

Our Most Powerful Weapons Are Spiritual

As followers of Jesus, there are two extremes we must avoid when working for cultural reformation. One is that we are entirely spiritual in our approach, relying only on prayer, fasting and preaching the gospel while neglecting the many practical, more “earthly” things we can do as well. The other is that we put all our emphasis on those practical, more “earthly” things (from feeding the poor to voting and from getting involved in the school systems to learning to be effective social media influencers) while neglecting the spiritual aspects of our calling. To do the former is to handicap our efforts; to do the latter is to sabotage them completely.

But since the foundation of all our work is spiritual, the most effective weapons we have are spiritual (and therefore, by the Spirit, supernatural), and the thing that sets us apart from the world is our spiritual—and very real—relationship with God. Everything we do—and I cannot stress this strongly enough—must flow out of this Spirit-first emphasis. If we can keep this balance, then we can see radical change come.

These words of Jesus speak to us directly and forcefully, reminding us of the utter folly of trying to accomplish God’s work in human strength:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is

that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:1–8, ESV, author’s emphasis).

We do well to meditate on these words regularly all the days of our lives. They are always on target and never get old.

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Think back to Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Although the context was very different than our current discussion, the question that he asked them is quite relevant to us today: “Are you that stupid? Having begun with the Spirit’s power, do you think you can reach the goal under your own power?” (Gal. 3:3, CJB). So, if God by His Spirit fuels the fires of a powerful season of revival, giving us a vision to see our community (or city or nation) changed, why do we think that we can now accomplish this goal by means of human effort alone?

Paul also had these important words to say. We know them well, but it is too easy to lose sight of them:

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 (Eph. 6:10–12, NIV).

Or, as The Living Bible paraphrases verse 12, “For we are not

fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies—the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.”

Do we really believe this? Do we understand that, ultimately, it is not people we are fighting but demonic powers? That our issue is not so much with a political party or political agenda but with a satanic plan? And do we realize that the devil wants to destroy our ideological opponents as well, since he hates every human being with an unfathomable hatred? More importantly, do we realize that Jesus shed His blood for those very people—the ones whose words and actions grieve us so deeply—and that He wants to reach out to them to redeem them, just as He reached out to us? Is that our spiritual perspective?

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Paul also wrote this:

For though we live in the world [or, in the flesh], we do not wage war as the world [or, the flesh] does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world [or, of the flesh]. 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 (2 Cor. 10:3–5, NIV).

Or, to quote part of the paraphrase of these verses in *The Message*, “We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ.” God-tools

indeed! J.B. Phillips, in his expanded translation, put it like this:

The truth is that, although of course we lead normal human lives, the battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level. The very weapons we use are not those of human warfare but powerful in God's warfare for the destruction of the enemy's strongholds. Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defence that men erect against the true knowledge of God. We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ.

May we never lose sight of this important truth: "the battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level." With that in mind, we confront the culture with unshakeable truth, we take our stand on relevant moral issues and we cast our political votes.

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