

DESKTOP REVELATIONS

DESKTOP REVELATIONS

VOLUME 1 SPIRITUAL WARFARE

l. carnevale

An elciProduction

elciProductions.com

Copyright © 2013 I. carnevale.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Style note: We made a conscious effort to keep this manuscript as reader-friendly as possible while thoroughly citing biblical references. All biblical references are denoted by a smaller-sized font between brackets []. This allows for you to choose the type of literary experience you desire. Simply skip over the brackets for a smooth, quick read, or take note and research it yourself.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version. Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from The Living Bible copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org). Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Because of the dynamic nature of the Internet, any web addresses or links contained in this book may have changed since publication and may no longer be valid.

ISBN: 978-1-4497-9835-2 (sc)
ISBN: 978-1-4497-9836-9 (hc)
ISBN: 978-1-4497-9834-5 (e)

Library of Congress Control Number: TXU001838530

This manuscript is lovingly dedicated to the most powerful united force on the earth today—the end-time church, the spotless bride of Christ. It is intended completely for her. To help her awake, rise up, and become all she was designed to be: beautiful, captivating, powerful, relentless, compassionate, loving, and unstoppable—all that she already is in Jesus—and to spark the inception of the “one new man,” the overcoming race of king/priests (true sons and daughters of God) that she was created to conceive and birth [Revelation 12]. My dear, it is your time. This book is your true love’s kiss. Awake. Arise.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	viii
Spiritual Warfare	1
Intro: The Basics	3
Battle Tactic 1: Let the Lord Fight, and “Replacement Theology”	11
Battle Tactic 2: Speaking the Blessing	21
Battle Tactic 3: Admitting Hurt	23
Battle Tactic 4: Soaking (Filling up and Tapping into the Presence of God)	26
Battle Tactic 5: Memorizing Scripture	30
Battle Tactic 6: Obedience (through Faith by Grace) and Walking in God’s Love	32
Walking in God’s Love	39
Battle Tactic 7: Speaking in Tongues	45
Battle Tactic 8: Discernment and Discerning of Spirits	50
Avoid Playing the Blame Game	58
Battle Tactic 9: Exposing the Enemy	71
Battle Tactic 10: Being Honest and Transparent	74
Battle Tactic 11: Freedom Ministry (Power of Agreement)	76
Battle Tactic 12: Trust (Keeping the Victory)	81
Battle Tactic 13: Holiness (Becoming Unstoppable)	84
Side Note 1: Redeemed from the Curse of the Law	95
Side Note 2: Why Two Parts?	98
Battle Tactic 14: Praise and Thanksgiving	98
Battle Tactic 15: Patience (Winning Every Time)	102
Fruit versus Root	104
Battle Tactic 16: Wash	109

Battle Tactic 17: Taking a Stand (How We Fight)	114
How We Fight	116
General Examples	126
Specific Examples: Suffering Silently—Part 1	130
Suffering Silently—Part 2	132
The Power of Words	134
What Do We Do When the Enemy Won't Change	137
Going on the Offensive	141
Battle Tactic 18: God's Love	141
Religion, the Counterfeit Exposed	145
Battle Tactic 19: God's Joy	152
Closing Thoughts	153
Connect	154
Appendix A	
My Story From Stage Fright to no Fear	157
Appendix B	
Pastors Quick List	166

PREFACE

I'll make this quick, cuz let's face it—who reads the preface?

If you are a skeptic, an “older brother,” or still looking for ways God will cater to you and “bless your mess”—don't waste your time reading this manuscript. There is nothing here for you.

This book is intended for those seeking God with all their hearts, those who truly want breakthrough and change, and those who truly want to see God work in greater ways in their lives. It's for people who are willing to change their ways and their beliefs and adapt to Jesus'. It's for people looking at life through a heart filter of selfless love and truth, not judgment, religion, excuses, or selfishness.

For those still reading, we've got to quit living in fear and doubt, following the world's way of doing things, and then blaming God for the poor outcome—blaming God for the way the world takes care of us. We've got to quit taking the “quick fix” road and then faulting God when it leads to a dead end. Warriors, if we want God's results, God's protection, and God's provision, then we *must* follow God's path. Only certain roads lead to certain destinations. If we want guaranteed results, we must follow guaranteed methods. The secret is not in getting God to move for us, the secret is getting us to move in step with Him. When that divine partnership happens, all of heaven and earth will begin to move on our behalf.

That is what this book is about. It's about moving past ourselves, unlocking the secrets of the Kingdom and understanding why (and how) to get God's results—Kingdom results—every time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jesus—my Lord, King, and best friend—You *are* this book! Without You there is no me. There is no victory. There is no revelation. There is no life. There is no joy. And surely there is no book. Thank you for the things You taught me before this book, during this book, and after this book. Thank you for Your patience with me. Thank you for Your crazy peace, Your exploding joy, and Your burning love! You are the “funnest” person I know. (Who else can make lying silently on a couch feel like complete ecstasy!) You rock.

Kristy, my wife and BFTL (best friend/teammate/lover) in Jesus, I am so blessed that Jesus picked you for me to do eternity with. You are amazing, funny, talented, smart, wise, loving, compassionate and smoking hot. You have such a seeking heart for Jesus. You truly are a P31 (Proverbs 31) woman! I can't wait to cuddle you ... hard! ☺

Lexi, my firstborn baby girl: in your twenty-two hours of life you were the complete embodiment of the word “overcomer.” What you gave is still growing and giving to this day. I can't wait to see all the fruit Jesus brings out of your sacrifice. And I can't wait to meet you someday in the air!

Liberty Faith, you were but a twinkle in your mommy's eye when your daddy started penning this book. Now you are over three months and counting. You are a true miracle. Genetic disorders were ordered. Impending mishaps averted. Heaven literally realigned earth to make way for you—not once but twice (that we know of ☺). You are living proof of what standing on the promises of God (in your case, Philippians 1:6) will do. It is no accident that you are ours. You are adorable. You are extraordinary. You are fearless. I cannot wait to see all that God has planned for you!

Friends and family, thanks for always allowing me the freedom to follow God and to chase the dreams and destiny He placed in my heart and called me to. No matter the struggles, strife, and misunderstandings that will be shed along the way, I love you all! You are *all* truly amazing!

Persecution, my constant opposition, thank you for your tireless pursuit to destroy me. Without you I have no incentive to run to Jesus. Without you I don't know my own desperate, deep need for a savior every moment of every day. Without you I remain shallow, weak, and ignorant of the one who loves me more than anything I could ever imagine. Without you I might have never tasted this depth of my savior's love. Without you I would have nothing to overcome! You are my fuel, my bread, my footstool, and my promotion. Thank you.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Spiritual warfare is a lot like picking your nose. It's a whole lot of fun, a little bit awkward in public, leaves you feeling totally clean and free inside, and is always entertaining to see what you "dig up" next.

I'm sorry; I apologize; we so "went there." ☺ Let's ponder the depth of wisdom in that for just one slightly uncomfortable second longer ...

Great, now we can try to forget it, regroup, and start all over.

Okay, take two.

Spiritual warfare, in a nutshell, is being a disciple. It is simply following, obeying, and becoming more like Christ. If you do these things, you will inadvertently defeat the enemy. It really is that simple. Warfare is not a bunch of independent, head-to-head, "bring your A-game" showdowns strung together. Warfare is simply a lifestyle, a way of life. God's way will always destroy the devil's way—eventually. That's the battle. It's consistently living life God's way, long enough to completely destroy the enemy.

And that's pretty much it! Yeah, you could actually put this book down now and know enough to successfully be a total overcomer in every area of your life for the rest of your life. Slow reader, you're welcome!

Okay, okay. If that truly *is* the case, then why am I taking the time to write this entire manuscript?

Well, unfortunately, today's warriors have been oppressed for so long that we don't even know what life in Christ, what God's way, what "the battle" really is. Often we think of it as I formerly did, as that "classic" conversion story: "I was into drugs, women, and loud rock 'n roll. Then Jesus saved me! Now I'm a happy, clean-cut, churchgoing, family-oriented businessman who listens to soft classical and owns a wooden-cross necklace." And that's it. There's no more. We are saved, the battle is over. Now we'll just hunker down, live a sheltered life, follow a few new rules, learn a new vocabulary, and put up some new walls. We never push any envelopes. We never challenge any giants. Rather, we color carefully within the lines and remain a "nice" person until the day we go meet Jesus.

Wow. That sucks. No wonder we are not overcoming the world. We have watered down the opportunity to do life with the Creator-of-the-universe as our best friend to some mundane,

manmade behavior modifications and vocabulary changes. Let me repeat. Wow. That sucks—and honestly, nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth is the battle does not stop at conversion. Life in Christ is not comprised of a single “first date” and then waiting indefinitely until the day we get married and move in together. No, the battle is what starts *after* conversion. Life in Christ is what continues *after* the first date. It’s how we are permanently freed of fear. It’s how Jesus eradicates lust from our heart. It’s how He exterminates our debilitating shyness, our destructive rage, our tormenting insecurities. It’s how He makes us less self-absorbed and free from anxiety. It’s how He heals us. It’s how He defeats the pride, offense, hurt, religion, weakness, confusion, rejection, doubt, unbelief, torment, trauma, self-righteousness, and good old-fashioned selfishness in our life. It’s how He makes us more loving and compassionate. How His power flows through us, how we become addicted to Him. It’s how our finances are transformed and how He reveals our calling. It’s how He gives us new giftings, expands our old giftings, gives us new revelations, and expands our old revelations. It’s living on the edge, in the face of the enemy, persecuted but never defeated. Never helpless. Never alone. It’s learning to feel His Holy Spirit, seeing prayers answered consistently, experiencing miracles daily. We could go on and on and on.

Do you see the difference? “The battle” is what happens after Jesus moves in and sets up that direct, permanent connection to heaven. “Life in Christ” is what happens now that our Father God (Papa) can direct our every move. “God’s way” is what happens as the Holy Spirit’s love and power starts flowing freely through us. That’s when life begins. That’s the battle. That’s the life of a warrior.

For the most part, satan totally has us right where he wants us. His subtle lies, embedded strongholds, tormenting oppression, and self-righteous pride—coupled with the honest naiveties, and powerless traditions of man—permeate our modern church culture, leaving us settling for “cookie-cutter” conversion stories and looking no further. Consequently, we remain spiritual babies; conceived (saved) but not yet reborn. We are easily aborted, unskilled, untrained warriors—perpetual “sitting ducks.” We are weak, blind, clueless, and worst of all, missing out on the most awesome part to being a believer. We are missing out on all the crazy stuff that happens once we can openly communicate with our living, loving, all-powerful, hilarious, brilliant, and personal best friend, Papa God of the universe!

My goal in writing this book is not to condemn or bash the contemporary church or the modern believer. No, we are all in this together. My goal is to take what I’ve learned—in my short but heavily bombarded eight years of true “son-ship”—and relay it to you in as much detail as possible. Specifically, it’s to relay the practical daily mechanics (the “how to” of it all), so that anyone can read any chapter and instantly know exactly what to do and exactly how to apply it to his or her own life and begin getting real results. My hope is that the revelation in this book will

help jump start all believers on their own personal path to victory; that it will lead them down their own personal path to becoming an overcomer, a destroyer of the enemy; so that they too can witness crazy, miraculous, continuous victories (like I have) in their own lives.

My heart is for every naïve, uninformed, untested battle-novice to become a highly skilled, well practiced soldier who can look at a battlefield, clearly assess it, and then take it as needed. I can't get us all the way there (I'm still learning myself), but I do know the One who can. My objective is to simply point the way to Him, to plainly spell out what I've learned, and to offer a helping hand up and out of the mess we are all in.

Family, it's time to quit overprotecting our little corners of God-given heaven. It's time to stop swapping the same unsatisfied church members back and forth. It's time to rise up, to ban together as brothers and sisters in Christ, and to start taking all future territory directly from the clutches of hell itself! I assure you, there is more than enough ground to go around. 😊

Intro: The Basics

If you read the other books in this series (coming soon), all of them have tactics, secrets, and examples of spiritual warfare strewn throughout. Some of those same strategies (among others I will attempt to further clarify in this book) include speaking to your morning; speaking the blessing; admitting hurt; letting the Lord fight; soaking; memorizing Scripture; obedience; walking in love; speaking in tongues; discernment; exposing the enemy; and being honest and transparent; as well as freedom ministry, trust, holiness, praise and thanksgiving, patience, taking a stand, and more.

But first, let's start with the basics.

Identification

Confusion comes when we don't know how to clearly identify both sides at war. If we don't know what the enemy (the forces of hell) look like, it is impossible to stop them. If we don't know what our comrades (the forces of heaven) look like, it is impossible to help them.

We can't misconstrue enemy attacks as "friendly fire." We can't confuse enemy orders as our own. We can't let the enemy's rhetoric (making God our opponent) twist our mind. We must be able to clearly distinguish the voice of our general, our Good Shepard, over that of the enemy's or we will find ourselves overpowered, outplayed, confused and destroyed.

Clarity begins when we undoubtedly know that God is for us [Romans 8:31; Psalm 56:9], that He will never leave us or forsake us [Hebrews 13:5], that a house divided against itself will never stand [Matthew 12:25]. When we truly know that God is *always* good [Nahum 1:7] and the devil is

always bad [John 10:10]. When we understand that all of God's righteous wrath and just judgment was placed on Jesus [Isaiah 53:5], then we can rest and have complete confidence that He would never be the one bringing the attack [Isaiah 54:15] because He is always standing with us to fight our adversary.

Clarity continues when we know exactly what God calls good and evil, a blessing or a curse [Deuteronomy 28; Psalm 103], and when we understand that the enemy is the father of all lies, the author of all confusion [John 8:44; Corinthians 14:33]. When we can look at the Genesis garden or the "new earth" in Revelation and clearly see that no sickness, death, fear, hate, darkness, poverty, decay, distance (from our heavenly Papa), or a devil are found in either one—then we can rest and know that good is simply good and evil is always evil. There is nothing to twist, nothing to misconstrue.

Clarity solidifies as we memorize the Bible, digesting chapters like 1 John 3, Proverbs 12, Psalm 91, and Psalm 103. Then we can begin to easily divide the enemy's lying voice of death from our General's truthful voice of life.

Check out Deuteronomy 28. That chapter plainly spells out the difference between a blessing and a curse, good and evil, life and death, God and the devil. Couple that with Scriptures such as Matthew 19:17 and Psalm 107:1 and we clearly see that God is good. Conversely, Scriptures such as John 10:10, John 8:44, and 1 Corinthians 14:33 plainly show us the devil is the father of all lies, confusion, and destruction.

We have to realize "God is life, satan is death." It really is that simple. Death (separation) is never God and life (deep relationship) is never the devil.

Bottom line: If the end result is life—a stronger relationship, more internal freedom, healing to our body, expanding dreams, opportunity, increase, development, aid, wisdom, talents, vision, love, clarity, and all selflessness—the author, the cause, is always Jesus.

Conversely, if the end result is death—separation, torment, insecurity, sickness, age, fading dreams, confusion, trickery, hate, indifference, loss, and destruction—the author, the culprit, is always the devil. He is the father of lies, manipulation, and all selfishness.

Remember, God will walk with us *through* the attacks of the enemy, *through* the valley of the shadow of death [Psalm 23], *through* the red sea [Exodus 14], *through* the fire [Daniel 3]. He guides us *through* the enemy's sickness, disease, torment and trouble to reach His victory, healing, life, and Promised Land on the other side.

I know our knee-jerk reaction when a bombardment comes is to cry out, "Why, God, why?" and wonder why He isn't stopping the attack. But remember, this is war. We are soldiers. There is a real enemy with his own free will. When that enemy shoots, we must shoot back. We must be ready to stand our ground, fight, and take ground as we need it.

Let me illustrate. Imagine we are on the front lines of battle. Bunkered down, weapon in hand, peering out into the thick darkness from the safety of our freshly dug foxhole. Suddenly shots ring out; brilliant bursts of light from advancing enemy gunfire flash sporadically against the dark jungle backdrop. We drop down and take quick cover, bullets smashing into the dirt around us.

As a trained captain who comprehends the war we've entered, what do we do next? Do we get the commanding general on the line and ask him why he isn't stopping this attack? Do we call up the president (the sovereign authority over the entire free world) and ask him why he is letting this happen to us?

Of course not! We are armed. We are trained. We have our orders. We simply pop right back up, engage the enemy, and take him out!

Sure we can call our general for backup, for the latest tactical update, for updated marching orders, and for resources or reinforcements as we need them. But as a trained officer, we understand that neither our general nor our president allowed this attack. In fact, we know just the opposite. Our leaders are actually teamed up with us to help stop this assault in any way that they can. They will gladly provide the guidance, the raw power, and the support, but we must engage the enemy.

Okay, analogy understood. God is on our side, however we must engage—but why? What is the point of all this? Why are we battling? Where are we battling? What are we fighting for?

First question, *why are we battling?* Unfortunately, we don't have time to truly do this question justice. However, we are essentially battling because we are caught in the middle of a raging war between the number one and two most powerful people in the universe, God and satan. The stage is earth, where all will be "played out" to decide who will take full, final control. Will selfish evil rule? Or will selfless love rule? <cue suspenseful music here> Of course we know selfless love conquers in the end, but it's anyone's game until then.

So how do we fit in? Well, we are smack-dab, caught in the middle because the war is actually being played out through us!

Joyce Meyer says it best, the battlefield *is* the mind. The point where the battle starts and predominantly rages is in our minds, and in the spirit world around us. This is why tactics like memorizing Scripture and thinking only on life-giving things are such a huge part of spiritual warfare.

But let's take it one step further. If the battlefield is in the mind, then *what are we fighting for?*

Let's think about it. We have two *eternal* forces battling it out. It's not like a human war where death is the ultimate decider. With both sides being eternal, one side can't just kill the other and win. Death is useless. No, these forces are left fighting for something far more valuable. They fight for territory. They fight for control.

Think of this in the context of rush-hour traffic. Rush-hour is a great example of an "unkillable war." We have thousands of cars all moving toward their individual goals, all jockeying for position, all fighting for the ultimate right to "rule the road."

As a driver, how do we "hold our own" on the highway? That's right—we simply move into and occupy *our* space. As long as we continue to occupy our space, our "territory," then we continue to maintain complete control over it.

We can't kill the other cars around us, at least not without ending up in jail and losing our current position. So if we see a new space we like, a place that can "advance" us, how do we take it? We physically move into the new space and occupy it before anyone else does. It's a war of position and control. It's a war of territory.

This is exactly how the spirit world battles. They simply jockey for position and control. Death is not a factor. Instead, territory is key. Which territory is controlled by which kingdom determines who is winning or losing at any given time.

This insight brings us to the final question. So, if we have two unkillable forces fighting for territory to control, then *where is that territory?*

Again, the answer is hauntingly simple. The territory is in our *heart*.

Yes, *we* are both the battlefield and the territory to control. Sure, we often see the results played out, spilling over into our *physical world*, the world we see around us. But controlling outward territory, territory in the physical world, is not the real, root battle. Certainly, it is evidence of the root battle, but it is simply the result (the outward "fruit," if you will) of a deeper battle already raging for control over an inward territory. The real battle ensues in the spirit world. It wars for key territory located in the hearts of man. Why? Because whoever controls the heart automatically controls the man and thus automatically controls the man's outward, physical world.

Clear as mud? Sorry, that was a mouthful. Let's say it this way. God can completely control the entire Walt Disney dynasty by simply having complete control over the heart and mind of Walt Disney. Simply put, once God is allowed to control the thoughts, motives, and desires of one man, then all that lies within his physical "real-world" influence also becomes God's as well. But it all starts within us first. Then it spills outward, affecting our world and others in that world around us. Yes, it's true. The battlefield *is* in the mind, but the battle rages for the territory (for control) of the heart.

This concept could easily take up a book in itself so we can't dig too deep, but even so, let's expound a little. Why the heart? What is so key about the heart?

The heart is key because it is our motivation. It is our core belief system. It is our hardwired truth center against which we check all the information coming through our mind. It determines our level of motivation, perseverance, belief, and whether we should take a course of action.

Scientists such as Dr. Caroline Leaf have found that the heart has its own independent, complex nervous system. This system is commonly called "the brain in the heart." There are at least forty thousand neurons (nerve cells) in the heart. This is as many neurons as are found in various subcortex centers of the brain.

Heart transplant memories, a phenomenon that occurs among heart transplant patients, were the initial trigger for scientists to dig deeper and discover that our heart actually *leads* our brain in its interpretation of the world around us.

Interestingly, heart transplant memories were first discovered after heart transplant patients would report significant changes in taste, personalities, passions, and even memories. For instance, a calm, soft-spoken woman who hated football might become an excessive, beer-drinking Cowboys fan after receiving a heart transplant from a crashed biker.

In an on-line interview with Sid Roth, Dr. Leaf expounds on our heart's "mini-brain": "It's like a checking station. It checks for the integrity of the message. And that keeps your mind calm. As the heart calms the brain down, your heart will release a chemical called ANF [atrial natriuretic factor]. When that flows through your body, you get that feeling of peace."

God said He would write His word on our hearts [Jeremiah 31:33]. He wasn't lying. God literally gave us a built-in truth checker, a heart-brain specifically for our "conscience," a place to store desires and passions, right and wrong. It's all hardwired (literally written) directly into our heart.

Our brain was actually meant to follow our heart, not the other way around! Our brain was meant to control, set, and regulate the body based on the truth (and the orders) it received from the heart. Isn't it cool how God created our bodies to chemically release "peace" when we line up with His inward-to-outward flow and simply follow His truth placed in our heart!

