

Holy Spirit in Missions

What do we need to share the gospel?

Prayer

Unless there is effective prayer, the truth that is presented will be generally ineffective in the hearts of those listening (James 5:16).

The Word of God

The seed we sow is the Word of God (Luke 8:11) and God has promised to watch over His Word to fulfill it (Jeremiah 1:12). We need to know the reality of God's Word in our lives so that we can share it with others (Hebrews 4:12, Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:7-5; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:23).

Faith

We can have tremendous expectations, as we trust God to fulfill His Word. (Mark 11:22-23)

The Holy Spirit

It is the Holy Spirit who equips us with power and spiritual weapons to come against the Enemy who has people bound (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:11) Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Why?

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Diligence

A whole-hearted attitude is essential for us to fulfill the call that is upon our lives to reach the world with the good news of salvation and reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 4: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has a **two-fold ministry** toward the believer:

In the believer

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within the believer to help them to grow in the Lord.

The Holy Spirit's role IN the believer:

- Opens access to the Father (*Eph 2:18*)
- Testifies that we are God's children (*Rom 8:16*)
- Baptizes us into the Body of Christ (*1 Cor 12:13*)
- Makes us one with the Lord in spirit (*1 Cor 6:17*)
- Teaches and guides us (*John 14:26; Rom 8:14*)
- Gives us wisdom and revelation (*1 Cor 2:9-10; Eph 1:17*)
- Enables us to live a holy life (*Gal 5:16-25; Rom 8:1-2*)
- Helps us in prayer (*Rom 8:26; Eph 6:18; Jude 20*)
- Strengthens and imparts resurrection life (*Rom 8:11*)
- Transforms us into the likeness of Christ (*2 Cor 3:17-18*)

The Holy Spirit is the One who takes the salvation of God that came through Jesus and makes it real in your life. (2 Thess 2:13)

Through the believer

The Holy Spirit also empowers the believer to serve God and minister to others.

The Holy Spirit's role THROUGH the believer:

- Gives power to witness (*Acts 1:8*)
- Testifies that Jesus is alive (*Acts 5:30-32; 4:31-33*)
- Anoints with spiritual gifts (*1 Cor 12:4-10*)
- Releases true worship (*Eph 5:18-19; John 4:24*)
- Glorifies Jesus (*John 16:13-15; 15:26*)

The Holy Spirit is the One who works in power through your life to communicate the Gospel to those around you. (1 Cor 2:4-5; 1 Thess 1:5)

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is like a wall outlet in your house. The power is always there; all you have to do is plug into it. With the power of the Holy Spirit, your "plug" is faith. When you ASK, believe God will answer your prayer, and you will plug into His power. *Read Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8.* Not only does the Holy Spirit indwell the believer, but he also desires to fill them with power to be an effective witness. The Bible calls this infilling being -baptized in the Holy Spirit. (*Matt 3:11; Acts 1:5*). *Read Acts 19:1-7* Just as water baptism means to be immersed in water, so baptism in the Holy Spirit means to be immersed in the power of God's Spirit. This is God's promise for every believer.

Read Luke 11:9-13

Being filled with the Holy Spirit manifests itself in a number of ways:

- A supernatural language (*Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:1-6*)
- Prophecy (*1 Cor 14:5*) ... for he who prophesies is greater...
- Signs and wonders (*Heb 2:4; 1 Thess 1:5-6*)

- Other gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:8-10)
- Empowered prayer (Eph 6:18; Jude 20) ... prayer and supplication in the Spirit....
- Supernatural joy (Acts 13:52; 1 Thess 1:6)
- Anointed worship (John 4:23-24; Phil 3:3)

Although the Scripture seems to indicate that there is just a one-time baptism in the Holy Spirit, being "filled with the Spirit." is not only a continuing experience (Acts 4:31; 6:3-5; 11:24; 13:9), but also a continuing command from God.

