

Beware of Satan's Weapons Against Your Spiritual Warfare

People who live on the sidelines are complacent. Replacing their spiritual armor with a sporty-looking civilian outfit relaxes them. But the trendy look of these sideliners is the primary symptom of what I call "spiritual HIV," or high indifference virus.

Just as medical HIV weakens a victim's immune system for warding off infections, the spiritual kind of HIV decreases a warrior's instinct and ability to engage in spiritual battles. His soldier instincts have been compromised. Unbeknownst to himself, he's gone AWOL—absent without official leave.

This infected warrior sits listlessly while his virus-stricken soul weakens from the disease. It breeds further in his soul as the unsuspecting victim adds layers of theological opinion and an assortment of Bible verses to the mix to support his faulty indifference toward spiritual warfare. The more he uses his Bible to shield himself from the war that's raging in the heavenlies, the more the virus takes over his immune system.

The high indifference virus reflects one or more of these four symptoms in its victim: 1) disinterest in the fight, 2) disbelief in the fight, 3) discouragement in the fight and 4) disdain for the fight.

Symptom No. 1: Disinterest in the Fight

The soldier afflicted with spiritual HIV becomes disinterested in and bored with the spiritual fight. He doesn't know he's sick. This virus creates for him a lifestyle of dispassion and disregard, not just for the fight, but also for the outcome of the fight. He feels there's nothing at stake for him in this

fight or believes the stakes are too small to pique his interest.

Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the main aspects of the mission of Jesus was to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). This includes removing blinders from the minds of people so they can positively respond to God's call to love and serve Him. Jesus was always engaged in the spiritual war. The stakes have not changed!

Admittedly, war is never pretty. Fighting is not nice. Yet Scripture declares we are to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). The Bible positions spiritual warfare as a necessary reality Christians must embrace in order to push back the powers of darkness.

But fighting is not just a necessary action. It is a loving action. The stakes are too high to become disinterested. When you participate in the spiritual fight, you join God in loving people into His kingdom. You fight because you love!

Symptom No. 2: Disbelief in the Fight

While some ailing believers are disinterested in the fight, others living with spiritual HIV disbelieve in the fight altogether. The high indifference virus causes their compromised souls not to see or believe there is a spiritual war happening around them. The irony of this view is that many of these spiritual HIV victims hold to the inerrancy of the Bible, which includes teachings such as Ephesians 6:13.

To one who has never fought spiritually, this verse seems like religious chatter. It has little or no meaning to civilians. Only warriors understand warrior language. But since no warrior's uniform is donned on this person, we must conclude they don't truly believe in the existence of a spiritual war.

When spiritual HIV attacks a soul, the diseased warrior—especially one with little or no experience in

spiritual warfare—often concludes, “I’m just having a season of bad luck.” He doesn’t put two and two together by looking at how the spirit world impacts circumstances in the natural world. Such a partial view of life keeps the diseased soldier functioning as a nonspiritual being—a civilian oblivious to the struggles of war. This flawed perspective cannot be confused with the Judeo-Christian worldview because it’s contrary to the Scriptures. If disbelief in the fight causes you to forfeit your ground, such a position cannot be held in good conscience.

Jesus clearly taught that Satan and evil spirits are not metaphorical terms representing evil. They are real beings who have the capability and power to get directly involved in the affairs of human beings. If you hold to a disbelief in the fight, you are also saying, then, that Jesus had a mental breakdown in the desert during His 40 days of fasting.

Quite the contrary. Jesus was not having an emotional breakdown. He was dealing with the dreaded foe—Satan. A disbelief in the fight is a disbelief in Jesus’ wilderness experience. You can’t have it both ways!

Symptom No. 3: Discouragement in the Fight

Three years ago, I visited the island of Patmos—the place off the Aegean Sea where the apostle John was imprisoned (Rev. 1:9). From a grotto located halfway up the side of a hill on Patmos, John received the vision of the apocalypse. To preserve this historic site, the Coptic Orthodox Church built the Monastery of Saint John around the grotto about A.D. 1088.

While visiting, I encountered a memorable sight when walking into the grotto. A stern-looking Coptic priest stood guard. It was his turn to protect the sanctity of that holy place. Tourists were to be turned away or silenced if they could not honor this sacred space that held an iconic place in history. Photographing the interior of the cave was not allowed.

Although the Coptic priest's duty to preserve that sacred space for coming generations is an extremely important one, he still has to take breaks because fighting is hard work. It demands soldiers function at a constant state of alertness, but if he had to be in high-alert mode constantly, he would feel like a prisoner to the very thing he was guarding. Scheduled breaks refresh him so he can maintain an attitude of alertness over time.

