

Understanding the Battle

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” —Ephesians 6:11-13

To understand a battle, you have to first acknowledge that we are in a war. Battles make up smaller components of the bigger picture. By definition, battles involve combat between two persons, factions, or armies.

As Christians, we are in a spiritual battle of some sort on a daily basis. In warfare, battles are fought on different fronts, for different reasons, and with varying degrees of intensity. The same is true in spiritual warfare. Our spiritual battles and warfare are real, even though we cannot physically see the attacker.

It is good to educate yourself about spiritual warfare. First ask, “Why do we even want to fight?” It does no good to educate ourselves on the battle if we see no reason for the fight. War is very controversial these days in the physical realm. However, in the spiritual realm, there is a battle going on regardless of our opinion. We will be either victors or victims.

Part 1: The Spiritual Battle

Many people don't want to deal with anything they can't see. They hide their eyes.

Question #1: What words used in the verses below describe the spiritual realm and its invisible components? Nehemiah 9:6; Luke 2:13-15; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:15-16

According to Hebrews 11:3, what is required for us to believe? What does that mean to you?

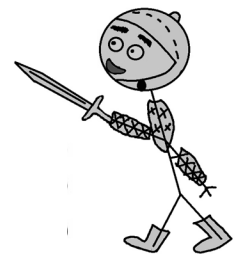
We all have an innate sense that there is more than what the eye can see. Stop and assess what we do believe. It took faith . . . to believe in Jesus Christ . . . that He died and rose again . . . that He is in Heaven . . . that He is coming back.

Question #2: From the following examples, what is taking place?

2 Kings 6:11-17; Daniel 10:7-17 ***We are surrounded by invisible forces—good and bad—that we can't see.***

Question #3: Some people believe that fortune telling, horoscopes, and Ouija boards are harmless fun, but what does the Bible say? Leviticus 19:26-31; Deuteronomy 18:9-14. ***Regard them not, don't seek after them; they are an abomination of the heathen.***

So, we've learned that the spiritual realm, these invisible forces are real. If we believe in Jesus Christ, then we believe that His death conquered the devil and set us free. There are forces, both angelic and demonic, at work around us. The Bible tells us to pray that . . . His will would be done on earth, as it is in Heaven; and the gates of Hell will not prevail against the work that God has purposed—but we do hit opposition.



Part II: The Worldly Battle

The Strong's Greek and Hebrew dictionary defines the "world" as the "earth (as moist and therefore inhabited); by extension, the globe; by implication, its inhabitants; specifically, a particular land. The world is where people dwell. So the pattern of this world (Romans 12:2) refers to how the people collectively choose to live on the earth.

We, as believers, are told to **not conform** to the norms of how others live but to live to please God, who is not of this world. Notice what Jesus said in John 17:14-16. So, we are called to live in the world but not be a part of the world.

Question #4: *In John 17, Jesus gives a clear message through His prayer to the Father about the seriousness of our lives in this "world." In John 17:6-26, circle the word "world" and underline (or highlight) every reference to Jesus or God the Father.*

What does verse 14 say about the world and us? The world hates us!

What does Jesus ask on our behalf in verse 15? ***Jesus asked, not that we be taken out, but that we be kept.***

What is the main point of Jesus' prayer for us (verse 21)? ***That we would be one in Christ, that the world may believe.***

After reading John 17, it becomes clear that if we are in the world but not of the world, we are going to have conflicts. Those conflicts are spiritual warfare. Why? Because the physical manifestations of the world, such as the trees, the ocean, and the sky are not the problem. It is the forces that control the world that are in conflict with God. **We, as Christians, are God's children. Thus, if the world is in conflict with God, the world is also in conflict with us.**

The prayer of John 17 expresses the heart of Jesus, as He knows the battles that we will face in this world. The world hates those who follow Jesus. We are not called to be **of** the world, or worldly, but we are **in** to the world to be a **witness** of Jesus Christ. This is a miraculous calling and it takes the miracle of the Holy Spirit living in us to fulfill it. .

Jesus understood the temptations of the world. He knew that Satan would use every kind of enticement possible to lure man's heart away from God. Jesus also knew how difficult it would be for those who believe in Him but do not remain faithful due to the cares of the world.

Question #5: Look up Mark 4:1-20 to answer the following questions.

What is being sown? See verse 14.

