

M 2 · W E E K F I F T E E N

Spiritual Warfare

The enemy is real, his schemes are documented, and the armor has already been forged. Victorious living starts here.

B E F O R E Y O U B E G I N

Whose Kingdom am I fighting for?

WEEK FIFTEEN

Recap

The last two weeks, we've heard testimonies from our brothers in Christ. We learned where God found us, how God transformed us, and what God is currently doing in our lives. That's incredibly exciting and inspiring to me. For me, it's probably my favorite two weeks of Millennium Men. It's important to hear the stories of our fellow warriors — because where we may be weak, we may find another that is strong in that area, and of course, vice versa.

One predominant theme that I heard through the testimonies was this: we need each other. We need one another to lean on in times of struggle, and all of us — from the strongest to the weakest — will face battles. I heard a pastor once say that there are three different kinds of people: those in the middle of a crisis, those coming out of a crisis, and those poor saps who are about to go into one.

JAMES 1:2-3 · NIV

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Notice he doesn't say "if you face trials." He says "when." We will face trials, and when we do, we must engage against an enemy that is at war against us. This is a very important lesson for Millennium Men. They must understand how to engage in spiritual warfare in order to live victorious lives. Pay close attention to this chapter, and perhaps use it again as a reference guide. Victorious living starts here.

WEEK FIFTEEN

The spiritual warfare chapter

Ephesians 6 is known as the spiritual warfare chapter. I find that interesting since the first part of the chapter deals with humility and submission — children to parents, servants to masters — before it ever names the armor of God. I don't think that's there by accident.

EPHESIANS 6:1-4 · BSB

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"Honor your father and mother" (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³"that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on the earth." ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath; instead, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

EPHESIANS 6:5-9 · BSB

⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶And do this not only to please them while they are watching, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷Serve with good will, as to the Lord and not to men, ⁸because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

⁹And masters, do the same for your slaves. Give up your use of threats, because you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.

EPHESIANS 6:10-13 · BSB

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

¹³Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand.

EPHESIANS 6:14-17 · BSB

¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

EPHESIANS 6:18-20 · BSB

¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will boldly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it fearlessly, as I should.

WEEK FIFTEEN

What is spiritual warfare?

DEFINITION · SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Any act that counters, cancels, and defeats the plans and actions of the enemy.

Our enemy is very real. He is not make-believe, nor is he a harmless horned devil with a pitchfork up to minor mischief. The enemy of our souls has power. How much power? Read the book of Job and you'll see what power the enemy can have if God allows.

He was able to create storms that destroyed Job's children's homes (**Job 1:19**). He was able to cause death and destruction all around Job. He was able to destroy his cattle — likely his livelihood — cause boils on Job's skin, and lastly, probably inspired Job's "friends" to visit him with accusations. Also, remember what happened in Pharaoh's palace. Moses turned a staff into a snake; so did Pharaoh's magicians (**Exodus 7:11–13**).

You have an enemy that is the author of disease and death. He can cause pestilence and storms to come against you. He can destroy your livelihood and bring discouragement through people you thought you could trust. That's a powerful enemy. But you shouldn't fear him, because the same Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead lives inside of you (**Romans 8:11**). Though the enemy and his angels are a well-organized kingdom who hate you, they cannot touch you unless you let them. Just as God placed a hedge of protection around Job, He has placed the blood of Jesus over you that covers your sin and makes you God's son.

