

Spiritual Warfare and it's Application to Marriage

Ephesians 6:10-18

INTRO

Danger of Assuming categories – Even the categories must come from Scripture.

Assumptions are made by *what seems right*.

What seems right is often informed by society, things outside of Scripture.

Spiritual warfare does not seem like a category you would find in a marriage course.

- Only 1 Christian marriage book I know of touches on the subject directly in any significant detail.
- A number of commentaries on Ephesians make the connection because they are dealing with the whole text of Ephesians.

Spiritual warfare is **CRUCIAL** to seeing victory in your marriage.

- We have missed this on an overwhelming scale.
 - First session – Divorce rates for Christians match the world. **IN SPITE OF** the abundance of resources for Christian marriage.
 - The **absence of spiritual warfare** in marriage materials indicates that perhaps we are dealing with marriage purely on a natural level, and not on a supernatural level.
- Your marriage doesn't need *natural* help. It needs *supernatural* help.

Where are you most frequent and most intense spiritual battles as a Christian?

- In your family relationships.
- In your employment relationships.
- Sometimes in church relationships.
- But I would suspect the **most frequent & most intense battles** are within your **marriage** relationship.

Most of your Christian life and your spiritual battles are lived out within the context of your marriage and family relationships.

50% divorce rate among Christians – that's a significant statistic of **spiritual defeat**.

What of the other 50%?

Failure in marriage doesn't always reveal itself in divorce.

Some of the most bitter marriages never divorce.

Yet spiritual warfare **is almost unknown** in our marriage instruction in Christianity.

Thankfully, it's not absent in the Bible's instruction.

LOOKING BACK AT EPHESIANS 5

Remember: Ephesians 5:22. The beginning of marriage instruction. “*Wives submit to your own husbands...*”

- “Submit” the verb was missing.
- Paul forced us back into chapter 5 to find the verb.
- We followed the 4 participial clauses back to the verb “but be **filled** with the Spirit”
 - We NOTED that the majority of Christian marriage instruction does not make that connection. ***This is an unnatural fragmentation of the text.***
 - *Be filled with the Spirit* was the context for everything that followed.
 - Be filled with the Spirit was the major artery that branched off into smaller arteries:
 - Characteristics of being filled with the Spirit: singing songs to one another, making melody to the Lord, giving thanks for all things, submitting to one another.
 - Then we followed the ***artery of submitting to one another*** as it branched off into the ***capillaries of the marriage relationship***, then followed by parent/child relationship and employment relationships.

We have a similar situation at the other end of this text. These **capillaries are dangling**. They have not reattached to anything.

Even though we connected to the main artery “be filled with the Spirit” – blood is now flowing through these arteries, but the patient is bleeding to death because we’ve left these capillaries severed from the vein on the other side.

If we were to end G6 without looking at what follows Ephesians 5, then G6 would fail in it’s purpose.

To stop here is a leave a serious CLIFFHANGER.

The CLIFFHANGER of Ephesians 5.

- Eph 1-5 Paul presents a glorious presentation of the riches of Christ that have been lavished on us.
 - Our glorious purpose in Christ, our salvation, all the spiritual blessings that we have been given, our standing in grace, our unity with Christ, our receipt of the mystery of the gospel, our unity as the body of Christ, the new life that we now live, and our being filled with the Spirit of God to live our lives.
 - The beautiful picture of how we are to live in our most important relationships.
 - IN THAT we have the ***most important, most magisterial picture*** of human marriage as a living metaphor for Christ’s marriage to his bride.
 - THIS IS OUR MODEL FOR MARRIAGE
 - A beautiful model. A helpful model.
 - An IMPOSSIBLE model.
 - A FRUSTRATING model.

HOW CAN WE DO THIS?