So if everything we believe to be "true" is stored in our heart—every core motivation and belief, even how we see and process life—and if our heart filters (accepts/rejects) and literally governs every thought we process, then wouldn't it only be fair to say that whoever controls that filter controls the rest of the body?

Yes, whoever controls the heart controls the person!

Just like war. Whoever controls the capitol, the governing city, controls the country. Likewise, whoever controls the ports to that governing city controls what gets in and out. Therefore, whoever controls the capital city and the ports to that city essentially controls the whole country.

Our heart is like that capital city. It's the governing motivator of the body. The yes/no filter to the decision-making process. Our mind is like the port to that city. Everything going in and out of the country goes through the "gate" of the mind.

This explains why the battlefield is in our mind. The battle rages in the gate of our mind, to gain access, to gain entry, to the governmental control of our heart!

We were created with free will. Neither the enemy nor God have initial control over our heart. That is why the war rages in the "port" of our mind. Eventually, enough bombardment, a traumatizing attack, or surrender of that port will give access down into our heart and allow some core belief to be changed in us. When that change occurs, territory is taken. The Bible calls these taken territories *strongholds*. Strongholds can be good or evil. More accurately put, they are life or death. When a new truth is secured, the stronghold is good and leads to life. When a new lie is secured, the stronghold is bad and will eventually bring sin and death.

God's Word (truth) in our heart is like building a stronghold of rock. It is unchanging, unwavering, and sturdy. When day-to-day life comes at us, a heart built on the rock will correctly analyze and filter our circumstances. Consequently, our mind will clearly distinguish the truth from the lies. As a result, we will know exactly what to do and will actually *want* to do it. We will not shift or waiver, and we will not faint. We will stand strong on God's truth, and His promise will eventually prevail.

But when our heart is full of lies, hurts, deceptions, and/or opinions, it's like building a stronghold on shifting sand. Because the "truth" in our hearts is now relative, it is subject to change. Therefore, our mind doesn't know what to believe. It doesn't know what to act on. It can't find peace. Thus, it may act one way for a while and another way after that. We become insecure, double-minded, shifty, weak, unmotivated, and destructive. Or we become prideful, religious, unyielding, controlling, driven and destructive. In such instances, life's circumstances will cause our hearts to analyze, bend, and run whichever way the enemy wants us to run. We become the enemy's shifting, yielding puppet.

The devil knows that if he sets up enough strongholds in our heart, he can motivate us to do anything he wants. Whether it is out of misplaced desire and passion or overt, terrorizing fear, the entire "country," the entire body, becomes his.

And that, my warrior friend, is the war that is waged. Both God and the enemy want control over our hearts. The enemy will take it by force even against our will. Likewise, God will

take it back by force, but only after we relinquish control—fully surrender to Him (He is a gentleman).

Ultimately, whomever gets control over our heart is our choice. We decide by what we allow and continue to allow into our minds. We choose by what Spirit or spirits we continue to follow. Make no mistake about it: someone will win. We can consciously decide the victor and fight alongside Him, or we can leave it up to “chance.” Either way, we are the territory, we are the battleground, we are the war.

Quick side note: I don’t know that I’ll be able to slip this in somewhere else, so I’ll say it now. Both the enemy and God can get to our heart through our mind (eye, ear, meditation gates). But once we allow Jesus into our heart and reconnect our spirit with the Father’s Holy Spirit, now God can flow to our heart from two directions: directly, from the spirit, and indirectly—as we allow—through His Word being consciously repeated in/pondered by our mind. As we “team up” with God against the enemy, we can attack from two directions: God through the spirit (praying in tongues, soaking, laying on of hands, etc.) and us—with God’s help—through our mind (Scripture memorization, soaking, meditation, etc.).

Okay, back on track. Now that we can plainly identify the enemy and know where, why, and for what the battle rages, that leaves us only one thing left to clearly identify before we can pick a fight. And that is, *how long do we battle the enemy?*

This is important to know so we don’t stop too soon. If we cut down a tree but stop and don’t pull it out by the roots, it can grow back even stronger than before. If we drive Hitler’s Nazi forces out of Europe but stop and leave them in Russia, it’s only a matter of time until those same forces are back in Europe stronger than ever. World War II (the fruit) will not end, until Adolf Hitler (the root) has been completely removed. That’s the importance of knowing how long to battle the enemy.

So what is the answer? How long do we battle the enemy? We battle the enemy until the root is gone, not just the fruit.

Let’s examine the difference.

The *fruit* is the physical manifestation of the root, or the outward, visible signs. It’s the results. The *root* is the inward draw, bent, or tendency to gravitate or be swayed by the enemy. It’s the cause.

For example, a pornography problem or masturbation addiction are both outward fruits of the root of lust (the spirit of lust) operating within us. Sweaty palms, shaking hands, and a racing mind are all outward fruits of the root of fear (spirit of fear) operating within us. An upset, uncomfortable stomach and the tendency to avoid certain social situations is the outward fruit of the root of anxiety (spirit of anxiety) operating within us. So forth and so on.

We have to be sure that we continue to battle until Jesus cleans out even the root of the enemy at work within us. Once that root is totally gone, we will be totally free—but not until then.

This has happened to me. Take the spirit of fear, for instance (you can read the full story in appendix A at the end of the book). God freed me from the fruit of fear—the sweaty, cold, shaky hands, knotted stomach, racing mind and heart—within six weeks. But it wasn't for another three years of battling that He freed me completely from the root. (And since that time, it's been 100 percent no fear! It's amazing! God's amazing!)

Often the fruit will go away rather quickly once we start teaming up with God and obeying His direction. But we need to be sure we don't stop there leaving the inner bent to fester. We must continue until Jesus kills that inner bent too, or we will eventually turn back and the addiction, the fruit, will be many times worse than before.

I'll give you one last example from my life: lust. The first thing God did when I got born again was free me from a ten-year pornography and masturbation addiction (TMI? I know, sorry, Mom ☺). Anyways, there was an amazingly strong spiritual tie that came along with that fruit of addiction. And while I currently enjoy complete freedom in that area, there is still a generational root of lust hiding deep down inside me. How do I know? Because if I'm unguarded around certain people, watch certain TV shows, or listen to certain music I can feel the same familiar tug and draw start to rise in me. It is weak, but it is evidence that the root is still there.

Because it is still there, I am careful to follow God's direction regarding what I should watch and listen to, and I am guarded about what I let into my heart. I want to starve that root and not feed it. I am also still actively going after that root, still getting prayer from time to time as I feel led, still talking openly about it, still memorizing Scripture, still soaking, even going back and doing more freedom ministry to try to remove that root completely. I'm gonna do whatever God leads me to do until it is totally and completely removed.

Does that make sense? We want to work with Jesus to kill the fruit first, but we never stop until the root has died as well. That's total freedom. That's warfare. It's a continual process of shedding. We shed layers and layers of the old man or woman, revealing the new. We don't mistake fruit as root and stop too soon. Likewise, we don't change our behavior and pretend the root is changed.

Finally, we are ready to do some battle! Let's talk different battle tactics and how to execute them. I do all of these as much as I can. Usually I do them daily or at least Monday through Friday. But if you are new to this, my advice to you is to start small. Please do yourself a favor. We are born again. We have all eternity to grow. There is no rush. The secret to longevity and success is baby steps. The key to breakthrough in every area is to keep taking them.

I have been radically born again for a good eight years now. It has taken me that long to slowly incorporate some form of all the following warfare tactics into my daily life. It's one little habit after another. Please don't jump in and try everything all at once. Pick one and practice it daily for thirty seconds. Make it routine. Then slowly expand. That's a great start.

Battle Tactic 1:

Let the Lord Fight and “Replacement Theology”

I've been doing the spiritual warfare thing for several years now. Well, I've been doing what we (as the modern church) would classically call “spiritual warfare.” You know, calling out spirits (shouting at the sky) and commanding them bound and gagged. However, over the years God has shown me two subtle (yet radically different) approaches to apply to my daily (Monday through Friday) routine—completely transforming my old method and cultivating genuine results. I offer them to you as well.

The first is simply to *let the Lord* do the fighting.

God's Word clearly states *the battle is the Lord's* [2 Chronicles 20:15; 1 Samuel 17:47, emphasis added]. That means the battle is *not* ours! Therefore, we must actually *let* the Lord fight *His* battle. Crazy, I know. But it's *He* who holds us safely out of the enemy's reach [Psalm 18]. It's *He* who comes bursting in when darkness overtakes us [Psalm 112]. It's *He* who rebukes the devourer for our sake [Malachi 3:11].

Deuteronomy 20:4 (New International Version) says: “For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you *to fight for you* against your enemies to give you victory” (emphasis added).

So what *is* our part? Our part is authority. Our part is simply to release Jesus onto the scene. It is to call for help, to verbally, openly, and boldly expose the injustice of the enemy. That's it. Then we simply “stand our ground” (we don't let the enemy intimidate or bully us back into silent submission) while Jesus does His thing.

Luke 10:19 (The Living Bible) says, “We have been given *authority* to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy” (emphasis added). Likewise, Revelation 12:11 says that we conquer the enemy by the *word* of our testimony (our verbal authority) and by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus' power).

Do you see the two parts being played in the battle? Yes, we have *authority* over the enemy's power. Yes, we call Jesus on to the scene. But after that, it's Jesus who has the *power* to actually stop the enemy. It's Jesus who fights the fight.

Please note, there is a big difference between having *authority* over the enemy's power and having *power* over the enemy's power. We must note that our part is *not* a game of muscle.

Rather, our part is a game of authority, of words, of speaking up. Thankfully, we don't have to fight the battle. We simply call (and keep calling) the shots. It's God's power that enforces our call. It's the Lamb who holds the keys. We just get to direct where He uses those keys and on what particular enemy. It's a tag-team effort!

Think of it this way. We are the spiritual referee. We blow the whistle and call the shots. But Jesus and His angels are the football team—physically muscling and moving the ball. If we get caught up in trying to take on the enemy ourselves, we will get run over. We will be easily destroyed. Much like a referee would get run over if he tried to take on the opposing football team himself.

Remember, Lucifer is the number two most powerful being of all time. Only Jesus' blood, the Holy Spirit, and the Father Himself can outmuscle the devil. It's a needless waste of our time to try to engage the enemy after we have released our authority in Jesus' name. This is why we let the Lord fight.

So how do we let the Lord fight? Let's take our vocal cues from the archangel, Michael. In Jude 1:9 (NIV) even the powerful angelic warrior Michael says, "The Lord rebuke you!" when confronting the devil. If Michael is wise enough not to confront satan in his own power, then we should be too!

When we declare and decree and war, we must remember to say "The Lord rebuke ... the Lord release ... the Lord bind ... the Lord loose ... the Lord, The Lord, The Lord ..." In this way we can simultaneously release our authority and point the battle directly toward Jesus. It's like confronting a bully and pointing to our "ripped" dad standing behind us, all in one motion.

Second, we *replace* (rather than remove, bind, or tear down) opposing spirits. This revelation, a big key that I have recently learned, is to not waste much time or effort on calling out demons or binding evil spirits. Rather it's to spend that time calling on the Holy Spirit or the inverse, positive spirit needed to fill that dark spot. In other words, don't just clean the house, fill the house with light and life. For example, don't spend months repeatedly binding an antichrist spirit. Do it once. Then begin to invite Christ's spirit to come and fill its spot from that point on. Don't spend years repeatedly binding instability and insecurity. Do it once. Then begin to invite God's stability and security to come instead. Don't continually bind sickness and disease. Do it once. Then invite God's healing and wholeness to come instead.

This is true "replacement theology"! ☺ We must not focus on all the negative—wasting precious time trying to get it to move—inadvertently turning what was a minor molehill into what is now an impassable mountain. Instead, we must focus on the positive. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill, to heal, and to replace all those negative areas. Then, as the positive grows, as the positive arrives, as we feel the peace, joy, and love (the presence) of the Holy Spirit, all the negative is

forced to move. Why? Because the *greater* spirit has arrived. Easy! We simply turn our attention to Jesus as we speak (and continue speaking) while the Lord does our fighting for us!

I saw this truth play out multiple times in my own life before God finally opened my eyes and I clearly caught on to the principle. One such instance took place shortly after I got radically born again in 2004. I was recently graduated and living in my parents' upstairs bedroom at the time (super cool, I know). God had just placed it on my heart to take Joshua 1:9 as my personal "mantra," my life verse. It was all about completely removing fear. If there was one thing I wanted to do, it was to become totally free of the constant, lifelong fear—fear of man, fear of speaking up, fear of performing on stage, fear of rejection, fear of something bad happening—that continued to battle me. In Joshua 1:9, I finally saw my true destiny, my God-given way out. There was no way I was gonna let that promise just pass me by. I was stepping up and into it. That promise was mine.

Funny how when we step up our game, so does our enemy. As I was battling to be totally rid of the fear that would flair up and control my heart, fear was battling to keep that flame alive. All of a sudden, my room (and my window AC unit) got really "creaky." You know, all is quiet and I'm trying to go to sleep, when suddenly a loud creak or pop or click rings out—followed closely by a spiritual explosion of internal fear flaring up again in my heart.

As the newly declared war raged, these types of creaks and noises began to happen more and more frequently, especially as I would react outwardly (or openly) to them.

But over time I noticed that oddly enough, as I began to ignore and not react to the sounds, they began to happen less and less. As I began to instead meditate and focus on Joshua 1:9, as that promise really began to grow in me, all the random, fear-inducing noises began to decrease. Until, finally they altogether stopped. My house hadn't changed. My AC hadn't changed. My room hadn't changed. All that had changed was my focus. Replacement theology!

A second such instance happened a couple of years later. By this time the battle for complete freedom from fear was going full force. I was getting freer and freer, but it was still a back-and-forth struggle. (Feel free to read the complete story located in appendix A at the end of this book.)

The spiritual pressure—the gossip, intimidation, and rejection—at work, among family, and friends was at an all-time high. The next step I felt led to do was to begin what I call "classic spiritual warfare." That is calling out spirits and commanding them "out" or "down" or whatever. There is a time and place to say that on occasion and then immediately shift the focus and vocabulary to calling in the Holy Spirit or the appropriate Godly spirit instead, allowing Jesus to crush our oppressor. However, this happened before I knew any of that.

So daily I began to call out those negative spirits and take authority over them. As my list grew, so did the time my attention, focus, and speech was devoted to them. As this focus grew, guess what else grew? The pops and clicks and bumps in the night. Weird, right? Weirder still was that I was married by now and living in a brand new, completely different house.

Then the dreams started. Not often, but with increasing frequency, something dark and “otherworldly” would pop into a dream. Of course God used this for good (for example: see the two dreams I reference in appendix A and how God taught me the basic principles of spiritual warfare through them). But it was still a new level of what I thought was “uncontrollable” attacks.

So what changed everything? Two things. One was the day I finally got tired of it and decided I didn’t want to have any more negative dreams. Seriously, that’s all it took. On that day I stopped being subconsciously “open” to them. On that day they stopped. Second, God showed me that focus matters. He showed me that what I focused on (gave attention to) is what grew larger and more powerful in my life. I realized I had been giving significant focus time to the devil! Ten to fifteen minutes every morning. When I turned that time around and gave it to God, when I began calling on the Holy Spirit and the positive (like love or unity or life or peace, etc), then God and those positive fruits began to grow bigger in my life. And all the other stuff—creaks, noises, and invaded dreams—just went away.

Of course stuff still happens on rare occasion. To understand why, we must understand that not all of this negative energy was being stirred up by me. Remember, there was active gossip and intimidation regularly flowing in my direction through others around me. That negative speech (worship) gives satan power to show up unaccepted every now and then. But the reason it is now so infrequent (and he is sent packing so quickly) is because I am no longer enhancing that flow through my own daily attention (worship) given to it.

Quick rabbit trail (tangential side note): I would love to dive fully into the subject of gossip. It truly is fascinating. But that is for another time and another book. Just know that gossip is real. It is dangerous. It’s not just a harmless pastime or “guilty pleasure.” It causes serious things to happen. It has real consequences. Our words have power. Our negative words have negative power. Lots of negative words have lots of negative power. Gossip is like casting a negative spell. It truly is a type of witchcraft.

I know, that’s a matzah-ball of a statement—we can’t just leave it hanging there. So let’s say two more things about it. First, to those who are being heavily gossiped about, know this: the negative affects of gossip *cannot* touch you if you don’t allow it. Simply disagree with it. Do not go along with it, or submit to it. I know that sounds obvious, but for years I was silently and unknowingly agreeing with gossip’s effects in my life. The negative effects were manifesting as progressively bigger things (seemingly random events) just going wrong. At the time I was unknowingly of the mind-set that “life just happens”—so when these “unfortunate” events would

occur, I would just take them in stride (accept them, if you will) and not resist them. You know, because *that's just life*. But the day I woke up and realized the enemy was completely stripped of all his authority (I mean *completely* stripped [Revelation 1:18]), and that I had yes, been “submitted to God,” but that I was not truly “resisting the enemy” (saying no at the heart/belief/core level)—that’s the day all negative spiritual energy built up from gossip completely stopped affecting me and my family.

Second, to those of you who are gossipers—stop. Please. ☺ It is extremely dangerous. Not just for others, but for you! Let me explain. Once I realized I didn’t have to accept any of the negative energy being sent my way by the gossip, where do you think all that energy went? That’s right. It went flying back on the “unsuspecting” heads of the gossipers. Thankfully for my gossipers I followed the example of Job [Job 42] and prayed protection over all of them. Instead of evil being returned for evil, I prayed that God would show up mightily in their lives and do good things instead. Salvation and great change will happen (and is happening) in my immediate social circles as a result.

However, not every gossip will be so “lucky.” What happens when somebody refuses the negative energy but doesn’t know to pray for protection? That’s right—it all comes roaring back on you! You are playing with fire every time you gossip. Stop.

Of course you can always bring that stuff to Jesus. Just honestly admit it and give it to Him to fix. He will protect everybody (including you) who needs protecting. He will fix everything (including you) that needs fixing. That’s why being a child of Jesus is so awesome! No matter what we do, if we are open and honest and give it to Him, He can and will fix it! The negative cycle will be ended. That is why we can boldly say that in everything we do, in every decision we make, we are “blessed or blessed.”

Getting back on track, we must remember that the key to effortless and lasting spiritual warfare is *focus*. Focus on the real thing. When we focus on the authentic, then the counterfeit will be easy to spot and remove. We don’t just sweep the house clean, we fill it! In a single phrase, the key to seeing real, lasting results in spiritual warfare is to simply *replace the enemy*.

If you want more on this subject, I recommend *Throwing Hatchets at the Moon* by John Paul Jackson. In it he speaks in depth about why we shouldn’t waste our time trying to directly engage the enemy and why doing so has about as much effect as throwing hatchets at the moon.

In addition, check out Dr. Cindy Trimm’s books *Command Your Morning* and *Your Words Have Power*. Also, check out anything produced by Katie Souza. All offer excellent insight on the subject. All are fantastic, cutting-edge resources on spiritual warfare.

Before we move on, I will leave you with a rather long preview of what I personally do. I have included such a large excerpt not to overwhelm you but as a clear example of all the kinds

of things you can throw into your own daily (or weekday) warfare routine. It will give you a concrete starting point and/or a place to build up to. Either way, the bottom line is to not waste much time directly calling out spirits the Lord makes you aware of (spirits that He reveals are in your way). Instead, call on the Lord and the Holy Spirit to come fight for you and fill your soul. Then use God's promises from Scripture to command and decree the heavenly direction of your day.

We will go into this in more detail later, but this daily training is quite possibly the most important thing you can do to become a successful fighter and a consistent overcomer. The daily practice of recalling memorized portions of Scripture and working those Scriptures into your everyday vernacular is invaluable. This *is* how we engage and beat our enemy. It's a war of words, "I know you are, but what am I?" kind of stuff (except with Scripture). This is how Jesus beat satan in the wilderness. He countered with "it is written ... it is written ... it is written." We must *know* what has been written like the back of our hands, so when we are caught off guard, in public, in a pinch, we can still spout off the truth and win the battle.

Daily practice (repetition) is the way we develop into such a seasoned warrior. It not only commands our day and shifts our focus, but it develops us into a well-trained warrior with a familiar, well used arsenal of weapons.

What I do usually takes about fifteen minutes. I like to do it while I'm running on the elliptical (treadmill). (It also works great in the car on the way to work.) I recommend starting small and expanding from there. When I started I only had a few lines. It's not so much about the length of time or the "binding the enemy" stuff as it is about speaking the Word of God out loud and recalling to mind all the promises we can claim in our own lives. No worries, God will show you plenty of stuff to decree, declare, and call into being in your own world. Soon enough you'll be flying down your own personalized list longer than this.

Feel free to skip the example below. You can always come back to it as needed.

First I put on my armor. I speak out loud: "I put on my helmet of salvation, my crown of life, my crown of love and compassion. I put on my signet ring of authority and my robe of righteousness. I put on my breastplate of righteousness, my belt of truth and my shoes of peace. I take my shield of faith and sword of the spirit (talk in a little tongues here)."

These next weapons are more personal weapons, weapons I've found elsewhere in the Bible, or weapons God has given me personally. Feel free to use them too or add any He personally shows you. "I take my ball of purifying fire, raise my banner of Jesus higher, take my hammer of justice, my pillow of mercy, and my wings of victory. I put on my iron bow, my shades of love, and my

lanyard with a key to a brand new book of revelation, one of infinitely many more to come. I put on my 'hearing aids' to hear God perfectly, accurately, and clearly; to hear perfect pitch and perfect relative pitch; to block out all the chatter and lies of the enemy. I put on my oxygen mask of fresh breath, of perfect communion with the Holy Spirit, of breathing the purified and rarified air of heaven; to renewed youth and life more abundantly. I bind my neck with love and faithfulness. I get in my 'force field' of favor. Thank You, Papa, that the blessing of the Lord is on my head, the head of the righteous. Thank you that you make me as bold as a lion. I get on my Pegasus."

