

Fight Like A Lover

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FIGHT LIKE A LOVER

WHY MUST WE FIGHT?

Becoming a Christian does not mean that everything will be rosy. This world has fallen from its original perfect state, sin is entrenched in the world and its systems, and it affects us, even if we are not the perpetrator. The kingdom of darkness is real, and we have a real enemy—Satan. God's will in sending His Son brings eternal life to us through our participation.

God so *loved* the world that He *gave* His only begotten son; that whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16, emphasis added).

Few among us desire confrontation, including me. However, after years of spiritual buffeting, and a very serious situation, I could no longer be a reluctant warrior. I had understood the spiritual armor for protection, but misunderstood how to use it for victory. My understanding began with putting on each piece vocally in prayer. As I grew in the Lord, I began to understand that each piece pertains to the Person of Jesus Christ and to the spoken Word. The Lord Himself is our armor of light and righteousness (Ephesians 6:10-18; Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7)!

If we neglect using the Lord's armor and weapons against our archenemy, we will lose in some or many areas of our lives. We must *labor* to enter into that rest and do things God's way—get our *daily* instructions and battle plan. God has called us as partners in a comprehensive battle for ourselves, families, friends, neighbors, church, nation, and . . . (fill in the blank)! The Lord must be invited, so He will not interfere if we choose not to fight evil.

The Lord Jesus fought a victorious spiritual battle for us as our substitute for the punishment we deserve—He defeated Satan totally. *God is love*, and we are to be lovers of God as His agents (ambassadors) and love others the way God loves us, with that perfect *agape* love and is available only in the Lord. *Agape* love is not sweet, syrupy love, but tough, corrective, persistent, compassionate, and tender. Lovers of God never give up on themselves or other people. Lovers of God rescue victims from the kingdom of darkness.

DEFEAT THE “OLD MAN”

When we give our lives to the Lord Jesus, we are completely forgiven of all sin up to that point. However, the *consequences* of our past sin may not have been erased. Sin affects our souls and bodies, forming negative thinking and behavior habits that must be corrected by the Word of God in spiritual warfare. For

example, if a believer in Christ is deceived and commits murder through blinding rage, he can be forgiven when he *understands the depth of his sin and truly repents*. Being sorry is not enough. Jesus wipes it away just as if there were no sin. The forgiven person still owes an obligation to other people and to society to pay for that crime. There will also be serious ramifications to his soul that will require instruction and correction from the Lord that may take great amounts of time. The same thing applies to so-called "smaller" sins that may not require public punishment. Actually, *there is no difference in the size of sin in God's eyes*. Sin is sin. Nevertheless, in the eyes of society, murder is considered greater than theft, because the damage is greater. The Law of God is a *unit*, made up of ten principles. Therefore, if one principle is violated, the entire law is broken (James 2:10). It is not called the Laws of God, but the Law of God.

OUR HEARTS

Scripture uses the word *heart* to mean the inner man that includes the soul (mind, will, and emotions) and sometimes the spirit as well. To illustrate the consequences of sin, imagine our hearts are like beautiful gardens. We know we are to prepare garden soil for vegetables and flowers. Likewise, we prepare the gardens of our hearts for the good seed of God's Word to be planted.

For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns (Jeremiah 4:3).

We break up the fallow ground by "soul-searching" and repentance while guarding against and eradicating weeds when spotted. The kingdom of darkness plants "weed-words" with every opportunity that act like poisonous mushrooms growing in the dark, underground, out of sight. If we allow anything toxic to flourish in our gardens, by accident, ignorance, or negligence, we will choke and contaminate the good seed of the Word. Speaking idle or destructive words, and words not in agreement with God's Word produce unrighteous responses—spiritual toxic weeds. Careless words actually set in motion curses against us. We can ask for forgiveness and will be forgiven for not taking care of the gardens. However, we will be responsible for digging up and eradicating everything contrary to the seed of God's Word. We all recognize the difficulty of permanently removing weeds from gardens. It also takes hard work and persistence to correct things in our lives that have become imbedded in our personalities (mental patterns). Confessing specific scriptures that apply to our struggles does work, but usually not instantly, depending upon how embedded the habit is. God's infinite grace assures us that He will not require more than we can handle (Romans 8:37), but most destructive behavior patterns are only corrected by cooperation with the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and *time of practicing* righteousness.

