

Can We Really Blame All Our Warfare on Spirits Like Jezebel?

Spiritual warfare against churches that are making an impact for God can be fierce—sometimes discouraging and sometimes even deadly. I've known some pastors who quit and other pastors who died premature deaths in the face of the intense battle.

Yes, the **spiritual warfare** is all too real at times. But can we really blame spirits like Jezebel, witchcraft and religion for all our warfare? Yes, principalities and powers surely attack, but too often the leadership is willfully opening the front door to every kind of evil.

Indeed, too often the enemy has plenty of help from offended believers. Too often discernment is lacking, and the onslaughts continue unabated—or even increase as spiritual sleuths go on a witch hunt for the Jezebels, Ahabs, Absaloms or other demons that carry rock-star status in the **spiritual warfare** culture. And too often these religious sleuths label certain members of the congregation troublemakers and seek to shut them out when those members aren't the problem at all.

No, I'm not exaggerating. This is a sad but true reality in some churches. I lived it.

A Badge of Honor?

I was once part of a church where we wore the "I'm under attack" label like a badge of honor. Leadership joked that even attempts to create a flyer for outreach would unleash principalities and powers against them. The not-to-subtle insinuation was that the church was such a threat to the enemy that he dispatched a host of demons to thwart its every step.

This church was proud of its warfare. And it was into extremes.

Taking pride in being attacked was the first sign that something was wrong. If not that, then the constant bickering on the worship team—yes, infighting among those who were supposed to usher in the presence of God—should have been a clue. And if not that, then the literal hissy fits at staff meetings should have made it crystal clear. And if not that, the senior pastor's habit of calling private meetings where he tore people apart with the words of his mouth should have offered a final verdict.

No, it wasn't Jezebel targeting the church for destruction. Many had yielded to a garden variety spirit of strife. You could see this spirit of strife manifest on international outreaches and local community events alike. There was an angry undercurrent woven into the fabric of the church. Oh, how it must have grieved the **Holy Spirit** to see men of God belittling one another and sisters in Christ contending to have their way instead of preferring one another in honor. There was no discernment among the leadership about the true root of the warfare because the staff had grieved the One who offers the gift of **discerning of spirits**.

This church opened the door to the principalities and powers that were assaulting it by refusing to resist strife's whispers. That spirit of strife stymied the growth of the church and its people, many who left complaining, "There's no love in this church!" I dare say the spirit of strife helped lead many into deception, as they were always buffeting the air against principalities and powers but never repenting for the spiritual pride in their own hearts. They didn't see it. They didn't want to see it.

What Causes Strife?

Yes, the spiritual warfare is all too real at times. But too

often we tap into a spirit of strife that afflicts the entire congregation. Strife spreads like wildfire. And it's not always so obvious as bickering on the worship team, screaming in staff meetings, or behind-the-door browbeatings. You may never see these things going on if you aren't part of the "inner circle." Politically correct church leaders are experts at masking an angry spirit. Or maybe you do see it. And maybe you see it in your own heart.

So, what does strife look like and what causes it? Where you see power struggles and exertion of superiority, you can't automatically blame **Jezebel**. Strife is the likely motivator. When you see arguing or contending over anything, it's not always rebellion. Strife is typically lurking. When you see double standards, where one escapes correction for a major offense and another is sternly rebuked for a minor offense, strife could be at the root.

Beloved, strife is an abomination to God (Prov. 6:16-19). Strife affects the anointing and the flow of the Holy Ghost (Ps. 133:1-3). Strife grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Strife destroys relationships (Prov. 17:9). Strife is rooted in anger (Prov. 29:22), hatred (Prov. 10:12), pride (Prov. 13:10) and a quarrelsome, self-seeking spirit (Gal. 5:14-18; Luke 22:24-27). James put it this way:

"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3, NKJV).

It was James who also said this: "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife

is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:14-16, KJV).

Let me repeat what James wrote so you don't miss it: Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. Strife opens the door to principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Strife opens the door to **spiritual warfare**.

If your church is under attack, I urge you not to have a knee-jerk reaction. Don't go on a witch hunt for **Jezebel**. (I talk more about this in my book, *The Spiritual Warrior's Guide to Defeating Jezebel*.) Don't ignore the devil, either, and certainly don't take pride in the fact that the enemy has targeted you for attack. Instead, get on your face and worship God. Repent of anything He shows you that's not right in your own heart. Then ask Him what the source of the warfare is. It could be Jezebel or any number of spirits coming against you. But it could be internal strife. And nothing kills the anointing faster than strife. Don't lie against the truth. If strife is the root of your spiritual warfare, repent so you can see clearly to battle your other spiritual enemies. Amen.

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *The Spiritual Warrior's Guide to Defeating Jezebel*. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.