

PUT ON YOUR PROPHETIC ARMOR

SPIRITUAL STRATEGIES TO
PULL DOWN STRONGHOLDS

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BEFORE YOU CAN enter the Special Forces, you need to go through boot camp. You can't expertly shoot a gun until you know how it operates—and how to use it safely. Basic training is essential to gain the wisdom you will need to wield the weapons of warfare expertly. As I always say, the strength is in the fundamentals.

You could relate this to basketball—or just about any sport, I suppose. I'm a big basketball fan. Although I don't have much time these days to turn on a game, I still appreciate warriors like Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, and, more recently, Tim Duncan. Duncan is also known as “Mr. Fundamental” because he has mastered the fundamentals of the game.

The six-foot-eleven, 250-pound Duncan might not be as spectacular as LeBron James, but his precision is undeniable. He's spent his whole career wearing a San Antonio Spurs jersey. During that time the power forward has earned five NBA championships, was the NBA MVP twice, was the NBA Finals MVP three times, and is the only player to ever land on both the All-NBA and All-Defensive Teams in each of his first thirteen seasons.

How did he achieve such great success in the sports battlefield called the NBA? Talent, yes, but most point to his mastery of the fundamentals. Early on in my spiritual warfare training, I had limited revelation and a limited arsenal. I was lacking

in solid spiritual warfare fundamentals. I thought everything was Jezebel or witchcraft. All I knew how to do was bind and plead the blood. I didn't have a full revelation of the believer's authority, and my arms grew weary holding up a shield of faith that had holes in it.

So before we jump into the many prophetic warfare strategies, let's make sure we've got our fundamentals down. You sure don't want to build your spiritual warfare wisdom on a faulty foundation. Armed with the revelations in this chapter, you will be well equipped to bring out old and new treasures of spiritual warfare revelation (Matt. 13:52).

WHO ARE WE REALLY FIGHTING

Paul told his spiritual son Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). Although there are true physical threats that manifest, we are usually fighting a battle against our mind. But who is waging war against our souls? As Paul explains, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12, KJV).

Let's break this down in the Greek. First, notice that we are wrestling. We are not wrestling people; we are wrestling the enemy's unseen Special Forces assigned to derail our destiny. According to *The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon*, the Greek word translated as *wrestling* in this verse refers to "a contest between two in which each endeavors to throw the other, and which is decided when the victor is able to hold his opponent down with his hand upon his neck."¹

The devil wants to put you in a stranglehold. In the wrestling world, a stranglehold is an illegal hold that chokes the opponent. *Merriam-Webster* calls it a "force or influence that chokes or suppresses freedom of movement or expression."² If

the wrestler doesn't break free from the stranglehold, the lack of blood or air can cause him to black out.

Translating this to our spiritual realities, the enemy wants to choke the Word of God out of your mouth so you can't wield the sword of the Spirit or pray. He wants to choke your revelation of who you are in Christ and your authority over him. The enemy wants to counter the work of the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in your life so you will sideline yourself.

We see this concept of holding your opponent down with pressure upon his neck in Joshua 10. Joshua led the Israelites into battle against five Amorite kings. The kings hid in the cave at Makkedah, and Joshua, with his prophetic wisdom, instructed some men in his army to "roll large stones over the mouth of the cave, and station men to stand guard over it" (Josh. 10:18). The Israelites went on to defeat the Amorite soldiers (representative of garden-variety harassing demons), but Joshua still wanted to deal with the leaders (representative of principalities and powers and rulers of darkness). Look what happened next:

Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out to me those five kings from the cave." They did this, and they brought out those five kings from the cave: the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. When they brought out those five kings to Joshua, he called out to all the men of Israel and the army commanders, "Come here and place your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came near and placed their feet on their necks. Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed. Be strong and courageous! For this is what the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight." After that, Joshua struck them down, killed them, and hung them on five trees.