Okay armor is on, and now I step to my place of authority in Jesus. "I wash right now in the blood of Jesus. Thank You, Jesus, that Your blood washes me perfect, continually! I come boldly before the throne, through the cross, and in Yeshua. Hi, Papa!"

Here is where I used to bind and gag demons. I no longer do that. Now I invite the Holy Spirit and God's spirits and/or blessings to come instead. Replace, rather than just remove. To save time I will just do a few, so you can get the idea. "Holy Spirit, come, be the strong man over TUA (my old workplace), strong man over Alpha (my church men's group), strong man over me and Kristy, over our marriage and family, over our baby, Lexi, and our future babies. Come, relationship (instead of binding religion), come, Christ's spirit (instead of binding the antichrist spirit), come, Holy Spirit and the fruits of the spirit. Come, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Come, holiness, humility, humbleness (instead of binding pride and perversion). Come, stability and security. Come, light and life. Come, protection and success. Come, faithfulness, favor, boldness, courageousness. Come, son-ship. Come, mighty inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit. Come, health, healing, and wholeness. Come, renewed youth, life, and life more abundantly."

(Continue here for any spirits God has revealed for you to call out ... and then end with one general, overall command to the enemy.) "Enemy, the Lord bind you and gag you and place you beneath our feet. The Lord take all your territory, all your power, authority, influence, and every possession of your house as His, for the Kingdom. In Jesus' name."

Then I invite the Holy Spirit in and go from there. "Holy Spirit, come, fill our house from attic to basement, restore, heal, renew our land. Lengthen our cords, strengthen our tent pegs, expand our tents, expand our borders, and never leave, we ask in Jesus' name. Thank You."

Begin to thank the Lord for any promises in His Word that you want to claim—this is our “battle training”—the part where we practice building up an arsenal of Scripture verses that speak to us and declare the promises we have in Jesus. “Thank You that anyone who comes against me will surrender to me. Thank You that I can safely meet a lion or step on poisonous snakes—yes, even trample them beneath my feet. Thank You that You’ve given me authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing by any means shall harm me! Thank You that You set a table before me in the presence of my enemies, that You rebuke the devourer for my sake, that You prevent the pest from destroying my crops and keep my vine from casting its fruit. Thank You that You bring me to Your banquet hall and everyone can see how much You love me! Thank You for making me above and not beneath, the head and not the tail, blessed going in and blessed coming out, blessed in the city and the country, in the desert and the jungle. Thank You that You give me victory in every battle, that You are my rock where no enemy can reach me, that in You I have ten thousand guardians. Thank You that You are with me like a mighty warrior so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail, they will fail and be thoroughly disgraced. Thank You that You give me constant joy to the end of my life, You replace my evil years with good, You give me gladness in proportion to my former misery, You give permanence to everything I do. Thank You that all Your promises prove true. Thank You that You give me Your mighty inner strengthening, so that I can keep going no matter what happens always full of the joy of the Lord. Thank You that the Egyptians we see today we will never see again, that You will fight our battles for us and we don’t even have to lift a finger! Thank You that Your favor is our shield, that You are our defender, that You hold us safely out of the reach of our enemies, that You save us from these powerful opponents. Thank You that You make us at least ten times better than everyone else around us. Thank You that You shut the mouth of the lion, You rescue us from every trap, You bring us through the valley of the shadow of death, You bring us through the fire. Thank You that the fire will not burn us and we come out free of our bondages and don’t even smell like smoke! Thank You that Your mercies are new every morning, that You shield us with Your wings, that in Your strength we can scale any wall or attack any troop. Thank You that You keep us safe as we run along the tops of cliffs, guide our path, and order Your angels to protect us wherever we go.” ... Continue as much as you want here. Just paraphrase from all the promises of God to you and all the promises in the Scripture that you know and want to see in your life. Then move on.

Next, I thank Papa specifically and Jesus specifically. “Thank You, Papa, for our giants. They are our bread and stepping stools; help us to see them clearly and take them and know how to take them for the Kingdom in Jesus’ name. Thank You, Jesus, that You are the God of gods, King of kings, Lord of lords, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Author and Finisher, the Lion and the Lamb. Thank You that we are redeemed by Your blood, out of the hand of the enemy. Thank You that You open the windows of heaven and pour out such a blessing on us that we cannot contain it. Thank You that like Isaac, we can get a thousand-fold return in famine, and five thousand-fold return in famine during the Benjamin generation. Thank You that You are our light and life, our love and compassion, our healer and friend, our fort where we can enter and be safe. Thank You that when darkness overtakes us, You come bursting in.” (Just keep going with any more promises you’ve found in Scripture.) “Thank You that it’s Your fight and not mine, and that You’ve already won! That the battle is the Lord’s and You have already delivered the enemy into our hands!”

Now I move on to warring tactics (to calling things into my day) that God has given me for my battles. “The Lord loose life and light, to bind up the wounds, heal the broken hearts, and restore broken relationships. The Lord loose eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to perceive to see clearly the lies from the truth. The Lord shine His light into every dark corner, exposing every hidden thing, every conspiracy of the enemy and replacing it with Himself, His full presence, permanently. The Lord loose boldness, courageousness, His mighty inner strength, zeal, and ravenous hunger for Himself into me, my family, and every saint deemed worthy by the Holy Spirit today. The Lord loose confusion over all the camp of the enemy, to break and bend and twist communication, to cause the enemy to expose, reveal and destroy itself today. The Lord open our Red Sea, make a way where there is no way, lead us safely across to dry land. The Lord loose blindness over all the enemy, total darkness so they cannot see us cross until it is too late. The Lord dry up our Jordan all the way back to Adam and lead us safely to our Promised Land today!”

“The Lord loose wisdom, knowledge, revelation, understanding, and foresight over every saint, believer, and person deemed worthy by the Holy Spirit, to thwart every agenda, purpose, plan, tactic, and motive of the enemy; the Lord loose the right words into their mouths; boldness, courageousness, peace, love, and joy into their hearts, to say the right thing at the right time, every time, in the right spirit, at the right place, for as long as it takes. The Lord loose His

warring, worshipping, praying, interceding angels to go before us and surround us; to expand our territory and destroy the enemy, to protect and build the Kingdom. I cover the door-post of my house and the door-post of me and my family's hearts with the blood of Jesus. I apply it right now, with the hyssop of my mouth. The Lord loose His hedge of protection and His full presence around Israel, America, the world, me and Kristy, our family, and our friends and extended family permanently, so even if the enemy breaks through the hedge, he stumbles right into the middle of Your full presence. Every curse and assignment of the enemy, fall to the ground right now. The Lord rebuke you. You help us grow faster, stronger, and straighter. I declare and decree that every assignment and blessing of the Kingdom goes forward. Prosper. Destroy the enemy, expand our territory. Loose light, life, and love."

"Every pitfall and snare of the enemy, the Lord cause the enemy to fall into it, be caught in it, and hung on it yourself. I saw satan fall like lightning. Look they have dug a pitfall in my path, but they themselves have fallen into it. The Lord hang you on your own noose like Haman. But every person operating with the enemy, the Lord bless them and keep them, make His face shine upon them. Give them His protection and success. The Lord melt deception off them, open their eyes and ears and soften their hearts. The Lord let them feel his love, joy, power, and presence. The Lord give them peaceful sleep and show up in their dreams, let them taste heaven and your goodness. The Lord show up in their bedrooms and audibly speak to them. The Lord loose His hounds of heaven to hunt them down, love them unconditionally, and take them back for the Kingdom, not letting a single one escape.

"Every agenda, purpose, and tactic of the enemy, the Lord make it plain and lay it bare, nothing hidden, everything exposed for all to see. Every lie of the enemy the Lord immediately expose it to the healing light of Jesus. Make it plain and laughably obvious for all who see and hear, immediately embarrassing and shameful for all who speak and do; but immediately healing for all involved. The Lord open the portals of heaven, the windows and doors of heaven, over me and Kristy and every believer, saint or person deemed worthy by the Holy Spirit, to unlimited, unhindered access to the presence of God, to the fullness of every promise, promised over the ages, to the fullness of every resource, every revelation, every gifting, talent, and treasure of heaven. To all it's power, love, time, glory, and You!"

Finally, I start calling my morning: “I declare and decree that today is a day of victory. I declare and decree light and life into every circumstance. The scales have tipped, the tides have turned. Today is a day of overcoming power. I declare and decree advancement in the Kingdom, all enemies exposed and destroyed. I declare wisdom, protection, and success. New ideas, new revelations, of expansion and breakthrough and the full presence of God on earth, of opportunity and favor, of salvation and shalom, of healing and restoration ... etc.”

Battle Tactic 2:

Speaking the Blessing

Speaking the blessing is one of the most powerful and game-changing tactics I’ve found. If you are a true, red-blooded member of this “instant gratification,” “microwave oven” generation, you will love this one. You will see results almost immediately.

Check out Kerry Kirkwood’s CD Series *The Power of the Blessing* if you want to dig deeper on this. Speaking the blessing is a fundamental truth of the Kingdom that will turn the enemy’s attacks right around on him while freeing your own heart at the same time. Listening to that series changed my life and my world forever.

The idea is to constantly be speaking blessings over your life and your future, but more importantly to be speaking blessings over those hurting you the most. Speaking the blessing over somebody who is cursing you is like putting water on fire—it will put it right out. The enemy hates this. Instead, he wants us to fight fire with fire. He wants us to operate in the same spirit that is attacking us. Hate for hate, creating a continuous cycle of escalation. Like adding fuel to fire, animosity builds and builds until everything and everyone in the situation is destroyed.

But when we speak a blessing instead, it stops this cycle cold. Instead of releasing more negative energy, we release God into the situation, and things will immediately start to turn around for good.

Here’s how it works. First, the enemy will get someone to offend us (the closer to our heart, the better). Then the enemy will keep bringing that person and his or her offense to our minds over and over again. His desire is for us to feed on that hurt, that injustice, that death until we begin to feel justified in executing our retaliation in equal or greater measure, thus offending the offender—death for death.

Once perpetrated, the enemy moves right back over to the original offender, accusing you back to them, until the offender feels justified in getting you back again, so forth and so on, each offense growing greater and greater. If unchecked, this cycle of “playing each person

against the other” allows the enemy to indefinitely escalate any negative situation—all the while establishing hooks and strongholds within both parties. It becomes a cyclical downward spiral, ending in some form of ultimate death and separation.

However, speaking the blessing breaks this “death spiral” and turns the curse back on the enemy’s head. It does this by introducing the blessing, the power (God Himself), into the situation. When we return someone else’s curse with God’s blessing, when we return another’s evil with our good, we give God legal right to enter the situation and create true heart change. The wound our offender has unjustly placed on us can now justly be healed in our offender, even without his or her consent. The amazing bonus is that it allows God to heal the wound in us as well!

Let’s examine a couple of examples from the Bible. Take Jesus’ death on the cross. After unjustly suffering mentally, emotionally, and physically, He is now nailed and hanging from a tree (the cross). He is dying. What does He do? He speaks the blessing! He says, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” [Luke 23:34 (KJV)].

Because Jesus “spoke the blessing,” the curse that was placed on Him was not only broken and He rose again, but the blessing can now justly be placed on us, even without our consent! He could have just as easily (and righteously) spoken judgment over the world. But instead, He spoke mercy, grace, and blessing. Now the entire world can receive Jesus and experience true heart change and salvation in every area of life simply because Jesus spoke the blessing.

The downward spiral was defeated. A new upward spiral was initiated!

Another great example is Stephen, the first martyr. He is being stoned to death, and like Jesus, he says, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He spoke the blessing!

You might say, “Well, a lot of good it did him. He still died.” Yes and no. First, through Jesus, he came right back to life—not physically here on earth but right back to life nonetheless.

Second, look at what Stephen’s spoken blessing actually did. If we take a step back we see that the man overseeing Stephen’s death was in fact, Paul (then Saul). He is holding the coats of the men killing Stephen. Fast forward to Paul (Saul) on the Damascus Road—Jesus shows up and confronts Paul without Paul ever asking for it or even remotely desiring it. The miraculous encounter (enabled by Stephen’s blessing) stopped the current downward spiral, changed Paul’s heart, and consequently the life of every believer today.

Because Stephen returned the curse with a blessing, God was able to get into the situation. Although satan illegally took Stephen’s life, Jesus was able to legally take Paul’s life in return—simply because Stephen opened the door to Him through the spoken blessing. Now look, we have two-thirds of the New Testament because of Paul.

That is exactly what speaking the blessing did in my life. Not only did I notice an instant change in my own heart (it began to soften again toward those hurting and offending me), but I saw an instant change in them. God was now on the scene, and the enemy couldn't keep things stirred up spiritually. God was bringing love and peace.

It was fewer than three months later when God brought around the breakthrough that entirely flipped my world. Those who were holding me down and crushing me were now moving out of my way. The spiritual oppression was quickly dissolving and God had set me above. The scales had finally tipped. All of this was triggered by the spoken blessing.

Quick side note: Please note, we do *not* start blessing our enemies thinking God *has to* (is now forced to) flip the scales for us. This isn't spiritual arm twisting or controlling God to please our whims. That's actually witchcraft. No, this has to be sincere. This has to be out of a sincere motive to allow God on to the scene. Speaking the blessing and trusting God with the results actually shows God that we are becoming spiritually ready to be moved up. God wants merciful, gracious, loving authority in His Kingdom; not revengeful, oppressive authority. If He knows we will use our new found authority to turn around and crush those who were previously oppressing us, He won't promote us. His kingdom is first about powerful love, mercy, and grace—then about powerful justice. He loved us when we were wickedly abusing Him, we must be willing and wise enough to do the same!

Battle Tactic 3:

Admitting Hurt

This one may seem pretty self-explanatory, obvious, and even a little lame at first. However, it is actually one of the most self-loving, internally freeing weapons of warfare we can use.

How does it work? Well ... you have to admit it.

Let me explain. For years, I was being rejected, but I didn't want to admit it. Honestly, I was so deceived I thought I was being honest about not feeling rejected and not caring whether I was. But in reality, deep down it simply hurt too much to admit. In reality, I felt that if I admitted to feeling rejected, I was in fact admitting I *was a reject*. But that is not the case. No, there is a huge difference.

This may be best explained with an analogy.

Let's say I'm really hungry. I missed breakfast, brunch, lunch, tea, and the late-afternoon ice cream truck. I'm starving. I'm on my way to my psychology 101A study group, about to miss dinner too, when suddenly, "Ahhh!" the smell of pizza comes wafting down the hall and I know the hour of my salvation is at hand! I begin to walk. Increasingly faster. The delicious fragrance wafts

ever stronger as I close in on my target. I finally reach the slightly ajar door to the teacher/student lounge at—okay let's face it—a dead-on run. I burst in (Superman-style) and ... stop dead in my tracks.

It's the psych 101B study group. Oh, bitter rivals. Of course they would plan ahead and purchase way more than enough pizza to go around; even for several, quite-large, quite-hungry study groups. Their eyes are glazed. They are beyond gorged.

They look at me. I look at them. They look at me. I look at them. It's totally obvious why I came bursting in—I mean, I'm still trying to catch my breath and wipe my drool.

Then, they offer, "Would you like some pizza?"

"I'm all out of cash," I respond.

"That's okay, we have plenty," comes the quick reply. "Just dig in."

Then I do something crazy. Something unbelievable. Something I still can't (for analogy's sake) believe to this day. For whatever reason—maybe it's embarrassment from bursting in and being caught "red-handed," motive on my sleeve; maybe it's guilt from not being able to cough up my fair share of the cost; or maybe it's simply blind pride because the offer is coming from psych 101B (*psych 101 B!*)—but I hear myself say, "No thanks, I'm all right. I'm not hungry. You guys have a great night."

Dang! Dang, dang, dang! *Dang, dang!* ... Dang.

I turn and walk slowly down the hall toward the psych 101A study group where I am positive there will not be a soul even remotely considerate enough to bring as much as a half-eaten cracker snack-pack. And I—am still starving.

Now that was my attempt at a humorous illustration. But you see my point. In essence, what did I just do? Simple—I didn't admit hurt. If I had humbled myself and admitted I was starving, I could have had all the pizza I wanted, and gone to psych 101A study group a happy, filled-up camper. But for whatever reason, I didn't or I couldn't. So I continued suffering.

This is exactly what I was unknowingly doing for so many years. I was going to God and saying, "I know You want me to forgive, so I'm not offended at them for hurting me so bad. I know You say I'm worthwhile and special, so I'm not bothered by them rejecting me." When in reality, I *was* offended. I *was* bothered and rejected. What I didn't realize is that God had my "food," my pizza right there. All I had to do was take a slice. "Yeah, Papa, I'm rejected. I'll take that slice of acceptance from You. Yeah, Papa, I'm extremely offended. I'll take that slice of forgiveness and healing from You."

I totally stumbled onto this truth.

Prior to this discovery, the way my relationship with God worked is that I would go out into the “real world” and get offended or hurt. Then I would come limping back home and soak in His presence until He cleaned and healed those wounds. But I still never admitted my hurt.

That’s all good, it does work, but the problem became the time-lapse in between—that unstable period between the offense and the healing soak. If the enemy really wanted to “get me,” all he had to do was string several offenses together in a quick row and then squeeze me (catch me off guard) before I had time to go soak those hurts away. That well-timed squeeze would cause a knee-jerk reaction in me, releasing the fresh hurt inside. Causing me to do or say something I didn’t really want to do or say. Mission accomplished. I was still being used (like a puppet) by the enemy. I needed a new tactic to maintain victory.

I can still remember the exact time I had the epiphany, “God I *am* rejected. I’m not a reject (because of who You say I am) but I *am* rejected, and I *am* a reject in others’ eyes!! Please give me Your acceptance!” Instantly the pain was gone. Instantly. No soak time, no period of time between the hurt and the healing. Instantly!

That’s when I realized. Admitting “I’m rejected” doesn’t make me worthless. Admitting “I’m offended, I’m unforgiving” doesn’t make me disobedient or a sinner. No, just the opposite! It actually frees me to be able to receive the acceptance, forgiveness, and healing God so desperately wants to give me. It frees me to instantly receive the appropriate antidote (the food I need) from God so I no longer feel rejected or offended. I no longer have to live life emotionally hungry!

Just like taking some pizza because I am hungry, I could now take acceptance because I am rejected. I could now take forgiveness because I am offended. I was no longer acting like I didn’t need it because I *did* need it. That “admission of hurt” allowed God to give me (and me to eat) whatever slice of emotional food I needed.

Now I’ve learned to do this in every area: rejection, offense, anger, hurt, jealousy, lust, distrust, whatever. As I’ve done this, I’ve watched my soul grow more and more stable. Now it takes a whole lot of rejection for me to even begin feeling like I’m rejected. Then I just admit it and God heals me.

Certainly, I continue to soak every day. But admitting hurt has allowed me to actively stay in the game, in God’s love, and in His wholeness continually throughout the day, all day.

It’s even healed me so much that I can openly talk about it. Just like in this book. Saying I’m rejected, or I’m offended, or I’m unforgiving is now no more embarrassing than saying, “I’m hungry.” That does mega destruction to the enemy’s kingdom and to exposing the enemy’s tactics. It’s really a great weapon.

Go ahead. Try this tactic and see how it heals you as well. You may have to ask God to reveal areas in your life where you currently are not admitting hurt, and other areas that you may be completely unaware of. Then listen for His voice and His guidance and watch how much admitting hurt will fill you up, free you up, and move you out of the enemy's control.

Battle Tactic 4:

Soaking (Filling Up and Tapping into the Presence of God)

Soaking is more of a pre-fight, post-fight tactic. It's more like a way of life than something we use in the heat of battle. It's a way to prepare and heal, to stay close to and in tune with God.

So what is it? Simply put, *soaking* is absorbing God's presence. It's reserved time to turn off all distractions and just let God work on us. He may show us a vision, give us a word, heal an inner wound, teach us something new, or just love on us and let us sleep. There are really no boundaries or rules. It's simply about learning to be with God and letting Him take the lead. Our part is only to receive, receive, receive.

Practically, this can look like any number of things. I started out soaking for only about five minutes at a time. I would put on my favorite worship song and then sit on the couch with my eyes closed, my heart relaxed and open to the Holy Spirit, and my mind focused on a mental picture of Jesus. Then I would just let Him speak to me however He wanted. If my heart was hurting, I would soak until the hurt was taken away.

Slowly, as I progressed and was able to focus more, I began to listen for longer periods of time as I lay comfortably on my couch. Eventually I began to soak daily and/or as my heart needed it.

Currently, I soak two times a day. Once with my wife, Kristy, when we wake up and then again, later in the day by myself. My times may include active praise and worship (where I'm up and running around my house or coffee table), or prayer (where I'm praying in tongues or flipping through my prayer journal or both), or reading a passage in the Bible (as directed by God), or just lying in total silence (enjoying the presence of the Holy Spirit flowing through me).

Traditionally, the modern church has labeled time alone with God as "quiet time." This is good, but it has come to mean fifteen to thirty minutes in the morning of reading the Bible or a devotional, saying a quick prayer or two, finishing a cup of coffee, and moving on. True, this is still a type of soaking (washing in The Word), but soaking is so much less structured and so much *more* than this. Soaking is about immersion—receiving, absorbing, listening, and taking God in. It is simply letting Papa take the lead. Asking Him, "What do You want to do today?" and then doing it. Rather than coming with a checklist of things to do, or a number of chapters to read, or trying to get through our routine daily prayers, when we soak we should come with little to no agenda. We

just come. Sure we may have a hurt to bring, a care to leave, a wound to heal, or a question to ask—but we let God direct the encounter. We simply absorb, soak, and interact. No pressure, no agenda. Just relationship.