How can a **wife** submit to her own husband as unto the Lord Jesus Christ? It's a beautiful picture, but very difficult to live out. Her husband is a thoughtless jerk. He's insensitive. He lives for himself. He makes her life difficult. ***If only this were a sentiment and not a command!***

How can a **husband** love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her good? How can he love her with a sacrificial, sanctifying love? How can he nourish and cherish her as he does his own body? How can he live with her in an understanding way? She's grouchy. She drops the ball in the home. Sexually she's a dromedary camel. Her roller coaster emotions drive you up the wall. ***I'm not strong enough to love her as I should—and sometimes, I don't even want to.***

Why do we have so much trouble obeying God's commands?

Romans 7:18-25

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, this is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Even though we are Christians, and even though we have a new nature in our new life in Christ, we still have ties to our flesh, meaning our natural sinful natures.

Even when ***we want to do right***, and even though we delight in the design that God has for us in our marriages and in the roles we play as husband and wife, we are involved in a ***war in our minds which can make us captive to the sin that still dwells in our flesh***. We are still attached to this wretched body of death that presents a battleground for all Christians.

Our problem is that we are weak in our fleshliness.

REMEMBER...PAUL is writing this to REAL PEOPLE who have STRUGGLING MARRIAGES just like you and I. Paul doesn't want them frustrated and failing. He wants them to have ***marriages that glorify God***. And they need *serious help*. They need a *complete solution*. And he delivers.

Q. How can we be strong against our sinful flesh? How can we be the husbands and wives God called us to be?

A. Fight.

Ephesians 6:10-13

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Paul is not changing subjects in 6:10. He is giving us *necessary instruction on how we must live our lives if we expect to see victory.*

- **5:22-33 Paul gives us the greatest instruction on marriage in Scripture.**
- *It's no coincidence that this is followed by...*
- 6:10-20 – the ***most extensive treatment*** of spiritual warfare in Scripture.

Whether we like it or not, we are involved in a supernatural warfare. To live as a new creation in Christ is to engage in spiritual war. You cannot be a spiritual war pacifist.

RECOGNIZE that we are in a spiritual war. Not all Christians are aware that we are in a war. Our culture bombards us with naturalism. We think about life naturally. We don't consider strongly enough that we live in a supernatural world.

THE NATURE OF THE WARFARE

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

This war *is not against flesh & blood.* Flesh & blood would be easier to battle than this supernatural realm.

There is a *hierarchy* of demonic forces that we face.

- **Cosmic powers of this present darkness**
- **Rulers & authorities (Our enemy is a coordinated system of demons.)**
- **Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (other-worldly places/apart from us)**

Your personal struggle to live an obedient, victorious Christian life is dependant upon engaging in a spiritual warfare of *cosmic dimensions.*

1 John 5:19

...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Satan is called 'the ruler of the kingdom of the air.'

In Matthew 4 Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness by offering him the kingdoms of the world. I never really understood that until I realized the reality of spiritual warfare and the degree of control that Satan now has over this world. Satan made an offer to Jesus that would tempt his humanity. It was an offer that Satan had the power to deliver.

TRUE STRENGTH TO STAND VICTORIOUS

Paul offers strength where we see no strength. Paul offers the ability to STAND where we think we will be overcome and knocked to the ground.

*... that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil...
...that you may be able to withstand in the evil day...
... and having done all, to stand firm.*

NOTE: This isn't some psychological motivation or pep talk. This isn't auto-suggestion. This is real. The warfare is real, with real consequences. Paul's instruction is real.

Somehow in this equation God's power is unleashed to us through the wearing of this armor.

...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

We can only be strong in the Lord when he shows his strength. The Lord is might. 'His might' is his inherent characteristic. The Lord is mighty. He is strong. The *strength of his might* refers to the *exercise of his power* – it's *outworking*.

That outworking of God's *might* is in the strength that is given to you. It's an *active strength* that you can see at work. And that display of strength comes through *being sufficiently armed in God's armory*.

Read through the Gospels with this section of Scripture in mind. Watch how Jesus Christ used these arms. Jesus lived his life in a display of the **strength of God's might**. He just didn't tell us that God was mighty. His life demonstrated that **might**. Jesus is our master warrior that we are to learn from. Jesus life is Ephesians 6 on display.

