

How You Can Be Confident of Victory When Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

If you don't know what victory looks like, how will you know when you get there?

In recent decades, our nation's military actions have often been hampered by, among other things, the lack of a clear picture of victory. A specific group or nation has become dangerous, an honest threat to our interests or our way of life, and so we go to war—sort of. Our nation's armed forces are the best in the world. But moving forward with unclear objectives or settling for half victories leads to frustration, loss and eventual defeat.

In World War II, the soldiers who landed on the beach at Normandy or the Marines who planted the U.S. flag on Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima knew they might not survive. But they knew their objective, and they knew what victory would look like. Our soldiers who fought in Vietnam or more recently in Afghanistan have been no less personally committed, but fuzzy objectives and an unclear victory have added even further suffering to their sacrifice.

Politics or popularity or the idea of a just war aside, a nation—or an individual—must know what they're fighting for in order to win.

Do You?

Do you know what your objective is? Do you know what winning in spiritual warfare looks like?

We often feel defeated when we get wounded. But is that a defeat or is that a battle scar?

We feel discouraged when we keep trying and nothing seems to change. But is that failure, or have we been entrusted to be part of a great battle?

And worst of all, we feel satisfied when we land a few blows on our spiritual foes or experience a temporary reprieve. But is that victory, or is it simply an opportunity for the enemy to reload?

A Biblical View of Spiritual Warfare

There are plenty of biblical heroes who fought against “the world, the flesh and the devil” in their quest for victory. If there’s a “hall of fame” for such heroes, it’s Hebrews 11.

We love to read the verses about Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel and David. We get excited when we hear of those “who through faith subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in fighting, and turned the armies of foreign enemies to flight. Women received their dead raised to life again” (Heb. 11:33-35).

We want to be like them. We want to obtain promises, escape our enemies, be made strong and see the dead things in our lives being raised to life again. That sounds like victory!

But Hebrews 11 doesn’t stop there. Without pausing for even a breath, it goes on: “Others were tortured and did not accept deliverance, so that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trials of mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered around in sheepskins and goatskins, while destitute, afflicted, and tormented” (Heb. 11:35-37).

Ouch! I don’t know one Christian engaging in spiritual warfare who looks forward to being jeered at, tortured, imprisoned or

killed.

But here's the thing. They won! Hebrews says, "These all have obtained a good report through faith" (Heb. 11:39).

What It Means for You and Me

We've got to stop thinking of spiritual warfare as a way to deal with the people who irritate us, to get the material things we want, or to achieve some level of success or happiness. We've got to get over the idea that if we struggle, if we're poor or unpopular or sick or a "failure," that we have lost in spiritual warfare.

What does winning look like? What do both groups listed in Hebrews 11—both those who stopped the mouths of lions and those who were sawn in two—have in common?

Winning Is Standing Firm on God's Side

That's victory in spiritual warfare. Remember, in the big picture, this war is about our allegiance, about who you will believe, obey, love, honor and worship. And in comparison, it doesn't matter all that much whether you "conquer kingdoms" or are "put to death by the sword." Whether you plant the flag on Iwo Jima or you get blown up by an enemy mortar, you're still a winner.

So what do you do in the meantime?

- 1. Choose which side you're on.** There are only two, and you get to choose.
- 2. Keep following orders.** Whatever He tells you to do, do it. It really isn't so much about you; it's about where God needs you in His plan.
- 3. Be confident in victory.** Whether you experience "success" here and now or not, we know the outcome. If you stick around on God's side, you're a winner!

We can be confident and grateful that we know the end of the story. And on the final page it says, "Jesus Wins!"

I love winning. And I know you do too. Let's be sure we're fighting for the right thing.

How do you feel about your "success" in spiritual warfare? What does "victory" mean to you? {eo}

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