Think of it this way. How fun would it be if you and your best friend always did the exact same things every time you hung out? If you always asked him or her the same questions, always went to the same places, always cracked the same jokes, always had the same conversation? Exactly—pretty soon it would be booring! Pretty soon you would be ready to get out of there. Pretty soon you would start coming up with all kinds of excuses to cancel or avoid the next date.

If this is true of a limited, earthly friend, how much more for an all-knowing, endlessly deep, compellingly interesting Papa, God? If we think we are bored, how boring do you think our limited, religious, stuffy, structured quiet time is for a limitless, creative genius like Him?

But what if everyday was different? What if the conversations varied? What if you always went someplace new? What if the jokes morphed and grew? What if the relationship evolved? What if the revelation expanded? What if the healing progressed? What if the feelings developed? How fun would that be! Pretty soon we couldn't wait to hang out. Pretty soon we would look *forward* to hanging out. Pretty soon we would be making all kinds of excuses to extend the next date. Pretty soon we would be really good, close friends. This is soaking.

In Esther 2:12 we see Esther walking this spiritual principal out in the natural. As was the custom of the day, she soaked in two types of oil for a year before she entered the presence of the king. One could say, like Esther, we need to soak in two types of oil—thanksgiving and praise—for a time until we are ready to come into the presence of the king, our Papa, God.

We also see biblical references to soaking in verses like “he makes me to lie down in green pastures ... beside the still waters” [Psalm 23:2], “be still, and know that I *am* God” [Psalm 46:10], and “tarry [soak] in the city of Jerusalem [in the upper room] until you are endued with power from on high” [Luke 24:49]. These Scriptures all point to the same idea of getting alone with God, receiving from Him, and waiting on Him to fill/refill us.

Jesus often modeled this principle. Many times He would get up early, stay up late, or go off by Himself to recharge and hear from Papa God [Luke 5–6; Matthew 4, 14, 26]. These soaking times ranged from the intense, personal distress in the garden of Gethsemane [Matthew 26:36–46] to times of temptation in the wilderness [Matthew 4:1–11] to supercharged, supernatural experiences on the Mount of Transfiguration [Luke 9:27–36]. Even the night Jesus walked on water (out past His disciple's struggling boat) was following a period of time spent alone, soaking with His Father [Matthew 14:22–30].

We benefit from these privileged glimpses into some of Jesus' most personal soaking times because they give us a blueprint, a clear picture of what our own soaking times can and should be. Often, Jesus' greatest miracles were preceded by these intimate times of soaking, times of simply hanging out with His Father, recharging, interacting, alone in His presence.

For me, soaking is invaluable. I won't lie: it started off a little slow. And there were periods where I was left wondering if it was actually profitable. But I am so thankful for it! I can honestly say that I would certainly not be here today without it. Each of those "plateau" periods was just God pulling back so I would be moved to ask Him how I could step up my game and press in. Each of those times He gave me something new we could do together: from sitting, resting, receiving, and listening to reading Papa-directed Scriptures; from active singing and dancing, to praying in tongues; from journaling and prayer journaling to grabbing a guitar and writing songs with Him. Our latest thing has been grabbing a timer and praying in tongues for a particular person or issue for a set amount of minutes. It's fun and big, big changes are already happening!

My point is this: now, each time is different. Now He shows up every day—or should I say I can now receive/tap into His presence (which has always been there) every day. And as we spend more time together, His presence becomes increasingly easier to tap into. At this point (several years) in our soaking relationship, I can lie on the couch in silence and in fewer than two minutes be in His presence, tangibly feeling His power flowing through my body, heart, and hands. That's a far cry from where I started. I can't wait to see where we go next!

Do you need a pick-me-up? Soaking is a way to recharge. Do you need more wisdom? Soaking is a way to get new ideas. Need a breakthrough? Soaking is a way to learn tactics. Need peace? Soaking is a way to heal inner wounds and unrest. Need physical healing? Soaking is a way to regenerate and renew your youth.

The most practical thing soaking does for me is realign my emotions with Jesus'. Anytime I feel any kind of negative emotion, from mild crankiness and grumpiness, to full blown anger and crushing hurt, soaking takes it all away. Sometimes when I'm so mad or hurt I don't even know what to say, I will say to God, "You *have* to take this away," and then lie there until He does. Sometimes He lets me lie there longer than others, sometimes I have to soak a couple of times in a row, but He always takes away the pain.

I've gotten battle plans this way, as well as business and family direction. I've gotten healing, joy, and love this way. I even got our family budget, which we still use today, through a soaking time in the early days with Papa.

This is one tactic you've got to put into practice, especially if the enemy likes to attack you or has a hold on you emotionally. Remember, the enemy didn't have any emotional holds on Jesus yet Jesus still soaked regularly. For me it took a lot of practice learning to open up, to relax,

to listen, to receive, and to “channel,” if you will, the Holy Spirit. But eventually I could and can feel the Holy Spirit’s presence daily.

It’s fun to look back and see how God’s presence was opened up to me. First, I could barely feel it in my gut, a very subtle burning in my belly (where our spirit resides [John 7:38 (KJV); Proverbs 20:27 (KJV)]). Then I began feeling that cleansing burn in my heart as well. Later I started feeling heat in the center of my hands, and currently I’m beginning to feel it all over (as if it flows through my veins). I can’t wait to see where I’m taken next.

Don’t worry. If you ask for an egg God will not give you a scorpion [Luke 11:12]. You can be sure if you practice soaking, God will make sure it’s the Holy Spirit you get filled with and not some other spirit. He makes that very clear in Scripture.

Let’s be plain. Soaking is *not* emptying yourself and letting any old spirit enter in. No. Soaking is focusing on Jesus, meditating on Scripture, listening to worship music, concentrating on God’s voice, and filling up on the Holy Spirit. It’s not cultivating an inner emptiness to receive anything. It’s cultivating an inner focus to receive one thing.

We’ve got to quit being scared of spirituality. Just because the enemy has perverted and counterfeited portions of the spirit world doesn’t mean we should avoid all contact. Do we stop using money because some people counterfeit it? Not at all! If we stop using money we become seriously debilitated and limited. So what do we do? We simply avoid the counterfeit while we continue to use the real thing as freely and as much as we want.

Satan is currently kicking our butt in a spiritual world that we are happily letting him rule. Just because his counterfeits scare and confuse us, we are happy to sit back and let him run all over us. We ignore the blatant fact that true worshipers *must* worship God in *spirit* and in truth [John 4:23–24]. Truth alone is not enough. Without also learning how to tap into our Holy Spirit guide we cannot ever be true worshipers. We will remain defeated, broken, and confused. It’s as simple as that.

A great additional resource to check out is *The Power of Peace* by Dennis and Dr. Jennifer Clark. Listening to the first CD in that series revolutionized my life! It taught me how to take my daily soaking time out into my everyday real world. It taught me how to “drop down,” thank God that His peace guards my heart and mind, and access that peace, that place of God’s presence, that Holy Spirit within me anytime I wanted. It changed my life.

True story. After listening to their first CD, I stayed in that place of perfect peace for four days straight. Let me clarify that this wasn’t simply accessing the unshakable peace already in my heart. God gave me that breakthrough in August 2009. No. This was deeper than that. This was accessing the limitless peace in my stomach (in my spirit).

Final thoughts: Remember, soaking is like playing an instrument—it takes practice. We must keep on learning to receive, and we will get better and better at it. But it's a process. It's something that we must develop. There's no rush. Relationships take time. Growth is a process. Our job is to simply have fun and do it as often and regularly as we feel led. The more we do it, the more sensitive we will grow. The more we do it, the better we will eventually become. Let's do it more and more and more. 😊

Battle Tactic 5:

Memorizing Scripture

I know, I know, *memorizing Scripture* wasn't so fun for me either—at first. For about five years after I got radically born again, I still had little to no interest in forcing myself to memorize tons of Scriptures. I had learned a lot of Scripture growing up in the church and several others after, so I thought I was okay.

It wasn't until a few years in (and satan had massively stepped up his game on me) that I finally memorized Psalm 91 out of necessity. Mostly because satan was starting to keep me up at night again with racing thoughts. I needed something longer than Joshua 1:9 to quote so I could quickly fall back asleep and not be tired the next day.

So I memorized it. Then I watched in awe as that simple psalm created two amazing miracles in my life. First, it played a significant role in permanently freeing me from an intense battle with fear. Then it saved my life when it kept me in perfect peace as my car spun out of control and got hit/nicked by two trucks (weighing more than twenty thousand pounds combined) on the freeway. I walked away without a scratch (just a tiny bruise on my left knee). That was good enough for me. My eyes were opened. I was hooked!

I began to memorize a little every day. It was so cool. Slowly I would watch thing after thing change in me. For instance, I became a more relaxed person. Anxieties began to fade away. The great reflexes (hand-eye coordination) I had as a kid just magically came back. Confidence grew in me. It became easier to distinguish God's voice. I learned other things (like drums) much more quickly. Song melodies and lyrics began to flow more easily. My creativity and sensitivity exploded. The life in me began to grow.

It wasn't instantaneous. But as I would get each verse down, I would slowly see changes happen. It's as if each digested Scripture filled up another piece of my heart and began crowding (forcing) the devil out. And the more a Scripture rolled around in my head and off my tongue, the more clearly, effortlessly, and deeply I could think.

But that wasn't all. It also gave me a platform (a way, a means) to connect with God on a deeper level.

Think about it. If I can't speak a language (any language at all), then God is limited to communicating to me through grunts, gestures, and pictures. But if I take the time to learn a language, then God can now talk to me. We can communicate more deeply.

What if I go a step further and learn to read and write in that language? Now God can also use other people's stories and life experiences and interactions with Him to communicate with me. We move deeper.

Likewise, what if I learn a second language? Now we can use nuances, phrases, and literature that I never knew existed to communicate more deeply still. And it goes on and on.

Memorizing Scripture is just like that. It gives God a broader platform to communicate new ideas and deeper truths with us. It opens up our world. It expands our knowledge base more widely to Him. He is still just as deep and wide as He'll ever be, but us memorizing Scripture expands our view of Him. It expands our ability to connect with Him in brand new ways. Thus, our potential scope for deeper connection, deeper understanding, and deeper revelation dramatically increases.

Memorizing Scripture does several other things as well. Like previously mentioned, it literally fills us up and transforms the truth filter in our heart, crowding out the enemy's lies and replacing them with the absolute truth. In addition, it gives us a clear filter through which to pass all of life—every word, every thought, every action. The wider our Scripture base, the easier it is to pick up on the subtle lies of the enemy and the deeper truths of the Kingdom. It sharpens our spirit senses while softening our hearts. It makes us as wise as serpents yet as gentle as doves.

It also gives us a weapon to fight with. The sword of the spirit is our offensive weapon. If we want to expand and take territory at will and as we see fit, then we need to know how to slice and dice the enemy. Yes, praying in tongues is the sword of the spirit as well, but that is more for sneak attacks, downloading tactics, and building us up individually. Sometimes we just have to talk directly to our enemy and tell him exactly what to do. If we don't have that memorized Scripture base, then how will we know what we have a right to tell him? If we aren't completely convinced his perpetration is actually unjust, then we are at a severe disadvantage if we try to speak up against it.

Lastly, memorizing Scripture builds our own faith and sure-footedness because we know *for sure* what the Word says. We no longer have to *try* to remember what that verse was. We no longer have to go by some "hearsay" Scripture we overheard the pastor talking about last week in church. Now it has become *our* Word. It has become *our* faith. He has become *our* God. We are rock solid.

If you are not in the habit of doing some type of regular memorization, I strongly urge you to begin. Again, start small. Do what is best and easiest for you. Let the spirit lead. Just keep moving forward.

The easiest way for me to memorize was to make a CD of myself quoting the Scriptures I felt led (wanted) to learn. I recorded them over some background beats and then played them over and over in the car. I would rewind, play, rewind, play all the way to work. Before I knew it, I had minutes and minutes of Scriptures memorized and my life was changing.

Side note: An easy way to do what I did is to go buy a digital recorder. Put some of your favorite worship music on in the background. Take the verses you want to memorize and read them into the digital recorder. Then download the digital recorder tracks to your computer and burn them onto a CD. Instant, personalized, Scripture memorization disk!

Battle Tactic 6:

Obedience (through Faith by Grace) and Walking in God's Love

I combined these two tactics because they are similar. We can't really do one without the other. If we obey the voice of God and follow the Holy Spirit's leading, we will inadvertently be walking in God's love. If we walk in God's love, we will inadvertently be following the Holy Spirit's leading and obeying the voice of God.

Honestly, this tactic is *the* most important one of all. If this is all we ever do, then we will defeat the enemy every time. All the other tactics I've included were "discovered" simply by faithfully operating in this one.

First let's unpack *obedience* a little. For all of this to make sense; we need to know who or what we are being obedient to. Is it a set of rules? Is it a lifestyle? Is it a theology? Is it a person? To answer this, we must take a quick step back and see what the entire meaning of life is. In other words—what is all of history, the entire Bible, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus hinged on? No biggie, right? Well, as we are about to clearly see, it's all about having one simple thing. It's all about having a personal connection, a way to communicate (our own relationship) with our heavenly Father, our daddy God.

The Bible sums it up best with the use of this phrase, *I will be their God and they will be my people* [Genesis 17:1–8; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 37:11–28; Hosea 2:16–23; Zechariah 13:7–9; 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; Hebrews 8:6–13; Revelation 21:1–7, emphasis added].

Go ahead, do a search on that phrase and variations of it. You will find it strewn across the pages of the Bible from start to finish. Why? Because that is God's main goal! That is the point of life: for all of us to have and experience a permanent connection, a personal relationship

with our Papa, daddy God. From Adam losing that connection; to the law providing a potential connection again; to Jesus fulfilling that law connection and establishing a new, better “grace” connection; to Jesus coming back to reign; to God moving all of heaven to earth permanently; it’s all about one thing: restoring our direct connection, our personal relationship with our loving, caring, all-knowing heavenly Daddy. No more separation.

So if the goal of life is to intimately know and interact with our Papa God, then we have our answer. We are to be obedient to the leading and prompting of Papa Himself. Nothing else. No law. No set of rules. No man. No way of “church life.” No government. No theology. We are called to live beyond the law, in a place of continued, intimate interaction with our heavenly Father.

So how do we accomplish that? Well, it’s done by having a connection to His spirit, the Holy Spirit. The Bible says only a man’s spirit knows the deepest parts of a man. Likewise, only the Spirit of God knows the deepest parts of God [1 Corinthians 2:10–12]. Therefore, we want to follow His Spirit in order to get to know Him deeply. Jesus was a prime example of this. Even though the Bible plainly says Jesus came to obey and fulfill the law [Matthew 5:17] (which He did by living a perfect, sinless life and dying unjustly in that perfection), Jesus clearly demonstrated this radical way of following the Spirit and living beyond the law.

From healing on the Sabbath [Mark 3:1–6], to walking on water [Matthew 14:22–33], and raising Lazarus from the dead [John 11], we clearly see Jesus following a path that consistently proved greater than the law. We see Jesus following a path greater than the Jewish Rabbinical law, greater than the laws of physics, and greater than the law of sin and death. His was a path of intimate relationship, direct communication, and open obedience to Papa God through the Holy Spirit.

Why was Jesus able to appear lawless? Check this out: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *Against such things there is no law*” [Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), emphasis added].

Jesus was able to appear lawless because He *was* lawless! When He was operating in total obedience with Papa (through the Holy Spirit), He was producing the fruit of the Spirit, which, according to Galatians 5:22-23, has *no law (no restrictions)*. It’s lawless! That means a perfect God-relationship (obedience/following the Holy Spirit) is greater than (goes beyond) the law!

Just like a plane can overcome the law of gravity by operating in a higher law of “lift and thrust,” through relationship, Jesus was able to rise above the current laws of earth by operating in the higher laws of love.

Likewise, when we operate completely in the Holy Spirit and obey as Jesus did—only doing what we see the Father doing [John 5:19] (through the Spirit’s leading)—then we too will rise above the law, becoming free and lawless [Galatians 5:18].

This is why the Good Samaritan was able to help the beaten, dying Jewish man when both the priest and the Levite (high priest) could not. Like Jesus, the Good Samaritan was able to rise above the law by obeying the Holy Spirit, operating in love and doing the right thing in the given situation. Whereas the priest and the high priest were bound, and if they helped, by law they became unclean. They were “stuck” under the law, unable to do the right thing even if they had wanted to. They were limited.

This is the obedience we are called to—to obey the Holy Spirit in every decision, in every situation, in everyday life, all the time. It’s not to blindly follow church culture or rules or even the Ten Commandments [2 Corinthians 3:3]. It is simply to follow the Holy Spirit because against such things there is no law! In Christ, in our relationship with God, we are truly free!

How do we do this? *Through faith, by grace.* “Through faith” simply means by believing and trusting. We can’t have a conversation with a person we don’t think is real. When is the last time you talked seriously with the Easter Bunny? Likewise, we can’t follow a person we don’t trust. When is the last time you gave all your bank account information to a total stranger on the street? If we don’t believe the Holy Spirit exists and don’t completely trust where He is leading us, we won’t be looking or listening for any signs or direction. So naturally we won’t receive any.

Furthermore, faith is a two-part process. It takes faith to believe, listen, and hear, and then it takes faith to trust, step out, and act. Stepping out is always a risk. It’s not a science. It is more of a practice. But even if we miss it, be assured our heavenly Papa is watching—and He is well able. He’s not going to let us step off a cliff by mistake in true faith and not catch us. He can and will handle our honest mistakes (even our dishonest mistakes). He is a big God.

So where does grace come in? Grace is our new connection. Grace is law’s replacement. The law was our old way to have and maintain perfect communication and connection with God. It was a direct connection, but it was harsh. It was unforgiving. Only constant perfection satisfies and maintains it. One mess up (one piece of bad fruit) and we’re done. No more communication. No more connection. It can’t be fixed. It can’t be patched up. It can’t change.

Grace is our new way to maintain perfect communication and connection with God. It is an indirect plan. It is gentle and forgiving. It establishes our permanent, unbreakable connection through Jesus’ permanent, unbreakable connection. This allows us to grow, fall, and make mistakes. But no matter what we do, by grace, our connection with God is always good to go.

Why does this new “grace” plan work so well? Because this new connection is solely based on Jesus (Yeshua). It exists because of *His* right standing with the Father, *His* fulfillment

(upon death) of the old “law” connection and not ours. Therefore, in Jesus (in grace) we are free to mess up over and over, and the connection, our communication, with Papa God is never broken.

Think of it this way. The law is the foundation, the firm, unchanging, constant base connection. Jesus fulfilled the law. He kept it perfectly His entire life. So now He stands on top of it, permanently tapped into His Papa God connection. We accept Jesus as our savior and Lord. We accept Him into our heart. We accept His connection. Now we stand on top of Jesus in *His* connection. Even if we fall, we are still on top of Jesus, who is on top of the law. Because of Jesus (grace), even when we fall we are still above the law, thus we never lose connection.

The only way we could potentially lose our grace connection to daddy God is for Jesus to fall. But Jesus can't fall. He already lived His perfect life. He was killed. That means He's done. He completed His mission. He fulfilled all the law required (perfection until death). He passed the test. He got 100 percent. The law was and is totally (and forever) completed in Jesus.

Interesting side note: This is why satan made such a huge mistake in killing Jesus. If satan hadn't killed Jesus, Jesus would still be alive today and still living according to the law. There would still be a chance that He could break it as it would not be completed yet. But because satan chose to kill Jesus, Jesus was freed from the law (in that upon His death He fulfilled it). In other words, Jesus completed the contract. He lived a perfect life to death. This is why Paul, speaking about God's secret wisdom, says in 1 Corinthians 2 (NIV), “None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had [understood it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Brilliant! The enemy's illegal crucifixion of Jesus sealed and permanently fulfilled the law's requirements in Jesus.

Now Jesus can never fall! Likewise, in Jesus, neither can we, His ceiling is now our floor. Now, in Jesus—we have the option (and the privilege) of standing on the Word, standing on the Rock, standing on Jesus. Now we are standing on His righteousness. We are in *His* connection. We are living in Jesus, living in grace, permanently connected to our Father, God. We are permanently above the law, living in a perfect, unbreakable grace connection.

So why is this grace connection so much better than the original law connection? Like we've mentioned, it allows for mistakes! As error-prone humans, we need grace for the times we don't follow the Holy Spirit, or when we think we are following the Holy Spirit and miss it. Grace is for all the times we mess up.

Grace also promotes growth. We are not translated into God's Kingdom as adults with a full and complete understanding of how everything works. No, we are *born again* into the Kingdom. That means we are like babies. We have to learn to see again. We have to learn to

hear again. We have to learn to walk again, run again, ride a bike again, etc. We have to grow up all over again.

Grace allows for this. It allows for dirty diapers. It allows for playing in the mud. Grace is for all the times we fall down, throw up, get sick, wander off, or rebel. Like learning an instrument, grace allows us to practice and make mistakes while we learn how to follow the Holy Spirit on our own two feet. Grace keeps us above the law. While the law demands immediate and continued perfection to communicate with God, grace allows us to maintain perfect communication (perfection) with God even if (and when) we break the law.

Furthermore, grace allows us to go beyond the law. While the law holds “haters” to a higher standard, it also limits “lovers.” The law limited Jesus to healing only six days out of the week, but grace made all seven available to Him. The law limited the priest and the high priest from helping the dying Jewish man, but grace gave the Good Samaritan freedom to help. The law limited Jesus to gravity and to catching the next boat, but grace allowed Him to walk on water and catch the first one.