WHO FIGHTS?

All believers are called to fight in the Spirit (our spiritual *labor*) to stay out of sin even after our sins have been crucified with Christ and to establish God's Kingdom in our hearts and the hearts of others. Correction in our lives is necessary, because we all had or still have unrighteous life patterns that can only be changed *permanently* through the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us what the Word of God actually does in and for us:

For the word of God is alive and active [KJV: powerful]. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes [intents KJV] of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12).

WHERE IS THE FIGHT?

The real battleground is in the mind. We must be on guard against old sinful habits of behavior and thinking which try to regain their lost ground. Our minds are the principle players in our maturity in the Lord. How do we transform our minds? Studying the Word, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal truth and to give us understanding is the only way.

3 For though we live in the world [KJV: flesh], we do not wage war as the world does.

4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they [spiritual weapons] have divine power to demolish strongholds.

5 We demolish arguments [imagination KJV] and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10: 3-5).

None of us are exempt from the fight. We are all part of the Army of the Lord with our General, the Lord of Hosts, leading us. We either follow orders, or we go AWOL. Even taking a "weekend pass" or a "vacation" from the fight without the direction of the Holy Spirit is dangerous. We shall all receive rewards (or not) based on obedience (or disobedience) to the leading of the Holy Spirit and on the quality of our service.

8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.

9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder,

and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care.

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,

13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.

14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.

15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst (1 Corinthians 3:8-16)?

Memorizing verses 11-16 reaffirm our accountability to God.

God never forces us to follow His plans for our lives. He has given us free will and the *grace* we need to walk in the good works He has prepared for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:8-10). Those good works are not just our service or our accomplishments, but they are also the destruction of the devil's works in us and in others. (1 John 3:8). That grace comes only by faith—it is not automatic, but God is ever present to help.

WHO FIGHTS WHOM?

We fight Satan and his kingdom with its principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness in this world. The Devil is a dangerous dude, never plays fair, and will attack at any advantage point. We must not underestimate him or allow his deception in any area of our lives. If we are spiritually naked (no armor), we are an easy mark for the kingdom of darkness. We are not supposed to fight against other people (flesh and blood—Ephesians 6:12). The Devil uses flesh and blood that sometimes confuses us about who we are fighting. Even a believer in the Lord who is ignorant of the devil's schemes can be deceived into cooperating with the devil by fighting with people.

HOW DO WE FIGHT?

In order to recognize the wiles of the devil, we must know God's Word and His character for a comparison. Having our sins forgiven when we come to the Cross brings responsibility to stay clean. How do we do that? Fighting the good fight of faith with God's Word, repentance, and obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit with His help will make us winners! The good news is that we can be victorious no matter what we are facing.

Be careful to not allow any method to become an automatic, mindless

formula, or a spiritual chore. Using our spiritual weapons now is *worship* and only a framework for seeking the Lord's Presence and His battle plan. We can speak the Names of the Lord plus Scriptures as they apply to each weapon. This will keep our minds involved while "getting dressed spiritually."

MULTIPLE SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

1. *Repentance*: Repentance was the main message of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), and the first message and start of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4:17). Our "walk" with the Lord begins with repentance and continues every time the Holy Spirit reveals "dirty ground" that Satan can legally march on. Remember that just being sorry for sin is not enough. Repentance is turning away from sin that rescues us from the "dirty path" of Satan's plans for us and puts us on the "path of righteousness" that David referred to (Psalm 23:3). Humility is a good place to dwell, since none of us are perfect. We are all guilty of "hidden sins," which I believe include unrighteous motivations that we fail to recognize still in us until the Holy Spirit reveals them.

