



EVIL IS REAL

SCRIPTURE VERSES (NIV)

Exodus 15:3

³ The Lord is a warrior;
the Lord is his name.

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:
"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

John 17:15

¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Romans 16:20

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Ephesians 6:10-13

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

1 Thessalonians 5:15-22

¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸

give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

³ But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

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Satan is Real
Fighting Spiritual Warfare
Unseen Battle Over Your Prayers
Whose Voice is it? Worry.
When You're Tempted, God Wants to Help
Winning the War Inside You
The Unseen World
You Need a Battle Buddy

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SATAN IS REAL

Rick Warren

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV)

You have an enemy — and it’s not who you think it is. It isn’t the person you’re competing against at work. It isn’t the difficult neighbor. It isn’t your ex-spouse. It isn’t the group in your community who are taking unbiblical positions against you. Your enemy isn’t flesh and blood at all. Your battle is with Satan.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).

One of the reasons we so often walk around in discouragement and defeat is because we don’t really understand who we’re battling. We don’t understand who our real enemy is. We blame the system, a political party, a segment of people, or the person we think has control over our lives.

We blame everyone but the one whom the Bible calls a thief and a liar who is out to destroy anyone who loves and follows Jesus.

To find victory in your life over what’s dragging you down, you’ve got to start by attacking the right enemy.

When you do, keep these truths in mind as you battle against your true enemy, Satan.

- 1. You’re no match for Satan.** It’s like trying to shoot a rubber band at a battleship. Outside of Jesus, you have no hope of defeating Satan’s influence over your life.
- 2. Everyone gets used by Satan.** Satan will put thoughts in the minds of Christians and non-Christians alike. At times we can all be a pawn of Satan. Protect yourself with the armor of God (see Ephesians 6:10-17).
- 3. Not everything that is spiritual is good.** There’s spiritual light and spiritual darkness. Don’t fall for the lie that all roads to God are equal. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6 NIV).
- 4. Satan doesn’t fight fair.** Satan can’t slug you, so instead he puts discouraging and depressing ideas into your mind. You’ve got to catch him in the act, let him know you know where the idea comes from, and ask Jesus for help.

Satan is real. He’s the enemy who has been disrupting your life. But there’s good news: He doesn’t have a chance against Jesus.

Talk It Over

- ◆ Who have you considered your enemy? What are the thoughts that have been in your head lately that you know are from Satan?
- ◆ What are you going to do to counterattack those thoughts and to guard your mind?

FIGHTING SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Rick Warren — December 5, 2015

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV)

There are four things we need to do when we are battling spiritual warfare in our lives:

1. Acknowledge the adversary. Satan is real (1 Peter 5:8-9). Why would God send his Son to fight what does not exist? The Bible says in 1 John 3:8, *“The Son of God came to destroy these works of the Devil”* (NLT). When you’re being attacked, it’s proof that you’re a believer. The more you make an impact for God, the more the Devil is going to fight you. You never outgrow it; it just gets more intense.

2. Accept God-given authority. Most believers are ignorant about the authority they have to use against the Devil. Matthew 28:18-19 says we have all authority in heaven and earth. Then Jesus says, *“Therefore go and make disciples”* (NIV). He transfers the authority to you and me. He does that because he’s given us a specific mission (2 Corinthians 5:20).

3. Put on God’s armor. When Paul wrote about the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17), he was in prison chained to a Roman guard. Paul used the Roman centurion as a model for spiritual armor. Paul says, just as the Roman soldier is properly dressed to do battle, we also need to be dressed for battle. For instance, I will often pray, “Lord, I put on the helmet of salvation that will protect me from the thoughts the Devil will try to give me. I don’t want to think the Devil’s thoughts. I don’t want to think my thoughts. I want to think your thoughts, so that I may be a voice for you. I put on the belt of truth. Lord, I want to share the truth, not falsehood. I want to lead people into righteousness.”

4. Aim the artillery. The battlefield for spiritual warfare is primarily in your thought life (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). The weapons God gives us to use demolish arguments are humility, faith, truth, and praise. Take every thought captive!

Talk It Over

- ◆ What does your authority in Christ give you the power to do when you feel attacked by the Devil?
- ◆ How will memorizing Scripture help you fight spiritual warfare?
- ◆ What do you think it means to “take captive every thought” (2 Corinthians 10:5)?

UNSEEN BATTLE OVER YOUR PRAYERS

Rick Warren — January 24, 2016

***“We are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age.”
(Ephesians 6:12 TEV)***

There is an unseen battle going on in a realm that we don't even understand. We don't see it. We don't feel it. But there is a spiritual war in other dimensions between good and evil, between God and Satan, between angels and demons.

And the fact is, you're caught right in the middle. If you're a child of God, Satan hates you. And he wants to mess you up.

When you send up a prayer, there's often a battle over how it's going to be answered. While you're in the waiting room, Satan starts throwing darts at you — the dart of doubt, the dart of discouragement, the dart of disappointment, the dart of delay, the dart of depression. The Bible says to be aware that he's going to try to get you down.