Grace always keeps the law. It never breaks it. But it also allows us to go far beyond it. Grace looks at every life scenario individually. It does what is right in (and for) that particular situation. Grace gives us the freedom to *always* do the right thing. It allows us to love as much as we want. It allows us to go far past the minimal “love” (the minimal requirements) the law demands and still maintain our unbroken relationship with Papa God.

The most brilliantly amazing part of it all is that grace is simply a free gift through Jesus. As long as we continue to receive grace and believe that our connection is available, it will be. It will stay wide open! The only thing we can ever do to shut it off is to quit believing it exists, or to believe we have done something to hinder it. Then we will pull back from Jesus and out of His connection to our Father. But even then, the connection is still freely available to us.

Unfortunately, I don't have more time to go even deeper into all this and thankfully I don't need to. Many others, much wiser than I have already done so. Check out pretty much any message by Joseph Prince. He is by far the best and most knowledgeable teacher I have found on this subject. He radically touches on some element of law versus grace in almost every sermon he gives.

In addition, reading Galatians will do the trick. I suggest reading it in a few different translations. I promise by the time you've read it several times, in several different versions, you will begin to see these principals quite clearly. Our tactic is to simply obey the Spirit (through faith by grace) and no longer remain under confining obedience to the law [Galatians 5:18].

Here are a couple personal stories that might help illustrate this principle.

When I first got born again, I had a ravenous hunger to listen to sermon after sermon. God had radically opened my eyes. For the first time I finally saw that God's way was clearly *the way*. It was my way out of the bondage, the abuse, of the enemy. It was my path to complete freedom. I wanted to know all His secrets to life. However, the Holy Spirit would only burn in me, speak to me, or hold my interest during certain messages and with certain preachers.

If I had taken a legalistic or law-based approach to this phenomenon, I might have reasoned, "Well, these other pastors and messages are all great and Bible-based as well. Shouldn't I want to listen to them too? Am I not 'spiritual' enough? What is wrong with me? I should just suck-it-up and 'power' through them." Can you see the dark, religious, legalistic, twisted, boring road these questions were leading me down? Instead I chose grace. I wasn't sure why the other sermons didn't "do it for me," but thankfully I didn't think about it too hard and only went with what excited me and moved me.

Later, the Holy Spirit showed me the reason I was excited and moved during certain messages was because those were the messages I was being led to hear. They were the messages I *needed* to hear at that particular time! That "captivation" was intentionally being placed in me by the Holy Spirit. It was the way I could personally identify His approval and know which specific message(s) I should spend my time listening to. He was leading me.

If I had ignored that prompting and that confirmation, not only would everything have become a major chore, but I would have wasted my time with messages and dealing with pastors I didn't need. My progress would have been dramatically slowed, and I probably would have gotten bored, pulled back a bit, or even quit.

Instead I had a blast! I learned by leaps and bounds. Major miracle breakthroughs began happening, even within the first three months.

Can you see how following the Spirit in grace (obeying) is so much more powerful than following the law? The law was telling me to listen to as much as I could, boring or not, listen to it all. The law would have limited me, overwhelmed me, even killed me. But grace *freed* me to hear Papa's voice and to follow His Spirit above and beyond. The spirit said, "Don't worry about it. Listen only to these certain messages that really engage and speak to you. Have fun. Don't waste your time. Let me personally teach, grow, and free you."

Another thing the Holy Spirit really led me to do (in those early days) was to give. I was just out of college, broke and jobless, but I was being led to give, give, give. Again, I could have looked at the law and said to myself, "I don't even have a job, why am I tithing? Ten percent of zero is zero." Or "I'm tithing, so why do I have to go above that and give an offering?" Or "I'm giving an offering, why do I have to give everything in my wallet ... again?"

But that's not the point. Because of Jesus, I was no longer under the law. I was free to go beyond it. I was free to give whenever (and however) I was led! So I gave. Did you know that somehow God had me give away more than 100 percent of what I made that first "jobless" (odd jobs only) year? Crazy, I know!

How did I live? Honestly, I'm still a little fuzzy on that one. He put it in my parents' hearts to not charge me for rent or food all year. I did have some savings. In addition to that, He supplied my money needs as they arose. He gave me part-time jobs throughout the year. At Christmas, He gave me a well-paying "bonus" job so I could afford to buy everyone presents. I even managed to get engaged during that season of life. And when God finally did provide a full-time, steady job, I still had zero credit card debt! How cool is that?

He was really working on my wallet and my heart during those years. I had kinda made a side deal with God (against my stingy flesh). I really wanted a generous heart. So my "side deal" was that if God asked me to give, I would give. However, if I ever noticed myself arguing with Him or arguing with myself about the amount—you know, arguing (justifying) sixty dollars down to forty dollars, forty dollars down to twenty dollars—then I had to give everything away in my wallet, no questions asked.

Needless to say, I had to clean out my wallet many times over those early years. (I stopped counting after twelve.) It got to the point where I had to really ask God what to put in my wallet because nothing ever stayed for long.

But through it all, He taught me my early lessons of how finances work in His kingdom. He taught me about complete financial trust in Him. He taught me about maintaining abundant generosity. He taught me how to do both those things, even during times of extreme personal lack. As I learned, as I got to experience life *His way*, He totally looked out for me! He got me the right job, kept me out of debt, and took care of all my needs.

Then one day I'm pulling off I-35 onto the Beckley exit for work as usual. And it hits. The heart change! It was the heart change that all this obedience (through giving) had been leading up to. It was the heart change that we had apparently been working toward all along. It was the heart change I didn't know I needed. But I got it! In an instant, in *that* instant, I got it! Giving wasn't about getting a return, although getting a return is a good, godly thing. Giving wasn't even about getting a return to build my God-called "kingdom," although building my God-called kingdom is also a very good thing. No, giving was to build *the* Kingdom. His kingdom! It really was all about building His kingdom, not mine. Ohhhhh.

I know that doesn't sound like much of a revelation on paper. But in that instant my heart changed. One second before I was all about God and building my God-called kingdom in God's system. The next second my heart was all in for building His kingdom in His system. I suddenly

had this deep, burning desire to use everything I had—all my talents and influence, all I was, all I would be to do just that. I still have it to this day. It only grows stronger.

Following the law would have blocked this potential heart change in me. I could have been totally justified in that “10-percent-of-zero-dollars-is-zero-dollars” reasoning and legally never given a dime. Because I was broke, I legally could have talked myself out of the larger amounts the Holy Spirit was asking me to repeatedly give. I still would have been living by the law, but it would have limited me to forever operating selfishly in the Kingdom. It would have kept me from ever knowing this deeper passion or truth. But relationship (obedience) changed the unchangeable. It performed a heart miracle. It aligned my heart more closely to my heavenly Papa’s and moved me from being a perpetual liability in God’s kingdom to being a total, 100 percent asset.

Again, breakthrough came through simple obedience. Obedience to Papa’s voice, telling me to give and give, prompting me time and time again. I didn’t always understand why, but I obeyed the gentle heart tug. Doing so moved me beyond the law, beyond my own capacity, and brought about a heart change that only He could accomplish.

This is the difference between grace and law. Grace is power to grow and change while law can only tear down or maintain. We must choose grace, following the Spirit beyond the base requirements of the law, so the Holy Spirit can grow us, change us, and shape us into the image of His dear Son [Romans 8:29].

Quick rabbit trail: the Bible plainly points to this distinction. It says grace *or* law, linen *or* wool [Leviticus 19:19]. It is *not* grace *and* law, *not* linen *and* wool. No. We can’t put new wine (grace) into an old wineskin (law) or it will burst and we lose both [Luke 5:33–38]. We can’t put a new patch (grace) on an old garment (law) or the patch will shrink and create a brand new tear [Luke 5:33–38]. Like a light switch they are mutually exclusive. It can only be one way or the other. We are either perfect and need no grace, or we are imperfect and can only live, grow, and remain by grace. It is impossible to be both. Likewise, we can only talk to the Father through one of these two connections, not some combination. Either we choose law where the responsibility of perfection falls on ourselves, or we choose grace, and the responsibility of perfection falls on the already completed work of Jesus.

Walking in God’s Love

Walking in God’s love goes hand in hand with obedience. Like obedience, it is the weapon of all weapons. It is where we want to live and to remain at all times. It is the place where we do the most damage to the enemy. It is the place where we release the Kingdom from us, and draw the Kingdom to us, with every decision we make.

However, walking in God's love goes one step deeper than obedience. It speaks to our motivation, our sincerity. It speaks to the purity of our heart. While obedience to our Father's voice will move us to begin walking in God's love, *walking in God's love* is a far more powerful place to live and remain.

Why is walking in God's love so powerful? Because love answers the question, "*Why do we obey?*"

It is easy to obey when we love. It is easy to follow God's direction when we walk in God's love. Without love, obedience can be hard work. It can be a chore. It's almost as if love makes the burden of obedience dissolve. When we love, obedience becomes an afterthought. When we love, obedience becomes unintentional because we no longer *have* to obey. Instead, we *get* to obey.

It's like *having* to eat chocolate everyday. When we love chocolate, eating it everyday isn't hard at all. In fact, when we love chocolate it is hard *not* to eat it everyday! On the other hand, if we can't stand it, then chocolate consumption everyday becomes a major chore.

Similarly, walking in God's love propels us into a perpetual state of grace. It effortlessly moves us to go beyond what is expected. Beyond what is required. Beyond what is asked. Beyond the law. When we love, we no longer need rules to guide us. Selfless love (God's love) is all the light, all the guidance we need.

Think about it. If you really love somebody, it's not hard to respect, honor, protect, and cherish that person. If you really love somebody and he or she asks you to travel a mile with them, you will gladly go two. If asked for your jacket, you will gladly give your shirt as well. Love makes doing the right thing, even going above and beyond "doing the right thing" easy and effortless. It just naturally flows out of you.

Not so much without love. Without love we need rules (the law) to guide us. Rules are for people who don't love. Rules answer the question, "What is the minimal amount of 'love' I am *required* to show to you?"

Think about it. If somebody really doesn't love you, it's pretty hard to get him or her to respect, honor, protect, and cherish you without making it a rule or a law to keep the person in check. If somebody really doesn't love you and you ask him or her to travel a mile with you, he or she may go but they are definitely "done after one." If you ask for the person's jacket (even if that person isn't wearing it), he or she will probably make up a reason to keep it. Without love, even the simple, easy, *required* requests feel like effort and work.

Now, I don't wanna sound like I'm bashing the law. Rules are good. I personally need rules for all the areas in my life where I don't have any love yet. I need rules for the times I let

God's love die in me and I fall back, out of love again. I need rules for the times I have no love rousing me to action. Rules definitely have value.

Yes, the law, though it is a ministry of death, definitely has glory [2 Corinthians 3:9]. The law protects us against the destructive actions of the blatantly loveless. That's certainly glorious. Society couldn't exist without that. In addition, the law acts as our surrogate guide, externally guiding us anytime we don't have a strong enough internal "love guide" yet. That's worthy of praise.

But the law (while absolute) should only be a foundation, a starting point, a way to assess ourselves and then adjust, regulate, and recalibrate our heart as needed, determining our own heart temperature. Are we hot, effortlessly going above and beyond what the law requires? Or are we cold, drudgingly doing the bare minimum for social existence (mostly to stay out of prison)? The law is simply our way to monitor and gauge ourselves—a way to provide an accurate answer to that hot/cold question.

Here is the complete system: we operate in grace, obeying the Father's voice by following the lead of the Holy Spirit; each act of obedience opens our heart further, filling us more and more with the Father's love. We live above the law, walking in God's love, freely and effortlessly propelled by pure motives and a burning desire to do the right thing, obeying God's direction in every situation. We frequently check our actions by comparing them to the fundamental guidelines of the law, honestly assessing and asking the Father to adjust us as needed. It's a simple, easy, honest, relational life. This is God's system.

But there is a counterfeit system too. A faux. A fake. A system that from the outside appears the same, having a form of godliness, but [inside] denying the power thereof [2 Timothy 3:5]. A system that appears loving, free, and effortless but underneath is love-starved, selfish, binding, godless, and a lot of work. A system that uses rules to replace love. A system that is neither hot nor cold. It is lukewarm. It is deceptive. It is hidden. It is dishonest. It's cerebral, not heartfelt. This system is called *religion*.

Religion takes the law and puts it center stage above a relationship with our Father, God. Rather than following the Spirit (God's personal voice), religion says to "follow the rules"—follow impersonal, indifferent guidelines. It reverses the order. It makes the cart greater than the horse, the creation greater than the creator, the cell phone greater than the spouse. It makes following the rules an idol above following God's personal powerful, right-now word. It puts law above love.

The twist is subtle. All the fruit, all the outward results—the respect, honor, and protection of religion are all the same as the outward results of walking in God's love. From the outside religion appears warm and loving, but the difference is inside. The difference is in the heart. The heart is where religion grows cold, self-justified, and uncaring.

Law over love is like spending all our time upgrading and perfecting our iPhone while ignoring the person patiently waiting on the other end. We become really proud of our super-cool, incredibly custom, totally screamin' phone. We show it off and point to it as "proof" of our amazing, loving relationship. Meanwhile, we can't understand why we never really connect with (or truly understand) who it is we are supposed to be talking to on the other end.

Our treasure becomes our phone and not the relationship (not the person). So naturally our heart moves to where our treasure is [Matthew 6:21]. We fall in love with our phone, our own busy upgrade efforts, what we've accomplished. All the while we ignore, misunderstand, even fear or hate the person (Papa God) on the other end.

This is why religion is so dangerous and so deceptive. Putting rules above relationship actually causes love to decrease, not grow. The deception is that religion (following rules) will bring us closer to God, closer to God's Love [1 John 4:8]. In reality, it does just the opposite.

Now please understand. We are not saying that organized "church" or a particular denomination/group is wrong or bad. Religion is not a synonym for church. Neither is religion a synonym for a particular denomination. No. Religion is a spirit—a spirit that exists and grows within the walls of even the healthiest of church organizations. Matthew 13 paints a picture of an end-time church where both the wheat and the tares (both true believers and religious believers) grow together, side-by-side. Furthermore, the author of Hebrews implores us not to live a lifestyle forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Certainly we don't avoid church. We need unity. We need to feed off of other true believers. Yet, we must not be blind to religion. This is the truth we are attempting to unveil. We must see religion plainly for what it is, so that we do not live an entire life bound in its deceptive, distracting, death grasp.

So what if we *are* bound? How do we get free from the trappings of the law? One, we must ask Jesus to come into our hearts and be our permanent Father-Spirit connection. Two, we must get honest and begin asking God to increase our love. We must ask Him to give us *His* love (His Spirit) in areas where we are lacking. Three, we must begin to follow the Holy Spirit. We must begin to do what we hear the Father tell us to do. Of course we should always gauge what we hear by the law. Only follow what we hear when it doesn't contradict the law, and only follow the law when we have heard nothing.

Now our love can grow. First John 2:5 (TLB) says, "But those who do what Christ [through the Spirit] tells them to, will learn to love God more and more." According to John, our love will grow when we follow what the *Spirit* tells us—not the law, the *Spirit*. If we follow what *Christ* tells us to do, then we should be able to periodically evaluate ourselves and feel God's love literally growing in our hearts. This is how we know we are really following the Holy Spirit. It's when the love in our heart keeps getting stronger and stronger—the love for God, for ourselves, and for others.

Walking in God's love allows God to flow fully and freely out of us. Why? Because a pure motivation of love aligns our heart perfectly with His. Everything the Father does is motivated out of love. So naturally, when His heart and our heart move together, it's as if He is right here on earth. We literally become Him—His hands, feet, voice, and body.

Jesus was the perfect example of this. Jesus' heart was perfectly aligned with the Father's. Jesus only wanted to do what He saw the Father doing and to say only what He heard the Father saying. That is why Jesus flowed in so much power and authority. In essence, He was the Father on earth. That is why Jesus could make statements like, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" [John 14:7–11].

Do you see the potential?! Obedience to the Father moves us beyond the law, but walking in God's love makes us just like Jesus! This is why walking in God's love is the most powerful tactic we have against the enemy. Imagine a world full of people truly walking completely in God's love, not their own. It would be a world full of little "Jesuses" running around healing everybody [Acts 10:38], walking on water [Matthew 14:22–33], teleporting [Luke 4:14], turning invisible [John 8:59], reading minds [Luke 5:22], casting out demons [Mark 16:17], speaking new languages [Mark 16:17], glowing [Matthew 17], raising the dead [John 11], and more [John 14:12]. A world filled with an unstoppable army of love. What an absolute mess for the enemy!

To illustrate the power of *walking in God's love*, let me share a couple of personal examples.

I was headed out the door to band practice, guitar and amp in hand. As I pulled the door shut to lock it, I felt the prompting of the Spirit saying, "Leave the TV on."

Weird, I thought. *What a random request*. So random I almost ignored it. But then I remembered God views the little things just as important as the big things. So I went back in and turned it on.

After practice, I was driving home talking to my wife, Kristy, on the phone. She casually thanked me for leaving the TV on. She had a tough day at work and the preacher on the TV said exactly what she needed to hear.

That was an eye-opening moment for me. My love walk (which prompted me to obey) had allowed God to change and heal my wife's heart. My house and marriage was forever changed and strengthened by my simple act of obedience. Papa was looking out for my family even when I couldn't be there to do it myself. I finally got it! I finally understood that His requests (no matter how small) weren't random and inconvenient, they were brilliant!

About a year later, the enemy was really attacking me, and my wife just couldn't see it. Time and again I had tried to open her eyes to it, but she just couldn't see.

It was tough, but God was teaching me to trust and lean solely on Him. So I did. I was.

Then came April 1, April Fools' Day. We were at the OB/GYN office during a scheduled checkup for our baby, Lexi. Satan hit me with all he had. He took the closest person to my heart, Kristy, and said the most damaging thing he could to me, through her.

In that moment I had a choice. I could self-righteously explode or give it all to God. The choice I made was much easier to make than it would have been a year prior, but it still wasn't easy. With the Holy Spirit's help, I leaned it all on God as much as I possibly could.

Of course I didn't hide or overlook Kristy's hurtful comment either. We discussed it openly. But it was a calm discussion, and God gave me the right words to show Kristy the door she had opened.

We made amends and began driving home. I began thinking, and thanked God. Suddenly I realized Satan had thrown everything he had at me. He had dropped the biggest bomb by the closest person to my heart. He had done as much damage as he could do. Yet all that had occurred was a pretty low-key discussion. My heart was so healed!

I was so amazed at the transformation God had done in me that I mentioned it, almost word for word, to Kristy. When I did, God just fell. It was like Satan's attack had been turned right around. I watched in awe (and a little unbelief) as Kristy proceeded to bawl uncontrollably for the thirty-minute ride home and then for about another twenty minutes on the couch.

I watched as God downloaded revelation, vision, and insight into her for an hour. When all was said and done, I had a brand-new wife! For real. What she couldn't see for years, even just an hour ago, she could clearly see now. She saw how she was unknowingly opening the door to Satan in our relationship. She saw how others around us were doing the same thing. She saw our future and more.

This revelation was huge. It was the first time I saw a radical transformation take place in someone *e/se's* heart, based on *my* choice to simply continue walking in God's love. For the first time I saw that my doing the right thing for years—running to Jesus and continuing in His love (even while wrongly and repeatedly paying for it)—actually caused a supernatural heart change in someone *e/se*. Furthermore, it resulted in totally transforming the situation. This miracle demonstrated to me firsthand, the huge potential breakthrough power that is available for us when we simply keep walking in God's love.

Battle Tactic 7:

Speaking in Tongues

Speaking in Tongues is probably the most misunderstood weapon we have. It is often given a bad rap, seeming too “spooky” and weird. Some of that is legit as it is a bit out of our normal comfort zone. However, most of that is just the enemy spreading his false propaganda and/or trying to take credit for the power of God.

So, why. Why do we need a weapon like “tongues”? Why not just pray in our everyday language? One reason is that it gets us out of our comfort zone. It stretches us. It “proves” our love and exposes what is truly in our heart. When God asks us to speak in tongues, He is essentially asking us to look foolish for Him. Do we love and need Him enough to look stupid for Him?

It’s a brilliant request because it sorts the sheep. It separates the men from the boys, so to speak. Those who are in it for all the wrong reasons, those who don’t have real love for the truth, they will avoid tongues (and embarrassment) at all costs. But those who love God and truly need or want more of Him will press past the embarrassment and toward real results.

Another reason God came up with tongues is that it gets us past ourselves. It gets us past our own cerebral wisdom and understanding. It shows us that God is more powerful in our gibberish and “foolish” faith than when we try to pray some fancy, “brainy” prayer. It keeps us humbly reminded that it’s all about God, love, and faith, not about the right words or formula. More simply put, it reminds us that it’s all about heart. Speaking in tongues takes all the “brains” (“formula”) out of the relationship, leaving all the heart (adventure) in.

Additionally, praying in tongues is limitless. When we pray with words we quickly run out of stuff to say. Then we have to stop or repeat ourselves over and over. In a relationship, repetition quickly gets boring. God’s brilliant use of tongues allows us to get around both these limitations. In tongues, we can pray without ceasing [1 Thessalonians 5:17], even while we do our daily tasks, and everything we say stays new and fresh.

Furthermore, it bypasses the enemy. Speaking in tongues is like our secret weapon. It’s our open yet closed line of communication. It’s verbal, yet encrypted. It allows the Holy Spirit in us to directly communicate with God, command and change the world around us, and cuts out all the interference the enemy can put in the way. It’s an uninterrupted, unhindered path of communication to our heavenly Father for our own personal edification and instruction [1 Corinthians 14:4].

