

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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The Principles of Spiritual Warfare

The success of any military battle is dependent upon several factors. We will cover what these factors are as “principles of warfare.” When we follow a solid plan of both, attack and defense, the chances of winning the battle greatly increases.

Principle #1 – Know That We Are At War

We must first acknowledge that we are in a spiritual battle with forces that desire the destruction of the human race. The Devil, Satan does not want us to believe he exists. If we deny the reality of Satan and hell, then we will live as if there are no eternal consequences to our actions. Sin will abound and souls will be lost!

*“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For we are not contending (fighting) against flesh and blood, but against the **principalities**, against the **powers**, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the **spiritual hosts** of wickedness in the heavenly places.” – Eph 6:11-12*

Although the war we fight is not with “flesh and blood,” but with angelic beings, we can use the analogy of earthly war to help us understand how we can triumph in this battle against unseen enemies. The irony of this spiritual warfare is that we know who wins the war, God and his faithful. What remains is that we win our personal battles so as to share in the glory of God’s victory.

Principle #2 – Know Your Enemy

Know your enemy’s **goal**.

- Satan’s goal is to destroy God’s family, the human race, and condemn to hell as many of God’s children as possible. He has his own army of demons (fallen angels) that assist him in achieving his goal.

“...fear him who can destroy both the body and the soul in hell.” – Mt 10:28

Know your enemy’s **nature**.

- Satan and all his demons are fallen angelic beings. (see **Rev 12:9**) Angels exist and some are good (God’s angels) and the others are bad (Satan and his demons)
 - for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether **thrones** or **dominions** or **principalities** or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **Col 1:16**

- The 9 Choirs (ranks) of Angels: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels.

Know your enemy's **strength**.

- Satan, because he is an angelic being, is physically stronger than any human army. He is more intelligent than our greatest geniuses. He never sleeps, eats or gets tired. He is focused and does not rest until he accomplishes his goal.

Know your enemy's **tactics**. A tactic perceived is no tactic at all.

- **Distractions** – to keep you ignorant and weak.
- **Deception** – to make you believe “Evil is good and Good is evil.”
- **Indifference** – to make us believe we are “OK, because I am a good person.” This is being lukewarm. (see *Rev 3:15*)
- **Temptation** – to make us believe that earthly pleasure is what our hearts yearn for.

Know your enemy's **weapons**.

- **Power, sex, fame and wealth** – in and of themselves, they are not sinful, but can and often lead to sin. See the 7 deadly sins in Appendix A.
- These characteristics, are Satan's weapons (*Gal 5:19; 1 Cor 6:9*) that can lead to mortal sin (*1 Jn 5:16*).

Know your enemy's **weaknesses**. Satan is only as powerful as we allow him to be.

- One of Satan's weaknesses is that he cannot control our minds and hearts. He can only “influence” them by his tactics. Our power rests in that, through God's grace, we obtain the righteousness of Jesus and as a result, the Devil loses all his power against us. (demonic possession/oppression can be a topic of later discussion)
- Satan's greatest weakness is his Pride. This was the downfall that led to his expulsion from heaven. (*Rev 12:9*)

Principle #3 – Know How to Prepare for Battle

Before soldiers are sent into battle, they must first be prepared. The main purpose of boot camp is to create an effective fighter and to give this fighter a better chance of survival. A soldier that has the proper training and preparation has a much greater chance of survival than one who doesn't.

- They will undergo extreme physical training to prepare their bodies for the physical exertion of war. They will need strength and endurance to help them survive.
- They will be given weapons training so that they can become effective combatants.

- They will be trained in fighting skills and in building courage to fight.
- They will need to know about armor, food, water and rest so they can fight at their best level.
- They will need to know what to do if you or your fellow soldier is wounded. And many more things . . .

In like manner, we as Christians fighting in this spiritual battle, must be trained and prepared so that our chance of “survival” (getting to heaven) is improved.