THE SPIRITUAL ARMORY

Ephesians 6:14 – 18

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...

It's easy to find this listing of armor irrelevant, or inapplicable. We struggle to understand what Paul is meaning by this, and how we are to use this armor to our advantage.

In the Lord of the Rings, Frodo inherits 2 things besides the One Ring. 2. A dwarf-made, finely woven chain-mail, light and strong. 2. An elven dagger – an orc killer.

But the weapons of our warfare are divinely powerful, fashions by divine hands and divine wisdom.

VERB/ACTION	METAPHOR ARMS	SPIRITUAL ARMS	PURPOSE
<i>Fasten on</i>	Belt	<i>Truth</i>	
<i>Put on</i>	Breastplate	<i>Righteousness</i>	
<i>Put on</i>	Shoes	<i>Readiness</i>	Given by the gospel of peace
<i>Take up</i>	Shield	<i>Faith</i>	Extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil on
<i>Take</i>	Helmet	<i>Salvation</i>	
<i>Take</i>	Sword	<i>Of the Spirit</i>	The word of God

These 6 things don't come out of nowhere. Paul has been developing all of these things throughout his letter.

This section is not just a restatement of the themes he has addressed. They are given a *new context that draws them together for the purpose that God gave them to us.* This is an *intensification of their importance and necessity.* They are brought into an *urgency, and a call to arms to engage in the war.*

We must answer two very important questions:

Q. What is this armor?

Q. How do we put it on?

Obviously, this armor is *not automatically placed on us, or at least that's the assumption.* We are told in every case to *fasten it on, put it on or take it up.* This is our action.

This isn't the first time Paul has said we must "*put on*" something in Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:22 - 24

...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

What we can see is that to *put on* the armor of God is the same as *putting on* our new humanity. We have a new life in Christ, and that new life must be *put on* by the believer.

Before we can *put on* this new humanity, or this new armor, we must *put off* our old self. We must *put away* our corrupt and deceitful desires.

We now renew our minds – we think according to God’s truth and principles.

We reject our old ways of thinking.

WHAT IS THIS ARMOR?

Given the *intense imperative force* of Paul’s instruction, almost commander-like, and the emphasis of the action, we need to see that the metaphor is *not prescribing passivity* – *put on this armor and then forget about it.*** *All of these commands are active characteristics of the new life and the new self that we are to actively pursue.***

We should also note that none of these commands are new to Paul’s teaching. They saturate Paul’s teaching. But here, they are *brought together into an urgent battle cry.* *This war takes place in the mind, in the heart, and in the will of the believer.*****

Paul’s point now is to explain how a believer stands in the battle. Each of these component parts form a totality of God’s provision that must be taken up and exercised by the believer. These are necessary elements for victorious battle.

BELT OF TRUTH

having fastened on the belt of truth

The first necessary action is to *have truth fastened around you, securing everything together.*

Truth seems like a no-brainer, so why mention it? Nobody would knowingly put on a belt of deception or falsehood. But that’s just our problem. We wear the enemies clothing naturally. Satan’s weapon of choice is deception and falsehood. He doesn’t want us to know, understand or operate based on truth. He has created a battleground of deception. This deception looks like truth, it looks wise, sometimes it looks godly and noble...UNLESS you are belted with God’s truth. Only then do the lies become apparent.

This is what happened to Eve in the garden. Satan deceived her with a lie that looked righteous. It was a lie that undermined her faith in God.

Truth does not come naturally to us. We must actively put it on by being saturated by God’s word so that God’s thoughts become our thoughts. We must think like God, and be trained in his truth. We see this truth in 2 Cor. 2 Tim. & Heb.

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

Isaiah 59:15-17

Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that

there was no one to intercede; then is own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head;

Righteousness is a characteristic of God. And this righteousness is an essential component for the Christian to display. This isn't speaking of our justification before God in salvation – that's a one time reality – and that reality allows us a standing before God whereby we can now 'put on' a righteous quality to our lives.