No wonder satan hates it so much. When we pray in tongues, he gets cut out of the loop. He doesn’t know how to block what we are praying for because he doesn’t know what we are

saying. It's God's way of sneaking up on (and past) the enemy, right in front of the enemy's face. Brilliant.

Speaking in tongues also cuts our limiting mind out of the loop. Any doubt, unbelief, or fear our mind would add to our words, slowing them down, clouding or stopping them, is cut out. Even our wildest imaginations limit God [Ephesians 3:20–21]. But with tongues our Spirit can pray for exactly what we need (even what we don't know that we need) without hindrance. Again, it's genius!

Speaking in tongues does a number of other things as well. It brings life and healing to the body [1 Corinthians 14:4]. It orders angels and the spirit world around us [Ephesians 6:17–18 (NIV)]. It prays exactly what we need to pray to the Father [Romans 8:26]. It communicates God's word to other people in their own native languages [Acts 2:7–12]. It hides our orders from the enemy [1 Corinthians 14:2], brings us revelation, instruction [Isaiah 28:11], and more.

If you are interested in digging deeper, Andrew Wommack has some of the best series I've ever heard about this subject on his website. One series is called *The Positive Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. You can find it in the 2011 radio archive section of his website (www.awmi.net). It is free. Go check it out when you can.

Personally, the most significant thing I notice (when I'm consistently speaking in tongues) is a big increase in the amount of new revelations I receive from Papa God. Additional side effects include brilliant ideas flowing; new solutions coming; assessing and handling difficult situations with seeming ease; outward pressures no longer affecting me inwardly; and somehow knowing exactly what to say and do (especially when it comes to leading my family).

I have found speaking in tongues to be extremely helpful in connecting me to God's "inner genius"—so helpful that I try to speak in tongues as much as possible, especially while working on any unfinished project or before any tense social situation. This entire book is a direct result of speaking in tongues. It has come from the many revelations God's given me over the past seven years. The entire previous section (Battle Tactic 6) came as brand new (new to me) revelation as I was typing it and speaking in tongues.

I'll admit, at first I was a little skeptical, maybe more fearful, about speaking in tongues. But once I finally started and then began to see direct results, I was hooked.

For instance, one day at work I lost my cell phone. I didn't notice until I was on my way out the door about 12:30 p.m. (I worked part time). I went back and looked all around my desk and through the halls. Nothing. Unfortunately, I hadn't used it all morning so it could have fallen out at any point.

I decided not to sweat it and to trust God to return it. On the drive home I started talking in tongues. About three minutes into the process God gave me a mental picture. He flashed it

across my mind. I saw exactly where it was! It was lying on my boss's comfy chair, right where I had been sitting during an impromptu, mid-morning meeting.

I couldn't wait to get home. I called my wife from our home phone ('cause that was the only number I knew), and then called my boss. Sure enough, that's exactly where he found it. Phone returned!

That wasn't the only lost phone we found through speaking in tongues. Kristy had a similar situation occur at one of my shows. Someone stole her cell phone. While I repeatedly called her number (and rambled on incessantly in tongues), she dug through every trash can in the joint.

For some reason God just put it in her heart that it was in the trash. Sure enough, after about twenty minutes of calling and digging, it turned up in the bottom of the trash in the men's bathroom. My guess is the thief was a lady. ☺

I can't tell you how many times I've needed wisdom to fix a problem and the solution has come after some rest and talking in tongues.

One time I spent eight hours trying to fix a computer installation problem. I tried everything, but nothing was working. After praying in tongues over the PC with Kristy, and then taking a little time to soak, God reminded me of a video that came with it. The next time I sat down at the computer the problem was fixed in under ten minutes!

Writing lyrics is so much better when tongues are involved. Anytime lines just aren't flowing I pause, talk in some tongues, and just listen for the genius God speaks to me. Writing books works much the same way (I liberally applied this method during the writing of this one).

God has even given me long-term strategies in which my only offensive weapon was to pray in tongues. At work, for example, things were really starting to heat up. It was during the time when I was first experimenting with and learning how to speak in tongues. Lots of gossip, lies, and rejection started flying my way from the enemy. God gave me the simple strategy of speaking in tongues during my thirteen-floor elevator ride to and from work.

During the first three months of implementation, things actually got worse. But then I watched in awe. God began removing, one-by-one, each and every troublemaker in the company. It's as if He was simply moving down a predetermined list. Save one lady, He even replaced one entire department. It was amazing.

What was even crazier was that everyone He brought in had a new spirit about them. Within fifteen months the entire atmosphere of the company changed. By the time I was set to move on, my office had become an entirely different workplace. God rocks.

Oh, and then there is the power of two. When Kristy finally got onboard with the tongue talking, oh wow, the results!

Kristy is an OB/GYN doctor. One of the ladies at her hospital had a bad delivery. The doctor who delivered said it was a hopeless cause; the baby was in such bad shape it wouldn't make it to morning. Kristy called me in tears. We prayed in tongues and commanded that baby to live.

The next morning, to the doctor's surprise, the baby had turned around so much that they were giving it a 50 percent chance of survival. It proceeded to improve so quickly that the doctor took some serious heat for making such an "inaccurate" initial prognosis. We know it wasn't actually an inaccurate prognosis; we just got to witness a miracle!

That wasn't the only time. We've seen results over and over.

Several months ago a lady came to Kristy's hospital in bad shape. Her water had broken. There was a slow leak in the gestational sack at only three months. If the leak continued, the baby would certainly die.

It continued—until Kristy called me and we prayed in tongues about it. The next evaluation showed that the leak had stopped, and the next showed the bag was beginning to refill. By the next morning the bag had not only refilled but resealed (healed) itself. God is awesome!

We've seen so many results that we include a time of talking in tongues during our weekly prayer time (and any other time we feel the need). We just call out the prayer request and then say, "Ready ... go!" and launch into tongues for a while until we feel a release. Nothing too long—God's a powerful God of short prayers too.

Lately we've been taking our businesses to Him in tongues as well. Specifically, we've been asking for new patients, especially new obstetrics (pregnant) patients for Kristy. It's so cool to watch the results. They just keep coming.

One day, near the start of our praying for new business, Kristy had seven new patients show up, some saying they didn't know why, but they just felt drawn to go to her.

Just today Kristy called me all excited. She had been talking with another new obstetrics patient. The lady was telling her that she'd had some bad experiences with female OB/GYNs and was specifically looking for a male doctor this time. However, she just kept ending up on Kristy's website.

Finally, the lady asked God what to do, and God said, "Go ahead, she [Kristy] is my daughter, she will take good care of you." And now the lady is Kristy's new patient! How friggin' cool is that? Seriously, that is cool, y'all.

I can tell story after story like this, but in general, when I consistently speak in tongues throughout the day, I notice an increase of brand new revelations and heart-changing words coming to me from Papa.

Okay. So it all sounds cool. But how do you tap into this too?

It's easy.

First, you have to invite the Holy Spirit in. In the same way you did Jesus, simply invite the Holy Spirit to come inside and baptize you in love. If you want, find someone who already has the Holy Spirit and get him or her to pray for you and lay hands on you (see Acts 19).

However, that is not a necessity. First Corinthians 12:3 (NIV) says, "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." If you can truly say Jesus is Lord and that Jesus is your Lord, then you have the Holy Spirit; you are good to go, just begin to press in.

Simply start to pray.

How?

For me, I had a little advantage. Unknown to me I already kinda spoke in tongues. Whenever I would write songs I would just sing gibberish to get the melody and then later go back and write the words. Well, that "gibberish" was really a primitive form of tongues. That's why when I started, tongues just kind of flowed.

Here's how I did it. I would picture a consonant in my head (like "k"). Then I would make that sound and add a vowel after it (like "k-a"). As I added the vowel I would imagine another consonant (like "t"). Then I would make that sound and add a vowel (like "t-oo"): ka-too. Eventually, as I got faster and developed it, I dropped thinking about the whole consonant thing altogether and now it just flows. It's mindless, but it's heartfelt.

And that's the point, to get our limited minds out of the way!

Certainly, it's okay if you still want to use your mind. Simply visualize what you are asking for as you pray from your spirit with all the emotions and "heart" you possess. This mind/heart/tongues combination is a powerful recipe for prayer!

What if you can't jump into it as quickly as I did? Here is a great way I heard some other people do it. Just get one word. Let one bubble up out of you, or just put one together cognitively. It doesn't matter. Then repeat that word over and over until God shows you the meaning of it.

Or pick a couple of words and repeat them. Again, no rush. Baby steps are fine. Just do whatever does not feel like "work" to you. It should be fun. It should stretch you a little, but it shouldn't feel daunting. If it does start to feel overwhelming or boring, pull back a bit.

That's it. Just move that mouth and speak! It takes practice, but eventually you will be praying effortlessly. I guarantee it.

Battle Tactic 8:

Discernment and Discerning of Spirits

What if you could tell when somebody was lying to you? What if you could tell when someone was telling the truth? What if you could see everyone's personal agenda? What if you could hear their thoughts and recognize their intentions? What if you could clearly perceive the spirit world around you? How dangerous would that make you to the enemy? Well, my friends, that is exactly the power contained in both *discernment* and *discerning of spirits*.

Discernment is simply seeing life through clear, undistorted lenses with no agendas. It's the way God sees life. It's the way life really is. *Discerning of spirits* is the ability to feel, hear, and identify (even see) other spiritual beings currently in the room or in control over a particular area.

From the outside it's not always easy to tell these two tactics apart. Often they work simultaneously. Generally, discernment has to do with recognizing the truths, lies, and underlying motives an individual is hiding in his or her heart and releasing through his or her actions, words, and deeds. Discerning of spirits has to do with identifying sudden internal or external pressures, changes, and/or feelings related to the spiritual activity presently in the room.

We see Jesus operating in both types of discernment all the time. This is why He seems to always be answering a question different from the one openly asked of Him [Mark 10; John 4] (He is addressing the motive/heart issue). This is why He could recognize faith [Mark 10:52]. This is why He could perceive thoughts and judgments of the heart [Mark 2:8; Matthew 9:4]. This is why He so clearly identifies and handles demons [Mark 5; Matthew 17], and why He could tangibly feel spiritual power flow out of him [Mark 5:30].

If we are called to do what Jesus did (and we are) [John 14:12; John 1:16]; if we are called to clearly see and analyze the world, the heart motives, and the spirits around us [1 Corinthians 2:15], then we should dig a bit deeper into comprehending both of these tactics. They should be regularly used to read, understand, and interact with the world around us.

Let's start with discernment.

Discernment is learning to clearly (and correctly) identify the underlying heart motive of a thought, word, or action. Discernment is primarily developed by listening to the Word, getting free of old bondages, receiving new revelations, and through heart change. Practically this is done through regularly memorizing and meditating on Scripture. Memorization and meditation is our part in the process. As we ingest Scripture, think about what it means, and recite it over and over,

God uses that Scripture to heal our heart of the past lies we've believed. As this healing process takes place, we will begin to view life through a clearer and clearer lens. Once we begin to filter every action, motive, and word entering our soul through this ever-clearer filter, this is when we will start to see all of life's "gray" elements slowly simplify and crystallize into black and white.

This is when life gets easy! When we can clearly see motives for what they are, decisions become easy to make. The enemy becomes easy to spot. God becomes easy to follow. Masks no longer work. Walls are no longer unidentifiable. Roots become exposed. Problems become easy to address.

So what do we need to know to get a jump-start on discernment working in our lives?

First, we need a simple, solid foundation. We truly have to see life as black and white, not multiple shades of gray. Obviously, this is only possible if life truly *is* black and white. Fortunately for us, if we look deep enough, it is. Let's check out Genesis 2 for the answer. Looking at verse 9, we see two trees. One was the tree of the *knowledge* of good and evil and the other, the tree of *life*. These two trees (choices) Adam faced are the same two trees (choices) we still face today. No matter how big or small, these two choices are the *only* two choices, the *only* two paths available. They lie hidden at the root of every decision we make. Do we get smarter and make ourselves look better (knowledge)? Or do we really connect and help someone else (life)? Do we become a distant critic (knowledge)? Or do we become an intimate friend (life)? The choice is ours. The fruits of both trees are consumable, but the ultimate results are polar opposites. One takes and one gives. One connects and one disconnects. One is safe and one is awkward. One produces life, the other death. This is it! This is life's core "black" and "white."

Notice that we must look past the tree and its fruit to actually see the black and white. A tree and its fruit, in and of themselves, are not bad things. Quite the opposite, they are good things. If we look only skin deep, we can easily be confused and tricked by the tree's outward "good" ("white") appearance. What we must learn—to truly see life as black and white—is to look more deeply. We must look past the "containers" of life and into each container's core. What does that fruit carry? What does that container hold?

Our enemy understands this principle very well. He uses it constantly. From television to Internet, movies to music, glamorous superstars to well-versed politicians, our enemy uses all these very good, compelling (white) things to deliver his twisted agendas and (black) lies. Agendas wrapped so professionally, so innocently, so appealingly, so convincingly that we eat ... and eat ... and eat. We rarely stop to realize that what we are consuming is death.

Adam's trap, like our trap, is that we can't always see the core. We try to judge things by the external appearance or the package it comes wrapped up in. A tree with delicious, pretty, edible fruit is not a bad thing at all. In fact, it is quite a good thing. However, if we only perceive at

this limited external level, our lives will be forever filled with lots of “gray.” We will potentially be subjected to large amounts of loss and/or confusion. Why? Because we are not looking deeply enough to clearly see the inner black and white. We are not looking deeply enough to clearly see the life or death contained within the pretty package. Therefore, we end up consuming what appears to be good and beneficial (even harmless) but constantly reap unexpected results.

Well then, what *is* the deeper black and white of life?

Simply put, it is *motive*. Is our motive love or hate, life or death, relationship or separation, selfishness or selflessness? Are we doing what is best for us or best for others? Are we chasing prideful knowledge or hands-on experience? As we mentioned before, the Bible depicts our two types of heart motivators as the *knowledge of good and evil* (death) or *experiential life*.

What’s the difference?

Life gives us experience, revelation, relationship, vitality, growth, and health. It requires that we give our control away and replace it with trust in the person we want life with. We are no longer calling the shots. It requires submission. It is motivated by love, by selflessness.

Conversely, the knowledge of good and evil gives us the ability to distinguish and decide for ourselves what is good or evil. It leaves us (and our limited, finite understanding) in control. It leaves us in the driver’s seat, calling the shots. It makes us look good. It appeals to pride. It is easily motivated by indifference (hate), and by selfishness. It makes us “god” of our life.

Here is the problem with knowledge. A person who spends his whole life gathering knowledge never spends that same time giving life. It’s like a person who spends all his time building and collecting the perfect tractor/garden set while never actually growing a garden. Not only does he lose all that food (life) for himself, but all the life he would have grown and given to others is shut down as well.

Can you see the distinction? Knowledge in itself is not a bad thing, but it is a dead thing. It leaves us distant and unconnected. Does that make sense? We can have all the knowledge in the world yet never connect to or change anything in that world. We can have all the knowledge in the world yet never know how to use all those random facts to actually fix our current circumstances, to actually balance our budget, to actually heal our family, to actually beat terrorism.

Knowledge is a hoax. It is smoke and mirrors. It appears as if we have something when we really have nothing. It appears as if it is our answer without ever giving us a tangible, usable solution. Yes, knowledge is needed, but it is dead. Like a tool, knowledge can be used to get something done more easily, but it can’t do the job without something or someone putting it wisely to use. For example, our rake can’t rake our yard for us. Likewise, our knowledge can’t solve our problems for us.

It's like a guitar. We can study the instrument. We can learn what it looks like, about the strings on it, how we should hold it, the types of wood it takes to build it, what temperature to store it at, how to polish it, how to tune it, all the chord shapes, all the scale shapes, all the arpeggios, etc. This is all knowledge. It is all necessary. It is a great tool. But it is death. Why? Because we can spend an entire lifetime learning, perfecting, and expanding our guitar *knowledge*, and meanwhile, our guitar is still just sitting (like an expensive, dusty paperweight), unused in the corner of our music room. Even with all our vast guitar knowledge we have not created any life or inspiration, any soul-moving, soul-healing music on it. We still can't play the thing. All the knowledge in the world has gotten us nowhere. We still haven't strummed a chord. We still don't know our guitar. All that knowledge is a waste. It is stagnant; it is death.

Conversely, life is experience. It is obedience. It is practice. It is relationship. It is reality. Let's say we instead spend a lifetime playing the guitar, practicing it, strumming its chords, playing its strings. We spend all that time we would have spent learning about it actually being with it. We spend all that same time getting to know it better and better—its touch and feel, its nuances, strengths, and weaknesses. Now we can create. Joy, laughter, peace, healing, power, boldness, and love can all flow through us and out of that guitar. It can flow into the world around us, changing it, healing it, influencing it, shifting it. We may never know much about the guitar or about the music theory behind it, but we can still connect to others and change our world with it.

This is the difference between knowledge and life.

Let's give one last example that may help clarify this statement. Pick your favorite celebrity. One who has always been at the top of my list is Will Smith. Let's say we spend our whole life learning about Will. We learn what he likes, where he works, and where he lives. We study all his movies and learn all his songs. We exhaustively research him on Google and memorize his Wikipedia page. We blow all our friends away with our massive knowledge about him. We make a living writing books about him. We even grow to be the resident "Will Smith genius" of North America.

We can have all the knowledge in the world about Will Smith. We can fool all our friends and everyone we ever come across with that knowledge, but the truth is it's a hoax. Sure it may appear to everyone that we intimately know Willard Christopher Smith, but the reality is we've never even met the guy. It is just smoke and mirrors. We don't know Mr. Smith. If we passed him on the street he wouldn't even nod. If we showed up to his house he would ask, "Who are you?" Knowledge isn't bad, but it's a lie. It's a false reality. It's a trick. Why? Because it is dead. Thus, it leads to death.

On the other hand, we may have never learned one single fact about Will but instead call him every day to ask what we can do to help him. Finally he agrees to let us buy him coffee every morning before work. We actually do it and the relationship begins. Now, after a lifetime of

bringing him coffee, when we show up at his house he will greet us with a smile and call us by name. And through the process, almost by accident, we learn more about Willard Christopher Smith Jr. than a lifetime of head knowledge could have given us.

This is the difference between the two trees we eat from every day. This is the difference between the two motives contained in every decision we make. This is the difference between knowledge (death) and life. This is life's black or white.

Now we could also call it: law or grace, theology or obedience, distant judgment or intimate engagement, following rules to relate or having open, honest relationships, hate or love, death or growth, hell or heaven, bondage or freedom, any other god or Jesus. Life's black and white is simply the *motive* that lies within the fruit and the eventual *final destination* to which the fruit leads us closer toward. It can only be one of two places.

Personally, I like to think of it as *selfishness* or *selflessness*. In my mind this sums up and clarifies everything we have previously discussed in two easy-to-remember words and one easy-to-remember question: *Is it really about what is best for others, or is it really about what is best for me?* Once we understand this simple foundational truth we can begin to question everything. "Is the motive behind that word, action, or deed *selfless* (creating life, freedom, and encouragement)? Or is it *selfish* (releasing death, bondage, and discouragement)?" We no longer care if something appears "good" or "evil." Instead, we look beyond the external and address the root motives. This is when life becomes a simple black-and-white picture. This is when life becomes easy to sort.

We must learn to think of actions, words, and thoughts as containers. They are neither good nor bad in and of themselves; they simply contain the life or death *motive* placed in them. It is up to us to determine which, so we do not receive, entertain, or permanently ingest containers full of death. Rather we accept, believe and ingest only those containers full of life. This is the basic principle of discernment.

With this in mind, the questions we need to be asking the Holy Spirit are, "What is the heart motivation of that 'good' thing? Is it selflessly motivated? Is it motivated out of love?" If the answers to those questions return as yes, then that "good" thing is in fact full of life and will prosper and grow. Receive it.

Conversely, if we ask those same questions but the answer is no, and instead we perceive that the good thing is actually selfishly motivated (or motivated out of pride or hate), then that good thing is full of death. It will destroy and kill. Handle it loosely, handle it wisely, use it freely as a tool, but don't ingest.

When we begin to see life in this way, as one of only two possible motives, then we are living in a black-and-white world. It becomes simple to comprehend.

Let's run this principle through a couple of practical examples.

Q: Is the news wrong to watch?

A: Well, does the news bring me down, make me fearful and discouraged? If yes, then it's a container of death for me, and I'm not gonna waste my time. Do I watch the news and enjoy praying in the Holy Spirit for all the hurt in the world, leaving me feeling invigorated and refreshed? If yes, then the news is life for me, so watch freely. Did watching the news used to make me come alive and now it drags me down? If yes, then it's time to pull back and do something else.

Q: Is dancing wrong?

A: Well, is the dancing all about me? Do I do it to show off and boost my own ego (even though it's in church)? If yes, then it's a container of slow, selfish death. I'm not gonna waste my time. Is the dancing a good way to spend time with my partner, to have fun, build each other up, grow as a couple, and have fun with Jesus (even though it's in a bar)? If yes, then dancing is life to me. Dance freely. Did the last song make me come alive, but this new song is just a great beat with self-hating lyrics that are fueling my lust? If yes, then maybe it's time for me to step outside and take a break for a song or two.

Q: Should I give this generous gift?

A: Am I doing it to be seen or to promote myself? If yes, then this gift is actually a path to death. It is a Trojan Horse. It will have strings attached. Don't do it. Am I giving it gladly and willingly? If yes, then go ahead. This gift contains life. It will lead to growth. Will this gift help others first with a potential of helping me too? Either way, give gladly and generously and don't worry whether a reward comes back around. Leave that part up to God.

