with the Participant's Guide, included at the end of this study.*

It was seven on a Friday evening in San Francisco. Jerry Brandt, head of Action Evangelism, had scheduled an outdoor praise-and-prayer service in Union Square. It was to take place at eight and kick off a drive for the city's homeless. Jerry had filled out the paperwork and received a permit for the use of the park. As he and a handful of volunteers were setting up for the event, a large crowd of angry people gathered. One man shouted, "Who's in charge here?"

Brandt replied, "Jesus Christ is in charge." The crowd ignored him. They didn't care about permission or permits.

The man said, "We've got a thousand people on their way here, and as soon as they arrive, we're taking this place over."

Brandt began to silently pray for wisdom. He felt the Lord saying through him, "You're too late. Jesus has already taken this square, and we're going to lift his name tonight in this place." He gathered his volunteers together and prayed that the rest of their people would show up soon. One of the crew read Deuteronomy 28:7: "The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven." Then they began to sing praise choruses to God.

As their worship began, something dramatic happened. The militant marchers stopped in their tracks. They turned and ran away from the square as fast as they could. The worship of God had a profound effect. "Looking back," Brandt recalls, "we realized God had delivered us and had used the power of praise to do it. Ever since that night, in our work in ministering to people on the streets, we have discovered that praise and worship are the keys to spiritual warfare."

Most Christians think of worship as something we do as we come together on Sunday morning. We've learned that worship helps us endure trials and empowers us for witnessing. However, did you know that worship aides us in spiritual warfare as well? The worship and praise of Almighty God gives us victory over the enemy.

In the Old Testament, the people of God learned that worship and warfare went hand in hand. Over and over we read of situations in which the people failed to worship God with their whole hearts. As a result their enemies defeated them. However, when they repented and truly worshiped God, he always gave them victory. They could not win a war without sincere worship.

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Someone said, "Satan is allergic to praise, so that wherever there is massive, triumphant praise, he is paralyzed, bound, and banished."

Discussion Questions:

[Q] Why do you think worship turned back the angry demonstrators in our story?

[Q] Have you ever had a similar experience where praise turned a situation around? If so, tell us about it.

[Q] Can you think of examples from the Bible where worship and warfare went hand in hand?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Old Testament provides an example of worship and warfare.

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–30.

In 2 Chronicles 17–19, we get a panoramic backdrop. Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. His name means "Jehovah judges." He was the son of the godly King Asa. Asa died, and Jehoshaphat was about 35 years old when he ascended to his father's throne. He reigned 25 years (875–850 B.C.). Second Chronicles 22:9 describes him as a man "who sought the LORD with all his heart."

Second Chronicles 17 tells us about his early reign. Verse 6 says, "his heart was devoted to the ways of the LORD." He was more of a pastor than a king. Imagine having such a president! He sent men throughout Judah to teach God's Word (vv. 7–9). As a result of his efforts, "the fear of the LORD fell" (v. 10), and he "became more and more powerful" (v. 12).

Chapter 18 describes Jehoshaphat's downfall. Verse 1 says he "allied himself with Ahab." Ahab was a despicable king of Israel who was married to Jezebel. He was an idolater who hated the one true God. Jehoshaphat goofed by marrying this man's daughter. Through this relationship, Jehoshaphat was led astray. Ahab convinced him to use his armies to help him fight the Syrians. Ahab disguised himself, but told Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes (v. 29). Thinking Jehoshaphat was Israel's king, they attacked him, but God saved him (vv. 30–32). However, Ahab was killed (vv. 33–34). When Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem, Jehu came out to question him (19:2). He repented of trusting in Ahab and went back to seeking the Lord (v. 9).

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In 2 Chronicles 20:1–4, we find a kingdom in a desperate situation. After a period of peace and spiritual renewal, the Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, and others mounted a major assault on Jerusalem (v. 2). En Gedi is about 35 miles southeast of Jerusalem.

Verse 3 says plainly that Jehoshaphat was alarmed. There is nothing wrong with being afraid. He knew he couldn't defeat his enemies on his own. However, he didn't seek an alliance with man. He sought the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. People came from all the cities of Judah to seek the Lord.

When you are in trouble, there is nothing better than gathering believers together to pray and worship God. Too many times, seeking the Lord is our last resort. It should be our first thought!

In 2 Chronicles 20:5–13, we see a nation humbled before God. These verses describe a mighty worship service. Verse 13 says men, women, and children all stood before the Lord. Imagine something like that on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Imagine our president leading us in national prayer.