—JOSHUA 10:22–26

Joshua won the wrestling match. Although his enemies had a foot instead of a hand upon their necks, it is the same principle. David also used this principle. He once said, “You gave me the necks of my enemies, and I destroyed those who hate me” (Ps. 18:40). Again, we are not wrestling against flesh and blood kings. Our enemies are purely spiritual, though sometimes even the most well-intentioned believer can serve as a vessel of enemy attack.

DON'T PLAY PATTY-CAKE WITH PRINCIPALITIES

When I was a kid, we played a clapping game called patty-cake. Maybe you played it too. It went like this: “Patty-cake, patty-cake, baker’s man/ Bake me a cake as fast as you can/ Roll it, pat it, mark it with a B/ Put it in the oven for baby and me.” It was great fun. But we don’t play patty-cake with the principalities and powers. When you enter into spiritual warfare, you have to put aside childish things. You don’t play games with the devil. He wants to kill you.

Paul told the church at Corinth: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, and I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). Childish things—things carnal Christians hold on to such as envy, strife, pet sins, and the like—open the door for the enemy. Again, you can’t play games with the devil in your flesh without risking a severe beatdown. You need to set aside childish things if you want to execute prophetic warfare strategies.

According to *The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon*, the word *principality* comes from the Greek word *arche*. In Ephesians 6:12, the word *principalities* refers to “the first place, principality, rule, magistracy” and speaks of “angels and demons.”³ *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* reveals that it is used of “supramundane beings who exercise rule.”⁴ These

are high-level demons—so high-level, in fact, that an angel needed help from an archangel to break through. Remember Daniel’s encounter:

But then a hand touched me, which set me on my knees and on the palms of my hands. He said to me, “O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have been sent to you now.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood trembling. Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand this and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.”

—DANIEL 10:10–13

The Greek word for *powers* in Ephesians 6:12 (*exousia*) refers to “the leading and more powerful among created beings superior to man, spiritual potentates.”⁵ Moving down the hierarchy, a *ruler*, which comes from the Greek word *kosmokrator*, means “lord of the world, prince of this age,”⁶ and *wickedness*, from the Greek word *poneria*, means “depravity, iniquity, wickedness; malice; evil purposes and desires.”⁷

See what we’re up against? If the angel needed help from another angel to get around this principality, how much more do we need help from angels and the Holy Spirit? The point is, we cannot battle our spiritual enemies in our own strength, but when we discover the fundamentals of spiritual warfare and execute prophetic strategies, the Goliaths in our life will fall.

OUR WEAPONS ARE NOT CARNAL

For decades we have been taught 2 Corinthians 10:4. In fact, most of us have it memorized: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” Still, many in the body of Christ are relying on carnal weapons—even works of the flesh—to battle against perceived human enemies. It’s no wonder so many Christians are walking around in defeat. The good news is that we can patch this crack in our foundation.

We will start by looking at some Greek words in 2 Corinthians 10:4. The Greek word for *weapons* in this scripture is *hoplon*, which in this context means “arms used in warfare, weapons.”⁸ *Warfare* comes from the word *strateia*, meaning “an expedition, campaign, military service, warfare.”⁹

Metaphorically, the lexicon suggests, “Paul likens his contest with the difficulties that oppose him in the discharge of his apostolic duties to a warfare.”¹⁰ In other words, warfare can manifest in many different ways. Warfare can come against your body, your family, or your finances; warfare can cause delays and detours; warfare can cause people whom you thought were on your side to betray you. You get the idea.