The truth is, the Bible doesn't tell us much about the spiritual warfare that's going on behind your prayers. But we do get a glimpse of it in the book of Daniel.

Daniel had a vision of an angel, who said, *“Daniel, don't be afraid. God has heard your prayers ever since the first day you decided to humble yourself in order to gain understanding. I have come in answer to your prayer. The [evil] angel prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief angels, came to help me, because I had been left there alone in Persia”* (Daniel 10:12-13). Are those the wildest verses you've ever seen? It says that Daniel had a prayer that wasn't answered for a while, and he was starting to get discouraged. The angel showed up and said, “I'm here to give you the answer. We heard it from day one, but we've been in a battle over this, and it was such an intense battle that Michael the archangel had to come down and help me with this battle so I could come and tell you that the answer is on its way.”

The same thing is sometimes happening when you are waiting on your answer from God. You can't know what kind of intense battle is going on over your prayer, but you can remember this: A delay is not a denial. When an answer to prayer is delayed, it doesn't mean it's not going to be answered. It just means God is fighting for you.

Don't be discouraged. Keep praying!

Talk It Over

- ◆ Why is it important that Daniel humbled himself “in order to gain understanding”?
- ◆ What kind of prayer can you pray while you are waiting on God to answer?
- ◆ While you are waiting, how does it help you to know that an answer to your prayer is on its way?

WHO'S VOICE IS IT? WORRY.

Rick Warren — March 12, 2015

A lot of Christians go through life living under condemnation and guilt, thinking it's the voice of God. But it's not. That's the devil!

Conviction comes from God. Condemnation comes from the devil. The purpose of conviction is to correct something that's out of whack in your life. The purpose of condemnation is just to put you down and make you feel miserable and guilty and ashamed. The motivation behind conviction is that God loves you and wants to help you be better. The motivation behind condemnation is that Satan hates you and wants to make you miserable. When God speaks to you about an area in your life for conviction, he's very specific. Condemnation is general.

God will give you a specific area of your life where something is out of whack. Then, he gives you the solution. You confess it to God, and the feeling of conviction leaves instantly. Condemnation, on the other hand, goes on and on and on.

Romans 8:1 says, *"There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus"* (NLT). God will never attack your value. If you hear a voice that says, "You're hopeless! You're worthless! You're unlovable!" you can know that is not the voice of God.

Finally, you need to ask about your idea or impression, "Do I sense God's peace about it?"

If you get an impression and it makes you feel pressured, overwhelmed, or confused, you need to question whether that impression is from God. Because God doesn't want us to live under pressure. He wants us to sense his peace. Satan wants to drive us compulsively. But God desires to draw us compassionately. Peter Lord used to say, "Ninety percent of what God says to us is encouragement." Have you sensed God saying anything encouraging to you lately? Or is it all about pressure? God has some encouraging things to say to us.

There is a word for the pressure that comes into our lives that drives us away from God's peace: worry. But Philippians 4:6-7 says, *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."*

These verses tell us that worry is never from God. It only creates pressure in our lives. Those verses also give us this incredible promise: Take your worry to God, and leave it there. Listen to his voice. It will bring peace if you only obey it.

WHEN YOU'RE TEMPTED, GOD WANTS TO HELP

Rick Warren

“Call on me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you will honor me.” (Psalm 50:15 NIV)

The Bible tells us that God is ready to help. He says we're to pray, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” That is the prayer of deliverance. You ask God for help.

The prayer of deliverance is often just one word: Help! It doesn't have to be “Our gracious heavenly Father ...” No. When you come to the prayer of deliverance, you can do a microwave prayer: “Help! Keep my eyes straight. I don't like this person. I do not like the way my relative treats me, and I'm going to see her today. Oh, God! You've got to help me! I lose my Christianity when I'm around that person. I really need your help today, because everything in me just wants to slug her!”

The Bible is full of examples of people who've prayed for deliverance, such as David, Daniel, Peter, and Paul. God provides assistance for anybody who asks.

Why can I expect God to help me when I pray the prayer of deliverance? Because God has promised it. Psalm 50:15 says, “*Call on me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you will honor me*” (NIV). God says you don't have to have a long conversation. You can just say, “Help! Mayday! SOS! God, I'm facing something now that willpower won't help me get through.”

God is sympathetic to your situation. He knows everything that's going on in your life. He knows how irritating those people are. He knows the things that tempt you. In fact, look at this verse: “*Jesus understands our weaknesses, for he faced all the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to our gracious God and then we will receive his mercy and grace to help us when we need it*” (Hebrews 4:15-16 NLT).

Notice he says Jesus understands. Why is he sympathetic? He faced the same temptation.

You say, “Wait a minute? Are you saying Jesus was tempted to get angry?” Yes, I am. “You're telling me Jesus was tempted to have self pity?” Yes. The Bible says he was tempted in all ways as we, yet he did not sin. That's the difference. He never gave in. He had the freedom to choose.

