

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the War Room

Examining the real battle on the front lines of living faith

There is a war going on...

- *In the cosmos ... between the God who is good and God's adversary, Satan*
- *In the world... between the people of God and our Enemy, the devil. Consider the visible evidence of evil at work around us.*

- *In every human heart ... there is notable evidence of the battle within us and some have been taken captive by the Enemy.*

This study, written by Carmen Fowler LaBerge, will help you identify the Enemy, his nature and tactics, how to prepare for battle every day and understand the victory in Christ promised by God.

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Lesson I: Who is the Enemy? (not flesh and blood but very real)

The first appearance of God's adversary in the Scriptures is found in Genesis 3, where he appears as the serpent, deceiver, tempter and liar. His appearance leads to the Fall. In other texts, the Enemy (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) is described as a fallen angel (Isaiah 14:12-15), the father of all lies (John 8:44), and the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The Enemy is the Devil (Ephesians 6:12) which means spoiler, destroyer, demon, shade, and accuser. He is invisible and yet he prowls around looking for those he may devour (I Peter 5:8). Jesus dealt with him (Luke 4:1-13) and Jesus instructs His disciples in how to deal with him as well (John 8:42-47).

C.S. Lewis' great work, *The Screwtape Letters*, unmasks the reality that much of what Satan is up to is couched in just enough truth, just enough love, just enough good, that we are fooled into believing it – willingly exchanging the truth about God revealed in the Scriptures for lies.

Satan's primary tactic

*Leading people to exchange
the truth about God for lies*

The Enemy's primary tactic is to convince people that God cannot be trusted. He seduces people into believing lies that lead to death. Adam and Eve exchanged the truth about God for the lies of the devil and the tempter has been leading people down that path of destruction ever since. Consider Judas who exchanged the truth about God's plan of redemption for the false hope of a worldly savior. Consider Ananias and Sapphira who exchanged the security of God's people for the false hope of material possessions. Consider those referred to in Romans 1, who literally exchanged the truth about God for lies. Paul says that "God gave them up" to futile thinking, sinful desires, sexual impurity, idolatry, shameful lusts and depraved minds. They are described as senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless. Such is the path of the Enemy that leads to destruction.

Satan is invisible, however ...

The prevailing images of Satan in our culture are of a personified demon, a participant in the evil acts of humanity, the being in charge of hell or a mythical joke in a red suit with horns. What is your image of the Enemy? How do you see Satan? Is your image drawn from the Scriptures, Dante's *Inferno* or the world?

In Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, the Bible bears witness to the very real presence of the Enemy of God.

In addition to the texts already referenced, read I Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6-9, 12, 2:1-7; Zechariah 3:1-2; Matthew 4:10, 12:26, 16:23; Mark 1:13, 3:23 and 26, 4:15, 8:33; Luke 10:18, 11:18, 13:16, 22:3 and 31; John 13:27; Acts 5:3, 26:18; Romans 16:20; I Corinthians 5:5, 7:5; II Corinthians 2:11, 11:14, 12:7; I Thessalonians 2:18; II Thessalonians 2:9; I Timothy 1:20, 5:15; Revelation 2:9, 13 and 24, 3:9, 12:9, 20:2 and 7.

Each name that Satan wears teaches us something about his personality and his work. (For a list of Satan's many aliases, see page 10.) The name Satan means "adversary." Devil means "slanderer." (there is only one Devil/Satan, but there are legions

of demons; he is their prince). While Christ is at work in the world seeking to "gather," Satan is hard at work scattering. Christ puts things together. Satan tears things apart. Jesus came to seek and save the lost; Satan is here to kill and destroy.

On five occasions in the Psalms, the Hebrew word "satan" is translated as "adversaries" or "accusers" and refers to those people who oppose the Lord. Read Psalm 38:20, 71:13, 109:4, 20 and 29.

"Satan" is also translated as "resist" in referring to those who resist the work or action of God in the world. That on-going battle will be the subject of the next lesson.