To live righteously is to make righteous choices based on God's truth and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It means choosing to turn away from evil, and from rejecting God's truth.

To live in a pattern of choosing unwisely is tantamount to going into battle with everything on but our breastplate, leaving our heart & lungs vulnerable.

READINESS OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace

The focal point in this verse are the feet, not the shoes themselves.

The language used here points to OT – Isaiah 52:7 & Nahum 1:15 are almost identical.

Nahum 1:15

Behold upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace.

The language of the LXX and the Greek NT are very similar.

Paul also uses this same reference in Romans 10

Romans 10:14, 15

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Paul in Romans links this with the *preaching* of the gospel of peace.

Paul in Ephesians links this with the *readiness* of the gospel of peace.

Readiness – preparedness, preparation.

Not ready to proclaim the gospel. That's not the context.

Ready for combat.

How does that work out?

The Gospel of peace has a vertical and horizontal implications. We have peace with God. We also have peace with men. In this war there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female. In other words, we have unity among fellow Christians. We do not have division or fragmentation.

This is a theme prevalent in Paul's writings that the church be unified, that it cross lines of gender, social status and race. This theme also comes out of Ephesians 5 where we are called to submit to one another.

There is a paradoxical element to this command. On one hand we are made ready for war. On the other hand we engage in this war by means of peace.

We must preserve and appropriate the Gospel of peace if we are to stand in the world and resist the evil powers that are against us. We must resist the temptations to fragment ourselves and be divisive.

SHIELD OF FAITH

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one

Paul mentions faith all through his letter. It is associated with a large shield that is able to protect the whole body.

This faith refers to our confident trust in the power of Christ. This is protective. Our faith in Jesus Christ and his reigning power enables us to live resolutely in the midst of fierce battle. Our faith in Christ is capable of protecting us from the flaming arrows that the enemy shoots at us.

Flaming arrows were often a weapon with a double punch. You might catch the arrow with the shield, nullifying that danger, but then the pitch soaked arrow would burn onto the shield and cause panic. The intent would be to have the soldier throw down his shield. Shields were made of wood and covered with animal hide. The hide was soaked in water before battle so that any flaming arrows would be extinguished when they hit the shield.

In the technology of warfare at the time, to have a shield that would extinguish flaming arrows was high tech. Paul's point is that the shield of faith in Jesus Christ is able to protect the believer from any type of assault devised by the evil one. Faith gives us the power to neutralize the offensives of the enemy.

HELMET OF SALVATION

and take the helmet of salvation

In Greek, 'take' here means 'receive'. The helmet of salvation is something that we must actively receive from God.

The OT is filled with descriptions of God as bringing salvation and deliverance for the oppressed.

We receive this helmet of salvation because it is a pure gift of God. We have nothing to do with it's existence. Paul instructs us to take this helmet up – those who are saved, to use

that salvation reality as a part of their armor. Our salvation insures a final victorious outcome. The war is won for us. We are already victors. However, while we still remain in this world and in our bodies of flesh, we still fight because the defeated enemy has not laid down his arms.

We do not battle with uncertainty. We are not battling for our eternal victory. That is won. We do battle for our present day to day realities. The reality of our salvation from the enemy changes the scope of the battle, and gives us assurance and protection.

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

Here again, we are dependant upon the Greek verb ‘receive’. The Sword of the Spirit is a gift that we receive from God as a gift. It’s not something we generate or create.

This Sword is the only offensive weapon in this armory of spiritual warfare.

The sword is the Word of God. The Spirit is the power that makes the Word of God sharp and effective.

The Word of God is routinely spoken of as an offensive weapon that smites God’s enemies.

Isaiah 11:4

...he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

2 Thess 2:8

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

All the power of Satan, in his signs and deceptions, is no match for even the breath of God, much less his words. The Word of God is a weapon that is more than sufficient to engage the enemy and defeat his assaults.