JOHN 1:12 · NIV

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

A right is something we must choose to accept. Every person may have the right to free speech in the U.S., but you have to speak in order to exercise that right. You may have the right to assemble, but you have to assemble in order to exercise that right. How do we exercise the right to become children of God? We must look and act like our Father by leaving sin. **1 John 3:8** says, "The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

It's clear that you cannot be engaged in willful sin and be a part of the Kingdom. There is no salvation without a repentant heart. We cannot be sons of God and engaged in the devil's work. *There are only two Kingdoms, and Switzerland isn't one of them.* You are part of one of the two Kingdoms, whether you realize it or not. God won't turn His back on anyone whose heart is contrite and wants to stop sinning, though may be struggling. That's not God's heart. He loves you and only wants what's best for you. John is speaking of those who are living a willful sinful life. The first step in spiritual warfare is to know which Kingdom you are fighting for. Understand that there are only two, and you cannot remain ambivalent. Choose this day whom you will serve.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:9–11 · BSB

⁹My purpose in writing you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it in the presence of Christ for your sake, ¹¹in order that Satan should not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

There are two very interesting points that Paul makes here in his letter to the Corinthians:

- ① Unforgiveness gives power to the enemy.
- ② Satan has a scheme — or plot — against us.

I would imagine, like in any competition, the opposing coach has analyzed his opponent's weaknesses and strengths and develops a game plan that will help his team win. The fact that Paul states the enemy has a scheme against us means just that. He is analyzing you, your weaknesses, and your strengths — and is bent on your destruction. Why? One reason is because you're God's image-bearer, and the other is he wants your inheritance — the earth and all that's in it. He's like the son that's been left out of the will. Worse than getting nothing, Satan knows where he will spend his eternity.

WEEK FIFTEEN

Satan's common schemes

Knowing the enemy's playbook is half the battle. These are the most common attacks he runs against men.

Fear — Fear is expecting the circumstance to move, whereas faith is expecting God to move.

Shame — Satan wants you to believe God is upset with you. Many people don't pray or ask because they don't feel worthy — shame in our finances, shame through our lusts.

Weariness — Satan attacked when Jesus was weary and hungry.

Isolation — Satan attacks when we are alone.

WEEK FIFTEEN

Spiritual battles are more prevalent

We are spiritual creatures with a physical body. Aside from the physical pleasure and instinctual design, sex is so alluring because it is the only human activity, outside of Christ, that can produce eternal fruit. **Ecclesiastes 3:11** says, "God set eternity in the heart of mankind." You're wired for eternity, whether you realize it or not.

The spiritual realm is eternal; our world is passing away. Therefore, the battles that we face are more often spiritual than not.

EPHESIANS 6:12 · NKJV

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Interestingly, Paul says that we aren't even wrestling against flesh and blood. That's not our battlefield. Our battlefield resides in the spiritual realm — which is eternal, and which contains a real enemy who wants to steal, kill, and destroy everything he can from you. Now, are you ready to fight the battle? Don't be afraid. God has defeated the enemy; the only problem is, you haven't. Your battle still exists against Satan, and it's time to put on your armor and go to war.

WEEK FIFTEEN

How do we fight?

The first step to fighting a spiritual battle is to understand that your power and might is useless against the power of the enemy. The only power we have are the weapons that Christ has given to us.

I hear many Christians say, "The battle is already won," which is partially true. God's battle is won. Our battle is ongoing and will be ongoing until Jesus returns, or we die. The first step to becoming "more than a conqueror" — as Paul states that we are in **Romans 8:37** — is to engage in battle. I want to repeat that because it's so imperative: *our battle as Christians is not won. God's battle is won.* We must fight Satan diligently with the weapons that God so graciously gave to us.

RULE 1 · TALK ABOUT FIGHT CLUB

The first rule of fighting a spiritual battle is the opposite of the first rule of Fight Club. We need to talk about our fight with other believers. You're more powerful when you fight alongside other believers. **Deuteronomy 32:30** says one will put a thousand to flight and two will put ten thousand to flight. That's a pretty good return just for adding one to your team. **Ecclesiastes 4:12** says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." The bottom line is this: we need each other. Don't *not* talk about fight club. Do talk about your fight with other brothers so that they can stand firm in the faith and help you fight the battle with you.