2. *Submission and obedience*:

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness (Romans 6:16)?

3. *Thanksgiving* for what the lord has done and is doing in us.

1 A Psalm of Thanksgiving. Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

5 For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations. (Psalm 100:1-5).

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

(1 Thessalonians 5:18 KJV, emphasis added).

We are to give thanks *in* every circumstance, not necessarily *for* every circumstance. Many circumstances are not from God, but are the creation of evil, some from our unwise choices, or simply the result of living in this world of tribulation. Remember, this is a fallen world. Being thankful *in* everything, and believing the Lord to turn everything around for our good (Romans 8:28) puts us on a path of righteousness through every trial (Psalm 23:3). After we have come through it with Him, we can praise Him *for* the experience, because through it we are corrected, strengthened, and matured. God has the very best blueprint for our lives.

4. *Praise the lord for his goodness, mercy, and lovingkindness.* The Lord *inhabits* (lives in!) our praises (Psalm 22:3). Praise invites His presence as our Warrior, giving us *His* strength. Rejoicing in Him, telling Him why you love Him and appreciating Him are all part of praise and thankfulness.
5. *Worship the lord for who he is.* Worship brings us into the presence of the Lord, where we fellowship and commune with Him, and we begin to learn *Who He really IS*. Spiritual maturity in our lives depends on this relationship with the Lord. It is a heart condition. The Lord desires fellowship with us! He wants us to bring everything to Him. He will be our Best Friend if we will let Him. Communion is more than just talking to Him; communion is also His speaking to us.
6. *The Blood Of Jesus:* The Blood is not a good luck charm to be spoken irreverently, but is a reminder of the price He paid for us. We must repent often in general because we continually fall short of His glory, and repent of any thing specific that is not pleasing to the Lord.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11).

God presented Christ as a *sacrifice of atonement* through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith (Romans 3:25a). The Greek word for sacrifice or atonement refers to the atonement cover on the Ark of the Covenant—a covering for sin.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death (Revelation 12:11a).

7. *The Armor of God—getting dressed spiritually:* As stated previously, the Lord Himself is our armor of light and righteousness, and we are to *put on*

the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14). *Christ* is the Greek word for “anointing.” *Messiah* is the Hebrew equivalent. Therefore, when we put on Christ we are putting on His anointing. Specific pieces of armor require conscious acknowledgement daily. Read and memorize Eph. 6:10-18. Following the leading of the Holy Spirit in praying will guard against prayer becoming automatic, a formula that leads to drudgery, or functioning without the involvement of your whole being. Nevertheless, we may use the following as a guide.

- *The belt of truth:* Thank Him that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Commit to truth. Ask for a love for truth so you will not believe lies (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Thank him for discernment and discerning of spirits.
- *The breastplate of righteousness:* Ask for a love of righteousness so you will hate iniquity (Psalm 45:7) and a hunger and thirst for His righteousness (Matthew 5:6). The Lord is our Righteousness (*Jehovah Tsidkenu*).
- *The gospel of peace on your feet:* Acknowledge the Lord as the Prince of Peace (*Jehovah Shalom*) and that He has given us peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Ask the Good Shepherd (*Jehovah Rohe*) to guide your steps in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3) and peace, and prepare you to share the gospel and to fulfill the plans He has for you to walk in (Jeremiah 29:11-13 and Ephesians 2:10).
- *The shield of faith:* Acknowledge that He is author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Ask for faith to please Him (Hebrews 11:6 and Romans 12:2).
- *The helmet of salvation (full coverage helmet):* Thank Him for the mind of Christ (Romans 12:2) that will school you into thinking and acting like Him and being more like Him daily. Ask for wisdom that the eyes of your understanding will be enlightened. Ask that your ears be opened to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord to put His word in your mouth and a guard on your mouth.
- *The sword of the Spirit (the Word of God):* Ask for understanding and revelation (Ephesians 1:17-19). Confess specific Scriptures over yourself, specific situations, and specific people.