Now I want to spend a minute on the word *carnal*, which comes from the Greek word *sarkikos*. It means “fleshly, carnal; having the nature of flesh, i.e. under the control of the animal appetites; governed by mere human nature not by the Spirit of God; having its seat in the animal nature or aroused by the animal nature; human: with the included idea of depravity; pertaining to the flesh,” according to *The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon*.¹¹

I see a lot of spiritual Christians waging carnal warfare against principalities and powers. When there are problems

in the church, carnal warriors engage in envy, strife, and divisions. (See 1 Corinthians 3:1–4.) When there are relationship problems, carnal warriors have a tendency to tap into the fleshly work of witchcraft and give their opponents the silent treatment to teach them a lesson. When there are financial problems, carnal warriors stop tithing or giving offerings. When there are health problems, carnal warriors rely on the doctor more than the Word of God. There’s nothing wrong with doctors, but we need to hit it from both sides. The Lord told Jeremiah, “Cursed is the man who...makes flesh his strength” (Jer. 17:5).

If we try to wage spiritual warfare with a carnal mind, we won’t like the outcome. We cannot be led forth into battle by the Spirit of God—discerning prophetic warfare strategies that are mighty in God to the pulling down of strongholds—when we are walking in the flesh. We won’t bless those who curse us when we’re waging carnal warfare. We won’t be peacemakers when we’re waging carnal warfare. We certainly won’t walk in love when we’re waging carnal warfare.

If you want to tap into prophetic warfare strategies, you need to walk in the Spirit. It’s like Paul told the Galatians: “I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal. 5:16–17). When you wage carnal warfare, you are setting yourself up for a lost battle. Sure, you still win the war in the end because you are in Christ, but the road to your ultimate victory will be paved with bumps and bruises. Consider what Paul told the church in Rome:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, for the carnal mind is hostile toward God, for it is

not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

—ROMANS 8:5–8

OUR WEAPONS ARE MIGHTY

Let's take a look at 2 Corinthians 10:4 again: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Our weapons are not carnal; they are mighty. The Greek word for *mighty* in this verse is *dunatos*. It means "able, powerful, mighty, strong; mighty in wealth and influence; strong in soul; to bear calamities and trials with fortitude and patience; strong in Christian virtue; to be able (to do something); mighty, excelling in something; having power for something."¹²

Wow. I don't know about you, but I will take the mighty weapons over the carnal weapons every time. It's when we use the mighty weapons that we are "more than conquerors" in battle (Rom. 8:37). It's when we use the mighty weapons that we can walk practically in the reality that greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). It's when we use the mighty weapons that God leads us into triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). See the contrast between this and carnal weapons? Again, I will take the mighty weapons over the carnal any day.

That means you don't need to scream at the devil to make him bow. Some spiritual warriors equate volume with power; they scream at the devil as if he's deaf. But the devil is not deaf, and screaming doesn't convince him to bow. When results elude them, some spiritual warriors grow louder and begin to moan and groan and make threats against the enemy they don't have the authority to enforce. I actually was trained in spiritual warfare in a church that hollered and wailed at the enemy in this manner with few results.

I am not against fervent spiritual warfare prayer or even getting loud. What I'm saying is the yelling that comes from frustration or out of a wrong mind-set that louder is more powerful is not fruitful. One of my mentors once said spiritual warfare skills aren't taught; they are caught. There is some truth to that. I believe some spiritual warriors scream and holler and make threats against the devil because that's what they have seen modeled. But that's not what the Bible models. That's not how Jesus did it.

So as you engage in spiritual warfare, don't get frustrated and abandon the fruit of self-control. Don't start acting like the devil! Remember, our weapons are mighty in God. In order to wield our weapons rightly, we need to know who we are in Christ, what our weapons are, and how to use them. There are entire books written on the authority of the believer, who we are in Christ, and all of our weapons; we'll look at some of that in the next section. But remember what Jesus said and rejoice: "Look, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

PUTTING ON YOUR PROPHETIC ARMOR

Before you can wage prophetic warfare, you need to put on your prophetic armor. It is one of those fundamentals I told you about earlier in the chapter. Who in their right mind would run to the battle line without the right equipment? Paul describes this spiritual outfit in Ephesians 6:14-17:

Stand therefore, having your waist girded with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace, and above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil

one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Jesus paid the price for our prophetic armor, but it's up to us to put it on. If you neglect to put on the whole armor—if you leave the house without your shoes of peace because you were too busy arguing with your spouse, sister, brother, child, or fill-in-the-blank—then you have left yourself vulnerable to the wicked one. If you disregard any piece of your battle array, you are open to attack.