Read and Reflect:

The Bible contains many other passages that are commonly understood to refer to Satan. Read and reflect on the character referenced in Genesis 3:1,4,5,14,15; Psalms 109:6; Ephesians 2:2, 4:27, 6:11-16; Colossians 1:13, 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:6,7; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8,9; 2 Peter 2:4; 1 John 2:13, 3:8,10,12, 5:18; Jude 6-9.

*What do these passages tell you
about the reality of the Enemy of God?*

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Lesson 2: There is a war going on

When considering the war in which we find ourselves we need to consider three distinct but interconnected levels:

- ✠ On the metaphysical level there is a war going on in the cosmos. This is the celestial battle between Good and Evil, God and the Enemy of God;
- ✠ On the physical plane there is a war going on in the world, within the context of human history, between nations, states and governments;
- ✠ On the personal level, there is a war being waged in every human heart. That is the battlefield of the mind and heart where it is determined which Lord we will serve and which Kingdom we will seek to advance.

War was declared in Genesis 3:15 when the Adversary of God took on the form of a serpent, talked Eve into exchanging the truth about God for lies, and sin distorted that which God called “good.” We will not seek to deal here with the theological issue of how evil came to be, but seek instead to equip ourselves to deal with its reality.

This is one war in which it is impossible to be neutral: We either side with God or we side with Satan; we are either for Christ or we are anti-Christ.

Christ crossed the boundary and invaded Satan’s territory

Consider Luke 11:14-26. Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. But some of them said, “By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, He is driving out demons.”

The picture given in this parable is one of Jesus invading Satan’s domain, walking right into his supposed seat of power and setting free those who had been held captive. Hebrews 2:14-15 notes that the Enemy makes gains by taking people captive to do his will out of a fear of death. Those taken captive by Satan become enemies toward God (Romans 8:7-8). Ensnared, they do not know the truth and are not in their right senses (II Timothy 2:23-26). Reasoning with them is futile as they cannot hear (John 8:43-47). These are the captives Christ came to set free.

When the religious leaders accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, Jesus refuted them with a two-pronged argument.

1. He pointed out that if Satan is fighting against himself it would spell the end of his kingdom. This would obviously not be a good game plan for anyone who wanted to secure victory. Jesus points out the flaw in their logic.
2. He also pointed out that if casting out demons is evidence of Satanic agency, then the charge they are leveling against Jesus must also be applied to other Jewish exorcists, including their own “sons” – something, of course, the scribes were not willing to admit.

Jesus reveals in His response that Satan has both a kingdom and a house. This present world system, this plane of reality, is the playground and the kingdom of Satan. When Satan is cast out of the heavenly realm he falls to the earth – the *world* that

constitutes the good Creation of God – the world of matter and humanity that God so loved that He would die to redeem it; and the *world system* that Paul refers to when he says that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world.”

However, when Jesus called Satan the *prince of this world*, He did not say that the sum of Creation, the whole world, is in Satan’s hands. Quite the contrary, Psalms 147 and 148 assure us that God is supremely sovereign; God has the world in His hands. But Satan has his hands in, and rules in the lives of, those who follow the ways of this world and who deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Paul put it this way in Ephesians 2:1-3: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”

Satan’s playground is the human heart but it is also human history

There are evil empires and political systems that are designed to work at cross purposes with the goodness and grace of God. The history of the world is not only a record of man’s inhumanity to man, it is also a record that reflects what is going on in the spiritual realm in the battle between God and the Adversary.

Christ has set us free!

When Jesus took on human flesh, He was taking the eternal cosmic battle between God and Satan to another level – our level. At the Incarnation, Jesus permanently became a part of the battle upon the earth and here He proved the supremacy of His power. Read and celebrate Colossians 1:13-14, 21-22; 2:13-15.

Christ proved the supremacy of His power

Returning to the parable from Luke 11, Jesus describes Satan as “a strong man armed to the teeth.” Let us not be fooled into thinking that Satan is silly or weak. Satan will do everything in his power and use every weapon within his reach to protect what he sees as his kingdom from the invasion of Christ.