In front of the nation, King Jehoshaphat prayed and praised God for who he is, what he has done, and what the king knew he could do.

[Q] Look again at verses 5–9. How does the king's praise become a specific request? What is he praying for?

[Q] Look again at verses 10–12. What is the king expressing at the end of verse 12?

Note the difference between this crisis and the first one. Earlier, Jehoshaphat had depended on evil Ahab. Now he's learned his lesson. He depends on no one but God.

[Q] In 2 Chronicles 20:14–19, we see a prophet with an encouraging message. In those days, God spoke to his people through the mouths of his prophets. How does he speak today?

Leader's Note: *He speaks through revealed Scripture, through the person of the Holy Spirit, and through godly counselors.*

[Q] On that day, God answered the nation's prayers by speaking through a man named Jahaziel. Look again at verse 17. How can we apply this verse to the battles we must fight with Satan?

[Q] What can we learn from verse 18 about how we should battle Satan?

[Q] In 2 Chronicles 20:20–30, we see a worship service that won the war. Read verse 21¬. Why do you think Jehoshaphat did this?

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[Q] Note what they sang. Why a song of praise when they were facing a battle?

Teaching Point Two: The New Testament provides a principle of worship and warfare.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5.

We are involved in a great spiritual war (v. 3). All around us is a titanic struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan. We are caught up in this war. It is a war of temptation, lust, and domination. It is spiritual, not physical. Ephesians 6:12 says, "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."

The spiritual battle cannot be won with physical weapons (v. 4). We can fight human enemies with tanks, planes, and smart bombs. We can't fight the Evil One like that. Paul says the weapons we fight with are not of the world.

One of the greatest weapons in our arsenal is worship. Ephesians 6 describes the "armor of God" and some of the weapons of spiritual warfare. But another mighty weapon that causes Satan to flee is the worship of Almighty God.

[Q] Name as many spiritual weapons as you can think of that are mentioned in Scripture.

[Q] What does it mean to "demolish strongholds"?

Leader's Note: *The* Quest Study Bible *says, "[Strongholds were] the walled cities of the Graeco-Roman world. Paul's enemies were using arguments, pretentions and rationalizations as walls against the Christian view. Christians are to counter false teaching—demolishing strongholds."*

Teaching Point Three: Worship and warfare also have a contemporary application.

Worship focuses us on the Lord. When we truly worship, we take "captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." We can't worship and be tempted to sin. We can't worship and lust. We can't worship and lie, hate, covet, gossip, cheat, and so on. Worship lays our souls bare to God.

[Q] What does it mean to take "captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"? How do we do that in our everyday lives?

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Worship brings about the victory. A couple of stories drive home the relevance of worship in spiritual warfare. First, the shock-rocker and self-proclaimed priest of the Church of Satan, Marilyn Manson, was scheduled for a concert in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on April 28. This brought about a great uproar from the community, because his music was linked to the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado. Law enforcement prepared for an ugly scene.

Then a group of pastors, youth pastors, and other believers got together and organized prayer-and-praise services before and during the concert. Through the power of worship, these Christians decided to bless, not curse, the concert goers. They passed out over one hundred pizzas and twelve hundred soft drinks in the parking lot. They paid for parking for many. "Many Manson fans showed a 'This does not compute' look as they scratched their heads in bewilderment." The results? Manson became so outraged, he destroyed his Nazi/antichrist set and stormed off the stage very early in the show, vowing never to return. At least three people came to faith in Christ. Worship is an incredibly powerful weapon in spiritual warfare.

Second story: In 1987, in a small community in Southeast Alabama, there was a rash of teenage suicides that no one could explain. A Baptist pastor by the name of Rick Hagens understood that this had to do with the satanic activity that was growing in their community. Some kids in his youth group told him about a friend of theirs who was in a club and wanted to get out. He said that the leaders of the club said they would kill him if he left.

He said to his Christian friends, "If I am found dead, I want you to know it was the club members who killed me." A few weeks later, he was found dead in a car, with a hose to the exhaust pipe taped to his wrist. His death was ruled a suicide, but Pastor Hagens and his young people knew better. They decided to motivate other Christians to help in what he believed was spiritual warfare.

