

Battle Imagery

LUKE 11:14-28; 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6

*It need not surprise us that as an image
to convey the nature of Christian living,
the Holy Spirit uses that of warfare.*

No image could be more apt.

—JOHN WHITE, *The Fight*

The Bible portrays the Christian life as a struggle against a violent enemy. It is clear that we are engaged in a spiritual war. Perhaps our immediate response to this picture is to jump up and enter the battle, weapons blazing. Such a response may be built upon a myth I call the “joy of the fight” that is so prevalent in our culture. The image of joy found in fighting pervades our culture and is seen in a spectrum of events from children’s entertainment (where the heroes beat up the villains) to sports (where the opponent must be crushed). This myth persuades us that engaging in forceful and intense fighting is the key to overcoming the enemy. It also conveys the message that violent battle somehow adds a heady spice to life, which we must drink before we are truly alive.

God’s kingdom, however, is not a kingdom of violence. Jesus confronted evil firmly, but he did not ultimately overcome

Satan by beating him up. Instead, Jesus overcame Satan by loving others and submitting to God's plan of death on the cross. As Christians we are called to maintain an eternal perspective: We balance our Christian walk by studying the scriptural images of spiritual warfare and being aware of the battle, while choosing to engage in spiritual warfare as Jesus did.

1. Are you comfortable with battle and warfare imagery to describe your spiritual life? Explain.

What are the advantages and dangers of such imagery?

READ LUKE II:14-28.

2. Note the different responses of the people to Jesus' driving out a demon. Why do you think some people responded negatively to Jesus' ministry?

3. Of what did some people accuse Jesus (verse 15)?

4. In what terms did Jesus couch his response to their accusations (verses 17-23)?

5. What is the main point of the story in verses 21-23?

How does this story relate to or expand on Jesus' claim in verse 20?

6. What might the parable of the empty house be warning us about (verses 24-26)?

7. What do we learn about spiritual warfare priorities from Jesus' response to the woman's statement (verses 27-28)?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6.

8. What military imagery did the apostle Paul use to describe how Christians should relate to the world?
9. How do our weapons of spiritual warfare differ from the weapons of earthly warfare (verses 4-5)?
- ✍ 10. The “strongholds” Paul mentioned in verse 4 are mental patterns of thought that have become habits and can ultimately become a defense against the gospel. What are some mental strongholds you face in your own life?
- ✍ 11. What are some ways in which these strongholds can be overcome?