RULE 2 · REMEMBER THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

If you're battling in an area, sow into that area. If you've got rebellious-teenager problems, volunteer to help serve the teens at church. If you're battling with authority problems, volunteer to help serve your local police officers. If you're facing a financial battle, sow a financial seed where God places it on your

heart. *Flip the script on the enemy by delivering a blow to his schemes right where he is trying to hurt you.* I was once facing a serious business battle and I began to pray for my adversary. Do you want to know what happened? A few months later, that adversary called me and asked me for a job. This may be the most powerful thing you can do when engaging in a spiritual battle. Sow a seed.

RULE 3 · CLEAN HOUSE

You may not remember the story of Ruth, but it's a beautiful story of redemption. Ruth needed a redeemer. She needed a man to help her and her mother-in-law, or they likely wouldn't have survived. Her situation was very dire after losing her husband. There was no welfare system in those days. Ruth made a plan to go and present herself to a man, in humility, to see if he would marry her. Before she went, Naomi, her mother-in-law, gave her some advice:

RUTH 3:3 · NKJV

Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

Naomi's advice was simple: *cleanse yourself.* If you want to be close to the bridegroom, be freshly cleansed. **2 Corinthians 7:1** says, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We are all on a sanctification journey. Just because you want to do the right thing doesn't mean you always do it. That's part of being human. There's abundant grace for the Christian that is prayerfully walking out his sanctification. But when you sin, it is important to ask for forgiveness from God.

Many times we're seeking a promotion, earnestly asking for healing or reconciliation of a loved one, but our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. Why?

ISAIAH 1:15–16 · NIV

When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil.

Take a spiritual bath. **Isaiah 52:11** says, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD." How do we take a spiritual bath? **Ephesians 5:25–26** says, "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." When you read the Word of God, it washes you. It washes your hands, your eyes, your heart. **Psalms 119:9** says, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word." **1 John 1:9** says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Confess your sins. Read the Word of God over your situation. Repent. Rinse. Repeat.

RULE 4 · ASK WITH PURE MOTIVES

JAMES 4:2-3 · BSB

You crave what you do not have; you kill and covet but are unable to obtain it. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask. And when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures.

I often hear verse 2 quoted in Christian circles and by prosperity teachers, but verse 3 is equally important. How do we weigh our motives? We align our will with that of God's. We must ask for things that are pleasing to Him to give. God loves you and is a good Father — and like any good Father, He takes pleasure in your pleasure. Every parent loves to give good gifts to their children, and our God is even better than the best parent. He gives gifts because He knows the future. When we ask God with pure motives, God is gracious and loving and loves to give us the gifts that will benefit us. So be sure to ask for your gift. Then be sure to check your motive. God knows all things. He knows what's best for us, knows our future and our past. Trust God to give good gifts. I often pray for things, but temper the prayers with these words: "But not my will, God — may Your will be done in my life."

RULE 5 · THE LAW OF REST

We are human and designed to rest. God modeled it after Creation, and then He built it into the Law of Moses. He made the laws for our benefit, not His. The Law was there because He loves us. The maker of the machine asks us to rest, and therefore we should gladly obey what He says about it. Music is made through rhythm, and rhythm, by nature, has pauses. Without the pauses, we'd have just noise. The same is probably true with our lives. Without pauses, we aren't as effective. We need rest, and God commanded us to rest.

I don't debate about which is the true Sabbath — whether it's Saturday or Sunday, or some other day for that matter. I'm not sure it matters which day you choose to set aside as holy unto the Lord, but I believe you should choose one consistent day, whatever day that is. If you're an NFL player and you play on Sundays, you probably won't be able to keep the Sabbath on Sunday. If you're a restaurateur, maybe you can close on Sunday and worship. That policy seems to have worked for Chick-fil-A just fine. Making a day holy just means it's set apart. *Do no profitable work* means that you don't make money on the Sabbath. I don't think it means that you shouldn't work in your garden if that's something you truly enjoy. Pray about your Sabbath. The day was made for you, not God. Be a good steward of it, and I

believe God will bless you with energy, clarity, and strength because you've chosen to honor Him.

