

Spiritual Warfare 101: How Jesus Dealt With Evil

From the moment Jesus showed up on the earth, He faced opposition. The majority of people may not have understood Him or His mission very well, but Satan did—at least to some degree. Jesus' whole purpose in coming as a man was to save humanity, and that could not be accomplished without defeating and destroying the devil and His kingdom of darkness. The incarnation was, along with all its other aspects, an invasion into enemy territory.

For Satan and his realm, Jesus's presence here was an ultimate declaration: "This means war!"

Yet Jesus seemed completely unruffled by such strong opposition. He never showed fear or anxiety when He encountered demons or those controlled by them, or even Satan himself. We never see Him on a hunt for demonic activity; His focus on being about His Father's business of saving humanity seemed unshakable. But whenever Satan or His demons showed up, Jesus responded with absolute authority over them.

As difficult as our lives may seem and as much demonic opposition as we may feel we are facing, we will never see Satan and his whole kingdom of darkness arrayed against us to the degree Jesus experienced. We can learn a great deal by examining the ways in which Jesus dealt with evil while here. Your own fear and anxiety will lessen as you more fully appreciate Christ's authority over evil and what His victory means for you and me today.

When it comes to spiritual warfare, Jesus is our divine example, our suffering Savior and our victorious King. Each of those dimensions is important. Some discussions of spiritual warfare focus on only one or two of those dimensions, but

without them all our Christian life will be ineffective and distorted.

Perhaps my favorite summary of Jesus's life is that proclaimed by Peter when he described "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). Everything Jesus did during His life and ministry was undoing what Satan had been doing. He was all about healing disease, setting people free from oppression and saving them from sin. It's no surprise that the kingdom of darkness was threatened.

Jesus frequently encountered those who were under the control of demons. The Gospels make several summary statements about Jesus healing those who were possessed or tormented.

Every time Jesus encountered Satan or his demons, He responded with calm, authoritative words. This began at His initial encounter with Satan in the wilderness just after His baptism. Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and to bow down and worship him. Each time Jesus defeated him not with a display of power but with His words. But they weren't just any words; they were Scripture.

Every time after this that Jesus encountered evil in His ministry, He responded the same way. He spoke with authority, and the demons had to leave.

Can you imagine the awed excitement with which Jesus's disciples heard Him say, "You want to do the same things you've seen Me do? You want to preach the good news, heal people, cast out demons, and raise the dead? Yes, you can! It's time for you to go and do it" (see Matthew 10:8). I can picture them going out two by two perhaps wondering if it would work.

So what does this mean for you and me? What does Jesus as our

divine example show us about dealing with evil?

- Have no fear or anxiety. We have absolutely no need to experience fear or anxiety in our encounters with Satan or his kingdom of darkness. (See Peter 5:8.)
- Fill your mind and heart with God's Word.
- Remain focused on what God gives you to do.

✖ *Adapted from Overcoming Fear & Anxiety Through Spiritual Warfare by Carol Peters-Tanksley, copyright 2017, published by Siloam, Charisma House. This book will help you discover the source of your fear and anxiety and break their hold. To order your copy, click on this link.*

Prayer Power for the Week Beginning May 20, 2018

This week ask the Lord to show you the source of your fears and give you Scriptures you can use in spiritual warfare. Remember that perfect love casts out fear and thank Him for His perfect love. Continue to pray for our spiritual, national and civic leaders as well as our first responders, military and their families. 1 John 4:18; 1 Peter 5:8