Think of it this way: each element of your armor works with the others to offer complete protection in the face of spiritual opposition. The very word *armor* suggests an assembly of parts, not a single piece. How can your faith work without the belt of truth? It can't. Hearing the word of truth activates your faith. How can your faith work without the breastplate of righteousness? It can't. If you do not have a revelation of your righteousness coming from Christ, the devil will successfully drag you into the pit of self-condemnation every time you make the slightest mistake. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, won't work for you if you don't wield it in faith.

Consider the seven sons of Sceva. Sceva was a Jew and a chief of the priests. As such, his sons were educated in the Word of God. They took it upon themselves to try to cast out evil spirits, saying, "We command you to come out in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches" (Acts 19:13). The only problem was that these seven sons of Sceva didn't have faith in the Word of God made flesh. In other words, they didn't have faith in Jesus and had no basis on which to exercise His authority. They didn't have a relationship with Him. They were not born again. The devils knew they had no authority to use the name. Let's look at the fate of these young men:

The evil spirit answered, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?” Then the man in whom the evil spirit was jumped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled from that house naked and wounded.

—ACTS 19:15–16

Now let me ask you this: Do you think these seven sons of Sceva were wearing the armor of God? I submit to you that if they had been, the outcome of this spiritual confrontation would have been much different. But these sons of Sceva didn’t even have the helmet of salvation, much less the breastplate of righteousness or the gospel of peace. The good news is that if you are a born-again believer, you have authority. Jesus gave it to you (Luke 10:19–20). Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, His Word, and His name is what gives you the strength to wield the sword.

WHAT ARE OUR MIGHTY WEAPONS?

Here is one last word before we move into the many prophetic warfare strategies in this book: a strategy is one thing, a tactic is another—but weapons are altogether different. We have an arsenal of mighty weapons at our disposal, and God will use them as we execute prophetic warfare strategies. So what are those mighty weapons?

We already talked about one: the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The writer of Hebrews explains: “For the word of God is alive, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). In other words, the sayings of God, the decrees of God, the mandates of God, the moral precepts of God, the prophecy that comes from God, the teaching of

God, and the reasoning of God—all of these are sharp enough to cut through any assignment of the enemy.

Revelation 12 offers a trio of weapons at our disposal: “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11). Since the battle is largely in the mind, pleading the blood of Jesus over your mind is a mighty weapon. We know there is power in the blood of Jesus to break every bondage. Of course, prayer is a mighty weapon. We can pray that God looses His ministering angels and pray that the Holy Spirit helps us and gives us strategies, wisdom, and strength. We can take authority over the enemy and bind and loose in prayer.

The word of our testimony is the second weapon mentioned in the verse, and it is a mighty one. There are two sides to this coin. One side is this: What is coming out of your mouth? What are you confessing? If you are confessing defeat, you are giving the devil ammunition against you. The other side of the coin is your personal testimony. Remembering and confessing what God has delivered you from—past victories—is a mighty weapon.

The third prong of this scripture is one that many don’t consider a weapon: loving not your life even unto death. In other words, trade self-pity for selflessness. Self is a snare on the battlefield. Selflessness is a mighty weapon because it places your mind not on the things of the flesh but on executing God’s will and trusting Him to take care of you.

Our mighty weapons are many: the name of Jesus, praise and worship, the knowledge of our covenant with God, submission to authority, the gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, and forgiveness. This is not an exhaustive list, and again, there are entire books written on these aspects of spiritual warfare. The point is that you have the prophetic armor of God and many mighty weapons. You have the spiritual

warfare technologies at your disposal. What you need is a revelation of prophetic warfare strategies—and the Spirit-led inspiration to use the right one at the right time.

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