

One Question Every Believer Should Ask Before Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

“Shall I go up?” David, a mighty warrior for God, asked Jehovah this critical question before running to the battle line—and we would be **wise** to do the same.

Although we war from a place of victory, rushing into spiritual warfare outside of God’s timing can lead to defeat. Although we are taught to remain on the offensive, presuming to enter a battle God has not called us to fight can be a **dangerous mistake**. And although we’re in a spiritual war, the battle really is the Lord’s.

“Shall I go up?” Every spiritual warrior needs to ask this question before engaging the enemy. In other words, we need to be led by the Holy Spirit into battle if we want God to lead us into triumph. If we lose a battle, it could very well be that the Holy Spirit didn’t lead us into the spiritual skirmish in the first place.

‘Shall I Go Up?’

Again, David was a mighty warrior for God. He officially started his military career by defeating a giant named Goliath that terrified the entire Israeli army (1 Sam. 17). Talk about coming onto the warfare scene with a flare!

David built quite a reputation for warfare. In fact, after David defeated Goliath, Saul set the brave teenager over his men of war. When David was coming home from his big win, the women came out of all the cities of Israel. They were singing and dancing and said, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7).

David could have gotten puffed up in the midst of the honor. He could have taken pride in his hand-to-hand combat skills. But he didn't get prideful, and he didn't get presumptuous. And soon enough, David would have the opportunity to play hero again when the Philistines were fighting against the city of Keilah and robbing the threshing floors (1 Sam. 23:1).

Clearly, there was an injustice underway, but David didn't take it upon himself to bring justice. Rather, he asked his just God this critical question: "'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?' And the Lord said to David, 'Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah'" (v. 2).

Seeking God's Confirmation

When David's men admitted they were afraid to go to battle, he wasn't **prideful** and presumptuous enough to think he could save the whole city with a sling and a stone just because he did it once before. And he didn't pooh-pooh their fears. Instead, David inquired of the Lord a second time. The Lord gave David the confirmation he was looking for:

"And the Lord answered him and said, 'Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.' And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah" (vv. 4-5).

There's a good lesson here. Even though God initially told David to go up, he was cautious—and humble enough—to continue seeking the Lord for confirmation when it appeared the circumstances could be changing. He was concerned for the welfare of his men, who were afraid. Instead of rebuking them for flowing in fear, he went back to the Lord to make sure he heard right.

I believe this careful, caring approach is one of the reasons David's men trusted his **leadership** so much. If you want to be

an effective general in God's army, you need to pray about your team's legitimate concerns before heading into battle. That doesn't mean you cower in the face of a challenge. It just means you make doubly—even triply—sure that you are in God's will and that you've counted the costs of waging war before leading others into dangerous territory.

King David Stays Humble

Later, when David was anointed king over Israel, he once again faced the prospect of war. The Philistines heard he was officially installed as king and went down to the stronghold, ready to attack.

David asked the Lord, "'Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?' And the Lord said to David, 'Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand'" (2 Sam. 5:19). David defeated the Philistines and gave God the glory, saying, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water" (v. 20).

Last week, I wrote a column headlined "You're Resisting the Devil, So Why Won't He Flee?" I talked about how pride in our spiritual warfare skills can cause us to stumble before our enemies because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. David didn't make that mistake. But King Ahab did. And it's one we need to avoid.

Ahab, Jezebel's husband and a mighty **warrior** who posted many victories, was certainly full of pride. God's prophet Micaiah clearly told him what no other false prophet on his payroll dared: that he would lose if he went to battle in Ramoth Gilead (1 Kings 22:17-23). Instead of heeding the voice of God's prophet, proud Ahab arrested the man of God and ran to the battle line anyway. He was killed in battle.

Before you run to the battle line, ask the Holy Spirit, "Shall I go up?" Then obey what He tells you. It could be He's assigned someone else to "go up" and defeat the enemy. It

could be that God is taking the battle into His own hands. Or it could be that you aren't yet skilled enough in battle to take on the enemy that's rising up. The reason doesn't matter. What matters is being in the will of God, even in our spiritual warfare. Amen.