

13 Truths About Spiritual Warfare for Leaders

Over the past 20 years, I have studied, written, and taught about spiritual warfare. Based on that work, here are some warfare reminders for church leaders:

1. The Bible is not a book about the devil. The Bible is about God. This truth matters, as many people interested in spiritual warfare give the devil more attention than the Bible does. That approach simply distorts the biblical picture of warfare.

2. The enemy is real. Paul was clear that we wrestle against principalities and powers (Eph. 6:12). Peter knew an enemy seeks to devour us like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). No hermeneutical gymnastics can legitimately erase this spiritual reality.

3. The battle is not ours. David recognized that when he fought Goliath (1 Sam. 17:47). Jehaziel reminded Jehoshaphat of that truth (2 Chron. 20:15). God is our warrior (Exo. 15:3). He always has been and always will be.

4. People are not the enemy. Paul was equally clear that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Even when people frustrate and anger us, they are not the enemy. When we remember this truth, we will love, shepherd, and pray for people differently.

5. Leaders are a primary target for the enemy. That truth shouldn't surprise us. The enemy knows that when leaders fall, followers are wounded in the process. I doubt I need to spend time listing the prominent Christian leaders who have fallen in the last few years.

6. The enemy strikes at marriages. Satan sought to divide Adam

and Eve (Adam turned on Eve and blamed her after their sin in Gen. 3), and he has attacked marriages since then. When marriages are destroyed, their witness to the gospel (Eph. 5:25) gets distorted – and, future generations are harmed in the process.

7. Self-dependence is evidence of the enemy's work. Satan is not alarmed by church leaders who operate in their own ability. All of our training and experience is no match for the subtle schemes of the enemy.

8. Hiddenness is a warning signal. The enemy often operates in the darkness. He delights when we sin and choose to keep our sin in the secret places of our lives. In no way does he want us to confess our sin.

9. Leaders often fight their battles alone. Sometimes leaders must stand alone, but too often they have no close team around them to help them win spiritual battles. Loners are by nature vulnerable to attack and defeat.

10. Sometimes leaders take on the enemy with too little prayer. Self-confident leaders are like Jesus' disciples who tried to cast out a demon without praying (Mark 9:14-29). They do not pray, pray only superficially, or pray only after the battle has been lost.

11. Even the best leaders may find themselves in non-stop warfare by God's design. The Apostle Paul was God's uniquely called apostle, but still he dealt with an ongoing thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-10). God left Paul in the battle so he would always recognize God as his strength.

12. Spiritual defeat need not be final. Simon Peter failed miserably when he denied knowing Jesus (Luke 22:54-61), but the story was not over. Jesus welcomed him back into His band of disciples and then used him to preach the gospel to Jerusalem (Acts 2).

13. The enemy will not ultimately win. He will spend eternity in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). Whether planting churches or revitalizing established congregations, church leaders can know they are ultimately on the winning side. Hell will not defeat the church.

Take time now to thank the Lord for victory in the battle.

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