

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

Lesson 12. Spiritual Warfare

And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. - Matthew 10:1

In Jesus' day, every calamity, every illness, every disease and every curse was associated with unclean spirits. There was no surprise to the disciples that they were given authority over demons and then told to heal the sick and cure diseases. They understood that those things were related.

The spiritual is the unseen realm. It includes the heavenly places where Christ is with God and angels, but is also inhabited by rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces of evil. Through these the devil subjects people to lifelong slavery by the fear of death, as it says in Hebrews 2:14-15. But this same Scripture says that Jesus Christ's death destroyed the devil in the prophetic tense.

Instruction

We wrestle against these spiritual powers and forces by understanding authority and our rights as the ones that bear God's image.

The Characters

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. - Revelation 12:9

The Bible is clear that there is conflict between the good nature of God and all the evil that opposes Him. The main character on the side of evil is the great dragon, that ancient serpent who is also called the devil, Satan, Lucifer, deceiver, thief, accuser, and other names. Just as God is a person with a nature and will, so the devil is a person with an evil nature and he exercises his will to steal, kill and destroy.

There are various kinds of angels that were created by God and choose to serve Him for good. Hebrews 1:14 says that angels are ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation. They are God's workers to help fulfill His purposes for the sake of mankind. There are also fallen angels that have chosen to rebel against God and were thrown down to the earth along with the devil. The fallen angels have rejected their responsibility and use their wills to work against God's purposes and against the salvation of mankind.

The Gospels describe how Jesus interacted with demons, evil spirits, and unclean spirits. The key characteristics of these enemies of God are that they demonstrate personhood and exercise their will. They are spirit beings, and therefore are unseen. They oppose the will of God and abuse authority by controlling people, causing disease and sickness, and overriding their free will.

There are Biblical references to antichrist. In some contexts the term is used as a name for opposition to God, often attributed to the devil. In other contexts the term is used for any

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

being that opposes God, such as fallen angels, demons, and evil spirits. It can also be used to describe false teachers, which certainly could be human beings.

Spiritual warfare can also be engaged against principalities and powers. These terms are more indicative of authority or laws rather than beings or persons. Laws do not have a will, nor do they interact on a personal level. They define interaction irrespective of persons. For instance, the law of gravity will not “pick on” one person while ignoring another. Similarly, principalities and powers are not subjective but objective.

Finally, strongholds are a term we use to describe areas of power or authority on a personal level. In other words, a stronghold can be a place of severe vulnerability to one person while having little or no effect on another. Strongholds are torn down by taking thoughts captive and making them obedient to Christ.

The Workings

And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. - Matthew 17:18

The Gospels describe many instances where physical and emotional healing came about by exorcism. There is a clear connection between the disease or condition and the unclean spirit. Jesus rebuked a demon or commanded an unclean spirit to leave and the person experienced freedom from its effects. The most literal translation of this condition is that the person was “demonized.”

We use various terms in spiritual warfare, depending on the audience. The term “demon possessed” has the connotation that the unclean spirit operates from inside the person. The term “demonic oppression” can mean the same, but has the connotation of demonization focused in one area of a person’s life.

The term “demonic influence” can mean the same as possession, but has the connotation of the unclean spirit working from outside of the person. Similarly, the term “obsession” can describe the work of a demon, but has the connotation of being from an urge or compulsion rather than a spirit being. The term “stronghold” can mean the same as obsession, but has the connotation of coming from a thought pattern or frame of reference.

All of these terms are variations of demonization and describe some level of temptation, persuasion or control by evil.

Authority

And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." - Mark 9:25

Jesus often dealt directly with an evil spirit as a being. We can engage in spiritual warfare in a similar way. In the example above, a father brought his son to Jesus for deliverance. Jesus called out the spirit by name and then commanded it to come out of the boy and never enter him again.

We recommend a similar statement for taking authority over demons or spirits:

Mute and deaf spirit, you are not welcome here. I command you to leave and never return, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

There is benefit in identifying the spirit by name. Names in the Bible were personal descriptions, often referring to one or more main characteristics. In the same way, we can assign a name to a spirit or demon to identify it.

Jesus named the mute and deaf spirit based on its primary attributes. A lying spirit is identified in I Kings 22:19-23. A spirit of *porneo* is one that attacks a person with thoughts of fornication or lust. A spirit of fear is one that uses panic attacks, anxiety or timidity to control a person. A spirit of rejection can be the name of a demon that oppresses a person by the risk of loneliness or lack of acceptance. Allow the Holy Spirit to give you discernment into the name of the evil spirit.

We use the term “you are not welcome here” to take away legal ground from the enemy. Before declaring that aloud, I may ask the person if it is true that the oppressing spirit is not welcome. In most cases they agree vehemently. However, if that spirit is welcome for any reason, then it will use that invitation to remain.