They learned from the police that these satanic cult members were actually singling out students and pressuring them to commit suicide. If they did not, they were killed and left to appear as suicide victims. Every day for a week, they went to the area where the satanic rituals took place to pray and worship God. Rick Hagens decided it was time for a showdown. Taking his cue from the Old Testament story of Elijah facing the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he announced on radio and television that he and many believers from the area would meet the people from the demonic cult in the graveyard, at midnight on Halloween night.

Hagens said, "I've always fought the devil with prayer and preaching, but as I prayed about how to do this, God seemed to be telling me that prayer and preaching were not to be the focus that night, but that we were to praise him and worship him. We had a 12-foot cross that we had made, and each person had a bag of tracts to pass out. It seemed as if the Lord said, 'Put the cross up, put lights on it so that it can be seen, and do nothing else but worship me.'"

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That's exactly what they did. It was so dark they couldn't see to read words from a page, and they didn't know many worship choruses back then, so they just sang old hymns like "Just as I Am" and "The Old Rugged Cross" from memory. As they entered the graveyard, they found a cow that had been mutilated. Sure enough, around midnight the enemy came. They were dressed as ghouls and vampires, with hoods and cloaks.

"We didn't pray warfare-type prayers," said Hagens. "We didn't break curses or talk about strongholds. All we did was praise and worship the Lord. As we did, God's Spirit seemed to captivate the crowd. They stopped jeering. They stopped taunting. They sat there transfixed, listening for hours as we sang praises." At 4:00 a.m., they left. Not one single threat was made against them. According to official reports, from that night on, there were no more teenage suicides.

[Q] Have you heard any stories about, or experienced, a victory over Satan that was won with worship? If so, tell us about it.

Read Psalm 44:4–8.

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To demonstrate our being "in Christ" in our battle against sin and Satan.*

Activity: *You will need a small fish tank partially filled with water (any clear receptacle will work); three nails; and a block of wood (a piece of 2 x 4 about 6 inches long). Prior to the demonstration, saw the block of wood in half lengthwise. Then attach the halves together with rubber bands.*

Using three volunteers, have each one drop a nail in the water. Point out that the properties of the nail cause it to sink every time, no matter who drops it. The nails represent our own efforts to battle Satan.

Then place the block of wood in the water, demonstrating that its properties cause it to float. Point out that Jesus Christ "knew no sin," and therefore can do what we could never do. Then remove the bands from the block of wood, place a nail between the halves, and re-band and put the block back in the water. This gives a visual demonstration of the believer's need to battle Satan in Christ's power rather than their own.

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Part 3 Apply Your Findings

During a medical mission in Mombasa, Kenya, thousands of people came from all over the country, bringing the sick and dying. They came for medical help and to hear the missionary tell them about God's love. Half an hour before the services were to begin, the missionaries played a worship tape called "All Hail King Jesus" over the loudspeakers set up outside. Even though most of the people didn't understand the words, they knew God was present in that music.

One song on the tape seemed to be especially used of God: "We Are Standing on Holy Ground." One of the men who wrote about the evangelistic crusades that took place there said that every night as that song was played, everyone could literally hear the demons cry out as praise was lifted up to God. We can't comprehend the demonic power that is present on the mission field. However, the worship of God's people sent Satan's minions running.

Action Point: Take your cue from Jehoshaphat: When attacked, worship. This week when you are struggling with temptation and sin, get on your knees. Plug in a worship tape. Sing. Pray. Read the Psalms. Memorize 1 John 4:4: "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

—Study by Coy Wylie, with JoHannah Reardon

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Participant's Guide

Win with Worship

Worship aids us in spiritual warfare.



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In the Old Testament, the people of God learned that worship and warfare went hand in hand. Over and over we read of situations in which the people failed to worship God with their whole hearts. As a result their enemies defeated them. However, when they repented and truly worshiped God, he always gave them victory. They could not win a war without sincere worship.

Someone said, "Satan is allergic to praise, so that wherever there is massive, triumphant praise, he is paralyzed, bound, and banished."

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: The Old Testament provides an example of worship and warfare.

Teaching Point Two: The New Testament provides a principle of worship and warfare.

Teaching Point Three: Worship and warfare also have a contemporary application.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Action Point: Take your cue from Jehoshaphat: When attacked, worship. This week when you are struggling with temptation and sin, get on your knees. Plug in a worship tape. Sing. Pray. Read the Psalms. Memorize 1 John 4:4: "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

—Study by Coy Wylie, with JoHannah Reardon

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