

Are You Ready for War?

Every day from every direction the winds keep blowing. The continuing war with Iraq coupled with the ongoing global war on terror threaten to disrupt the peace and calm so many of us have taken for granted. Since 9/11, it has been easy to see that we in America were not prepared for this period of instability.

Often there is a parallel between the natural and supernatural realms. In the supernatural realm today, the winds of war are blowing as well. The church in America needs to be prepared for the spiritual challenges that lie on our very doorsteps. But are we?

In Judges 3 we read how a generation of Israel was somewhat oblivious to what war was really about. The Lord remedied this situation by allowing some enemy nations to exist so that “the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war” (see v. 2, NKJV).

For Christians, learning to do “war” means gaining measurable victories over the kingdom of darkness. Think about it this way: When a thief gets saved, stealing diminishes; when a wife-beater gets saved, a family might be restored; when a drug dealer gets saved, drug dealing decreases in one neighborhood. As James 5:20 says, “He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

There are five primary ways for us to effectively fight the good fight of faith—the kind that changes lives for Jesus.

The will to work, fight and win. Gen. Douglas MacArthur said, “It is fatal to enter any war without the will to win it.” The Bible says that the Jews in Nehemiah’s day “had a mind to work” when it came time to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in the face of their enemies (see Neh. 4:6).

Knowing and having faith in Jesus' victory at Calvary and how it has changed countless situations, lives and families through the ages ought to provide plenty of motivation for pressing through to victory.

Righteous living. A clear heart and life allow us to stand in the face of adversity as well as to draw inner strength and stamina for undertaking spiritual action. Without righteousness, the devil can rightfully accuse us of attitudes and actions we have not repented of.

If our lives are not right with God we can pray the prayers, sing the songs and yell the formulated declarations but our voice is a shout with no clout. The condition of our heart matters: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

Prayer. So much can be said about praying, but I like what James wrote best: "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). The "much" it avails includes the power of God being loosed in us and through us as we fight for the lives of our family, friends, cities and nations. I have watched it thwart the works of darkness and help open the doors to evangelistic ministry.

The Word of God. God's Word ought to be stored up in our lives so that when we need it, we don't have to run to a bookshelf to find it. The Word is to be hidden in our hearts where it is available to be brought to our minds by the Holy Spirit on a moment's notice. In this way, Scripture becomes "the sword of the Spirit"—ready to be used when we face a situation in our own life or in another's. Is your ammo ready?

Winning people to Christ. This could be the most underused or even forgotten weapon of spiritual warfare, especially when influencing families, neighborhoods—even cities. There is no spiritual weapon that can replace evangelism. There is no spiritual substitute for evangelism, for it is the primary way

of actually reaching out and touching another person with the life, love and gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the easiest ways to measure the victories of our war is with this question: Are lives being changed and people getting saved? People coming to Christ and lives being transformed are a sure way to measure if our ministries or churches are effectively waging war in our communities.

Let's not be like the Israelites in Judges who knew nothing of war. Every day gives us great opportunities to make a difference. Let's move to the front lines.