We could do these all day. See how each answer is person specific? What may really hook and affect me may not hook and affect you. See how what appears good may not actually contain life? See how each answer could even vary depending on the day or even the time of day it is asked? From case to case? Situation to situation?

This is why we need to be constantly in tune and listening to the Holy Spirit in everything we do [Proverbs 3:6]. This is a relational life. This is a discerning life. This is the life Papa wants from us. It's interactive. It's spontaneous, ever-growing, ever-changing. It relies on Him (not dead, unyielding, set-in-stone, "here's how it always is" knowledge). It's fun.

Before we move on, let's take this just one step further. We also need to ask the Holy Spirit, "What is the heart motivation of that 'bad' thing?" Is it selflessly motivated? Is it motivated out of love? If the answer is yes, if the core of that bad thing is life, then it is from God and we should gladly receive it!

Sadly, this one trips the church up the most. We are missing out on so much needed revelation and life because of “bad” outward appearances. Not everyone who outwardly appears drunk is drunk on alcohol [Ephesians 5:18], not everyone in black eyeliner and tattoos worships satan, and not everyone with a lisp and flamboyant T-shirt lives a secret, alternative lifestyle. Some are hardcore disciples.

Furthermore, not everyone who *is* currently drunk on alcohol, who *is* currently worshipping satan, or who *is* currently living a secret, alternative lifestyle channels death 100 percent of the time. Many are simply pre-Christians searching for what actually works. They are searching with real hearts for the real truth. If we recognize this, then with a keen eye and developed perception we understand that there is still life, truth, and wisdom that we can glean—even from them. Remember, everyone has been given at least one irrefutable gift or talent from God [Matthew 25]. Every “bum” on the street has at least one nugget of gold to give.

Back before I had a real, tangible relationship with Jesus, I got some of my wisest counsel and life-altering course corrections from Jesus through the advice of unsaved (pre-saved) friends, in drunken, late-night conversations at parties. That statement might really mess with some of today’s popular church theology, but it’s true nonetheless.

Life is life, no matter what it is packaged in and no matter who it comes through. We can’t let “bad” containers keep us from enjoying the life they carry, just like we can’t let “good” containers trick us into blindly ingesting death. Remember, Jesus can come to us riding on a donkey [Matthew 21] or riding on the clouds [Revelation 1:7]. Likewise, our enemy can come to us plainly as a great dragon [Revelation 12] or masquerading as an angel of light [2 Corinthians 11:14-15]. Still, Jesus is Jesus and the devil is the devil. This is why accurate discernment is so important to us individually and to us as a body of believers.

Without digging too deep, here is a good, simple visualization of this concept. While there are only two *internal* core motives (only two trees to pick from), when we combine those motives with the two *external* appearances we end up with four options to any container (word, action, thought) that we are presented with.

They are:

External Appearance	Internal Motive	
Good	Life	Choose This ☺
Bad	Life	Choose This ☺
Good	Death	
Bad	Death	

Like God says in Deuteronomy, choose life! We aren't often confused by the good-life, bad-death choices. Those are easy. It's the other two, the bad-life and the good-death choices that we need clarity to discern. Often this is what people are referring to when they call life's choices gray. Clearing up this "gray" is why we desperately need such a close, personal relationship with our all-knowing and loving heavenly Father. He is never fooled by packaging and is always willing to answer our questions and guide our paths.

Okay, so we understand the whole "container" principle, but we're still having trouble recognizing what is actually a life-or-death motive. Our next step to clarity is *memorizing Scripture*.

I would suggest starting with Matthew 12:34, James 2:18, and 2 Corinthians 10:5, and then moving to Proverbs and first, second, or third John (or however the Spirit directs you personally). Although there are many discernment secrets strewn throughout Scripture, I've found these particular books have lots of little anecdotes (and antidotes) specifically designed to help us pick up on life or death motives.

Let's start with the basics. Matthew 12:34, James 2:17–18, and 2 Corinthians 10:5 are great starter Scriptures because they provide the scriptural base for our previously discussed container principle. These biblical excerpts provide the solid fundamental insights we need to start building our arsenal of discernment.

Matthew 12:34 says, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Meditate on this, and we realize that every word we say comes from the overflow of our heart. In other words, our words constantly reveal what is in our heart. This is huge. This means we can simply listen to someone talk (even ourselves), unwrap the motive within those words, and know exactly what is going on inside his or her (or our) heart: the drive, intentions, agendas, insecurities, or securities hidden there.

James 2 continues. It talks about how *faith without works is dead* and that *living faith* is displayed by our works. This verse reveals that we can discern a person's level of faith, what he or she truly believes and trusts in, by simply observing the person's actions. This means we can unwrap any action (or lack of action) to find motive and clearly see what belief system is flowing out of that person's heart.

II Corinthians 10:5 (KJV) completes the trifecta. It expresses our need to "cast down [vain] imaginations" and to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Wow, even our own thoughts are containers of life or death! We must be willing to analyze even what is being placed in our own head. What thoughts do we catch ourselves "entertaining" again and again? This helps us determine the intentions (even the hidden intentions) in our own hearts.

The combination of all three verses reveals that we can unwrap motive in every thought, word, or deed. Sounds cool, but practically how do we use this? We start by simply applying these Scriptures to our life and to the circumstances surrounding our lives. We filter actions, thoughts, and words through these Scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth or lies hidden within.

Often I look for “red flags” in my life—inconsistencies. Red flags are words, reactions, interactions, or scenarios that just feel “strange” or “off” or “weird.” In other words, they don’t sit quite right. I will pass those through the discernment filters I already know and/or give them to the Holy Spirit for further explanation. Frequently I find the Holy Spirit has “checked” them in my spirit for a specific reason, and the understanding I receive from them guides the steps, prayers, and insights I take into the future.

For example, let’s say we have a friend who is always joking around in a patronizing (putting others down) kind of way. According to what we learned in Matthew, we know the person’s mouth is simply revealing his or her heart. The person feels worthless, worth less than others. He or she is fearful that they don’t measure up. So naturally, out of that abundance of fear and worthlessness, the mouth speaks, pointing out the shortcomings the person sees in others before others can point out flaws in him or her. As we gain a wider Scripture base, we will clearly see how insecure (negative) words, even as jokes, come from the enemy. They curse us; they bind us and trip us up. They are death. Source identified!

However, that’s only the start. Now we can use this newfound insight to take control of the scene. Instead of blindly following our friend down the enemy’s road of negative joking (to eventual death), we simply stop and steer the conversation back to a positive direction, back to life. Then we combat the enemy by combating the insecurity in our friend. We begin to look for ways to speak encouragement, value, and hope into them.

That’s really all there is to discernment. Not all thoughts, words, or actions are as easy to “unwrap” as our example. And that is where gradually memorizing Scripture and learning to communicate with the Holy Spirit come into play. But as we continue to follow God, our discernment will continue to grow clearer all the time.

Avoid Playing the Blame Game

Now let’s pause for a moment and take a step back. I have to mention that our job in discernment is never to judge or condemn the person. Only God truly knows the heart [1 Samuel 16:7]. Only God truly knows the pain, hurt, trauma, or abuse this person has had to face. God’s Word clearly says, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged” [Luke 6:37; Matthew 7:1]. Our job is to simply pick up on the motive of the thought, word, or action that person is currently releasing and nothing more. We are

to come against the enemy who is speaking to or through the person, but not the person themselves. Flawless victory is destroying the enemy while building up, healing, and redeeming the person out from under the enemy's grasp. Remember, at any given time any person is only one God-encounter away from total transformation in any area. It's not our place to judge or attack the individual. It's our place to help and rescue them.

When we are tempted to judge, we must think about this. God's strength is actually made perfect in our weakness [2 Corinthians 12:9]. So the more weaknesses we perceive in an individual (or ourselves), the greater that person's potential actually is, in Jesus. Weakness should trigger thankfulness. We should give thanks for how mightily that person will be used for the Kingdom (in Jesus) instead of judging him or her as presently unfit.

For example, that guy who is currently "boxing us in" with his arrogant, careless words is actually one of the most powerful, humble, empowering men around—in Jesus. That girl who is currently the company gossip, causing massive relational tension, destruction and strife is actually a loyal encourager, to be used for rebuilding and reshaping lives—in Jesus.

We must always live in—and view life through—that forward-thinking Kingdom mind-set. Yes, we should discern others accurately in their current, broken, snapshot, "now," moment. But we should see them as Jesus sees them—as a finished work, completely whole and operating in their full destiny. Likewise, we should treat them as that perfected, finished work.

We must also be aware that when we are unwrapping (and learning to unwrap) motives it is easy for the enemy to get us caught up in "what the other person is doing to us." In other words, we begin to blame them for the perceived hidden motives they may be accidentally (or purposefully) passing on to us.

This is a trap. Remember, we mentioned earlier that it is 100 percent up to us whether we consume the fruit handed to us. We can lead a horse to water, but only the horse can choose to drink. God never said we wouldn't have to observe, handle, or interact with bad fruit. He never said we should avoid it or take shelter from it. Quite the opposite. He actually said we *would* encounter and touch it [John 16:33]. His only command was *don't eat it*.

If someone regularly sends bad fruit our way—and if those words/actions affect us negatively (tearing us up inside)—that is a sign that we are eating, accepting, hooked on, and believing what that person is feeding us. This isn't the time to start blaming that person for our pain. Instead, this is the time for us to run to Jesus and learn how to stop eating, believing, and reliving what the enemy is sending our way. Once we are healed inside and understand how to stop eating the negative fruit we are handed, it will no longer matter what anyone sends our way because it will have no emotional effect on us.

The subtle trap of the enemy is to get us to start blaming the other person for the hurt we feel. This does two things. One, it leaves us feeling “stuck” indefinitely—emotionally tied to the other person. We are left feeling powerless, always under that person’s control and at his or her mercy. Two, it gives satan an open door to control us anytime he wants. As long as we continue to blame others, our focus is misplaced, satan stays hidden and can indefinitely continue to press our emotional buttons to move us however, wherever and whenever he wants.

Blaming others for our pain is a vicious downward spiral. Instead, we must learn how to be healed in the presence of Jesus. We must learn how to tap into His spirit, hear His voice, receive His healing (over and over), until we learn to be selective in what we eat—until we learn how *not* to ingest any old piece of fruit that is handed to us.

Let me give two quick examples of this from my life.

My first serious (out of college) job was as the sole web designer/developer for a growing ministry out of Dallas, Texas. It was a smaller company, averaging about twenty-five to thirty employees at any given time, and since my immediate boss and I were responsible for all aspects of our growing online presence, we both wore many hats.

One of those hats involved finding third-party vendors and web platforms that we could freely integrate and develop within. This meant a lot of meetings, phone calls, and relational stuff I wasn’t good at and didn’t like doing. Thankfully, my boss was fantastic.

However, he loved to pull me into meetings, introduce me, and then turn the lead over to me. In his mind it was because I knew the most about the technical (how-to) side and therefore would know all the right technical questions to ask to be sure we got the package or deal we needed. A wise decision, right?

Unfortunately, I was usually clueless as to who this third-party company was, who the representative was, and how far along the deal was. I felt stupid, insecure, and way out of my element—like I was being tossed into a lake and told to swim. I hated it. I could have easily grown to resent my boss for this. After all, he was the “source” of my perceived embarrassment and pain. I wanted to continue flying comfortably under the radar.

Instead, I ran to God about it. I began to soak. As God healed me of my insecurities, the “hot seat” became more and more “lukewarm” and then even “comfortable”!

The blame game would have kept me stuck, driven me down further, led to resentment toward my boss, and ultimately to quitting (the death of) my job. But Jesus changed the game! He turned it into an opportunity for me to rise up, get healed, and learn to swim, grow, and change. I even began to enjoy what had originally caused me so much pain.

My second example is a much bigger and much more long-term attack. It really began shortly after I got radically born again in 2004. As God began to free me of addictions, old thought patterns, insecurities, and hurts, the gossip about me began to rise.

For example, when you're the guy who won't talk bad about your boss, people begin to talk bad about you. When you're the guy who stands up and won't back down for a righteous cause, the enemy, who knows he can't face you head on, begins to work behind the scenes to tear you down.

Without going into much detail, after only a few years from my born-again transformation the gossip was freely flying. I was presented daily with opportunity after opportunity to be hurt, offended, rejected, and limited. I could have gone the blame route and become indefinitely "stuck"—controlled, swayed, and dictated by everyone around me. But as before, I used my situation as an increased incentive to run to Jesus more and more often (honestly and thankfully, it was my only option). I began to soak daily and then twice a day. As insecurity after insecurity, rejection issue after rejection issue, fear after fear began to melt away, so did the daily hurt. Even when everything finally came out and I was openly attacked, there was little to no emotional pain. I could openly talk about all the craziness, all the misconceptions, all the false judgments that were placed on me and feel emotionally attached to none of it. It was amazing.

Because I never settled for passing the blame and instead used the attacks as opportunities to learn how to stop eating the constant fruit of rejection sent my way, because I kept hanging out with Jesus until He healed me internally, I became truly free! The fruit never stopped coming; I just stopped eating.

This is our advantage over the enemy. We don't have to eat his fruit, even when it is forced upon us. And even if we do, we have a healer we can run to weekly, daily, hourly, every second (as we need) to absorb the pain and reverse the ingested death.

Moving on, let's jump into the second type of discernment, *discerning of spirits*.

Discerning of spirits is a free gift of the Holy Spirit that can be "stirred up" by speaking in tongues. It is developed by practice, through trial and error. More specifically, discerning of spirits is a keen awareness of ourselves and our surroundings. It is picking up on and interpreting strange or sudden pressures, fears, joys, emotions, thoughts, pricks, pains, or discomfort in the atmosphere around us.

Ever walk into a room and the tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife? That is a discerning of spirits. Ever had a boss who made your heart jump every time he or she walked into your office? That is a discerning of spirits. Ever had a friend who always felt like "a breath of fresh air"? That is a discerning of spirits.

Often we overlook or dismiss this sense as “just us,” when in reality we are simply perceiving the spirit world around us. Everyone (and everyplace) carries some level of spirit in it. That is why people can carry an “air of authority” or transmit a compelling charisma, or why someone’s words will have “weight.” All those phrases refer to our ability to sense and interpret the spiritual backing of a person.

Growing in this gift will help us determine exactly how to attack the enemy. Are we facing a spirit we need to cast out or just looking at a trail of destruction left in that spirit’s wake which we must now help to rebuild? Operating in this gift will clearly show us how to act, speak, and pray in any given situation.

Looking back I can see discerning of spirits operating regularly in my life. But because I was clueless, it was actually being used by the enemy against me, and I never knew it. God has only recently opened my eyes to this phenomenon. I was that guy who thought all the crazy spiritual pressure I felt was just “little old insecure me.” I didn’t realize it was stuff being passed on to me from others or stuff currently in the atmosphere I was walking into.

Unfortunately, I’ve never really run across any type of comprehensive, in-depth teaching on this subject. I found a great chapter in Jonathan Welton’s book *The School for Seers* (chapter nine). Additionally, Lance Wallnau briefly mentioned the subject in a couple of his online YouTube videos. But that is about it. Likewise, I’ve only really picked up on it in my own life within the last couple of years, so I’m no expert by any means.

That being said, I’m just going to relate some of my experiences where the gift of discerning of spirits has played a key role in shaping my life and the world around me. Hopefully it will help open your eyes to clearly see this gift operating in your life as well.

I first began to pick up on this gift in Walmart. Yeah, Walmart. For whatever reason (Holy Spirit), I started to notice a recurring “shift” in the thoughts that would pop into my head as we did our weekly grocery shopping there. They were prideful, lustful, accusing, or self-hating thoughts. Thoughts I didn’t think anywhere else. Thoughts that didn’t bother me anywhere else. But here they didn’t stop and I would get grumpy and annoyed. It was a war zone.

It was like that for months. A twenty- to thirty-minute trip wasn’t a big deal, but by sixty or ninety minutes in that atmosphere, I was so ready to go. I started to see the direct Walmart/mental attack correlation, but I still didn’t get it.

Then it was Christmas-time. That means Christmas music. We were in the store doing some holiday shopping. We were probably there about thirty or forty minutes when suddenly God nudged me and I realized, *Wait a minute. It just feels normal in here today. Just fun and light and normal. No oppression, no pestering thoughts. Hmmm.*

I paused to ponder this conundrum as “Silent Night” wafted over the airwaves. Suddenly, it hit me! The music! The only thing different this trip was the music. It was old-school, Jesus lovin’, Christmas music that was playing. The atmosphere was different; it was clean.

That was the first time my eyes were clearly opened and I saw it wasn’t me. I was simply picking up on what was going on in the atmosphere around me—all the chatter of the enemy. That’s why the thoughts were always random yet persistent. They weren’t mine. They *weren’t* coming from me, but they *were* around me.

Shortly after my “Walmart revelation” I had a major confrontation with someone close to me. God used this encounter to solidify exactly what I had just learned at Walmart.

Kristy and I had just come from church. It had been amazing, a great worship followed by a great service (we even went up for prayer afterward). We were in high spirits, conversing freely the entire car ride to our scheduled lunch date. Even as we walked up to the restaurant, everything was free, light, and fun. We saw our friends and went over to greet them. As soon as I hugged one particular individual, everything shifted. The best way I can describe it was like I couldn’t catch my breath.

As soon as I hugged him it was like the air suddenly thickened. I had a big, natural smile on my face and suddenly, in that instant, my smile felt faked. When he asked how I was doing (and I was doing great), it suddenly felt phony and wrong that I answered as such. It felt like everything was screaming “liar.”

Then I found out why. A few minutes later, that same person exploded at me. Twelve years of pent-up anger, gossip, and half-truths were spewed out all over me.

Believe it or not, that situation was an answer to prayer and is currently being worked out. But the point is, that funkiness, that fakeness, that “thickness” I suddenly felt—it wasn’t me. It was me clearly perceiving the spirit world around me. It was oppression and accusations being put on me. Later, when I talked with Kristy, she disclosed she had felt the same thing.

Wait—there’s more. 😊

God activated this gift in me one time at the dentist’s office to protect my family. We had just gotten new insurance and our dental provider changed as well. Kristy made back-to-back appointments for us, and mine was first. I got all the X-rays and prep work done. Finally the dentist came in and examined my teeth. Suddenly I felt like he was going to lie to me. I’ve never had a cavity and suddenly it felt like he was going to lie and tell me I had one.

I felt it so strong that I answered back (in my mind). I thought, *No, you will tell the truth.*

After a short pause, he looked at me and said, “Son, you’ve got the best teeth I’ve seen all day. Let’s just schedule a cleaning.”

Okay, no biggie. He seemed nice enough, so maybe that was all just some weird head game.

The nurse came in to schedule my cleaning appointment. Then she asked me an odd, out-of-the-blue (red-flag) question. It was about a turquoise-blue bracelet I was wearing on my wrist. She asked if I also worked for their dental company (it was a big chain company). When I replied no, she proceeded to tell me that all the employees of this chain have to wear similar bracelets which are exactly that color!

Okay, whatever—kind of random conversation. Now they *knew* I didn't work for them.

Then it was Kristy's turn. She has great oral hygiene too. Yet strangely it was a different story for her. The dentist found three cavities in her teeth that needed to be filled. It just didn't sit right. I told her about my experience and about what I felt in the spirit while I was in the room alone with them. We decided to get a second opinion.

Fortunately, Kristy's dad is also a dentist. We talked the situation over with him and let him see the X-rays, and he recommended we go somewhere else. We ended up switching back to our old insurance and going to the dentist Kristy grew up with. He did a 360-degree scan plus digital X-rays and found nothing wrong. Nothing.

Looking back, it all finally made sense. I did accurately perceive what was going on in that room. That doctor was being tempted to lie to me (apparently a common practice for that dental chain), and I picked up on it. God protected me through their mistaken judgment of my turquoise bracelet. However, once the truth about my job status was disclosed to them, they had no problem lying to my wife. All this so they could make a few extra insurance dollars.

Wow. God played that story out perfectly. He was training me how to better discern spirits. Now I was catching on. I was learning to trust my senses and not just pass off thoughts or feelings as random, "off-the-wall," or even necessarily as my own anymore.

I began to notice this at home as well. I would suddenly feel like I was being accused, blamed for something. Like the Walmart trips I didn't know how to address it, so it would just kind of get "on" me and make me feel frustrated and grumpy.

Then one day, shortly after I had been talking a lot in tongues, Kristy came home and I felt that same accusing spirit suddenly hit. It had been a particularly great day for me, so the change was abrupt and weird. Suddenly the Holy Spirit nudged me, and I realized the correlation. The only thing that had changed when that accusing spirit hit was that Kristy had walked in the door. (Thank You, Holy Spirit.)

I had to test it. So instead of trying to think or pray the funk away and get grumpy when it wouldn't go, I simply brought it up. I asked Kristy if she was okay. She said no, that she was sorry

if she was a little “out of it.” That was all. But instantly the funk lifted. Instantly. And it was gone the rest of the night. Lesson learned!

These are only a few of the many more stories I could tell. You’d think I’d learn faster. Umm, nope! But at least I’m finally starting to get it. When I feel a “funky” spirit hit, I’m learning to look around and see what has changed. If it wasn’t me—meaning if I haven’t been focusing on negative things or whatever (things to bring it on myself)—I’m learning I’m actually just sensing what is going on around me spiritually.

But I don’t think I’m alone. I believe there is a massive subculture of people out there like me, born with a strong gift of discerning of spirits. But satan is terrified of them and somehow he can tell they have the gift. So throughout their lives he brilliantly uses their own gift against them. As they are beaten down by these crystal-clear covert messages coming from the enemy (perpetuated through “bullying” or clueless people), they become quiet, withdrawn, and shy. Even though they see clearly what is actually going on, they settle for following and for “falling in line” because they think the pressures, fears, thoughts, emotions, and insecurities they feel are all their own. I’m here to tell you, *they are not*.