But even better is the fact that he never sinned. What does that mean? He can help you overcome. So the Bible says, “Come boldly to God.” Come and say “Mayday! SOS! I need your help.” God isn't ticked with you when you get tempted. He's not going to scold you when you're tempted. He says, “I'm here to help.”

Talk It Over

- ◆ How will your prayers change when you understand that God wants to help you with your temptation?
- ◆ Think of a time when you prayed for deliverance. How did God respond?

WINNING THE WAR INSIDE OF YOU

Rick Warren

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV)

You may not realize it, but you're at war. You may not wear military fatigues. You may not eat at a mess hall. You may not dodge physical bullets.

But you're in a war — an invisible one. It's called *spiritual warfare*. You'll be in the war from the moment you're born until the moment you die.

The Bible tells us that you have three mortal enemies out to destroy your life and everything God wants to do through it:

- ◆ The world — the dominant value system around us
- ◆ The flesh — the old nature within you
- ◆ The Devil — a real being that's out to “kill, steal, and destroy” along with his demonic minions.

The victory for the war you're in won't come through bullets or tactics. The Bible teaches us that, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).

In this war, all that matters is Jesus. He has to be the general of your life, the one in charge of the battle plan. You may be a believer, but that's not enough for this war. Jesus has to be your Lord, too.

Many people believe in Jesus. But to find victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil, Jesus has to be more than just someone you believe in.

Romans 7:24-25 says, *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (NIV)

The answer to the all-consuming battle you're in isn't a self-help seminar, a new book, a conference, a psychology, or a therapy. It's Jesus. Make him your boss. Paul, who wrote the book of Romans, makes it clear he is at the end of his rope. He can't win the battle on his own. His only hope is “Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Bible says it's Jesus, the Lord, who will deliver you, too. It's time to put a sign over your life: “Under new management.”

Talk It Over

- ◆ What are the times in your life when you feel like you experience more spiritual warfare than usual?
- ◆ Why do you think so many people are quick to try therapy to fix their problems but hesitant to surrender to Jesus?

THE UNSEEN WORLD

February 23, 2015

The Angel of the Lord [was] standing in the way. —Numbers 22:23

Did you know that the microbes on just one of your hands outnumber all of the people on the earth? Or that millions of microbes could fit into the eye of a needle? These one-celled, living organisms are too small for us to see without a microscope, yet they live in the air, soil, water, and even in our bodies. We constantly interact with them, even though their world is completely beyond our senses.

The realities of the spiritual world are also often not visible to us humans, as the prophet Balaam discovered. He was trudging along the road with his two servants when his donkey “*saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand*” (Num. 22:23). To avoid the angel, the animal walked into a field, crushed Balaam’s foot against a wall, and lay down with Balaam still on her back. Balaam was angry and struck the donkey. He didn’t realize something supernatural was going on—until God opened his eyes (v.31).

The Bible tells us that a spiritual world does exist, and we may sometimes encounter realities from that realm—both good and bad (Heb. 13:2; Eph. 6:12). Because of this, we are encouraged to be watchful, prayerful, and prepared. Just as God rules the world we see, He also rules the unseen world.—Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Heavenly Father, help us to be strong in You and in the power of Your might. Open our eyes so that we may see the spiritual realities You have for us.

All that is seen and unseen is under God’s sovereign power.

YOU NEED A BATTLE BUDDY

Rick Warren

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so God can heal you. When a believing person prays, great things happen.” (James 5:16 NCV)

People don't go to war by themselves. It would be a suicide mission. Someone has to have your back.

You need a battle buddy.

The same is true in the spiritual battles we all face. You can't go to war against lustful thoughts, dishonesty, addictions, and fear by yourself. You'll be doomed to fail.

If all you want is to be forgiven, admit your sin and brokenness to God. If you want to make a change, admit it to someone else.

Revealing your sin is the beginning of healing. You don't have to admit your sin to everyone. But you need to admit it to someone. You need one person who'll love you unconditionally, accept you completely, and pray for you constantly. You need someone of the same gender to be open and honest with.

The Bible says in James 5:16 *“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so God can heal you. When a believing person prays, great things happen”* (NCV).

When you confess your sins to someone else, you open the relief valve and take the pressure off. Suddenly, the boogiemer isn't so big.

Often sin is a cycle. You start out humbly asking God for help, so he gives you the power to make it. After about six months of success, you start getting prideful. Then, you fall. And, in humility again, you ask God for help. If you could stay in that spirit of humility, you'd be good. But pride always returns.

You can't kick that kind of cycle without friends who'll pray for you, care for you, encourage you, and keep you on track. When success comes, they'll help you keep your perspective so your humility stays in check.

That's why local churches are so important. But you can attend many churches for years and never put yourself in a situation where you know others and are known by others. Make the effort to find a small group of believers in a local church with whom you can be open and honest.

To think you can quit a bad habit without being honest about it with others is simply a cop out. It never works. You guarantee failure when you do that.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What sin in your life do you need to confess to another person?
- ◆ To whom in your life can you confess your sin?
- ◆ What frightens you about revealing your sin to someone else?