Read Eph 5:18

To be "filled with the Spirit" means to be anointed with the same anointing that Jesus had (*note in Acts 10:38; John 14:12*). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we become the hand of Jesus touching people's lives today.

Read Luke 4:18-19

God desires every believer to experience the power of the Holy Spirit both in them (for personal growth) and through them (in empowered ministry to others).

The Person of the Holy Spirit

" . . no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God". 2 Pet 1:20-21

The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who gave us the Bible.

The work of each of the three persons is of critical importance to believers. Jesus died to save us (John 3:16), the Father draws us to Himself and loves us (John 6:44; II Cor. 13:14), and the Holy Spirit interacts with us (I Pet. 1:2, Eph. 4:30)

The Holy Spirit is a person, just as Jesus and the Father are (Luke 12:10; Acts 13:2, 15:28, 16:6,7). His most impacting work in believer's lives is His permanent sealing of our salvation when He comes to live in our hearts (Rom. 8:11):

" . . having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph 1:13)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30)

The Holy Spirit's work is not limited solely to the believer; He is also very much at work in the world, and His ministry is fulfilled in five ways:

In Testimony In Conviction In Restraint In Power In Visitation

The Holy Spirit's continual aim in everything He does is to bring glory to Jesus

Spiritual Warfare

Introduction

How to prepare for spiritual battles, and what are our weapons? Who has gone through Spiritual Warfare / Battles in their Christian Walk?

Prepare for Spiritual Battles

We all are going to face Spiritual Battles, as God's people are filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit and are soaring as eagles in a victorious and fruitful Christian life, we must always beware of the enemy's attempts to "clip our wings," so to speak, and destroy our effectiveness. In Eph 6:11, God warns us, *"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."* The Lord tells us, *"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. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand"* (Eph 6:12-13). He then describes the armor in which we must be dressed at all times. As eagles, God wants us to soar. But He also wants us to "stand" firm and be prepared.

Spiritual Awareness and Understanding

In order to defeat our enemy rather than be defeated by him, it is very important that we

- Understand who he is,
- Where he gets his power,
- The means he uses to attack us, and
- The deceitfulness of his methods.

In John 10:10 says it all in plain language: *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."* This is what Jesus applies to Satan. In contrast, Jesus claimed of Himself, *"I have come that they may have life, and they may have it more abundantly."* Satan's strategy is to use whoever, whatever, wherever, whenever and however to destroy us. He attacks what God has already given us. If you knew someone was planning to break into your home, you would prepare and be on guard to take action against this. But what if you knew someone was intent on destroying your marriage, hurting your children, and causing havoc in your life? What would you do? For certain you would not stand by and do nothing. When it comes to the spiritual realm and attacks, often that's exactly what we do – nothing. As a result, the enemy forces have a heyday messing with our lives, and most of the time we are clueless and stumble around not knowing what is happening. *Unless we are on guard and walk in trust and obedience, the enemy can work like that weasel, weaken or destroy our witness and rob our joy and victory.*

What can we do?

Meditate on what the Lord tells us in (Eph 6:12-13), *"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. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand"* Our Prayer is that the Lord open the eyes of our heart that we may see the truth of who our enemy is so that we can avoid the snares and methods of our enemy.

Understanding the Kingdom of Darkness

Satan's kingdom is a structured organization of supernatural evil. Originally it was part Christ's perfect creation and under His authority. Scripture plainly reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ created those in Satan's kingdom. As the creator He holds the kingdom of darkness answerable to Him. Just look at,

Col 1: 15-17 - He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Satan is not a creator. In Colossians the text that we read makes this very clear. Having been created by the Lord Jesus Christ, the thrones and powers (dominions), where Satan and his demons do their work, remain under full authority of Jesus Christ. As we know, Jesus has won the final victory over Satan and all the fallen angels. They cannot even consist (verse 17) and hold together apart from the sustaining power of the Creator. For sovereign purposes known only to God, the kingdom of darkness is allowed to rebel and function until God's perfect time comes to judge Satan and his buddies. At that moment, God will cast the fallen spirit beings into the lake of fire prepared for them.

