

When the Devil Tries to Kill You: 8 Practical Steps for Victorious Spiritual Warfare

Do you feel like you're walking through the valley of the shadow of death? It can feel like the loneliest and scariest place. I know that valley well. I've walked through it in different seasons of life, and I've learned that it's something we're supposed to do just that in-walk. We're supposed to walk until we're out of it.

I learned this the hard way in a season right after Kathy and I got married. I made the mistake of camping out in the valley for three years, not because I wanted to, but because I had been taught that Christians could not be demonized. This teaching set me up to war against my flesh instead of the spirits that were attacking me every day. The truth is that the spiritual realm is real, and angels and demons are very active on the earth, whether we see them or not.

My Story of Hell on Earth

While Kathy was fighting her way through her pregnancy, I was carrying tons of responsibility at the shop. I worked 12 hours a day, six days a week and rarely stopped to eat lunch. Consequently, my diet consisted mostly of candy bars, Coke and potato chips. One night, exhausted from a long, hard week of work, I got in the bathtub to relax my tired body while Kathy lay sick on the sofa. As I started to get out of the tub to dry off an intense thought hit me: *I am going to die.*

Like everyone else in the world, bad thoughts were not foreign to me, but this was different. This thought was so strong that it caused panic to rush through my whole being like stampeding cattle! My entire body began to tremble as my heart pounded out of my chest and my pulse raced uncontrollably. All my

strength drained from my limbs, and I struggled to get out of the tub. I fell back into the water, shouting desperately for Kathy to help me. Eight months pregnant, she strained to help me out of the bathtub and onto the couch. Then she ran into the kitchen to call our family doctor. He relayed a few questions to me through Kathy and concluded that I was having a panic attack, not a heart attack. Little did I know that this was the beginning of a three-and-a-half-year journey through hell.

Touring Hell and Calling for Heaven

The panic attacks continued, turning into endless, tormenting nightmares. Horrible images filled my mind as I imagined terrible things happening to me or envisioned myself doing dreadful acts. Although I knew in my heart that these images and thoughts were illusions, they still felt so real. I often wondered if I was losing my mind.

Finally, Kathy and I decided to quit our jobs and move up into the mountains to find a slower pace of life. We relocated to Lewiston, California, a town of about 900 people way up in the Trinity Alps. As time passed, the fear intensified, affecting every aspect of our lives.

Spiritual Attacks and a Prison Break

Two more years passed with no relief. Then, just when I thought it could not get any worse, I began to experience demonic visitations. Demons would literally come into our room at night and torment me. Lights went on and off, and pictures spontaneously fell off the wall. The phone rang every few minutes with people saying crazy things on the other end of the line. I am aware that many people do not believe in spirits, demons and angels, so this paragraph may be a little hard to swallow. But if you are reading this article and have had or are having these experiences, I hope you believe in them now.

By the third year of this terrible storm, Kathy had given birth to our second beautiful daughter, Shannon, but my life was becoming unbearable. Then, early one cold winter morning, something startling happened. I got up about 3:00 a.m., turned the stereo on low and lay down next to the speaker so I would not wake my family. We did not get very good radio reception in the mountains, but I thought I would try to find a late-night talk show to help get my mind off my condition. Finally, I tuned in to a preacher. The static was so bad that I could only make out about every third or fourth word of his message. Yet in the midst of the noise, I heard him say something that would forever change my life. He quoted Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7, NKJV). Then he went on to explain, "Fear is a spirit! Some of you are thinking you are going insane, but you are just listening to the spirit of insanity. Not all your thoughts are your own. Evil spirits talk to you by giving you their thoughts."

I was stunned. I had been taught that Christians could be mentally ill but could not be demonized. What I did not realize until that night was that I had been educated right out of my solution.

I turned off the radio and asked Jesus what I should do. Immediately I heard a voice inside my spirit say, "You have been listening to the spirit of insanity and the spirit of fear. Tell them to leave you right now!" Lying on my back on the living room floor, I said in a quiet but confident voice, "You, spirit of fear, and you, spirit of insanity, get off me right now in Jesus' name!"

I could not see anything, but suddenly, I felt something get up off my body. It physically felt like a lead blanket, the kind dentists use during X-rays, and it was being lifted off me. My shaking completely stopped, peace filled my soul, and my mind was clear again. Joy overwhelmed my heart, and I laughed out loud for the first time in more than three years.

A miracle had happened in my life, and I was eager to tell Kathy and the world about it.

Learning to Stay Free

I knew I had experienced something incredible that night, yet I did not fully understand that I had received a real deliverance. What I experienced that night was not some kind of spiritual hype or psychosomatic occurrence. I was set free! I enjoyed complete freedom for more than a week. After three years of hell, it was amazing to be filled with peace. My joy returned, my appetite came back and all my physical symptoms disappeared. The demonic visitations left, and for the first time in years, I slept through the night.