Revelation 1:16

...from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword,...

Revelation 2:12

The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

Revelation 2:16

If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation 19:15

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

This sword is given to believers.

Isaiah 49:1,2

The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Paul began this list with the belt of truth, and ends with the Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God, which contains the truth of God.

The Word of God saturates our armory. It begins with it and ends with it. It provides for our defense and empowers our advance.

God's truth undergirds our defense, our protection.

God's truth instructs and motivates our righteousness conduct.

God's truth readies our feet with the truths of the Gospel of peace, allowing us true unity.

God's truth informs and resolves our faith in Christ as a shield.

God's truth provides knowledge of salvation and empowers the Spirit to work savingly and sanctifyingly in our lives.

God's truth is our offensive weapon to engage the enemy and defeat him in the skirmishes that seek to cause us to fall and not stand.

This ends the military metaphor.

THE MAIN EXHORTATION is this:

Our Christian lives, our conduct in our relationships, the integrity of our marriages, are all involved in a present warfare. In this war we will either stand firm, or we will be toppled. To stand firm requires that we first be armed for this spiritual conflict. To be armed is to put on, take up and receive the divine armor.

It is implied that we know our arms, and that we keep them ready for battle. We've all seen the military movies where in boot camp the recruits are drilled in dismantling, cleaning and rebuilding their weapons with speed. Every bit of their equipment and clothing is carefully inspected for readiness. Because in battle the last thing you want to have happen is to be caught without something you need or something that isn't functional.

PRAYER & PERSEVERANCE

praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,..

As we take up our arms and engage in war, we must at all times be dependant upon God. Prayer for strength and help is critical for the use of these arms so that we can withstand the enemy's offensive against us.

This short verse is loaded with references to prayer:

*Praying at all times in the Spirit
With all prayer
With all supplication
Keep alert with all perseverance
Making supplication for all the saints.*

Paul is making an intense command for the attitude, or posture, by which we are to enter the battle. In prayer. In persistent dependence upon God for everything.

Our prayers must

- **Be at all times. (not just in the battle, but when there is a lull in the battle).**
- **Be in the Spirit. (living in the Spirit allows the Spirit to inspire and guide your prayer life so that it is effective.)**
- **Be with all prayers – no limits on the kind of prayer.**
- **Be with all supplication – all requests directed to God.**
- **Be alert to the dangers of potential battle. (this enables us to pray at all times – being alert).**
 - *Luke 21:34-36*
 - *But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.*
- **Be persevering in prayer that we do not neglect or grow weary of making.**
- **Be filled with requests for the battle other Christians around us face – specifically ones that we know and ones that we can make specific requests for.**

Our prayers must be at least as frequent as the battles we and our families face. Our prayers must move beyond the battle to be prayers of an alert spiritual warrior who anticipates needs before they meet us, our families and our church family.

Paul stresses here the need for effort and spiritual discipline in this necessary element to engaging in war. If we lack effort in pursuing a healthy prayer life, and allow spiritual complacency to be our primary posture in this battle, we will not see defeat.

This not only refers to our own defeat, but if we fail to pray for those who we should be praying for, they to are in a position of greater weakness than if we had been persistently praying for them.

- **We don't understand the spiritual economics of prayer. There is an element of prayer that requires faith in our lack of understanding of how it works.**

- **Scripture is clear. Christ is clear. Paul is clear. We must pray. And we pray to spiritual benefit of ourselves, our families and other believers.**
- **If prayer works toward spiritual benefit, then the *lack of prayer*, the neglect of prayer, results in the lack of spiritual benefit in our lives, and the lives of those we should be praying for.**
- **As a prayer warrior, you hold a unique place in the relationships around you. As a husband or wife, you have a unique vantage from which you can pray for your spouse as no other person can. Same is true for your children and your parents.**

This is a huge challenge. How often have you heard people tell stories of spiritual victory that came about because of the prayers of those around them. Often the prayers of mothers and fathers, but not limited to them.

