

Week 1

Why Can't We Get Along?

This week examines the spiritual realities behind church conflict. While Satan wants to harm your church, you can claim a greater spiritual power. Satan cannot destroy the Church of Jesus Christ, but he can render your congregation ineffective. For him, that is enough.

You don't have to succumb to Satan's schemes. In Christ, you have victory at your immediate disposal. From God's viewpoint the war has been fought and won. Once you view conflict from God's perspective, His purposes can be accomplished in your congregation.

You will study:

Day 1: The War Around Us

Day 2: The War Within Us

Day 3: The War Among Us

Day 4: Devil Talk

Day 5: Conflict From God's Perspective

At the end of this week's study you will be able to:

- Define spiritual warfare and describe the three ways Satan attacks us
- Identify places where the enemy tries to break through our defenses
- Identify sources of conflict in the Body of Christ
- Evaluate the ideal biblical fellowship
- Assess your personal understanding of spiritual warfare and the victory you have in Christ
- Understand how accusation, gossip, and slander accomplish the purposes of the great accuser, Satan
- Learn how to perceive conflict and spiritual warfare from God's perspective

Key Scripture Passage

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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 (Ephesians 6:11-12).

Day 1: The War Around Us

Nearly every American was touched by the harsh realities of World War II. Rationing affected almost every household. News from the front lines made daily headlines. Everyone knew someone who was serving in the armed forces and many people had lost loved ones. Despite these hardships, very few Americans questioned the war. They knew the danger was real. They believed that victory was worth the sacrifice, however dear and costly.

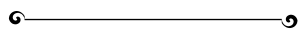
Today the average American is detached from the experience of war. Life seems to go on as normal no matter what happens on battlefields around the world. Politicians openly question the justification for fighting. Public opinion is divided, not united.

Given these dramatic changes in how the average American experiences war, it's not surprising that many Christians and churches disregard the reality of spiritual warfare. It seems removed from their daily experience. Rather than address what is facing their families and churches, they choose to continue blissfully from one Sunday to the next, leaving themselves unprepared for Satan's inevitable onslaught.

❖ **How would you define spiritual warfare?** _____

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8



Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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.

Ephesians 6:11-12

❖ **Examine both scriptures in the margin from 1 Peter and Ephesians then complete the following statements.**

1. Satan (the Devil) is called an _____.
2. He spends his time looking for someone to _____.
3. As he prowls around Satan uses strategies or _____.
4. Our primary battle as Christians is not against other people but against _____, _____, powers of this _____ world and against spiritual forces of _____.
5. Our greatest defense against our enemy, the Devil, is to be dressed in the full _____ of God.
6. Our constant state of readiness involves being self-_____ and _____.
7. Rather than going on an offensive attack, we are to _____ against Satan's schemes.

We're at War!

We're at war, whether we like it or not. Satan is preoccupied with our destruction. If we fail to grasp the reality of spiritual warfare, we will be unguarded when he attacks. Our enemy is a real enemy and he has a battle plan for the demise of the church and every believer. Spiritual warfare – the battle of Satan and his demons against God and His children – will be waged until Satan is finally banished. We must be alert to this reality and be prepared to stand firm against enemy attacks.

If you're prone to underestimate Satan's power, consider what he did in biblical times. Satan destroyed Job's health, family, and possessions (Job 1:1-22), incited David to rely on military power (1 Chronicles 21); tempted Jesus three times (Luke 4:1-13), influenced Peter to rebuke Jesus (Mark 8:31-33), entered Judas prior to his betrayal of Jesus (Luke 22:3-6), and prompted Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11). And what Satan didn't accomplish personally he achieved through his demons who afflicted their victims with physical, emotional, and behavioral disorders (Matthew 9:33; Matthew 17:14-18; Luke 8:27-33).

There is no reason to believe that Satan has changed his tactics. In Ephesians 6:11, the Greek New Testament describes Satan's ways by using the word *methodeais*, from which we get our English word "methods." Beginning with Eve in the Garden of Eden and continuing to this very moment, Satan uses the same methods to deceive people by leading them to question God's Word and appealing to their sinful desires. Satan is deceptive. However, he is not at all innovative so we can learn to detect his strategies.

Satan is your avowed enemy, waiting for just the right time and place to attack you. He has declared war on you and your church. However, God is sovereign over Satan and limits what he can do (Job 1:12; Luke 22:31-32). Satan cannot destroy you or Christ's Church, but he can render you and your congregation spiritually ineffective by inciting sinful attitudes and actions that destroy your testimony and your unity in Christ (John 17:20-23).

