

THROUGH THE FOG

A Bible Study on God's Goodness
Amidst Physical Suffering

SPIRITUAL WARFARE GUIDE

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ARMOR UP

Hey there, Friend! Thank you for starting your journey through the fog with me. When this study went through a focus group, many people said the study changed their lives. But with change comes resistance, both from our flesh and from a very real enemy. Spiritual warfare is a common phrase used to describe the resistance we encounter both in the unseen and seen realm when we are drawing closer to God or bringing others closer to Him. But what does that even mean and how do we engage in it? I made this guide to give you a brief overview of the spiritual warfare that many who have done this study have gone through. I pray it equips you to powerfully receive the life-changing work God wants to do in your life through the study.

JERA



SCRIPTURAL BASIS

The Bible makes it clear that we have a very real enemy who has a very real desire to steal, kill, and destroy what God wants to do in us. Thankfully, we're also given some strategic tools in Scripture to help us stand against his schemes. First, let's address the Scriptural basis for the warfare you will probably engage in as a result of your participation in this Bible study. Jesus tells us to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). He also tells us that in this world we will have trouble, but He gives us peace and He will be with us to the end of the age (John 16:33). Jesus has overcome death, hell, and the grave, but the enemy, Satan, prowls the earth like a lion looking for people to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

We also know that the enemy shoots flaming arrows at us (Galatians 6:16), that we are called to be aware of the enemy's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:10-11), and that our real battle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12). If all of this sounds overwhelming, fear not. It's important to understand that we fight from the victory Christ has already secured for us through His death on the cross and His resurrection, and that no weapon formed against us shall prosper (Isaiah 54:17).

THE FLESH

Did you know that the words "war" and "warfare" in the Greek only occur five times in the entire New Testament? Take a look at the five instances below and consider their context:

1. **1 Timothy 1:18:** *Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well...*
2. **2 Timothy 2:4 KJV:** *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*
3. **James 4:1:** *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*
4. **1 Peter 2:11:** *Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.*
5. **2 Corinthians 10:3-5:** *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 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.*

In all five examples of the original Greek words for “war” and “warfare” used in the New Testament, not one has to do with the devil! So what are we waging war against? These passages suggest that the New Testament authors were talking about conquering the flesh and taking charge of our minds.

This means that though there is a very real enemy and very real demons in the world, according to the instruction of the Word, we are to focus the majority of our warfare efforts on submitting our flesh and our minds to the Holy Spirit. That doesn’t mean that we never need to address the demonic in our lives, nor does it mean that we are to disbelieve in the demonic realm. This is a powerful and critical topic that thankfully already has been addressed by other authors. If you’d like to learn more about this type of spiritual warfare, I recommend checking out *What Demons Can Do to Saints* by Merrill Unger. For the purpose of this guide, what I want you to remember is that the primary form of warfare you will likely engage with as you are confronted with attack is a fight for your flesh and for your mind.

THE ENEMY’S SCHEMES

So what are some of the common ways Satan attacks our minds and our flesh? I’ve put together just a few of the most common ways I’ve seen attacks manifested in my life and in the lives of people I love.

- 1. Lies:** Satan will try to get you to believe lies about who you are and about who God is. This goes back to the Garden of Eden, when Satan asked Eve what God had really said and questioned God’s character. This is why we must know who God is through His Word and we must know whom God says we are through His Word.
- 2. The Broken World:** Often things get blamed on the enemy that really are just symptoms of our broken world, from daily annoyances to tragic losses. Regardless of whether or not these confrontations in our life are directly from the enemy or not, he will most certainly try to use anything that hurts us to separate us from God and doubt God’s goodness. We must stay rooted in the Word of God and in community to discern how the enemy might be trying to use our circumstances to turn us against God.
- 3. Relationships:** The enemy often will use the brokenness of other people to try to get a foothold in our lives. Hurt people hurt people, and when we are hurt by people who are meant to care for and protect us (or just people out on the street, for that matter), our emotions, if left unsundered to God, leave us vulnerable to the enemy’s lies.



COMMON TIMES OF ATTACK

While you can face spiritual warfare at any point, there are common times when the enemy seems to attack us. Noting these times in advance can give you a heads up on when you can expect to feel spiritually attacked by the enemy. Please note these are not directly from Scripture but rather are based on my own experience and the testimonies of faithful believers I know:

1. When you are making significant progress in growing closer to the Lord. Examples include:
 - a. Surrendering a part of your life to Him that you never have previously
 - b. Choosing to repent of a sin and seeking help to find freedom
 - c. Reading the Word or spending more time in prayer than you have before
 - d. Seeking to build community with other believers who will draw you closer to God
 - e. Going to church again
 - f. Doing Through the Fog!

2. When you are engaging in an activity that is a direct assault on the enemy's territory. Examples include:
 - a. Engaging in missionary work with people who have never accepted Christianity before
 - b. Preaching or leading a Bible study
 - c. Spearheading a serving project in the community
 - d. Sharing the gospel with someone who is not a Christian

3. Before or after you receive a new insight or direction from the Lord. The enemy would love to distract you with busyness so that you don't stop to listen to what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you, and he loves to steal, kill, and destroy any seed of hope or vision or truth that God plants in your soul.