We have hard enough time praying for ourselves. Pray is one of the *most neglected Christian disciplines* today. A recent poll at a seminary revealed only 6% of the seminary students had a daily personal prayer time.

Our prayerlessness is indicative of our lack of spiritual concern. We don't really think prayer makes a difference. We don't really think we live in a supernatural world, in the midst of a supernatural battle. We are comfortable with where we are. When we do pray it's usually sporadic, and lacks focus. And then we get disillusioned because our sporadic, thin prayers don't seem to accomplish much, and we blame God rather than ourselves.

What does the engagement of spiritual warfare look like in marriage?

It takes place in the battleground of your mind.

THE MIND AS BATTLEGROUND

2 Corinthians 11:2

I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

It is in the mind, within the thought life that you allow to exist, the ideas you entertain – your thought life is the theatre of operations where your battles are won or lost. The cunning assaults of the enemy are designed to lead you *astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

This is the overarching reason for every problem in your marriage. Marriage problems arise from our being led astray from sincere and pure devotion to Christ in our marriage relationship.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We

destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

The spiritual tactics of Satan are:

- Keeping your eyes on the flesh (where we walk) as the field of battle.
- Keeping your understanding of this war as a flesh war so that you do not take up spiritual arms.
- Deception & cunning. Finding subtle ways to seed ungodly thoughts and ideas.
- Leading your thoughts astray
- Turning you from sincere and pure devotion to Christ.
- Raise strongholds – strongholds are arguments & lofty opinions raised against the knowledge of God
- Seeding thoughts to disobey Christ.

These tactics can be categorized in two ways.

1. **Satan's efforts for you to not recognize the nature of the war so that we are inadequately prepared for the battles.**
2. **Raising strongholds of deception** in our minds and thinking which push out the knowledge of God. In other words, Scripture is dispossessed of your mind.

A PICTURE OF A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

The battleground is your mind and heart. How do you think? Where your affections are placed? Your mind and your heart move your will. If Satan can gain a foothold either in changing the way you think, or in moving your affections from Christ to something else, he can lead you into sin, as he did Eve.

Satan's deception of Eve was a spiritual battle. Eve **did not stand strong**.

- She was **led astray by the cunning** of Satan.
- Satan planted an **argument** in her mind... "You will not die if you eat this fruit."
- Satan **raised a lofty speculation**. "God knows that in the day you eat of this tree you will be just like God, knowing good and evil." That was a true statement. But its truth was used **against** Eve and her relationship to God.
- Eve did not take those **thoughts captive** to obey God.
- Then Satan left, and Eve pondered what he said. The argument and lofty speculation became a **stronghold** in Eve's mind and worked on her heart. And she walked into sin.

THE BATTLE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Marriage as an institution is designed to picture Christ and his bride. Your marriage is designed to actively picture Christ and his bride. Your marriage can give God glory.

Satan does not want God to receive glory from your marriage.
 Satan wants to use your marriage to defeat you personally.
 Satan targets your marriage for spiritual war.

Satan knows God's instruction for his people in marriage. He knows how God designed marriage to function better than you. And he comes to us with cunning attacks. He uses the truth we know to work against us. He uses our attachment to our own flesh against us. And he is going to carefully attempt to lead us astray by planting subtle arguments and lofty speculations that will establish strongholds in our minds.

These arguments, speculations and strongholds are designed to--

- keep you from being the husband or wife you should be.
- cause you to be dissatisfied with your spouse.
- raise expectations in your mind that your spouse will fail at.
- magnify your spouses sins, weaknesses, failures, irritations.
- cause you to question the practicality or fairness of your role responsibility.
- raise a victim mentality in your heart.
- deter you from forgiveness, forbearance of your spouses sin.
- raise justification for not fulfill your role responsibility to your spouse.
- cause you to raise conditions for you to fully engage in your responsibility.
- cause you to neglect your spouse.
- deceive you into thinking you are fulfilling your responsibility when you are not.
- raise strong emotions within you that are directed against your spouse.
- cause you to question God's goodness and fairness.
- raise frustration.
- cause you to think as men think and not think on the things of God.
- develop and maintain prayerlessness.
- keep us out of God's Word.
- to rob you of joy in God's command and contentment in your marriage.

