

Topic 1B: The Warrior's Path (spiritual warfare, perseverance and handling peer pressure)

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**Objective:** Understand the importance of putting on the armor of God each day to resist evil and live more fully.

**Topic 1B** of Area One God has given you an identity, unique design, and purpose along with the gifts to accomplish it.

Spiritual warfare is real. Why do I say that? Because the Bible speaks about it many times, there is evidence for it and I have seen it myself in action. Most of life I have seen it in action through the battle field of the mind. But a few times I have seen it manifested in action in the real world. The important point I want you to get is that spiritual forces do exist, but there is not a demon behind every rock, and yet you are still responsible for your actions. We need a balanced perspective. Throughout Jesus' life we see him dealing at times with demons and spiritual forces. So we know that they do exist. But what is the proper perspective on them? I believe the Bible teaches us to be alert and take up the armor of God (1 Peter 5:8 "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour"). So, what I want to do today is start off with one usual situation and two unusual stories that relate, and then talk about the importance of putting on the armor of God.

The first situation describes what happens many times when we sit down to read our Bibles or pray. I can almost guarantee that there will be some thought of food, tired feelings, some chore that needs to be done, someone you will remember that did something wrong to you: there will be distracting thoughts. Those distracting thoughts will lead to other distracting thoughts until you are no longer engaged in your mind—although you may be physically there—while reading your Bible.

What is the proper perspective on this situation? It is true that people get tired, hungry, irritated and busy. Those may have nothing to do with demonic influence. But there are other times when you are caught in a spider web of sinful and distracting thoughts where the influence is not just from yourself or your environment, but from something you cannot see. That is what God has given us his armor to combat. And, the battle field is in the mind. The battle is to not give the devil a in-road, especially a permanent in-road in your life. So, remember that one of the first things you should do is take authority in Jesus name before you begin to read your Bible.

The second story comes from when I visited overseas (the country name does not matter). I will relate two dramatic stories that happened to me.

I was in a little village where we were having a church service with about 100 people. These people did not understand English and thus all we said was translated. After we finished singing a worship song and clapping along, one woman just started shouting and kept clapping, disturbing the whole service. Only a few seconds after her disruption began, my pastor stood up and said, "In the name of Jesus I command you to be quiet." At that instant, this woman froze, became quiet and her two hands that were clapping just came together and stopped...weird. I knew this lady did not speak English either. The local pastor slowly took this woman out of the service and freed her of the evil spirit.

There was another similar occurrence in the same country. About 70 people were in an outdoor church service. After the worship and singing, three of the people began to flail and flop around on the ground. In this situation, I spoke by the authority of the name of Jesus and saw the

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person stop and respond. I saw the evil spirit leave the person and the person come back to their right mind.

These are stories that happened NOT to someone else, but to me. Not just for me, but for all of us the vast majority of the time the battle is in the mind, to do as 2 Corinthians 10:5 commands: "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." There is a great story that relates to this about an American Indian who had become a Christian and was asked by a reporter what it was like. He responded that he feels like there are two dogs inside of him, a black dog, which symbolizes his ungodly desires (the flesh), and a white dog, which symbolizes his Godly desires. He said he felt like they are always fighting. The reporter asked, "Which one wins?" The American Indian responded, "The one I feed more." This is right in line with Romans 8:5: "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

But is there really any data to support the existence of evil spirits? There are many paranormal ghost hunters and stories of sightings. But to me the two biggest pieces of evidence are 1) The number of recorded near death experiences<sup>1</sup> where people see spiritual forces and 2) the sheer number of people who have had some belief in evil spirits since the beginning of time. If you stop to even think about it from a humanist standpoint, almost every culture for the last 5000 years has had some belief in a spirit realm. It wasn't until the 20th century that the concept of Atheism, or No God, took hold. So from a pure numbers perspective, given that about 60 Billion people have walked the earth and vast majority of them have believed in evil spirits, I would say that is pretty good proof. For anyone to say that if you cannot see it and interact with it, then it does not exist is simply arrogant, especially if they say they have been in love with or have faith in someone.