- Satan's kingdom has a counterfeit, parallel plan for most things that God has established in His plan
- Although Satan has only a temporary influence on us, his plan is counterfeit and we need to be aware of it.
- We must not forget that Satan is exceedingly clever and devious. He is the master deceiver.

Always be aware – *When you look at Joshua Chapter 9*, see what Jericho could not do with walls, or Ai with weapons, but what the Gibeonites could accomplish with deceit. Satan tries one device after another to defeat God's people; we must constantly be on guard. It is usually after a great victory that Satan begins his subtle attacks. It was after the victory at Jericho that Israel was defeated by Ai, and it was after Israel's defeat of Ai that Joshua was deceived by the Gibeonites. We must beware of "judging after the flesh" (*John 8:15*) and depending upon our own wisdom (*Prov 3:5-6*). This is what Joshua and his leaders did before Gibeon. They judged by appearance and did not seek Godly wisdom and counsel.

Joshua 9:14 "Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD". In this verse we can see what can hinder our walk. This is one of the few cases in the Bible where failure to pray is pointed out.

Not inquiring of God's will leads us to wrong decisions which have lasting effects in our lives and in the lives of others. Similarly, many Christians have found themselves in difficult or disastrous circumstances because they rushed to a decision without properly consulting the Lord, His Scriptures, and His people for guidance.

- Satan rules by deception, fear, and ignorance. Satan has no reality to the present.
- Everything about him is counterfeit, deceptive, and misleading. Deception and fear can only succeed when we are ignorant of the truth.
- Satan can and does hold his bondage on a believer and his family when they function within the sphere of Satan's deceptive tactics. He uses our ignorance concerning the truth to his advantage to achieve his purposes.
- So always get into God's word, and in prayer ask for God's wisdom and protection from the enemy.

Spiritual Warfare: What is it?

Spiritual warfare exists in the unseen, supernatural dimension, where God is all-powerful and Satan is in revolt. As any Christian soon discovers, although spiritual warfare is unseen, it's absolutely real.

The Bible speaks of spiritual warfare in many places, but most directly in *Eph 6:12*, where Paul speaks of putting on the full armor of God:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Show Do We Go Into Spiritual Battles as Christians?

Spiritual warfare is an image that many of us would rather reject. However, since the Bible uses terms of warfare, it's best that we accept God's imagery, so that we're properly prepared for real battle. As Christians, we're going through more than a mere "struggle" on earth – and it seems that war imagery captures this reality better than anything else. Since it's warfare, God instructs Christians to use a very specific set of armor and weapons in

Ephesians 6:14-18:

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit..."

God's list of weaponry is rather unique – these are “weapons of peace.”

Throughout the Bible, you will find examples of God's weaponry in action. For instance, King Jehoshaphat sent out praise singers in front of his soldiers to cause disarray among the enemy; Joshua used singing and trumpets to bring down the great city of Jericho; and what better example of using faith in battle than David fighting Goliath with a slingshot. Of course, the lesson in all these examples (as in all spiritual warfare today) is that it's only God who allows us to claim victory over evil!

Be Strong in the Lord

Spiritual warfare is a reality of the Christian life. But remember, we know the ending – our side wins. Since the Devil has already lost, he has nothing to lose in trying to take as many people with him in defeat. Therefore:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Eph 6:10-11)

Pray before, during and after the battle

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. Eph 6:18 NLT

When we reach the end of the list of God's armor, we also reach a moment of truth. First, will we put on the armor? Second, once we have put on the armor, what will we actually do?

Our tendency will be to rush off and begin pushing and shoving whatever. But note what Paul's “marching orders” turn out to be: Pray.

We struggle with what it means to pray “at all times and on every occasion.”