So it is with us. If we had to live in a heightened state of alertness every waking moment, we would easily become discouraged in the fight. Some have. Unlike the Coptic priest, those afflicted with spiritual HIV of this sort did not build seasons of respite into their military routine. This cannot help but lead to discouragement over time.

Some believers are sidelined because they've become discouraged by the fight. They have not learned how to pace themselves when it comes to spiritual warfare. This battle lasts a lifetime. It starts when we're born, and it should take on a new clarity when we're born again. But it ends when we die. The battle ends when heaven's gates open to us.

Until then, we must find ways to keep ourselves vigilant and engaged without becoming overwhelmed or decommissioned by discouragement at the length of the war. A balanced life must allow for adequate time and attention to be given to relationships, careers and the mental and physical care of our bodies, in addition to our spiritual development. Admittedly, there is tension that exists if we are to build emotionally healthy lives. Yet balance can only be achieved when appropriate care and attention are given to each of these important areas.

A balanced spiritual life must include giving attention to Scripture, prayer, communion with God and fellowship with other believers. Spending time both privately and publicly in the Word enables you to better know your faith, know God and

know the hope we have in Christ. When you spend time in prayer, your passion for Christ deepens while you gain answers for the challenges of life. Communing with God happens when you practice the disciplines of meditation, solitude and other biblical habits aimed at keeping your heart pure before God.

A healthy spiritual life cannot happen in isolation. We need to fellowship and hang out with other believers. These social interactions create a keen sense of community—a place where encouragement, comfort and a healthy provocation occur as a means to grow in our relationship with Christ. These four practices are what caused the early church to be so successful evangelistically and in their personal development (Acts 2:42). Committing to this practice will protect you from contracting spiritual HIV.

Not everything is a fight. Satan is not lurking around every corner waiting to grab you. A warrior's constant alertness does not require a sustained adrenaline rush. The Christian life is not a 60-yard dash; it's a marathon. Our pace determines how we finish. Strive to finish strong!

Symptom No. 4: Disdain for the Fight

If you meet someone who has disdain for the fight, rest assured he's suffering from spiritual high indifference virus. Having a disdain for the fight means looking on spiritual warfare with contempt and scorn. No one starts off with that kind of attitude. When you ask the question, "Why fight?" in a rhetorical manner, you're creating a perspective of hopelessness. This is a surefire way to contract spiritual HIV. Through a series of painful battles, the soldier's question morphs into the declarative statement, "Don't fight!" The virus takes hold of his soul, and disdain for the fight spreads.

A flawed theological reasoning often brews to support a disdain for the fight. The thinking goes something such as

this: If God wants it to happen, it will happen. If it's meant to be, it will be. This faulty view of God, the Scriptures and spiritual warfare is not new. In fact, it falls under the historic term "antinomianism." This is the doctrinal notion that because of our salvation relationship in Christ, we are free from the responsibility of obeying God's laws. But you cannot be a victorious warrior if you believe something along these lines: "If God wants me delivered, He will deliver me right here and now. And if He doesn't want me delivered, I won't be."

Antinomianism strips you from bearing any responsibility to work God's Word. The infected fighter no longer believes fighting makes a difference. His disdain makes him a weaponless warrior, like a dog without teeth. His prayers never lead him into the war room. If blessings are not automatically given to this person, he will not search them out through the weapon of prayer.

Just as some people enroll in the U.S. Army because of the fringe benefits—a striking uniform, tuition assistance and future veteran's benefits—God's army attracts similar inductees. Some people come to Christ only because of the promised salvation and ticket to heaven—which I admit should not be passed over. Yet they have a disdain for fighting.

The calling to be a Christ-follower does not stop with being born again. It progresses to discipleship, which is synonymous with representing Christ on your knees in battle for the souls of men. Paul's words to Timothy hold true for us today: "Endure hard times as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3).

Disdain paints a one-sided picture. We welcome God's help, yet we are unwilling to reciprocate. Allegiance should not be one-sided. We must join God on our knees in His battle against evil and wickedness.

But while spiritual soldiers are not exempt from suffering, as a good general, the Lord accompanies His troops into every battle. He does not leave us alone. That is why David, the warrior king, confidently sang, “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). We cannot allow David to sing solo. This verse must be a chorus, your voice harmonizing with David’s to affirm God’s allegiance to His troops.

David D. Ireland, Ph.D., *is the founding and lead pastor of Christ Church in New Jersey. He is an author, an international speaker and a diversity consultant to the National Basketball Association.*

To learn more, read this...

Learn how to fight our spiritual enemy skillfully and bring deliverance to captives through Pastor David Ireland’s *The Weapon of Prayer: Maximizing Your Greatest Strategy Against the Enemy* (Charisma House). You can find this book at [Amazon](#), or wherever Christian books are sold.