So, I want you to not fall into the two extremes when it comes to spiritual warfare. The first extreme is the one that says there is a demon behind every rock and every time you stub your toe. This is known as animism. The other end of the spectrum is a belief that demons and the spiritual world really do not exist or affect our lives today. In fact, one of Satan's biggest tricks is to make you believe he does not exist. The truth is it requires a new and balanced way of thinking. One analogy that fits is the result of the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. After that day, all Americans knew that we could not just comply with terrorist demands anymore as we did during the Iranian hostage crisis, but that we had to fight for our lives in the face of a terrorist. When we get on a plane or go to travel, we have a heightened awareness for odd packages and people. We do not want to assume that everyone is a terrorist, because the vast majorities are not. We just want to be aware of the possibility. In a similar way we need to view the world of spiritual warfare in a balanced and aware way. So let's begin talking about the armor of God as it relates to spiritual warfare.

In 1991 I was working as a high school teacher at a place called Youth for Tomorrow (YFT), sponsored by Coach Joe Gibbs of the Washington Redskins. From Wikipedia on Gibbs, in 1991, which many call Gibbs best team; the Redskins won their first 11 games before finishing the season 14-2, and cruised through the playoffs with home victories over the Atlanta Falcons (24-7) and Detroit Lions (41-10). In Super Bowl XXVI, the Redskins were up 37-10 in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nderf.org/> and [missing matter](#)

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the third quarter before Gibbs called off the dogs, en route to a 37-24 victory over the Buffalo Bills. The victory gave Gibbs and the team their third Super Bowl title.

Now the next morning after Gibbs won the Super Bowl at 8:00 AM in the morning where would you be? On the road to your next interview to make a bunch of money? Your next Gatorade advertisement? What would be so valuable that you would want to come out and talk to 30 young men about this? Coach Joe Gibbs came out to YFT and talks to 30 young boys about Ephesians 6 and the armor of God. He talked about how every day he wakes up and envisions himself putting on each element of the armor of God. That made such an impact on me that coach saw explaining Spiritual Warfare as more important than getting boo-quos of money for himself. I hope that importance of putting on your armor every day will make a significant impact on you.

As we get into spiritual warfare, I want you think with me for a second about becoming a master warrior. In so many movies and video games we see the characters becoming masters of their craft. For example, Luke Skywalker becomes a Jedi Master under Yoda. In Lord of the Rings Frodo Baggins has to master himself in order to not succumb to power of the ring. In the Matrix, NEO masters the environment of the computer generated Matrix. Those were all movies, but in the Bible we also see this idea. In particular, we see in the book of Genesis that God warns Cain before hurting his brother that, "... if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Now it is your turn to learn under the greatest teacher of all time, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; he conquered sin and wants to make you into a master warrior using the armor of God.

There are 3 disciplines that need to be part of your life. The first is going to God's temple each day (which we will cover later). The second is reciting the Lord's prayer. The third is putting on the armor of God

## **Eph 6**

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

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

12 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.

13 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.

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 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.

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

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20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

I want to make a number of points here:

This serious stuff- Satan is not a dude who has pitch fork and a little red suit. He is the opposite of God. Instead of love, he is filled with hatred and control; he desires to be equal with God. Instead of being someone who would send his own son to die on the cross, he would spend his days accusing people of evil and basically telling them that they are worthless. He creates undertow of accusations, lies and feelings of worthlessness. He is called the "accuser of Christians" (Rev 12:10) Why do you think so many people deal with worthlessness? The enemy's chief goal is to keep us from being in relationship with the God of the Bible.

What we are about to talk about is significant in the spiritual world. God has NOT given us a plastic squirt gun. But he has given us serious spiritual weapons. I remember when I first held a .357 magnum and shot it at a shooting range. Shooting that gave me a new respect for the power and damage such a weapon could do. In a similar way, please stop to think about the amazing armor God has given you... and use it wisely.

