

SESSION 6

PARTNERSHIP IN PRAYER: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

KEY VERSE:

‘FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST ... THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS’ (EPHESIANS 6:12)

REMEMBER:

- Computer with speakers
- **Leaders' Note:** Of all The Prayer Course sessions, this is potentially the most controversial, but it is also vitally important. Some group members may be sceptical about the very notion of Satan and demons, while others will know such realities in their own experience. All Christians agree on the reality of spiritual warfare, but we disagree on precisely how to fight! This session is therefore deliberately simple, covering principles about which Christians can all agree.

(5 MINS) WELCOME

AIM: TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME

- Welcome to the final session of The Prayer Course!
- **This week:** Spiritual warfare
- Open in prayer

(15 MINS) VIDEO

AIM: TO OPEN EYES TO THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND HOW TO WIN!

- No one can be a pacifist in prayer. We are all caught up in a spiritual battle against 'the world, the flesh and the devil'
- We live in the gap between Christ's victory on the cross and his return when suffering and sin will finally be eliminated
- In this gap we pray for God's kingdom to come in salvation, healing, justice, reconciliation and beauty

(20 MINS) DISCUSS IT

AIM: TO GET EVERYONE DISCERNING SPIRITUAL REALITIES IN THEIR MONDAY-SATURDAY WORLDS

- What did you find most helpful in the video?
- What questions did it raise for you?
- Discernment of spirits' is one of the spiritual gifts, listed in 1 Corinthians 12
 - » What do you see the Holy Spirit doing in your workplace/school/university/street/family?
 - » What do you see Satan doing in your workplace/school/university/street/family?
- Pete said that it's generally better to 'plant seeds than to pull up weeds'. How can you bless the things you see the Holy Spirit doing?
- How might you live with an 'opposite spirit', neutralising the demonic strategies and cultural strongholds you see?

(15 MINS) DO IT

AIM: TO WIELD 'THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD' IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- **Praying the Promises:** 'You will never pray a higher or more effective prayer than when, guided by the Holy Spirit, you go to the Word, find the promise that relates to you and your situation and say "Lord, you've said it; you do it."' – Derek Prince¹

¹ Derek Prince, *Secrets of a Prayer Warrior* (Chosen Books, 2009)

- **Promises of God:** Learning to claim the promises of God is one of the most powerful ways we can pray because we then know that we are asking in line with his purposes and wielding 'the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God'
 1. Ask people to think of a particular satanic stronghold in their own lives, their family, workplace or elsewhere in the world.
 2. Now invite them to think of a promise from the Bible that addresses that stronghold.
 3. Remind the group of the authority they have in Christ. Invite everyone to stand and raise their voices together, claiming the promise and addressing it specifically to the issue they are thinking about.
 4. Finish by joining hands and pray for the group, agreeing together for the kingdom of God to come.

(5 MINS) DEVELOP IT

- **Conclude:** Although this is the end of The Prayer Course, this can be just the beginning of a wonderful, lifelong journey full of great joy. Psychologists say that it takes about forty days to form a habit, so try to persevere with some of the prayer tools taught on this course until they have become 'holy habits, enriching and strengthening your ongoing prayer life'
- We pray from a place of gratitude, hope, faith and victory. Just as prayer begins with adoration, 'hallowed be your name', so it ends, 'the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours'. One day there will be no more spiritual warfare, no more disappointments and listening to God will be easy. Once again humanity will walk and talk with God daily, 'lost in wonder, love and praise'
- Plug the 24-7 Prayer Room or any similar corporate prayer event you are planning

GOING DEEPER: OPTIONAL EXTRA MATERIAL

(20 MINS) DEEPEN IT

AIM: TO CONTEXTUALISE OUR CURRENT STRUGGLES IN CHRIST'S VICTORY AND OUR AUTHORITY IN HIM

- **Read together:** Ephesians 6:10-18
- **Discuss:**
 - » How does the armour give us insight into where/how we get attacked?
 - » How do you practically wield 'the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God'?

- » What do you think Paul means by ‘principalities and powers’ and where do you see these at work in the modern world?
- Today we may see ‘principalities and powers’ at work behind:
 - » human trafficking
 - » governmental oppression and corruption
 - » unbridled greed and consumerism
 - » institutions where abuse or lawlessness has become systemic
 - » multi-national companies that choose to abuse people and the planet even though most of their employees wouldn’t behave that way in their own private lives

THE ABCD FOR ENGAGING IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

1. **Authority** – remember that you are ‘seated with Christ in heavenly places’.
2. **Blessing** – not cursing. Always remember that you are dealing with real people, loved by God and so try to pray positively rather than negatively. There will be times when you have to address the enemy directly but as a general rule don’t go looking for him. Try to pray good things into people and situations rather than bad things out of them. It is ‘perfect love’ that casts out fear and in Paul’s list of spiritual armour there is only one offensive piece of equipment – the word of God.
3. **Common Sense** – The greatest gift God wants to give to many Christians is common sense. Is there a practical response, or a medical explanation?
4. **Discernment** – The discernment of evil spirits is a vital gift. Sometimes the Lord will help us to know exactly how to pray and what the nature of the problem is. Part of the discernment process may well be conferring with others who are wise.

EXTRA RESOURCES

USEFUL QUOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- A senior demon writes: ‘I once had a patient, a sound atheist, who used to read in the British Museum. One day, as he sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way ... If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone. But I was not such a fool. I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggested that it was just about time he had some lunch ... Once he was in the street the battle was won ... He is now safe in Our Father’s (The Devil’s) house.’ – C. S. Lewis ²

² C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (HarperCollins, 2002), p. 3

- '(In Christ) we are set at God's side and lifted up to Him and therefore to the place where decisions are made in the affairs of His government. And this is what takes place in ... Christian prayer ... We then find ourselves at the very seat of government, at the very heart of the mystery and purpose of all occurrence.' – Karl Barth, theologian ³
- 'And all shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.' – Julian of Norwich, fourteenth-century nun ⁴

STORIES

- **Story about 'Principalities and Powers'**

Near the end of the Second World War, a German pastor called Helmut Thielicke preached the following powerful sermon entitled 'deliver us from evil' just days after being liberated by the advancing Allied forces:

'Dear friends, in our time we have had far too much contact with demonic powers; we have sensed and seen how men and whole movements have been corrupted and controlled by mysterious, abysmal powers, leading them where they had no intention of going; we have observed all too often how an alien spirit can ride people and change the very substance of men who before may have been quite decent and reasonable persons, driving them to brutalities, delusions of power, and fits of madness of which they never appeared capable before; ... we sense how real and almost tangible are the evil spirits in the air, seeing an invisible hand passing an invisible cup of poison from nation to nation and throwing them into confusion.'⁵

FURTHER RESOURCES

- C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*
- Ed Silvoso, *That None Should Perish*

³ Karl Barth, *Christian Dogmatics III/3*, p. 287

⁴ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (Penguin Classics, 1998), p. 22

⁵ Helmut Thielicke, *Our Heavenly Father: Sermons on the Lord's Prayer* (Harper & Bros, 1960), p.110.