We all already have Satanic strongholds operating in our minds. If we didn't, then we would be the perfect husband or perfect wife. Your spouse has Satanic strongholds operating in their minds. Part of our warfare is to locate those strongholds and shut them down.

The problem with strongholds or any of Satan's tactics against us is that they don't look like the enemy. They look like allies.

7 WATCHFUL HABITS TO UNCOVER THE STRONGHOLDS AND ASSAULTS IN OUR MINDS & HEARTS

1. Be continually saturated in Scripture.

The more we know God's Word, the more we will think God's thoughts after him.

Tellers & counterfeit money illustration.

As you regularly read through the NT, examine yourself according to those key parts of Scripture that speak to your role in marriage. Ephesians 5, Titus 2, 1 Peter 3.

2. Be teachable & listen to those around you, particularly to your spouse.

Sometimes the people closest to you can see things about your life that you can't see. When your husband or wife comes to you with correction or concern, *listen*. Do not jump to the defensive, and most of all, do not retaliate with your own offensive. *Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.*

If you are unable to listen to correction from your spouse, you have a pride stronghold in your mind and heart.

3. Be daily confessing and examining the sins you committed that day. All sins originate from a stronghold, or an argument or lofty speculation that Satan has successfully landed in your mind.

4. Watch your emotions.

When you begin to feel anger, frustration, irritation, or bitterness rise, you have just located a stronghold in your mind that reaches to your heart.

5. Watch what robs you of your joy, thankfulness and contentment in fulfilling God's commands within your marriage.

Wherever God's commands become a burden in your marriage; wherever you see joy, thankfulness and contentment vanish, it is here that the enemy is engaged in an attack.

6. Seek your spouse's input.

We need to be asking our spouse how we are doing. Ask if their needs are being met. Ask where they see our weaknesses as married partners. How can we do better? What hindrances do they see in our relationship?

7. Remain vigilant in prayer.

God will reveal to us our weaknesses to us, and our sin, if we ask.

HOMework

Read the account of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness by Satan in **Matthew 4:1-11**.

- Look at the 3 cunning arguments or lofty speculations that Satan used against Christ. Notice how Satan cunningly uses truth and subtly twists it to serve his own evil purposes. A skilful deception almost always looks like wisdom.
- Notice how Jesus uses the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, to counter attack Satan's offensive movements. Jesus never entertains any of the ideas. He immediately recognizes them for what they are and cuts them down with the proper handling of God's truth. No strongholds are gained in the mind of Christ, even though he was in a very weakened and vulnerable state.

Read **Matthew 16:21-23**

What was the lofty argument that Peter spoke, as a pawn of Satan?
What was this argument raised against?
Was Peter's motive sincere or insidious?
Was the argument sincere or insidious?

Jesus was showing the disciples from Scripture that his purpose was to suffer and be killed, and then be raised the third day. This was the mystery of the ages that would be fulfilled in Jesus. But this wasn't easy for Jesus. His purpose was a terrible burden. The night before these things would take place Jesus pleaded with God to find another way. His heart weakened under the thought of being placed out of communion with God while he bore the wrath of God's judgement for sin.

Satan used Peter to attack Jesus at his greatest vulnerability. Jesus immediately engages the spiritual battle that Peter unleashed, and cuts it down. He rebukes Peter sharply for hindering him. Peter's problem was not sincere love for Christ, it was Peter's flesh that was thinking like a man as opposed to thinking clearly on the things of God.

Peter, perhaps the closest person in Jesus life, was at this moment a great hindrance and a vessel through which Satan was able to wage a spiritual ambush against Christ.