Just as if you were playing football and would not go out on the field without your equipment, we should not leave our house without putting on the armor of God. The enemy would think, "Fresh Meat." Can you imagine a football player going onto to the field without his helmet or shoes? He would come back with big knot on his forehead and bloody feet... or worse

- The Belt of truth- In the same way the physical belt held the sword, tunic and armor in place, God's truth holds our spiritual armor in place. As an aside, Many of you will remember the song "pants on the ground."(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMwhl4IrPNc>), where Larry Platt makes fun of people who wear their pants on the ground because they look like a fool. Well, I have to say what we do NOT want, "Armor on the ground. Armor on the ground...Looking like a fool with your Armor on the ground." So, remember to gird yourself with God's truth.
- The Breast Plate of Righteousness - It was constructed of strips of metal fastened together by leather. In the same way that the physical breast plate protected the vital organs, striving to live a righteous life today will protect the vital areas of our life.
- Feet fitted with the Gospel of Peace - The Roman boot was designed to stand ground in battle. The Roman boot was fitted with metal studs, like the cleats of football player, to help him maintain ground in battle. In the same way that the Roman boot allowed them to take ground and not get pushed around you are to take ground for God by standing firm in the Gospel. And this will many times bring peace to situations.
- Shield of Faith - This is the most important piece of armor. Without faith it is impossible to please God. We can have great assurance because our faith has stood the test of time, and it is faith in the all powerful living God. In the same way that the physical shield protects, your faith in God will protect you from thoughts and events that would seek to destroy your relationship with God.
- Helmet of salvation - Roman soldiers would wear the helmet for two reasons. The first reason was to protect their head. The second reason was to let everyone know they were a Roman soldier. So how would a spiritual helmet of salvation protect our minds? You will be bombarded with all kinds of ideas that go against God. By filling our minds with the

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Bible and God's goodness, we protect and rejuvenate our minds and our hearts. If you can defeat a sin in your mind, it can never become an action. Secondly, everyone knew a Roman soldier by the giant purple plume feather that was on top of his helmet. In the same way, as you begin to put on your armor each day, you will change and become a master of using the armor, and it will become obvious that you are soldier in God's army. As an aside, remember in the movie, the x-men, where magneto wore the helmet to protect himself against the influence of Xavier's mind control power. In a similar way our knowledge that we have been saved by the blood of Jesus protects us from many ideas that would seek to influence our lives.

- **Sword** - The sword is the word of God. This is really your only offensive weapon. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, he responded with, "It is written". Think of the SHING of the sword being removed from its sheath when you hear, "It is written." You want to become a master swordsman. I will tell you a story of my sons. I wanted to communicate to my sons that wielding a sword takes practice. In fact, some of the Roman swords weighed up to 20 lbs. So one day I brought in a 20lb solid iron digging bar for my sons to use as sword. If you ever have a chance to try that you should. It made me laugh because they could do it but they realized they would need training in order to truly wield a sword. In the same way you should memorize scripture and use it in all kinds of situations to get better and better. Remember to never drop your sword because it is your only defensive weapon. Heb 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Take a moment, stop the tape and meditate on that.
- **Pray in the Spirit** - Prayer is one of the greatest weapons to pull down strongholds of the enemy. It has been said, "Is your prayer life like an intercom request from your bedroom asking for a pillow or like a soldier in a foxhole on a walkie-talkie asking for reinforcements?" Pray earnestly. It works.

So the next question we are going to ask is how can we apply this knowledge to our everyday lives? One of the first examples is when I first started becoming interested in girls when I was in 7th grade. I tell you this story because I want you to know I understand the issues that revolve around peer pressure.

When I was in 7th grade it was one of the most awkward times of my life. Any girls listening to this story will hate me at the end of this. But remember it was many years ago. So there was this girl, call her Beverlese, who was in 7th grade. She was so sweet and kind and had nice personality. I wanted to ask her to be my girlfriend so I spent the previous night practicing what I would say and a lot of time in the mirror making sure I looked good. So the next day came. There I was with sweaty palms and jittery words. But, I got up my nerve to ask her if she would be my girlfriend. I could not believe it. She said yes. The rest of the day, I dreamed about how she would have fun and hang out. Then I got on the bus with my other friends and told them. To my great surprise, many of them said, "Beverlese" OOOH she is ugly." Well instead of standing up to them, I caved like an avalanche and broke it off the next day.

What changed between the previous day and the day after? Nothing but my perception of what my peers thought. I did not think for myself. But this was before I was believer in the Lord. If I had been a believer and put my armor on, I would have been able to stand up against what my so called friends were saying. You see the battle is many times in the mind. Francis

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Frangipane in this book *How to Battle with Satan: The Three Battlegrounds*. He talks about how Jesus was Crucified at Golgatha or "the place of the skull" and how we need to battle in the mind and be renewed in our mind to him. Putting on the armor can do that we can stand firm.