We live in a physical world, but we are also spiritual beings. The bridge between physical and spiritual happens in us, moment by moment.

God calls us to spiritual warfare. Though we may feel like the struggle is physical, it's primarily spiritual.

As difficult as we may feel life in this world to be, we haven't understood the nature of the real struggle until we see how our physical experiences fit into the infinitely larger universe of the spirit.

We try to make the spiritual a small and optional part of life when just the opposite is true.

Our physical lives are brief moments in the span of spiritual eternity that is part of our gift from God.

So, prayer isn't just work. Prayer is war.

Prayer isn't time out from the battle. Prayer is full-on engagement in the battle.

As long as I think of prayer as effort and work, it simply boils down to a matter of lifestyle and convenience.

But if I begin to think of prayer as warfare, I am faced with the issues of life and death. Even a casual look through Scripture leads one to the conclusion that prayer is serious business.

Spiritual Weapons of Warfare

In Christ, we can overcome spiritual warfare! By overcoming Satan in the battlefield of our mind, God provides us with spiritual armor, divine protection, and weapons to fight with.

2 Cor 10:4-5 says, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. . ." Just as the Bible tells us repeatedly to be strong, it promises us that when we do overcome the enemy, there is great reward.

1 John 5:4-5 says, "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

We are engaged in a spiritual battle and must realize that we are subject to Satan's lies and we need spiritual weapons of warfare. Because of this warfare, and because God always meets our needs, we have spiritual weapons that God has given to us so that we may stand against the devil and his legion without being knocked down or tempted beyond our ability to resist.

God loves us so much that He wants us to succeed in this ongoing battle with Satan. He has given us armor of protection, which is Christ's righteousness and we must mentally put it on, along with His belt of truth, which enables us to defeat Satan's lies. God's righteousness is the body of armor that protects our hearts and ensures God's approval. Satan wants us to think that telling others the "Good News" is a worthless and hopeless task too big and difficult for us to handle. But the shoes God gives are the motivation to continue to proclaim the true peace that is available in God's gospel. God's shield of faith protects us from Satan's fiery arrows and temptations. God gives us an eternal perspective so that we can know that ultimate victory is for believers through Christ. Satan wants us to doubt God, Jesus, and our salvation. God's helmet of salvation protects our minds from doubting God's saving work in us. The sword is our only weapon of offense. There are times when we need to take the offensive when we are tempted, angry, afraid, or praying for others. We can trust in the sword, which is the truth of God's Holy Word, and reading and burning it into our hearts as part of every day's activities will make us victors instead of victims. Each day, we must put on the full armor of God that he has provided

What should I wear in the battle?

Dressing for spiritual warfare may sound silly, but in reality it is what Christians need to do if they are going to survive the temptations and bumps in the road. It is important because all of us are engaged in a spiritual battle.

On the one hand, there is Satan launching wave after wave of attack in various forms - from the obvious ones like specific temptations to attacks that we may not recognize. On

the other hand, is God who has clothed us for this battle?
Is there a scriptural basis for spiritual warfare and defeating it?

2 Cor 10:3-5 states, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

When dressing for spiritual warfare, there are six basic items listed in Ephesians 6.

Strong Belt of Truth

The truth that God provides will defeat Satan's lies every time. What Satan may be telling or selling might sound good, but God's truth will open our eyes.

Breastplate of God's Approval (righteousness)

One of Satan's favorite attacks is on our hearts, which in turn, attacks everything else. God's approval of us is reflected in the fact that He sent His Son to die for us shows us His love.

Shoes of God (the gospel of peace)

We must be ready to spread the good news and do our part in helping fulfill the Great Commission of telling the entire world. Satan really doesn't want this to happen, so he wants us to think the task is too great or that we can't make a difference.

Shield of Faith

Our growing faith in God shields us against attacks in the form of setbacks, insults, and temptation. We must realize that the ultimate victory is ours with God.