Jesus instructs His disciples in Matthew 10:28 about fear: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

He is speaking here of the enemy. Listen to Jesus’ description of that same enemy from John chapter 10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Satan comes only to rob us of

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Lesson 2: There is a war going on (continued)

our joy, kill our spirits and destroy our hope; Jesus comes to give us life, abundant, full and eternal.

Satan is real; he is strong; he is powerful; he is the tempter and the father of all lies. Jesus met him in the wilderness and confronted him in order that we might know how to do the same – with the very Word of God on our lips and the very power of God within us.

The beginning of the victory

If the Incarnation of Jesus Christ was the beginning of the battle on this earthly plane, then the defeat of the tempter in the wilderness was the beginning of the victory. During His earthly life, Jesus overcame Satan's power at work in this world through His physical presence, through the proclamation of the truth, by uplifting the paralyzed, healing the sick, setting at liberty those who were possessed, raising people from the dead, and lifting their eyes to the hope of salvation.

And even though the hours upon the cross belonged to the power of darkness, Christ won the victory, stepping forth from the grave in resurrection glory to give people resurrection hope. And now, right now, He is seated in heaven – right where Satan longed to sit!

Read and reflect

1. Where do you see and experience the three dimensions of the spiritual battle going on right now?
2. How has Christ given you victory over the power of sin through transforming your thoughts, desires and behaviors?
3. Read Revelation 11:15-19 and 12:7-12 and 19:1-9. How do these texts provide hope for those persecuted in the world and how do they give you a hope for victory in Christ?

Satan's many aliases

Abaddon (Hebrew: Destroyer),
Revelation 9:11

The accuser of our brethren,
Revelation 12:10

The adversary, 1 Peter 5:8

The angel of the bottomless pit,
Revelation 9:11

Apollyon (Greek: Destroyer),
Revelation 9:11

Beelzebub, Matthew 12:24;
Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15

Belial, 2 Corinthians 6:15

The Devil, Matthew 4:1;
Luke 4:2,6; Revelation 20:2

Our common enemy,
Matthew 13:39

Evil spirit, 1 Samuel 16:14

The father of all lies, John 8:44

Gates of hell (Hades),
Matthew 16:18

Great red dragon, Revelation 12:3

The liar, John 8:44

Lying spirit, 1 Kings 22:22

The murderer, John 8:44

That old serpent,
Revelation 12:9; 20:2

Dominion of darkness
Colossians 1:13

The prince:

- Of this world, John 12:31;
14:30; 16:11
- Of demons, Matthew 12:24
- Of the power of the air,
Ephesians 2:2

Ruler of the darkness of this
world, Ephesians 6:12

Satan, 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6;
John 13:27; Acts 5:3, 26:18;
Romans 16:20

The serpent, Genesis 3:4,14;
2 Corinthians 11:3

The spirit that works in disobe-
dient people, Ephesians 2:2

The Tempter, Matthew 4:3;
1 Thessalonians 3:5

The god of this world,
2 Corinthians 4:4

Unclean spirit, Matthew 12:43

The wicked one,
Matthew 13:19,38

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Lesson 3: Christ shattered Satan's arsenal

Having crossed the boundary and invaded Satan's territory, and having proved the supremacy of His power over the Enemy, Christ then shattered Satan's arsenal of pride, fear, lies and hatred.

Satan's favorite weapons:

- **Pride:** I Timothy 3:6 reminds us that it was pride, in the form of vain conceit, that led the angel Lucifer to fall from his position in Heaven to the earth below.
- **Fear:** Hebrews 2:14-15 says that Jesus shared our humanity and died on the cross in order to destroy the one who holds the power of death, the Devil, and free all those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.
- **Lies:** John 8:44 reveals that when it comes to Satan, there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
- **Hatred:** I Peter 5:8 again reminds us that the Devil is after us – that he hates God so much that he becomes the enemy of those who love God and is even now prowling around like a lion looking for someone to devour.