After accepting Jesus at age 13, I experience this scenario in high school. I was 15 years old and I remember a tough guy, bigger than me, named Kevine. We would be in the lunch line and he would routinely steal food from the cafeteria when there was no lunch lady watching and stuff it in his backpack. He was kind of the Hamburgler incarnate. Many kids saw him do this, and some would even pass him food when he asked them, "Hey man pass me a hamburger." So I thought what am I going to if he asks me to pass him some food? Well it happened and I remember looking at him and saying, "Kevine if you really need that food, you can have mine but I am not going to help you steal this food and you need to put that food back." He looked at me, raised both of his arms quickly like he was going to hurt me and walked away without taking anymore hamburgers. I do not know if he stole anymore in the days to follow. I did not see him much after that. But what I do know is that God gave me the strength to hold firm and bring some peace to the situation.

One of the things that is not said but implied in the armor is that we think like soldiers. One of the key characteristics of any soldier is perseverance. Being a Christian is one of the hardest but greatest things I have ever done. In fact, I have a couple friends who have been in the Special Forces and gone through Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS). They talk about a number of the grueling, I am talking grueling, tests of mental and physical endurance. One of the things they taught me about being a soldier is persevering in the exciting and the mundane tasks. In Pr 24:16, "For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity." You need to know that there will be times that you are up and times that you are depressed. They come in cycles. There will be times where you mess up and have to do things over again. The difference sometimes between success and failure is simply getting back up. But like Rick Warren says, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing wrong until you get it right!" The Christian life is a marathon not a sprint. Notice that the righteous man just falls but the wicked experience serious calamity. In a similar way, as we put on the armor of God and persevere, we will be able to stay close to God and minimize the height and depth of the ups and downs.

One of the other key characteristics of a soldier is that they know when it is time to take an offensive or defensive position. We can see that there are parts of the armor that are offensive and some that are defensive. Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:18, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it." Why did Jesus use the word gate there? Have you ever seen a soldier swinging a gate in battle? No, the gates of hell are meant to be assaulted and broken down. So as you put on your armor each day know that, "We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments." (2 Cor 10:4). False arguments like, "it is ok to cheat a little on those tests," "A little pornography never hurt anyone," and "It is OK to have sex before marriage as long as we repent later." These are a few of the terrible and destructive ideas that you need to war against.

The other day I had lunch with a family about to embark on a missions trip overseas. The youngest family member who was 12 years old explained how she did not know if there was going to be suffering involved in sharing the gospel or not but that she was ready to suffer if need be. That impressed me. We have so many things that make us comfortable that they can

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actually take away from the life that God wants us to experience. Now I am not saying anything against having nice things. I just want you to remember that God did not call us to a life of comfort but to a life of submission. Remember 2nd Tim 2:3, "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus," and John 15:20, "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."

In summary, we have talked about the importance of putting on the armor of God and winning the battle in our mind. I want you to imagine yourself putting on the armor of God each morning. We know that Jesus clearly dealt with demons and spirits in the spiritual realm. In Exodus 15:3 it tells us that the Lord is a warrior. You have been made in his image. So use your God given spiritual authority to put on your armor each day and take back strongholds around you and in your own life. Realize this armor will help you in many situations, especially to resist peer pressure, persevere and endure hardship. So put on the armor each morning.

## Resources

<http://www.truthnet.org/Spiritual-warfare/6BackgroundArmor-God/Armor-of-God.htm>

<http://www.truthnet.org/Spiritual-warfare/7Armor-God/Armor-of-God.htm>

<http://shadowspear.com>

## Questions

I want you to roll play with you mentor potential real life situations that could happen to you where flaming arrows are thrown at you

- 1) You go over to a friend's house and you are the only ones there in the house. Your friend goes over to a box and pulls out one of these. What do you do in each situation?
  - Cigarettes
  - Marijuana
  - Pornography
  - Video game where your character has to rape a woman.
- 2) You are in class and a friend passes a note to you with a bunch of answers to the test you are taking. What do you do?