- We need to be trained in the Word of God, the Bible, to know how to defeat the enemy.
- We need spiritual strength and to endure to the end (*Mt 10:22*)
- Our greatest weapon against the Devil’s attack is God’s **GRACE**. The primary means of Sanctifying Grace are the Sacraments – most especially Confession and the Eucharist after we are baptized. There are other means of receiving “actual grace”: prayer, meditating on the Scriptures, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
- The Eucharist is our spiritual food (*Jn 6:55*) and Confession is the medicine that heals us when our souls are wounded by sin. (*Jas 5:16*)
- The ultimate purpose of the Sacraments is **union** with God. A deep, intimate relationship.

Principle #4 – Know Yourself

Know your **weakness**.

- Sin is humanity’s greatest weakness. It is the only thing that can cut off the life-giving Grace that God offers us each day. And what is sin, but “love of self over God and his commandments.” The root of sin is *Pride*.

Humanity’s greatest weakness, therefore, becomes the vice of **Pride**. Pride is defined as an excessive love of self and is the root of ALL the vices. The antidote to Pride, then, is the virtue of **Humility**. Humility becomes our greatest weapon against Satan. One cannot love God and neighbor without the virtue of humility. One cannot pray without humility. One cannot obtain faith for salvation without humility. All goodness and holiness that God demands of us requires humility.

- "You fast, but Satan does not eat. You labor fervently, but Satan never sleeps. The only dimension with which you can outperform Satan is by acquiring humility, for Satan has no humility." – *St. Moses the Black (Ethiopian)*

We must become like Jesus, “meek and humble of heart” and we will find peace and rest for our souls. (*Mt 11:29*)

Know that we were made to participate in Christ’s **mission** as . . .

- **Priest** - *1Pet. 2:9* But you are “a chosen race, a royal **priesthood**, a holy nation . . . who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
- **Prophet** - *Joel 3:1* I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall **prophesy**, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;
- **King** - *1Thes 2:12* . . . conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his **kingdom** and glory. *Rev. 1:6* who has made us into a **kingdom, priests** for his God and Father . . .

Know that through the Holy Spirit we become . . .

- **Partakers of the Divine Nature** – *2 Pet. 1:4* he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to **share in the divine nature**, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.
- **Temples of the Holy Spirit** – *1 Cor. 6:19* Do you not know that your body is a **temple of the holy Spirit** . . . and that you are not your own?
- **Children of God** – *1 John 3:1* See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God, and so we are. *Jn 1:12,13* "all who . . . believed in his name, he gave power to **become children of God**; who were **born**, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but **of God**."

Principle #5 – Know That We Do Not Fight Alone

To win battles, a Christian, like an earthly soldier, needs an army of fighters, especially highly trained ones, to fight alongside with them.

- We call these "highly-trained" spiritual soldiers – the Saints! (the Church Triumphant). They have fought the good fight and won their crown of victory! They desire for us to also win our fight and join them in the heaven. As part of the “Communion of Saints” we are able to ask them to pray for us just like we ask those on earth to pray for us. These Saints are not dead, but alive in Christ and they offer our prayers to God (*Rev 5:8*)
- We also have the saints here on earth (the Church Militant) that fight alongside us to encourage and support us in our time of need. They pray for our needs and they intercede to the Lord for us. (*1 Tim 2:1*)
- We also have the heavenly hosts (the good angels) that battle for us and assist us in overcoming Satan and his demons. We all have a guardian angel (*Mt 18:10*) that behold the face of God. We need to pray to our guardian angel to help us in our time of need. These angels that behold the face of God offer our prayers to the Father (*Rev 8:4*).

APPENDIX A

PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

PRAYER TO OUR GUARDIAN ANGEL

Angel of God my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this day be at my side to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen

The 7 Corporal Works of Mercy

- 1) Feed the hungry, 2) give drink to the thirsty, 3) shelter the homeless, 4) visit the sick, 5) visit the prisoner, 6) bury the dead and 7) give alms to the poor.

The 7 Spiritual Works of Mercy

- 1) Counseling the doubtful, 2) instructing the ignorant, 3) admonishing the sinner, 4) comforting the sorrowful, 5) forgiving injuries, 6) bearing wrongs patiently and 7) praying for the living and the dead.

Here are the 7 deadly sins. Which of these sins apply to you in your own life?

- Anger
- Gluttony
- Greed
- Pride
- Laziness
- Lust
- Envy