4. Before a big spiritual breakthrough or significant turning point in our lives, ministries, etc. These are times when a new shift in our life could bring glory to God and draw others to Him, and Satan does not want that. Examples include:
 - a. Before you get married,
 - b. Before having a child
 - c. Starting a ministry
 - d. Writing a book
 - e. Becoming an empty-nester
 - f. Making a job transition
 - g. Moving to a new city

PRACTICAL PRACTICES

Now that we are aware of some of the enemy's schemes, what are some practical ways to prepare ourselves? Take a look at the spiritual armor of God given to us in Ephesians 6:10-17:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 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. 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Here are some practical ways we can wear the armor of God each day:

1. **Belt of Truth:** The belt in a Roman soldier's armor (which the metaphor of armor in Ephesians was based on) was the piece of armor to which all the other pieces were attached. Without the belt, nothing else would work or be held together. Our Truth and our belt is the Word of God. It's not shiny and it's not glittery, but to be held together with armor it's important that we prioritize spending time in the Word of God. I understand that whatever physical suffering you deal with may make it challenging to consistently read the Bible. If that's the case, try some alternative options such as listening to the Bible on audio, picking one piece of Scripture and just meditating on that for as long as you're able, or start a reading plan on a Bible app such as YouVersion (if you're looking for ideas, scan the QR code below to check out a reading plan I created called *From Chronic Pain to Constant Praise*).



2. **Breastplate of Righteousness:** A breastplate protects a soldier's heart. To protect our hearts, we must walk in righteousness. Apart from the Holy Spirit, this is impossible (Romans 3:23). But with the Holy Spirit, anything is possible (Luke 1:37). In order to grow in righteousness, put your faith into action. Find a way to encourage someone else or serve someone else, die to your flesh, and actually implement what you've read in the Word each day. Maintain accountability and ask for discernment of the Spirit to guard against righteousness becoming legalism, too.

3. **Shoes with the Readiness of the Gospel of Peace:** A Roman's shoes in his armor were fitted with studs that dug into the ground. This helped the soldier keep his footing when being attacked or when taking ground. God's peace is supposed to function as the spikes in our shoes that keep us grounded under attack. Without making an idol of peace (sometimes God calls us to do things that are uncomfortable), evaluate each day if the peace of God is ruling in your heart (Colossians 3:15).
4. **Shield of Faith:** A Roman's shield was not only used defensively, but it would be locked with the shields of his fellow soldiers on either side of him to move forward offensively. The shield was meant to be used with others. Each day, practice linking your faith with the faith of other believers. Whether that's a roommate, friend, family member, or spouse, find ways to be vulnerable, seen, and known by trustworthy believers.
5. **Helmet of Salvation:** Salvation is not meant to solely be a ticket to heaven, but it is supposed to begin a new way of living in your life. As a helmet protects a soldier's head, applying our salvation (rather than just receiving it) protects us from the attacks of the enemy. To apply your salvation is to allow its past-tense justification to change our lives in the present (sanctification).² In order to put on your spiritual helmet each day, ask the Holy Spirit where something in your heart or mind is not in alignment with His truth. If He reveals something, repent, ask for God's help, and change course.
6. **Sword of the Spirit:** This double-sided sword in the Roman soldier's arsenal could disembowel their enemy with minimal penetration. In the same way, the Word of God can disembowel the enemy even if we don't get a full stab in. The Word of God is that powerful! Read the Word and memorize the Word. Write it on sticky notes, put a verse as a screensaver on your phone, have someone quiz you on a verse each week, write the first letter of each word of a verse on your hand as a way to help you memorize it, etc. Whatever works for you, it is vital to memorize God's Word so that you have a sword ready to use whenever you face attack.

GOD'S GIFT

While you may be familiar with the warfare language used in Ephesians, what you might not know is that it is a masterful reference back to Isaiah 59:15-19. In this scripture, Isaiah describes God's disappointment with Israel and their wickedness:

*"Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him
That there was no justice.
He saw that there was no man,
And wondered that there was no intercessor;"*

Isaiah then describes God metaphorically putting on armor to wage war against their sin:

*“Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.
For He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloak.”*

As you step into this study, I want you to see this incredible shift in Scripture. This passage in Isaiah shows us a time when God’s people had turned from him to idolatry, witchcraft, and child sacrifice, leaving God no choice but to execute justice on his people by reminding them of His power and holiness through the metaphor of armor. In her study *The Armor of God*, Priscilla Shirer states that *“In response to this demoralization, God Himself responds by donning His armor, in essence His own character and virtues, to bring judgment and justice.”*³ God once had to don His own armor to come against His own people who were betraying Him. But now, the new covenant we have in Christ has torn the barrier between God and sinful humanity. God no longer has to wear His spiritual armor against us, but freely gives us His spiritual armor to use against the devil and demons. The Church can be fitted as a divine warrior, united together and outfitted to take our stand as one body. I hope you picture this divine twist as you move forward as a Warrior in God’s Kingdom.

DAILY PRAYER

LORD, thank you for your truth in my life. Thank you for my salvation in Jesus Christ, by whom I am sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14). I ask that as I seek you today you would open my mind to receive your truth in your Word and through your Spirit. Please reveal my heart to me and make known to me the paths of life. Guard me against the lies and attacks of the enemy and help me be aware of his schemes. Show me how to submit my flesh and my mind to you, God. Holy Spirit, give me courage to not only live defensively, but to live offensively for your Kingdom. Lead me not into temptation, and deliver me from the evil one. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

EXTRA RESOURCES

- *Dressed to Kill* by Rick Renner
- *The Armor of God* by Priscilla Shirer
- *What Demons Can Do to Saints* by Merrill Unger



ENDNOTES

1. Rick Renner, *Dressed To Kill: A Biblical Approach to Spiritual Warfare and Armor*, (Teach All Nations, 1991), 39
2. Priscilla Shirer, *The Armor of God*, (Lifeway Church Resources, 2015), 153-155
3. Priscilla Shirer, *The Armor of God*, (Lifeway Church Resources, 2015), 65