Helmet of Salvation

This protects our minds from doubting God's saving work for us.

Sword of the Spirit

This is a weapon of offense against Satan. When tempted, we must rely on the fact that God is with us, and He wants us to go on the offense fighting back.

A Briefing for War

"And a war rose in heaven..." Rev.12: 7 (KJV).

This great spiritual conflict has its roots in pre-Adamic history, and has escalated down through human history. But this spiritual war is not simply the story of the attacks of Satan against mankind. For war to be war, both sides must fight. An expert on war wrote: "It takes two sides to fight a war...Even when an aggressor sends his army across the border of another country, that aggression will not lead to war unless the victim fights back" (The Conduct of War). Satan took the initial initiative of rebellion against God and in the seduction of mankind, but from that point, God has taken the initiative.

We, as the Church, must realize that the war is on, that we are not called to lie down in the dust for the Evil One to tread over (*Isa.51: 22-23; 52:1-2*), but that we now take the battle to the Enemy (*Eph 6:12-13; 2 Tim 2:3-4*).

The Cross-was an act of war against the Dominion of Darkness and its end result will be the returning of Satan's authority structure back to God (*Eph 1:9-10; 1 Cor 15:24-29; Rev 11:15-18*).

Victory at the Cross

As the means of salvation, the Cross-dealt a death blow to Satan's rebellion. At the Cross-, Satan was defeated in five realms:

- In the realm of sin (*1 John 3:8; 2 Cor.5: 21*).
- In the realm of sickness (*Isa.53: 4-5; Ps.103: 1-3*).
- In the realm of death (*Heb.2: 14; Rom.5: 12-21; 6:2-14; I Cor.15: 51-57*).
- In the ruler ship of this world (*John 12:31-33; Rev.11: 15*).
- In his rebellion against God (*Phil.2: 8-11; Eph.1: 10; Col.1: 20; Rev.1: 18*).

God is at war because, by His nature, He can do no less. The war we fight is God's war, not ours. We are called to join God in His warfare.

A Declaration of War

A war is not just fought by two armies - it's two nations at war. In the same way, for us to understand the nature of the war we are fighting, we must first understand the nature of the two kingdoms in conflict.

The Two Sides

- God v Satan (*Acts 26:17-18*).
- Light v Darkness (*Col 1:12-13*).
- Spirit of God v Demonic powers (*Matt.12: 25-28*).
- God's will v Satan's rebellion (*Matt.16: 18-19*).

God is Sovereign

This means that the effect of His will is total upon His creation (*see Jer.32: 17; Dan.2: 20-22; 4:34-35; Isa.40: 10; Ps.2: 4-12*). But just because God is sovereign, that does not mean God can and will do everything. The Bible reveals there are some things that God cannot do –

- He cannot lie (*Num.23: 19*),
- He cannot change (*Mal.3: 6; Heb.13:8*), and
- He cannot fail (*Job 42:2*).

But in His sovereignty, there are also things that God *will* and *won't* do. He will never, for example, deny His word or contradict His own nature (*2 Tim.2: 11-13*).

Every war has limitations of action - the Rules of Engagement. In His war, God has limited His action, and these limitations define our rules of engagement.

Delegated Sovereignty

When He created mankind; God by His own choice limited His sovereignty. He gave people a free will - a portion of God's own personal sovereignty that is given to each one of us. This delegated sovereignty to man is on two levels:

- Individual sovereignty (2Cor.5: 10).
- Community sovereignty (Rom.13: 1).

Why Do We Pray?

If God is sovereign, why do we pray? Prayer is the joining of two wills - our will and God's. It is the joining of two sovereignties - our limited sovereignty and God's overall sovereignty. When we pray, we:

- Participate in God's purposes (2 Tim.1: 9-10).
- Take responsibility for our community's rebellion (Daniel 9:4).
- Extend the limitations of God's action (Is. 59:15-16; 63:3-6).