A ten second spiritual dressing in an emergency will work, but I believe the Lord wants to spend time with us. Therefore, dressing spiritually will take some time. Time is the only thing we really have to offer the Lord, because He has given it to us with the free will to use as we please. Giving Him *our* time is the sacrifice that God wants us to freely give. He does not

need our finances—He owns the universe. He does not need our gifts—He is the Creator of everything. *He owns everything except our time.* Giving Him our time opens the door for the Lord to bless us as He has always wanted to. Remember, the Lord awaits our invitation. Dressing ourselves with His armor is crucial. It prepares us for the daily task of overcoming, as well as for serious, and sometimes intense, intercession.

THE WORD OF GOD

The sixth piece of armor listed (Ephesians 6:17) is the sword of the Spirit, our first *offensive* weapon mentioned. The Word of God is the most powerful force in the universe. After all, God spoke the universe into existence (Genesis 1:2), and is being upheld by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Since we are created in God's image, we must also *speak* to exercise authority granted to us by God. We are to speak audibly the Word to situations and command the kingdom of darkness to flee. God's angels listen for the Word of God to be spoken from our mouths (Psalm 103:20), and speaking the Word of God sends the angels on assignment to act in our behalf. We do not boss angels around. They respond only to the Word of God being spoken in faith.

The Word instructs about God's expectations for us—both correction and blessing. Learning God's Word protects us from deception. For example, if we are ignorant of or disbelieve the *fact* that with the stripes of Jesus we are and were healed (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24), then we will miss the victory available through resisting sickness with the weapons and defense systems in the Word.

We please the Lord immensely by studying the Word of God and by faith. Faith only comes by hearing and by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17).

15 Do your best to present [KJV: Study to show] yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Satan's only weapon against us is deception, and he has convinced many that he does not even exist. He has no authority over a believer in Christ unless that believer gives it to him, either through ignorance or chosen willfully. Satan is a real enemy, however. He hates God and God's people. He will try to convince us to do and say things that are not in agreement with God's Word. If we yield to deception, we sin and open the door for Satan to do his dirty work in us. We will gain in discernment when we learn more of God's Word and will be able to resist

anything that is not of God (James. 4:7).

PRAYER AND INTERCESSION

Prayer is the all-encompassing activity and is mentioned last in the armor of God, but is also a powerful *offensive* weapon, and may be the most important. I believe it is the “security latch” holding all the defensive pieces in place. *Prayer is the power source that requires the defensive armor pieces for effectiveness.* In all the sermons I have heard about our six pieces of spiritual armor, I never heard an emphasis on prayer as the seventh piece or as the reason for the first six. I believe it is the main reason for putting on the other six. Prayer is all encompassing, using all the components of our arsenal—thanksgiving, praise, worship, pleading the Blood of Jesus, speaking the Word over people and situations, taking authority over the enemy, and fasting. We lift up our needs, our desires, and ask for direction and pray for others. We conduct warfare!

FASTING

Fasting is not mentioned with the armor, and certainly is not popular, but extremely important. In my humble opinion, fasting could be considered the eighth piece in our spiritual armor. It is a powerful weapon against the kingdom of darkness *when coupled with prayer.* If we fast without prayer, it becomes merely an austere diet. We do not “twist God's arm” into action with our fasting. Fasting tunes our inner and outer ears and our hearts to the Holy Spirit, so that we can cooperate perfectly with His plans. Many people believe that fasting is simply denying ourselves of anything we like, such as TV, video games, sports, desserts, and such. If any of those things take up too much time, are in excess, or are an obsession, then they should be fasted. However, scriptural fasting is actually going without food, or limiting food to “no pleasant bread” as in Daniel's case (Daniel 10:3). I do believe that God is pleased when we temporarily give up things that use time that could be spent fellowshiping with Him. We should from time-to-time choose to fast just to cleanse the soul and come closer to God. Choosing our own fast has benefits, but the best fasts are the ones chosen by God—when the Holy Spirit directs us specifically (Isaiah 58:6-12). The correct order is prayer and fasting, not fasting and prayer, so the emphasis is on prayer. It is easy to get busy with “stuff” or duties while fasting and not giving enough attention to the Lord. Fasting alone has some physical benefits of detoxifying the body, but when prayer prompts fasting to hear from God, it benefits the entire being.