Christ shatters them all

It was pride that turned Lucifer the angel into Satan, the adversary, and he knows that pride works to produce idolatry in us as well. Satan tried the weapon of pride on Jesus, seeking to tempt Christ to bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:9). Jesus resisted. At every turn, Jesus rebuked pride. In His birth, in His living, and in His death, Jesus exalted humility.

Hear anew the declaration from Philippians 2:5-11 with the pride of Satan in mind. I imagine that nothing chaps Satan's hide like the reality of Christ's humility. Satan who DID consider equality with God as something to be grasped; Satan who sought to exalt himself; Satan who longs for everyone to bow the knee; Satan who longed to sit in the very throne of God; who considers humility weakness and the self-promotion as the way to the top! Lucifer, the creature wanted to become the Creator; Jesus, the Creator willingly became a creature.

Beyond disarming Satan of the weapon of pride, Jesus also cast aside the weapon of fear.

Fear is one of the strongest human emotions. Fear puts us in a cold sweat, makes our pupils dilate and our hearts race. Fear makes us fight and fear makes us flee. Certainly there is healthy fear that keeps us out of danger and alert to the realities that there are those who would seek to do us harm, but Satan uses fear to lead to a bondage of the spirit and a life of suffering in the dark.

The fear of death is one of the arrows in the enemy's quiver of fear. 2 Timothy 1:10 assures us that Jesus has abolished death. To abolish means to deactivate, to render useless. Death is still a reality but, because of Jesus' resurrection, it no longer has any sting. Satan should not be able to use this weapon against those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Fear and faith cannot live in the same head and heart. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of

love and of self-discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Having demolished pride and fear, Jesus also deals with Satan's lies. Satan is a liar and the father of all lies. Jesus came to bear witness to the truth. By the way He lived and by what He taught, Jesus exposed Satan's lies and revealed God's truth.

We should note that Satan's lies are often religious – remember, he masquerades as an angel of light and sends his false prophets to lead people astray. Satan is even able to twist the Scriptures, leading people to interpretations that are false.

The final weapon in Satan's arsenal examined here is hatred. Satan hates God and Satan hates God's people. We are called to love and to be people of love; but do not be deceived! Psalm 97:10 reminds us that those who love the Lord are called to hate evil.

Truth be told, most of the hatred in the world is not directed toward evil but against good and the agents of good. Why is that? Because people love the darkness and hate the light. The world hated Christ when He was here and it hates His followers. Satan uses the weapon of lies to blind people to the truth and once blinded, people become afraid of that which they cannot see and do not understand.

Jesus has but one way to destroy Satan's arsenal of hatred: Love. Consider the words of John 3:16, Romans 5:6-8, John 15:12-14 and Matthew 5:43-48.

Christ claimed Satan's spoils

The war is a battle for good, a battle for love, a battle for righteousness, but like all war, in the end, the spoils belong to the victor. We should capture and use for God's glory everything Satan has previously possessed. The spoils of this war are human beings – the most precious part of God's creation.

Colossians 1:13 reminds us that God "has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves." A transfer has taken place. A transformation is under way. A good work has begun – a good work that will be brought to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.

At His birth Jesus invaded Satan's territory; in His life Jesus overcame Satan's power and destroyed his weapons; in His resurrection Jesus put to death Satan's stronghold over us, and in His ascension Jesus claimed the spoils for Himself. In sending the Holy Spirit, Jesus empowers us to withstand the flaming arrows of the Evil One and promises to be with us always even to the very end of the age. And then, yes, then, He will stand once again upon the Earth and declare final victory. Maranatha!

Read and reflect

Read Colossians 1:13 and discuss the reality of being rescued.

Where do you see evidence of the "dominion of darkness?" Who do you know that is presently held captive there? Where do you see evidence of the "Kingdom of the Son God loves?" Describe your personal experience of "transfer" from the one to the other? Where do you still struggle with pride, fear, lies or hatred? Pray that Christ will take every thought captive to Himself and help you to abolish the strongholds of the Enemy in your life.