But soon I encountered the harsh reality that getting free and staying free were two very different things. One dark, cold night, I was driving home from work in my jeep, winding through the forest on a narrow, unlit road that followed a wide creek. I was so excited about my newfound freedom that I shouted out loud; "I'm going to tell everyone about this—I'm going to help thousands of people get free!"

Just then, a voice in my mind shouted back, "If you tell anyone about this, I will kill you!"

Suddenly, all my symptoms returned. I had such a bad panic attack that I could not even drive. I pulled over into the ditch alongside the road. My heart was racing, and I was hyperventilating.

Then a quiet, yet powerful voice asked me a question: "Does the devil hate you?"

I knew instinctively it was the Holy Spirit speaking to me. "Yes!" I responded in my mind.

"Then why didn't he kill you when you got saved?" the voice pressed.

"I don't know," I replied, still trying to gain my composure.

"Because he can't! He has no power over you unless you give it to him," the voice insisted.

Peace began to seep back into my soul, and the anxiety slowly lifted over the next few minutes.

I began to shout again, "I'm free! I'm free!"

That scene repeated itself many times over the next several years as I learned little by little how to stay free and keep my peace.

Who's the Enemy?

It's so important that we understand we are not warring against our old man, but against principalities. The war is finally won when you recognize that these thoughts are not your own and you resist them. Ephesians 6:10-13 says:

Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

When we understand that our old man is dead, we don't try to fight with him anymore.

Because these thoughts are manifestations of evil spirits and not just bad ideas, when you decide to resist them, it becomes a struggle—an intense battle for land in the spirit realm. Most people retreat or digress to try and find peace or solace instead of press in and defeat the enemy.

Spiritual Conflict

Spiritual conflicts most often occur when we advance into new territory that is inhabited by evil spirits. Much like Joshua's promised land experience or Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls, the enemy defends his territory when we are pushing forward into the new land. Most Christians are completely unaware that these are real spirit wars, so they retreat at the first sign of conflict, failing to recognize the true source of the battle. It is important to understand that evil spirits attack by giving you compelling thoughts. In other words, they make you feel like you want to do them, even though they are the opposite of your history and nature. Then those same spirits accuse you for having these thoughts and feelings. If you believe these accusations, you lose confidence in yourself and God's ability to keep you. This starts a spiral down into depression, anxiety and self-hatred.

Practical Warfare

A few things that are important to remember in these times are that these evil spirits have no power over you (even though it feels as though they do). Rather, you have power over them. Second, these battles come in waves, and they will not last forever. Remember: if it's not good, it's not the end. And finally, you probably did nothing wrong to cause this battle. As a matter of fact, you are most likely experiencing this battle because you are doing something right. Here are a few more things to hold onto while you walk through the valley:

1. Don't be afraid, but instead remember the Lord. "After I looked around, I stood up and said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, 'Stop being terrified because of them! Remember instead that the Lord is great and awesome. So fight for each other—and for your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses'" (Neh. 4:14).
2. Remember the testimonies in your life. They are weapons

of warfare. Fill yourself with faith by holding onto testimonies from other people's lives too. Revelation 19:10c says, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." This means if God's done it before, He can and will do it again.

3. Remember the work you are doing is noble. Nehemiah 6:3 says, "So I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I am doing a great work, so I am not able to come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?'"
4. Remember who you are! The enemy will try and convince you that you are defeated, but the truth is that you are a victor! He'll try and convince you that you're the worst person in the world, but the truth is that you're the apple of God's eye, destined to change the world. Speak the truth about who you are over yourself with every assault that comes your way.
5. Trust Jesus to keep you. Jude 24 says, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with rejoicing."
6. Release the peace within you through singing and proclaiming Jesus. Remember the freedom within you will become the freedom around you. Acts 16:25-26 says, "At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's shackles were loosened."
7. No matter what, nothing can separate you from God's love—not even the valley! "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom.

8:38-39).

8. Remember that God never leaves you, and He's walking through the valley with you: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4).

Keep Walking Today

This too shall pass. Even though we may feel crazy in the valley, we have been given a sound mind. Here again, we have to remind ourselves that how we feel isn't always how we are. I want to encourage you with this verse: 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Hold onto this as you walk through the valley, and remember the goal is to keep walking. Don't set up camp, and don't give up.

I am praying today that you would have peace in this season, that God would protect you at night and that His voice would be the loudest one over you. I pray that irrational thoughts would be dissolved in Jesus' name and that Holy Spirit would make clear the illusion and lie of the enemy. I pray that angels would surround you, and that the right people would come around you in this season.

If you're struggling in the valley, I encourage you to listen to a message I recently preached at Bethel by clicking [here](#). You can watch it free with your Bethel TV account. I have so much compassion for everyone who may be working through this, and I have so much hope that you can and will be free.

What are some things you do to make it through the valley? Let me know in the comments! {eoa}

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