AUTHORITY IN THE SPIRIT

The Lord went to the Cross so that we could have authority in His Name, not against people, but against evil. Let us ask the Lord for discernment to use that authority properly and to not be deceived. The Greek words *exousia* and

dunamis are synonymous for power and authority. Jesus spoke to His disciples:

19 I have given you authority [exousia] to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:19-20).

8 But you will receive power [dunamis] when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

WHEN AND WHERE IS THE FIGHT?

The first hours of the day are best for communing with the Lord. He always requires *first fruits*, and I believe this applies to the hours in a day. Consider spending a tithe of your day (144 minutes or 2 hours and 40 minutes) with the Lord. Some work schedules will not allow the recommended time as first fruits, but the Lord does not condemn. Prayer can be divided into segments around work schedules and other necessary duties. Everyone has the same number of hours per day, so there *is* time. It just may have to be juggled a bit.

Dressing ourselves with the defensive pieces can be quick or lengthy (our choice), but that is only the beginning of spiritual warfare, as stated in Ephesians 6:18. The beauty of praying in the Spirit is that you can pray while doing some tasks that require less focus. If we are not able to give a tithe of our time in the morning, we can at least dress ourselves for battle early before heading out the door or attending to duties. Pray as time allows during the day. Renewing the armor briefly before doing battle is wise.

We need to be ready anywhere and anytime to be led by the Holy Spirit! We are to be lights in this world of darkness. If we have not spent time with the Lord to get His battle plan, His daily instructions, reading His Word, putting on the full armor, we will not be ready if the Lord calls on us, or if we have an emergency. Our fight is not just for ourselves. We are responsible to pray and do warfare for our families, our friends, our church, our neighborhoods, our nation, and..... That is intercessory prayer—prayer for others.

THE MOST LOVING THING

Remember, we fight like lovers—lovers of God and lovers of people, doing battle, following orders from the Lord of Hosts—tearing down strongholds of darkness and becoming partners with God in the establishment of the Kingdom of God in hearts. Preparing ourselves daily for battle by renewing the armor of God and praying fervently is the most loving action we can do.

About the Author

Diane Shields Spears lives in Texas with her husband, Truman, of thirty-seven years, has a B.A. in art, English, and education, an M. A. in Christian counseling, and an Ed. D. in Christian education. She is author of the book *Who, What, Where, When, Why and How? A Creative Look at Life's Main Issues* ©. Diane is all level state certified, and has been an educator off-and-on since 1964 in both public and private school systems.

Her last public assignment was at Edgewood I.S.D., San Antonio, Texas, in which she was the Fine Arts Curriculum Specialist-Coordinator, and during her last year, Head of Visual Arts and full time instructor for the Edgewood Academy of Fine Arts.

Private educational settings include homeschools and private schools in grades five-eight core curriculum, K-8 music, and K-12 art.

Diane is now semi-retired again. When her schedule allows, she is spending time drawing and painting in her art studio, writing curriculum, poetry, and prose. She has taught adult Sunday school, assisted in children's church, and various other church activities.

Diane has a background of personal achievement in the art world, including featured artist exhibits, first place cash awards, free-lance commercial illustrations, illustrating children's activity books, and is represented in many private art collections. She is author of several Bible based art instruction manuals.

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