ISAIAH 58:13-14 · NIV

If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.

WEEK FIFTEEN

Weapons of warfare

There are several spiritual warfare weapons. These four are the ones God has put in your hand: the Word, prayer, worship, and fasting.

THE WORD

There are several spiritual warfare weapons, but none is better than the Word of God. Speak His Word over your situation and watch the enemy melt away. Your words are meaningless to the enemy, but God's Word has power and authority. The enemy can't stand against His Word, so use it. If you're sick, read Psalm 91 over your house. If you're discouraged, read Psalm 103 over your situation. If you're looking for wisdom, read Proverbs over your situation. **Luke 1:37** says, "For no word from God will ever fail." How often does it fail? Never. If you need faith for a situation, **Romans 10:17** says that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The Word is powerful and is useful for every situation. There is not a human condition or problem that the Word didn't address. It is not outdated or anachronistic. It is one hundred percent reliable today, just as it was two thousand years ago.

PRAYER

Get alone and go talk to God. Go for a walk with your Father. Ask Him.

PSALM 5:3 · NIV

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

You don't have to be the most eloquent speaker. Just open your mouth and talk to God as if He were standing right next to you — because He is. He is even inside of you. Talk to God. I think it helps to have the posture of prayer with petitions on my knees, facing Jerusalem, but you can pray however you're led. Some of my best prayers come in the shower. I pray when I'm driving down a long stretch of highway. I pray before meals; before my girls go to school, I pray over them. I pray before I take long

trips. I once ran into a guy that has the same condition I was born with, spina bifida, but was in a wheelchair. It's only by the grace of God — and maybe a millimeter of bone — that I wasn't bound to a wheelchair for life as well. I'm thankful for so many things, and when I see others that aren't as blessed as I am, I make sure I tell God how grateful I am for these things. If God never did another thing for me, He's done enough. How could I be ungrateful about anything? I wasn't born in Rwanda or war-torn Lebanon in the eighties.

We'd make time if King Charles were waiting outside our door to talk to us. Well, the King of Kings is waiting for an appointment with you. Bring your petitions to the King. Pray. Pray often. Pray out loud. Pray the Word. Pray with thanksgiving. Pray with expectation. Remember that if you pray half-hearted prayers, you'll get nothing. God wants you to pray bold prayers. Mark Batterson says in *The Circle Maker* that if you're praying prayers that man can achieve, your prayers aren't bold enough. Pray big, audacious prayers. I believe the tailor of a man's life is the size of his prayers. Pray big, bold prayers and watch God move heaven and earth to show you just who He is.

MATTHEW 17:20 • NIV

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Pray. Pray often. Pray big prayers. Pray with expectation.

WORSHIP

I'm big on symbols in the Bible. I believe that every word of the Bible is there for a reason. I believe that it's no mistake that the first battle the Israelites fought in the Promised Land was won through worship. The walls of Jericho fell when they marched around the city, and on the seventh time, they blew their horns and shouted to the Lord (**Joshua 6:1–27**). When you are facing walls that are thick, an army that outnumbers you, and a land full of giants — worship the one true God and see what happens. The battle isn't yours. It's His — but you've got to do your part.

Furthermore, we worship with more than just singing. We worship by doing a great job at work and doing our work as if unto the Lord. We worship by honoring our elders, loving our wives, and disciplining our children in a loving way.

FASTING

This one may be last on the list, but it is not least. This is by far the most powerful weapon you have against the enemy. It's so important — so powerful — that I wrote a special lesson on it. Please read it. It will explain the different kinds of fasts, how to fast, why to fast, and what to do before you fast. It's a good guide, and most of my material comes from one of my heroes in the faith, Jentezen Franklin. I often do a summer four-week lesson on fasting, where we break down the book *Fasting* by Jentezen Franklin. I highly recommend the book.