

Are You Ready for Battle?

“What is spiritual warfare?”

My eyes widened in surprise as I gazed at the questioner, wondering about the seriousness of his question. But the gentleman was looking at me with an earnest curiosity that caught me off guard. Since accepting Christ as Savior in childhood and living as a Christian until an 8-year journey into witchcraft, spiritualism and ghost hunting, I have been aware of spiritual things.

I eventually repented of my occult involvement and returned my life to Christ, but because of decades of an awareness of spiritual things, I never gave much consideration to the possibility that others might not be so in the know.

“Spiritual warfare ...” I responded, uncertain of what to say. “You know, there is God and Satan. Angels and demons. Well, spiritual warfare is what Christians do. It’s how we pray when being tempted or harassed by demonic spirits. It’s how we overcome those temptations.”

Yeah, right. Even now, that vague answer has me planting face to palm.

It was not until then that I saw how unprepared I was to answer the question. It never occurred to me that Christians or anyone else might not have the vocabulary to define spiritual warfare as it is understood in the Bible. It never occurred to me people might not have any concept of the spiritual battle that we all find ourselves in, or how that battle impacts our daily lives.

That gentleman’s question compelled me to learn how to be “prepared to give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15). It put me in the process that led to writing this book.

The reality of spiritual warfare is there for anyone who is enabled by the Holy Spirit to see it.

As I began thinking about how to write this book, a heinous act of murder and violence rocked America. I believe it illustrates how evil can influence a person as surely as God's goodness is able to do (even in those who do not yet know Him as Savior and Lord). Each one of us on this planet is engaged in spiritual warfare, even if we do not realize it.

The morning of July 20, 2012, my husband and I were returning home to Michigan from a Christian Booksellers Association conference in Orlando. I was feeling pretty upbeat after a week of meeting publishing professionals, getting some books signed by their authors and even meeting some celebrities who were promoting their work in Christian films. Even so, my husband and I were ready to be home. But it is a long drive from Orlando to Michigan, so Thom and I had stopped in North Carolina to catch a few hours of sleep in a hotel.

As I walked out of the bathroom, toothbrush in hand, I saw Thom sitting at the little desk staring at his laptop. He then turned to me, a look of shock and horror on his face. "You're not going to believe what's happened," he said.

Thom's eyes filled with tears as he explained. Inside a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, during a midnight screening of *The Dark Knight*, 12 people, including a 6-year-old girl, had been gunned down. A man armed with an assault rifle, a shotgun and a handgun had kicked in a door at the back of the theater. He wore riot gear and body armor and released tear gas canisters into the crowd. And then started shooting. Besides those who had died, dozens had been wounded.

As we finished packing, I felt an urgent need to pray for the surviving victims and families. My heart broke for them.

Honestly, I questioned God. What madness, what evil could beset anyone to plan and execute such violence and

terror? As I formed the thought, the answer came to me from the Holy Spirit through the words of Matthew 24:12: "Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold" (NLT).

This act was the result of our spiritual enemy's influence.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that the gunman is not culpable for his crime. The man performed a heinous act and bears the burden alone. He made a choice at some point. His true mind or motive may never be known, but he chose to commit murder, and with frightening attention to detail.

Nevertheless, Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy.

We live in a world currently under the control of "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2, ESV). The enemy. Our enemy. The church tends to take two approaches to this reality: ignore the problem or spend too much time and attention on it, as if every little thing were the result of a demon.

Neither view is helpful or effective.

Let's develop an understanding of spiritual warfare that acknowledges that we have an enemy who seeks to harm us. Let's pursue an approach that promotes sensitivity to the influences within our culture as we submit ourselves to God, as suggested in James 4:7. This is, in fact, the most essential key to spiritual warfare—submitting ourselves to God.

When I think on the events of July 20, 2012, I realize there are no easy answers to satisfy the question of why. I am unsure we can even come up with words that do not sound trite or reflect useless platitudes in the face of such evil. Rather, I am now even more determined to seek God for discernment in recognizing spiritual warfare as it occurs

daily around us.

So what say you?

Kristine McGuire grew up in church but, as an adult, became immersed in the occult. In 2007 she renounced her occult affiliations and recommitted her life to Christ. Now, as a popular speaker and writer, she shares her unique insights with others. Her writing has been featured with *Faithful Devotions*, *Praise & Coffee Magazine* and *Charisma News*. The author of *An Insider's Guide to Spiritual Warfare (Chosen)*—from which this article is adapted—she lives with her husband, Thom, in Grandville, Michigan. Visit her at .