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Lesson 4: The battle plan for here and now

Ephesians 6:11-13 reminds us that there's a battle raging over us, around us and within us even now. This warfare is ultimately eternal and spiritual but it has very real temporal, physical and relational consequences. John Donne observed that "Satan hates me, yet is loathe to lose me." However, God loves me, and died to save me.

Learning to recognize the schemes of the Enemy

Luther said, "The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn." And Thomas More agrees, "The devil ... the proud spirit ... cannot endure to be mocked." So mock him.

An attack from all sides is a strategy that the Enemy employs against each one of us. He feeds us lies, tempts us with the world, speaks to our desires and our lusts, accuses us, and then, if all else fails, he plants the seeds of doubt in our minds – doubts about ourselves and doubts about the goodness and grace of God.

God is always straightforward. God always approaches us in the fullness of light, with no hidden agendas. Satan's flaming arrows, however, are delivered from a quiver of contradictions. One minute he may inflate your pride and the next he may debase you with shame. He's only interested in one thing: drawing your attention away from God, getting to you drop your gaze and drop your guard, enticing you into a "reasoned" conversation that is designed to destroy your faith, steal your joy, squelch your hope, and fill your mind with doubt, fear, shame and lies.

We must develop strategies for resisting the Enemy's advances. He is armed, but so are you! God has not left you defenseless. Available to you are the Holy Spirit, God's Word, the full armor of God, comrades in arms and, when necessary, the very host of heaven.

Following the pattern of Jesus Himself, when we are tempted by Satan with half-truths and bold-faced lies, we not only reject him, but we send back arrows in the form of the Word of God. No matter what lie he may aim at you, the Word of God is broad enough to deflect it. If he tries to make you feel unworthy or unwanted, the Word of God reminds you that you are a beloved child of God, an heir of the Kingdom of God, bought with the price of Christ's blood. Although we are not worthy, He is fully worthy. If he tries, on the other hand, to pump up your ego and make you feel invincible, the Word of God will humble you, reminding you that apart from Christ you can do nothing.

The weapons for this war are God's

II Corinthians 10:3-5 reminds us that the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. God's weapons in our hands are designed to demolish strongholds, arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. Satan takes captives but so do we! "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Satan tempts us to mental laziness and distracts us from the Word of God by the worries of the world. He fills our time with countless lesser pursuits. He wants us too busy or too tired or

too pre-occupied to meditate on the Word of God. Having distracted us from the Word itself, Satan then begins to distort our understanding of the Word. And the longer he has to work on us in an environment that is free from the fresh infusion of the real Word, he will twist and turn and manipulate our minds into believing his lies.

God knows this. That's why God places such a high importance on our loving Him with all of our mind. If this mental component of our faith is left neglected, or untended, we will find ourselves needing to be delivered from the Tempter's snare.

Read and Reflect

There is a battle plan and you have a part to play in it.

- 1. Take refuge!** God is present and ready to shelter you. *Psalm 11:1-3, Psalm 32:7, Psalm 46*
- 2. Stand your ground.** Guard your heart and defend your faith.
I Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:18: Be self-controlled and alert.
I Peter 5:9, Ephesians 6:11-14: Resist the devil and stand firm in the faith.
Ephesians 6:10-17: Put on the full armor of God.
Proverbs 4:23: Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.
- 3. Protect others.** You know the Victor and you know the plans of the Enemy. Others do not.
Protect the wandering, the weak, the lost and the fatherless.
- 4. Reclaim lost ground.** Snatch people out of the fire – by overcoming evil with good.
Romans 12:17-21
We have a responsibility to love and pray for those held captive (*Matthew 5:43-44*). We are also instructed not to engage with them in foolish or stupid arguments (*II Timothy 2:23-24*).
- 5. Remember the victory in advance.** The battle is not over, but it is already won.
Job 19:25, John 11:25-26, Romans 8:31-39

Sing: "Because He Lives" and "A Mighty Fortress is our God," reflecting on the words, theology and truth expressed.