❖ Check any of the following "fingerprints of the enemy" that have been evident in churches you've attended.

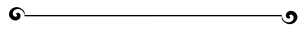
- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> joyless Christians | <input type="checkbox"/> disputes | <input type="checkbox"/> divisiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> anger | <input type="checkbox"/> jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> impurity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> selfishness | <input type="checkbox"/> idolatry | <input type="checkbox"/> greed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gossip | <input type="checkbox"/> accusation | <input type="checkbox"/> disorder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> controlling people | <input type="checkbox"/> backbiting | <input type="checkbox"/> deceit |

Satan Is a Defeated Adversary

Satan is at war with you. He stirs up ungodly actions and attitudes in an attempt to weaken or destroy the witness of individual Christians and entire congregations. However, the Bible tells us that Satan is a defeated Adversary! Colossians 2:15 describes how God has triumphed over Satan's evil forces



Spiritual warfare – the battle of Satan and his demons against God and His children – will be waged until Satan is finally banished. We must be alert to this reality and be prepared to stand firm against enemy attacks.



And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Colossians 2:15

through the cross of Jesus Christ. This verse uses the vivid imagery of a Roman general leading his captives victoriously through the streets of Rome, publicly humiliating them as the spoils of war.

This is what God has done to Satan and his demons. He has defeated them through Jesus Christ, publicly and completely, and He wants to share His victory with us. When Satan prowls around looking to attack a weak area in us or our church, God calls us to believe His Word and claim Christ’s victory over Satan. He calls us to stand under the shelter of the cross, allowing Christ’s victory over Satan to become our victory in the present moment, in the middle of the attack.

We cannot resist Satan in our own strength. Once a mighty and beautiful angel in heaven (Ezekiel 28:17), he is now “*the prince of this world*” (John 12:31). His powers far exceed our human abilities. However, Satan is powerless to harm us. In Christ, we are victorious over Satan because we have the ability to discern Satan’s deceptive ways and resist his attacks.

❖ **What is the best way to know when Satan is attacking your church?**

- a. his fingerprints are evident
- b. you are experiencing dissatisfaction with your church
- c. the membership of your church is dwindling
- d. when you disagree with someone in the church

❖ **What should be your primary response when you know Satan is on the attack?**

- a. find another church that is problem-free
- b. stand firm and resolve to experience victory in Christ
- c. stop attending church until the controversy is over
- d. resolve not to get involved in the problem

You must realize you’re fighting a war that has been won already and stand firm. Put on the fighting equipment God has given you – the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of readiness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit, which is God’s Word (Ephesians 6:14-17). Find hope and courage in the fact that no matter how severe Satan’s attacks might seem, he is powerless against the armor of God. Not only that, you know the outcome of the war!

And the devil...was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Revelation 20:10).

If we understand how to use the spiritual weapons God provides, we are fully readied and protected from the enemy’s onslaught. The following activity helps you see the nature of these weapons.

❖ **Read Ephesians 6:14-17 in your Bible. Check the statement that accurately describes what we possess when we wear each piece of armor.**

1. Belt of Truth

- You put on your best understanding of truth
- God girds you with His absolute and infallible truth
- Wear the belt lightly since truth changes from situation to situation

2. Breastplate of Righteousness

- Christ covers you with His perfect righteousness
- You are stronger in battle when you live a good life
- You can win if your position is the right one

3. Shoes of Readiness

- Wearing the right shoes will make you fashionable as you fight
- These shoes help you flee the enemy faster
- Holding to the gospel enables you to stand firm in battle

4. Shield of Faith

- You have faith that it's God's battle and His victory
- If you have faith, God won't make you fight in warfare
- With faith, you will never get hurt in the battle

5. Helmet of Salvation

- The helmet will give me supernatural powers
- Salvation secures our eternal destiny regardless of the battle
- I will understand why everything is happening

6. Sword of the Spirit (God's Word)

- The Bible has supernatural power – a force of its own
- We can use this weapon against enemies to wound them
- God's Word helps us mature into battle-ready soldiers

The weapons God provides are formidable, having divine power to utterly destroy any spiritual force we encounter. If we are prepared to use them mentally and spiritually, we can conquer anything that sets itself against God and His children.

There's a war going on around us, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – a war that will continue until Satan is completely vanquished. Be realistic and believe God's Word. Be sober and alert. Put on the full armor of God. Allow Christ's victory over Satan to be *your* victory over Satan, moment by moment, day by day.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you (Romans 16:20).

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*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.
2 Corinthians 10:4-5*