Although we are not of the world, we are in it, and our position in the world is of strategic importance for God's warfare. We represent our community before God. Although God will not violate the sovereignty He has delegated, except under extreme conditions, we, as part of the community, can by our sovereign decision, open the door for Him to move.

The Church at War

"...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" Matt.16: 18-19.

Spiritual warfare can be simply defined as "the advancing of the kingdom of God into enemy-held territory".

The Church is the vanguard of this warfare. In our warfare, however, we have tended to violate some very fundamental principles of war. The Church, in general, has waged:

- Defensive rather than offensive warfare.
- Reactive rather than proactive warfare.
- Carnal rather than spiritual warfare.
- Competitive rather than united warfare.
- Civil rather than kingdom warfare.

- Splintered rather than focused warfare.
- Disjointed rather than integrated warfare.

Our Military Mandate

The Church is the cutting edge of God's grand strategy (*Eph.1: 22-23; 3:10*). As the vehicle of salvation, the Church has a military mandate:

- To storm the gates of hell (*Matt.16: 18*).
- To frustrate the Enemy's plans - "binding" (*Matt.16: 19*).
- To rescue the captives - "loosing" (*Matt.16: 19*).
- To proclaim the news of God's Kingdom (*Matt.28: 18-20*).
- To present God on Earth (*2 Cor.5: 18-20; 1 Peter 4:11; Matt.12: 28*).

Opposing Strategies

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" 2 Cor.4: 4.

Here we see Satan's grand strategy to control mankind. But notice that God's strategy is different. It doesn't even attempt to tackle the Enemy's strategy head on. Instead of trying to convince people's minds, God aims for a different place.

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4: 6)

God's solution to the unbeliever's blinded mind involves three simple steps:

- Bypass the mind
- Reach the heart (notice that the Heart is the center)
- Renew the mind

The Ultimate Weapon

What is God's Grand Strategy for dealing with the powers of darkness? *We are!*

Not only do our lives become a weapon in God's hands against the Enemy, but also the very conflict itself produces a work in us, which propels us toward the fulfillment of God's ultimate purpose for our lives.

Advancing the Kingdom

"...I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" Acts 26:17-18. Spiritual warfare is about retaking Enemy-controlled territory for God. Victories are measured by lives reclaimed. Therefore evangelism is the *front-line* of spiritual warfare. Every army has its "center of gravity", which is a major target of enemy attack. The Church's center of gravity is evangelism. Each time a new life is born into the Kingdom of God, a major victory has been accomplished in spiritual warfare. All other spiritual warfare is incidental to this. In Col 1:13.

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" Col 1:13.

So Our Mandate Is...

"I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world...As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" John 17:14-18

We have been given a commission to reach the world for God (Matt. 28:18-20)

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (NKJV)

So are you briefed? A better question - Are you prepared?

Prayer and Devotions

Why do we Pray?

If God is sovereign, why do we pray? Prayer is the joining of two wills - our will and God's. It is the joining of two sovereignties - our limited sovereignty and God's overall sovereignty. When we pray, we:

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Although we are not of the world, we are in it, and our position in the world is of strategic importance for God's warfare. We represent our community before God. Although God will not violate the sovereignty He has delegated, except under extreme conditions, we, as part of the community, can by our sovereign decision, open the door for Him to move.

Different kinds of Prayers

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions *with all kinds of prayers and requests*. With this in mind, be alert and *always keep on praying* for all the saints" Eph 6:18. Notice that Paul says "with *all kinds of prayers and requests*". Prayer is expressed in several different ways, as led by the Spirit, depending on the occasion.

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone..." 1 Tim 2:1.

Paul urges us, first of all, *to pray*. Prayer should be our instinctive reaction to any situation, within the will of God. But this verse reveals four types of prayer that we can use, and each is very different.