Briefly describe the scenarios of how the seed is sown and what happens to each.

_____	-	_____	-	_____
_____	-	_____	-	_____
_____	-	_____	-	_____
_____	-	_____	-	_____

How does the world influence a new believer and what is the result? See verse 19.

The battles of spiritual warfare are intense when a person decides to accept Jesus as their Savior. The enemy will attack from all angles, hoping to dissuade the person from fully giving their life to Jesus. He will use:

<u>Circumstances</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>People</u>	<u>Things</u>	<u>Doubt</u>
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The seeds that are sown in people’s hearts will either take root on good soil, which is a heart fully surrendered to the Lord. Or, they will be sown in places where the word is snatched away from them until they fall away. Once we are made aware of the world’s influences and how they are in contrast to God’s ways, we must then learn how to operate in the world as a follower of Jesus Christ.

It is one thing to be naïve to the world’s deceptions, but once the truth is revealed, we have a responsibility to obey the Lord’s directions for us.

Question #6: What does James 4:1-4 say about our relationship with the world?

Part III: The Battle Within Us

The hardest battles are often fought within ourselves.

We can understand the circumstances and situations that the enemy uses to destroy us. We can understand to some degree that the battle in the spiritual realm is real and ongoing even though we can’t see it. But, to get a grasp on what is going on within our own hearts and minds can be the hardest, most exhausting, battle of them all.

In this section, we are going to explore what the Bible teaches about the war within us, the constant struggle between flesh and spirit. Our battle with sin “wars” within our members.

Question #7: To begin to examine the battle within us we must first understand its nature. The desires of the flesh are part of our human nature and its history goes back to the beginning of time, as we know it. Describe the setting in which the word "sin" is first used in the Bible. See Genesis 4:3-7.

What was God's warning to Cain?

God tells us to fight against sinful feelings. We must learn to fight against the very nature within us. Paul tells us to put off the old nature and put on the new man (Colossians 3:8-13). The Lord has given us His Spirit who will empower us to overcome, but we must be willing to allow Him the authority to be in control of our **thoughts, feelings, and actions.**

Question #8: From the following verses, describe the battle of flesh versus spirit.

Matthew 26:41

Romans 7:14-20

Galatians 5:16-17

We are constantly battling between what we want to do versus what we know the Lord wants us to do. The battle is waged because we are given the **power** to overcome sin's grasps. There is no battle when there is no opposing side. It takes two to fight. When we are dead in our trespasses, there is no spiritual battle within us because there is no spiritual life. The Spirit of God brings us to life spiritually, yet we live in these bodies of flesh that still have a sinful nature. Thus, the battle rages in the lives of believers but the victory is assured because we are in Christ.

Question #9: From 1 Peter 4:1-6, answer the following questions:

What is the advantage of suffering in the flesh?

Describe the sins of the past (of the Gentiles).

What happens when we decide to follow the will of God? See verse 4.

At this point, we have to ask ourselves a few questions like . . .

Is Christianity about fighting and suffering or about love and joy?

Isn't the Christian life about peace?

Didn't Jesus do it all so I would not have to?

Do I really have to think this much about my faith when it only took one prayer to be saved?

Even if most Christians do not conscientiously ask these questions, their lives reflect the answer. The Christian life is not passive.

Jesus told us in Luke 9:23 says that if any man will follow Christ, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and "Follow me." Jesus promised us an abundant life that starts here on earth. Until we understand the forces that are against us, and are prepared to fight for what is rightfully ours, we will not be able to receive all that God has for us.

Think about it: Don't you want the desires of your heart fulfilled? Don't you want to know that God heard your prayers and then answered them? Don't you desire to be all that God wants you to be because He is so good that He only gives you good things? And don't you want to have all that God wants you to have because He wants the best for you? Don't you want to do even greater things than Jesus did because you know the Lord and love Him?

Question #10: What have you learned in this lesson regarding the spiritual warfare and battles in your life?

How will you apply what you have learned to your life?

Pray about it: Lord, there are parts of me that do not want to understand the spiritual realm because it seems too scary and too foreign. However, I do realize that I am not where You want me to be. I want to understand what it takes to be victorious. So I ask that You will give me a discerning spirit and I ask that I can be equipped to become victorious. Open my eyes to see and my ears to hear and, then, change me for eternal purposes. In Jesus Christ name, I pray.