

The Spiritual Battle You Didn't Know You Were Fighting

When was the last time you prayed for someone, and nothing seemed to happen? When did you share the Gospel with a friend or family member, only to watch them shut down or walk away—again? Have you ever felt like there's an invisible wall between the message of Christ and the people you're trying to reach?

You're not imagining it. And you're not failing.

In 1984, I was a young pastor shepherding a small flock in southern Illinois. I had never been out of the United States and had no personal experience in overseas mission work. Like most Western Christians, I had little awareness of the spiritual dynamics at play in evangelism and ministry. I embraced what I now recognize as Western anti-supernatural assumptions.

All of that changed in 1994, when God catapulted me out of St. Louis to Toronto and then into the world. Since that time, I have traveled to fifty-five countries and ministered the Gospel to hundreds of thousands, followed by miracles, signs and wonders. What I discovered face-to-face in the mission field wasn't just theology—it was reality. There is a war being waged for the souls of men and women, and most of the Western Church is ill-informed and ill-equipped to fight it.

The Disconnect in the Western Church

Much of the Church has been faithful to obey a truncated version of the Great Commission by faithfully preaching the Gospel, while failing to embrace the miracles, signs and wonders that can accompany it. This resulted because of wrong teaching that denies the miraculous power of God at work in

the world today.

We've been taught that miracles ended with the apostles, that the supernatural isn't for today, and that everything can be explained through natural causes. This dismissive stance regarding the devil and evil has provided an open door for the works of Satan to prosper. Add to that the emphasis on justification without the sanctification that needs to follow, and you have immature believers.

The result? Much of the Church, especially the Western Church, is ill-informed and ill-equipped when it comes to spiritual warfare. We've learned to explain away the supernatural, to rationalize spiritual opposition, and to rely solely on human effort in evangelism. But the early Church didn't operate that way—and neither should we.

Power Makes the Gospel Relevant

Here's what I've learned through decades of ministry across the globe: Power does make a difference. It makes the gospel relevant to the present needs of people who must deal with disease, demons and natural disasters. It says, "our God can help you now, not just when you die." This gospel we preach can bring healing to the sick and deliverance to the demonized. You don't need to consort with shamans to get help with evil spirits.

The power allows us to evangelize and do missions the way the apostolic Church (33–90 A.D.) did, the way the Ante-Nicene Church (90–325 A.D.) did, the way the Ante-Chalcedon Church (325–481 A.D.) did, the way the Church of the first millennium (481–1,000 A.D.) did and the way parts of the Church have done throughout its history.

You Don't Have to Be a Missionary

You might be thinking, "That's great for people in full-time ministry, but I'm just a regular believer." That's exactly who

needs to understand this. As I became part of God's expansion of the Church into other parts of the world, my experience as a Christian expanded significantly from my Western Church orientation. This brought me face-to-face with the issue of spiritual warfare and the disconnect between what missionaries experience in the field versus how the Western Church prepares believers.

This disconnect has caused what amounts to a failure in the West to adequately train and equip not just missionaries, but everyday believers to deal with the spiritual warfare we all encounter. Whether you're sharing the Gospel with a coworker, praying for a sick neighbor, or interceding for your children, you are engaging in spiritual warfare whether you realize it or not.

Beyond Theory to Practice

For too long, the Western Church has approached spiritual warfare from a theoretical, self-help, or even superstitious perspective. We need something biblically balanced, theologically sound and practically applicable. We need to understand what the Bible actually says about engaging the enemy, diminishing his influence and advancing God's kingdom through the authority we've been given in Christ.

When we understand the spiritual dynamics at play and learn to minister as the bold warriors God designed us to be through His victory at the cross, everything changes. We stop seeing evangelism as a human effort and start recognizing it as a partnership with the Holy Spirit to break the dark powers of this world and draw the lost to Christ.

The enemy wants you frustrated, confused, and powerless. But the truth is this: you have been given authority through Christ's finished work on the cross. You have access to the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. And you have been called to advance God's kingdom on earth as it is in

heaven.

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