Requests

The simplest and most common expression of prayer. God has invited us to ask Him for anything in prayer (*Matt 7:7*). But the Greek word here translated "request" actually has two meanings: 1) Supplications - "to ask, to beseech", 2) Deprecations - "to speak disapproval of"

Prayers

In the original Greek, mean, "the pouring out". This pouring out of our hearts is a special, deeper expression of prayer. It is not simply asking; it is the depths of our heart being expressed to God, often with tears, for what is dearest to our heart. For a Biblical example of this kind of prayer, *read 1 Sam 1:9-15*.

Intercession

This is another unique expression of prayer, as translated from the original Hebrew and Greek, means:

- *"A meeting between"* (1 Tim.2: 1)
"To come or fall upon; to meet" (Jer.7: 16; 27:18)
"To meet with; to come between" (Rom.8: 27,34; 11:2; Heb.7: 25)
- *"To meet with on behalf of another"* (Rom.8: 26)

The Bible contains many examples of intercession (*Gen.18: 20-33; Dan.9: 2-19; Neh.1: 2-11*). But the greatest intercessory model is Jesus Himself. His death on the Cross-was the greatest act of intercession - He was not dying for His own sin and guilt, but for ours. From this act of intercession we can see what the ministry of this intercession is really all about - taking the place of another in prayer before God. The ministry of Jesus in heaven right now is to intercede for us (*Rom.8: 34; Heb.7: 25*). He is able to do this because He knows how we feel (*Heb.2: 14; 4:14-15*). But His intercessory ministry is also expressed through His Body, the Church (*Rev.1: 6*). The Holy Spirit will sometimes cause a believer to be "yoked" with Christ's heart in prayer, and this is often described as "the burden of the Lord" (*Matt.11: 29-30; Rom. 8: 26*). The yoke is tailored made for our lives and needs, and the Spirit shares the burden.

Intercession is not the pouring out of our heart's desires to the Lord; it is the joining of our hearts with God's heart on behalf of others.

Thanksgiving

To offer our thanksgiving for the blessings and answers to prayer (*Phil 4:6*)

Five Ways God Answers Prayer

Whatever the answer, your best interest is always in mind. Here are five of his most frequent answers:

"No, I love you too much."

The Lord of the universe isn't under obligation to say "yes" to every prayer. That's a good thing, considering some of the things we request! But sometimes God says "no" to our most heartfelt requests. Have you discovered this to be true in your own life? I certainly have. I've been reminded of this repeatedly since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America. Tens of thousands of lives were spared. But God said "no" to the prayers of thousands of others. Does that mean we shouldn't bother to pray? Just the opposite, over the years, traveling throughout the world, I've discovered four other ways God frequently answers prayer. Believe me, he loves to say "yes!"

"Yes, but you'll have to wait."

Immediate answers to prayer: You want them. I want them. But God simply does not always work that way. And to get his best, we must be patient. In some cases, we must wait until the stroke of midnight for his answer to come.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (*Matt. 7:7*).

"Yes, but not what you expected."

Have you ever asked God to use you? If so, expect the unexpected!

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (*Prov. 3:5-6*).

"Yes, and here's more!"

Ever wonder if the Lord really knows what you want and need?

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (*Jer. 29:11*).

"Yes, I thought you'd never ask."

Many people think prayer is complicated. Actually, the simplest prayer can bring you the miracle you need, when you need it.

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (*Jas. 5:16*)

Prayer Time

Make prayer an important time and not just something you tack on to the end of your **Personal Time** or **Family Time** or **Group Time** each day. You need to pray for **specifics** and not in **generalities**. You need to pray for the most important issue of life, which is for the salvation of souls and not just for physical and temporal things.

During Family Time / Group Time give each member of the family an opportunity to share a prayer item. As they do, have another member of the family take that request. When the children are small have each one pick a missionary prayer card from a box and pray for that family. As the Lord answers prayer be sure to rejoice about it and thank the Lord.