Why would someone welcome an unclean spirit? It only happens when they have been deceived. For instance, a spirit of lust may enter a person when they are feeling lonely and unloved. The spirit of lust convinces them that he can help overcome that loneliness. When the person accepts that spirit’s help, it seems to alleviate the problem for a moment. Then the need becomes even more apparent, and the evil spirit offers to help again. In this manner, the demon gains access by permission and operates in authority over the person’s free will.

Once the person sees that they have been duped, they are quick to remove all welcome signs and revoke the invitation made under duress. If there is other legal ground, such as unforgiven sin or generational curse, then that can be dealt with as well.

Our ultimate authority comes through the fact that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ. He has come to destroy the works of the devil. As long as we are in agreement with Him, and working under His command, we also have all the authority we need to carry out our orders. That is why we invoke the name of Jesus Christ when we command a demon to leave. This authority is available to anyone that has submitted to His rule.

James 4:7 says “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” This is a promise that God keeps, and it works every time. Submit and resist and he will flee.

Freedom

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first." - Luke 11:24-26

Jesus described the invisible when He said that the unclean spirit goes out to a waterless place. However, these spirits are like parasites needing a host. It may try to return to the person that was set free.

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

We must learn to hold the territory. Remember to submit to God and resist the devil. Know your authority and stand on it. When the demon knows that you know your authority it will lose heart and leave you alone.

Be prepared to resist the devil when you are tempted. It can happen when you are vulnerable, and the deceiver tries to convince you to let it back in again. Put on your guard and at the first sign of temptation, restate the command that this spirit is not welcome and must leave in the name of Jesus.

Jesus said that when He sets a person free, that person is free indeed. A demon may do a “drive by” attempt if it happens to be in the area. Often it comes with a sense of nostalgia where the evil spirit asks if you remember “the good old times.” As you walk in the Spirit these drive by temptations are weaker and weaker. Soon your freedom is unshakable.

Spiritual warfare is neither glamorous nor daunting. It is a condition of the conflict between good and evil, God and the devil. The outcome is already accomplished, and victory is as good as won. Be bold in the Lord, and overcome the enemy by the power of the blood and the word of your testimony.

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

Lesson 12: Spiritual Warfare Exercise

Take a few minutes to complete a spiritual warfare inventory and assessment. This will not lead to a diagnosis of demonic influence, but provides a framework through which you can pray and investigate. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is no exposure and 5 is high involvement, what has been your exposure or involvement in each of the following:

Inability to hear God or know truth	1	2	3	4	5
Persistent dark or unwanted thoughts	1	2	3	4	5
Persistent unwanted emotions	1	2	3	4	5
Uncontrolled behavior	1	2	3	4	5
Intentional oaths or vows	1	2	3	4	5
Experimentation with the occult	1	2	3	4	5
Contracts or agreements with evil	1	2	3	4	5
I suffered abuse	1	2	3	4	5
Evidence of a generational curse	1	2	3	4	5
Membership in secret society or group	1	2	3	4	5
Exposure to hexes or spells	1	2	3	4	5
Self-harm thoughts or actions	1	2	3	4	5
Regular panic attacks or anxiety	1	2	3	4	5
Fear of rejection	1	2	3	4	5
Uncontrollable outburst of anger	1	2	3	4	5
Blackouts or mental lapses	1	2	3	4	5
Undiagnosed disease or infirmity	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Take a moment, either alone or with a witness, to pray about the results of this exam. Identify any demonic influence by name, step into your authority as a believer and follower of Christ, and ask Jesus to command the spirit to leave you alone. Listen for confirmation, and take any remedial steps indicated by Jesus.

Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

Sharing: Spiritual Warfare

Discuss these points and questions in your small group.

- What personal evidence can you share that convinces you God is a person and not just a force or law?
- What has been your understanding of demons, demonization, demonic possession, and demonic oppression?
- How did Jesus interact with the spiritual beings in His ministry?
- Explain the basis of your authority when it comes to spiritual warfare.
- How will you encourage others to hold the territory against the enemy?
- What spiritual disciplines help you discover and destroy legal ground that could otherwise be used against you?

Caring: Spiritual Warfare

Get into groups of four or five and take some time to minister to one another. Ask the Lord to reveal the breach that led to the enemy's claim of legal ground, and ask for the prayer strategy to reclaim that territory. This may include confession, forgiveness, and an act of repentance such as revoking a vow or proclaiming a freedom in the name of Jesus.

Use this format for a cleansing prayer:

- a) Thank the Lord for His forgiveness and cleansing work.
- b) Specifically confirm the spiritual transactions that have been taken.
- c) Proclaim authority in these areas.
- d) Confirm the cleansing in the spiritual realm by the blood of Jesus.
- e) Pray for the blood to cover any remaining legal ground issues and strongholds.
- f) Invite God to assign warring angels to protect everyone that participated.
- g) Ask for a hedge of protection in the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms.
- h) Thank the Lord for His protection and provision.