Each day when you pray:

- Confess your sins to God.
- Tell Him what you think of His creation and how much you love Him.
- Thank Him for specific things He has done in your life recently.
- Ask Him for things that he would want you to be asking for. Pray for your family, friends and missionaries. So spend the last few minutes talking to God in prayer.

What are Devotions or Quality Quiet Times?

We should first note that there are different kinds of devotions depending on who is participating.

- Personal Devotions (God and you)
- Family Devotions (God and your family; family altar)
- Group Devotions (God and your small group)

But what does one do during quiet times? Generally we think of it as a time of prayer and Bible reading, maybe some singing. Unfortunately, many treat this time simply as reading God's Word and saying a quick prayer to God. If we are only defining the components, this might do, but we need to go deeper for **it is in our superficial understandings that many problems preventing quality times with God find their roots**. Let's focus on prayer.

Scripture Reference –

- *Eph 6:18* – Pray always...with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,
- *1 Thess 5:17* - Pray without ceasing,
- *Matt 6: 7-13* - When you are praying...do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do ...
- *Rom 12:12* – rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer

Developing a habit of daily devotions

(Prayer, study of God's Word, and biblical self-evaluation)

- Follow the example of many people in Scripture who had a heart for God (*Ps 5:3,63:6, 119:62, 147-148; Daniel 6:10; Acts 10:1-2, 17:11*)
- Be equipped for spiritual warfare (*Eph 6:10-18*) and to remain alert to your adversary, the devil (*I Pet 5:8*)
- Be obedient to the scriptural command of habitual and continual prayer (*Luke 18:1; Eph 6:18; Phil 4:6-7; Col 4:2; I Thess 5:17*)
- Be sustained and nourished continually by the Word of God (*Ps 1:2-3; Jer 15:16; Matt 4:4; I Thess 2:13*);
- Be directed in all of life by the Word of God (*Ps 19:7-11; Ps 119; II Tim 2:15, 3:16-17; Heb 4:12; II Pet 1:3-4*)
- Focus your life on the worship and praise of God (*Ps 16:11, 34:1, 48:1, 63:1-4, 92:1- 2, 95:6, 119:164; John 4:23-24; Heb 13:15*)
- Examine yourself daily in the light of God's Word (*Psalms 119:105; Hebrews 4:12*), confess your sins (*I John 1:9*), and practice self-discipline (*Gal 5:23-24; I Tim 4:7-8; II Pet 1:6*), thus avoiding the necessity of the discipline of the Lord (*I Cor 11:31-32; Heb 12:5-11*); and
- Keep yourself in a biblical position to help others (*Matt 7:1-5; Gal 6:1-5*).

Daily devotions will enhance your own spiritual development as you:

List your prayer requests and God's answers to those requests. This will help you to:

- Become persistent in prayer (*Dan 10:12-13; Luke 18:1-8*),
- Learn patience in waiting for God's answers (*Ps 40:1; Gal 6:9b*),
- Avoid anxiety (*Phil 4:6-7*), and
- Be thankful to God for His greatness (*Ps 92:1-5, 105:1-2, 106:1; Heb 13:15; James 1:17*).
- Develop a pattern of prayer that embraces:
 - Worshipping God (*Ps 95:6; John 4:23-24*),
 - Confessing your own sins (*Ps 139:23-24; Prov 28:13; I John 1:9*),
 - Thanking God for what He has accomplished (*Ps 119:164; Eph 5:20; I Thess 5:18*),
 - Interceding on behalf of others (*I Sam 12:23; Luke 10:2; Eph 6:18; I Tim 2:1-2*),
 - Acknowledging your dependence on the Lord to supply your needs (*Matt 6:9-13*).
 - Meditate on specific passages or principles of God's Word (*Psalms 1:2-3, 119:48*) as well as on God's majesty and His wonderful works (*Ps 145:5*).
- Develop a plan of scriptural study that includes application of biblical principles to everyday life (*Matt 7:24-27; II Tim 2:15; James 1:22-25*)