It’s time to stand up, my friends. It’s time to get regularly into the presence of God, to strengthen our inner man so we can rise up and take back this world from the enemy we clearly see and feel. I’m telling you, if we truly begin to utilize this gift, we will dominate our world. We will be able to expose and crush the enemy at every turn, as we see fit.

How do we do this?

First by *soaking*. Regularly getting into the Holy Spirit’s presence each day (soaking) has really helped me develop my spiritual discerning senses. Not only has it increased my ability to feel things in the spirit, it continues to help me identify exactly what it is that I’m feeling in the spirit.

For example, soaking has really developed my ability to feel, perceive, and identify the Holy Spirit. It used to take me fifteen to thirty minutes of lying perfectly still to barely feel the Holy Spirit in my gut (if I felt anything at all). Now I can lie down and feel the Holy Spirit in fewer than two minutes—flowing through my gut, heart, hands, and entire body. It’s a real, tangible sensation. It gets stronger all the time. That’s how sensitive God has made me in about three or three and a half years of soaking (the last two years being years of routine soaking).

Becoming sensitive to the positive spirit world at home, and knowing exactly what the Holy Spirit feels like, makes it easy to pick up on the negative spirit world in other places. It also helps me clearly identify when a new spirit shows up that is not the Holy Spirit.

Simply put (and for lack of better terms), the positive spirit world feels like purifying fire. It is clean and burning, free and peaceful. It feels like anything is possible. The negative spirit world

feels cold and clammy, thick and dark, oppressive, confusing, and fearful. It feels like impending doom.

Second, we grow our ability to discern spirits by *speaking in tongues*. I personally noticed a significant jump in “God promptings” shortly after I began to talk in tongues as much as possible throughout the day. Before that I was mostly just talking in tongues in the car to and from work, maybe twenty to sixty minutes a day, tops.

However, after our daughter, Lexi, died and we took a major faith stand to pray publicly for God to literally raise her from the dead [Matthew 10:8; 1 Kings 17; John 11], satan started hitting us hard. To combat, I really felt like God said to pray in tongues nonstop (as much as possible). He also gave me the desire to do just that (previously I never had that intense a desire). It was shortly after obeying, just a few days or so later, that I really began to get clarity. I began to “see” what was going on in the spirit world around me. (By see I mean finally putting two and two together correctly). It’s as if all the extra speaking in tongues was making me sensitive enough to hear Papa God’s voice in every situation. Likewise, all the daily soakings were making me sensitive enough to feel the spiritual energy around me. I was now feeling those Holy Spirit “nudges,” opening my eyes to all the right things, watching in awe as the right words just spilled out of my mouth. It’s as if the combination of the two (soaking and speaking in tongues) opened the door wide enough for the Holy Spirit to start bringing everything clearly together for me. The Holy Spirit was finally leading the way.

Third, we grow our ability to discern spirits through *spiritual freedom*.

Spiritual freedom naturally comes during day to day life as we follow our Papa God’s voice through the leading of the Holy Spirit. It’s not something we can do ourselves or necessarily “make” happen. However, it is something we can easily watch for and observe over time in our own lives. It is also something we can cause to happen more quickly through continual, prompt obedience.

For example, I gained spiritual freedom when God led me away from my pornography addiction. Not only did He free me from physically looking at the pictures but also the internal attraction, the excitement, the uncontrollable tug that would rise up in me—the tug to which I couldn’t say, “No!” That spirit left. Once I was free and no longer blinded by that intense, internal “tug,” I was free to start feeling other things.

Likewise, when God kicked fear totally out of my heart, not only did my nerves go away, but that internal fear, that “I’ve got to be ready for anything” internal sensation was gone. Once I was free and no longer blinded by chronic, internal panic, I was able to start feeling other, more subtle things.

Does that make sense? It's like the more "negative-spirit-free" (Holy Spirit-filled) I became on the inside, the easier it was to feel negative spirits on the outside. The best way I can explain it is that it's like being on the back porch during a storm. There is hail, rain, lightning, and thunder. At first all we can hear is a general roar. But soon the hail stops. Suddenly we can hear the thunder and rain better. Then the thunder stops. Now the rain becomes really easy to hear. Finally the rain stops. Now we can hear our dog (who has been there the entire time) softly whimpering under the shed.

In the same way, as the Holy Spirit expands within us and all the old internal spiritual "noise" is quieted, we can begin to sense the subtler things externally around us.

Like turning off the radio playing incessantly in the background and suddenly hearing the tick of the clock on the wall, as all the noisy spirits we used to be in bondage to are broken off and driven away, our subtle discernment senses will simply open up. It will just happen naturally and effortlessly as we follow the Holy Spirit.

Let's go one last place before we wrap this section up: *emotions*. Emotions *are* our sixth sense. This is something God has recently revealed to me. Just like our body is a gate to the soul, allowing outward, physical senses (and data) to penetrate and influence the decisions we make within our inner soul man (or woman), so are our emotions to our inward, spirit senses. Simply put, emotions don't tell us *how* to feel, they tell us *what* we are feeling. In other words, our emotions are simply picking up on the spirit we are currently tapping into or is currently tapping into us. Emotions are like an extra set of hands, or an extra set of eyes. They feel, they look, into the spirit world around us. And they pick up on what is there. They don't tell us *how* to react; they tell us *what* to react to.

Emotions work the same way our physical senses work. Like a cheat-sheet for our soul, our physical senses pick up on information in the physical world around us and simply communicate that information to our soul—nothing more and nothing less. Our physical senses tell us "this is over here" and "that is over there." They supply the information to help us take the appropriate action(s) and make the appropriate decision(s) that we need to navigate successfully or victoriously in any given situation. They lead us to make choices that we might not have made without the extrasensory information.

For instance, we see that the sprinklers are on in the front yard and we know to wait to go check the mail, unless we want to get soaked. Or we put our hand on a hot stovetop and instantly know we'd better quickly move it or lose it. If we touch something hard, we know it's hard. If we feel something soft, we know it's soft. If it's dry we feel dry, or if it's wet we feel wet. It's not that our physical senses are randomly telling us how to feel, they are simply reading the physical world around us and then relaying that information back to our soul. They give us clarity. They analyze and identify our surroundings. Now it is much easier to know exactly how to interact. We

are no longer moving blindly. We are no longer acting ignorantly. This dramatically increases our chances of survival, adaptation, and victory.

Do you see the correlation? Emotions are the same. They too are a cheat-sheet for our soul. However, instead of sensing the physical world around us—emotions sense the other world, the *spirit world*, around us. Emotions pick up on the spirit that is in the room, the spirit that is attached to a particular memory, or the spirit that is evoked by what we are currently thinking about. Emotions are not our feelings “randomly” telling us how to feel. They are simply our spiritual senses reading the spiritual world around us and then conveying that information back to our soul where we can ask the Holy Spirit for advice, allowing us to deal knowledgeably, appropriately, and victoriously with the spiritual situation at hand.

Our soul is simply the middleman, the “bridge,” so to speak. It spans the gap between the two worlds in which we live: the physical world and the spiritual world. It allows us to simultaneously walk in both. It simultaneously gathers information from both. But we must learn to accurately recognize (and decipher) the parallel streams of information that are being fed to it. For instance, if someone walks into the room and fear leaps into our heart, we know this person has a spirit of fear attached to him or her. Furthermore, we know the fear spirit the person carries is trying to move into us and/or get us to move according to its desires. It’s not that we are a fearful person. Don’t believe that lie. We are simply picking up on the spirit coming against us.

Once we realize this straightforward “emotion to spirit world” relationship, we can simply stop, take a step back in any situation, check our emotions, and identify our spiritual enemy. As in our example, if we identify that we are dealing with a spirit of fear, we can specifically ask God what to do with it. He may reply that perfect love casts out fear [1 John 4:18]. Now we can shift our focus to what we love about that person, what God loves about that person, and ways we can show God’s love tangibly to that person. Now that we have our specific solution, we are no longer moving, reacting, or fighting blindly. Our chances of survival, adaptation, and victory dramatically increase. Life becomes simple. Life becomes easy.

In addition, if we go one step further and act by faith on that word, if we act by faith on that love (even when we don’t feel it yet), we will be inviting a new spirit (the Holy Spirit) into the room. Now the room’s atmosphere (and our internal feelings) will change as the new spirit (the stronger spirit) arrives on the scene. It’s not that we have changed; rather, the spirit we are sensing (the spirit present in the room) has changed. We have simply opened the door, allowing God’s spirit to enter, causing the evil spirit to flee. Everyone can feel the shift. Everyone can feel the positive energy. This is victory. And no longer blind victory. ☺

A great analogy is this: we are like a radio. We don’t determine everything that is being broadcast (in other words, we don’t determine which spirits are presently available for pickup in the room). But we *do* determine what station we tune into. We *do* determine which spirit we

rebroadcast. Additionally, we can easily learn to recognize which spirit (station) we are currently tuned into. Are we tuned into the Holy Spirit (picking up on all the Galatians 5:22 “fruits of the spirit” in our emotions) or some other spirit? Remember, if we don’t like what our emotions are picking up, we are totally free to refocus our mind (our attention) and change the channel.

Please note: this is why we can’t wait until our feelings change to act. This is why we can’t wait until we “feel like doing something” to do something. That is reverse order. Our feelings will *not* change until a new spirit comes into the room. It takes action plus focus (obedience) to open the door to a new spirit. It takes action plus focus (obedience) to change the channel and dial in a new signal. Therefore, we must act in order that our feelings may follow.

Thankfully, we can do this in any situation, even (and especially) in ourselves. For instance, let’s say somebody shames and embarrasses us. Maybe intentionally, maybe not. But now, every time we think of that person (or hear that person’s name), negative emotions of hurt and anger rise up in us.

Since we know our emotions are simply our sixth sense telling us which spirit(s) we are feeling, we can step back and accurately assess the situation. We see clearly that rejection, offense, and anger are the spirits coming against us. With the attackers identified we can now ask God how to appropriately deal with them. Maybe God replies and asks us to dispel them by daily blessing and praying for our offenders and/or by doing good things for our offenders behind their back—allowing the Holy Spirit to flow more freely into us until those negative emotions are completely driven away and we only feel God’s love rise toward our offenders. This is victory. And no longer blind victory.

The Bible strongly supports this truth. It gives us the fruits of the Spirit as one perfect example. Before they manifest physically as “fruit” (as works), what *is* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control [Galatians 5:22-23]? Simple: they are emotions! This means that when we are tapped into the Holy Spirit (when we are feeling God’s Spirit strong within us), we will also feel these nine emotions. These emotions are not us but rather a byproduct of the Holy Spirit that we are currently feeling in or around us. If we can’t feel these emotions or if we feel some other set of emotions instead, then we know the Holy Spirit has not yet fully shown up or that the spirit we are dealing with is not the Holy Spirit.

This spiritual discernment technique can be used anywhere and everywhere. We must learn to pay attention to any random emotions, sudden “rises” in feelings, or strange changes in the atmosphere around us. Can you see how living in a world of downplayed or ignored “wrong” emotions can desensitize and blind us to what is really going on behind the scenes?

We must learn to pay attention to any emotions that are tied to our thoughts and/or current mental focus. We must learn to pay attention to any emotions tied to a city, a room, or a

particular person. We must understand that our emotions are to our spirit world as our physical senses are to our physical world. Emotions simply amplify and identify what is going on around us in the spirit. Emotions *are* our spiritual “eyes and ears.”

Again, please let me mention that we don’t use this ability to pass judgment on or blame anyone. We don’t want to fall into that trap. We simply use it to quickly and accurately expose and identify our enemy. Then we can replace that attacking spirit with the opposite spirit and ask God what to do. Remember, our enemy is not flesh and blood [Ephesians 6:12]. We always want to destroy the attacking spirit while protecting, edifying, and loving all the people involved.

Also, keep in mind that discernment always starts with us. We learn by practicing on ourselves. It’s impossible to accurately recognize spirits in others if we can’t recognize them in ourselves *first*. We must ask God to reveal the blind areas, the bound areas, the bad attitudes in ourselves. Then, as we are blatantly honest and He repeatedly exposes those areas or attitudes, we can begin to grow in understanding and victory. This understanding (accurate discernment) and victory (freedom) within ourselves will allow us to begin to discern accurately in others as well.

It’s like a high school math student talking with an elementary school math student. The elementary school math student may be deceived and believe he or she knows higher-level math. The student may talk a good game about solving for x and y and may impress and deceive all the other elementary school math students. But let that high school mathematician get in a five-minute conversation with our elementary school charlatan and the jig is up. The high school student just knows too much. He’s gone too far down the same road. Talking with the elementary school student is like looking at himself ten years prior. He knows right where this kid is. The high school student may not be able to open the elementary school student’s eyes to his present self-deception, but because the high school student has seen all this same stuff play out in himself first, he isn’t fooled—not even for a second.

In the same way, as we walk honestly and openly out of our own deceptions, following Jesus’ lead, it becomes increasingly easier to recognize those same deceptions in others. It’s not that we have to try to make the deceived “see the light.” Instead, it gives us grace, mercy, compassion, and true understanding for them. It allows us to speak more clearly and more effectively, unveiling their current blindness. And it allows us to accurately assess and judge them so we are not taken for a ride or misled. In this way, we can truly be wise as serpents yet harmless as doves [Matthew 10:16].

Lastly, here is the “INVINCIBLE” cheat-code for any of my fellow gamers out there. It’s HS24/7 (Holy Spirit 24 hours a day 7 days a week). Remember, the Holy Spirit beats every other spirit—every time. So don’t necessarily worry about trying to figure out exactly what other spirits you are feeling all the time. Don’t necessarily worry about discerning which spirit(s) someone else

is operating in. Instead, focus on attracting, feeling, and obeying the Holy Spirit twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week [Deuteronomy 6:6–8; 11:19]. As we continue to do this in greater and greater ways, we will defeat every other spirit coming against us without even trying to. We will be invincible.

That's all I've got for now. My prayer is that God will waken and raise up His army of discerners and that very soon this subject will be inundated with good, solid how-to information. I will do my best to write more as I continue to learn as well. Looks like we're all growing in this one together!

Battle Tactic 9:

Exposing the Enemy

We've all seen a good criminal drama, from *Perry Mason* and *The Mentalist* to any one of the ever-growing collection of *Law and Orders*. It's the same each week. We open on the chaos left in the wake of some recently fabricated crime scene. Then we watch, riveted, as the truth is slowly uncovered, brought to the surface, and displayed for everyone to see. Finally, in some well-timed, overly dramatic fashion, everything is revealed, the right perpetrator is caught, and justice is served.

What have we learned? Simply that "truth uncovered brings justice." We seem to understand this principle quite well in the natural.

Likewise, exposing our spiritual enemy works just the same. Like our crime scene, justice comes as we simply begin to uncover what the enemy is doing. It can be spoken out loud. It can be written in a letter. It can be typed in an e-mail, or even mentioned as a joke. As long as we bring the enemy's lies and tactics into the light—exposing them for everyone to clearly see—then we are destroying the enemy's power hidden within those schemes. We are destroying the enemy's power that is actively oppressing us [Ephesians 5:11]. The truth uncovered brings justice.

Remember, the enemy only has power in darkness, deception, lies, misunderstandings, and confusion. He goes about as a roaring lion [1 Peter 5:8 (KJV)]. See that the keyword is "as" a roaring lion. Unless we submit to his roaring lion deception, he cannot devour us. We can safely meet a lion and step on poisonous snakes [Psalm 91 (TLB)]. We have authority over *all* the power of the enemy and *nothing* shall by any means harm us [Luke 10:19].

What is darkness? Darkness is anything that can't be completely and truthfully talked about in front of somebody. It is anything that isn't readily admitted or fully disclosed to the appropriate sources.

Darkness is where the enemy works. Temptation and blackmail are his game. When that fails, he uses accusations, quick judgments, gossip, lies, half-truths, fear, pride, and pretty much anything else he can—to show us a convincing enough bluff and to get us to submit or fold. The key to victory is to simply keep going. It is to be completely transparent, to run directly at the enemy, to call his bluff, and to get him to expose his hand. If we are truly trusting and walking in Jesus, our hand will always win because now we are playing with Jesus' cards.

Open communication in any relationship will kill the works of the devil. That's why Jesus calls for such humility in His people. Humble people will be open and honest about everything, no matter how embarrassing or crazy it seems.

The enemy will often take partial truths and then set up scenarios around those half-truths to try and play two sides against each other. He uses this tactic to destroy human relationships, but he most often uses this scheme to ruin the relationship between us and God. We see it played out from the beginning [Genesis 3]. Adam and Eve are tempted and tricked by a half-truth into eating the fruit of *the knowledge of good and evil* (death) by the devil. Immediately, the enemy turns this back on their heads, making them so ashamed that they run and hide from God. The relationship between God and man immediately breaks.

Later we see satan playing the exact same game. This time it's between Job and God. In Job 2 we find him accusing Job of having wrong heart-motives toward God. When God sticks up for Job, satan isn't satisfied. The truth isn't enough; he wants proof. So God allows the enemy to "prove" His word. Notice that when the enemy strikes Job he immediately turns around and begins speaking to Job (through Job's wife and friends), blaming the attacks on God [Job 2:9; Job 4-36]. To God's face, satan blames Job. To Job's face, satan blames God. Yet the truth was God loved Job and Job loved God.

How was this all cleared up? Open, direct communication. Open, direct confrontation. God talks directly and honestly to Job [Job 38-42]. Likewise, Job talks directly and honestly to God. The lying middleman is cut out, the full truth is finally made known, confusion and darkness are dispelled, the healing comes, and the relationship is restored.

This is why God, through Jesus, made direct, open communication available to anyone who wants it with Himself. It is the essence of exposing the enemy. It is the essence of removing the enemy. It is the bed out of which true intimacy can grow and thrive. Direct, honest communication is the foundation of every good, healthy, close relationship.

For some reason having a direct, open, honest relationship is much easier to say than do. Brady Boyd of New Life Church in Colorado Springs has some great messages specifically on this subject. They are called *The Art of Confrontation*; check them out online for additional ideas.

Personally, I began to include this request in my prayer times with Papa God: I would say, “Open my eyes to ‘territory moments,’ moments when I can say or do things to take territory from the enemy and to expose the enemy.” Then I began to look for times when I could slide something into my normal daily conversations, or normal daily e-mails. You would be surprised at how often these opportunities arise when one is looking for them. Often I would just slip something into a conversation as a lighthearted joke or I would address a concern through e-mail with my boss, my band, or even a family member.

Eventually I had to sit down and directly confront a few people. Then a few more. Then a few more! But God was good and never rushed me or gave me more than I could handle. And of course, you should bring up everything possible with your spouse. Keep those walls down. Don’t let satan get any foothold there.

A great way to bring up any issue without being accusatory is to begin by saying you really value the relationship. Brady Boyd teaches on this. Then say you sense or feel that when you are around him or her, this issue is dividing you. And because you value that relationship so much, you don’t want to leave the room until every aspect of it has been discussed, because you don’t want there to be any chance at all of the relationship being damaged.

Then just launch into it.

Another great way is to simply shoot out an e-mail (or mass email) addressing an issue that you feel may be causing some concern. Then, without pointing fingers, simply talk about the issue and reveal the heartfelt truth. Ease fears and concerns. No one has to reply. No one has to be blamed. But the light has been turned on, the truth has been revealed. The enemy can no longer work under cover.

I will say this. Unless continued gossip and accusations are bringing noticeable spiritual oppression against you or your household, don’t get too hung up on these tactics. I noticed that I did just as much damage to the enemy when I didn’t have a clue as to what was going on around me and I was just having fun and loving people.

For instance, I didn’t realize it, but a rumor was going around work that I had a girlfriend on the side. I believe it stemmed from the fact that I always answered my phone, “Hey, baby!” whenever my wife called. Apparently that is something most people drop after the first few months of marriage. Looking back, I can clearly see other seemingly “random” conversations I had with coworkers, conversations during that same period of time where my coworkers kept hinting in that direction—conversations that seemed to be digging for some deeper information that just wasn’t there.

Whatever the case, it all culminated one day at lunch. The subject was brought up in full force as the conversation moved directly into cheating perpetuated by social media networks.

Usually I stayed out of that kind of talk, but for some reason it just welled up in me and I said, “That’s why I always put a picture of Kristy and me as my Facebook profile picture. I don’t want anybody to misunderstand or get any wrong ideas that I am anything other than happily married.”

I got some weird looks and that was it. That whole subject was cleared up. All the gossip stopped at that point. I didn’t realize any of that was going on until much later. But it was cool to look back and see how God used my own mouth to put a stop to it when I was just having fun, loving on people, and didn’t have a clue.

Battle Tactic 10: Being Honest and Transparent

Honesty and transparency run hand in hand with much of what we have previously discussed. It is a vital base to any healthy relationship. It is like having a direct, static-free cell phone connection with no operator involved. With total honesty and transparency there is no room for miscommunication, hidden motives, or some third party to purposely interfere. Everything is up front, out in the open, and straight from the horse’s mouth.

This type of direct communication wreaks havoc on the enemy’s schemes, which require some sort of secrecy, ambiguity, or confusion to persist. Every big breakthrough and lasting change that has occurred in my life has been birthed out of some new level of honesty and transparency with God, others and/or myself.

For example, I got saved at five, but I didn’t sell out (give God every part of my everything) until twenty-six. What finally caused that radical change? I finally got totally honest with myself that what I was doing wasn’t working. I finally got totally transparent with God and admitted I needed His help with my mess. Likewise, God freed me from an ever-growing pornography and masturbation addiction. What caused that change? The same principles—I finally got honest with myself that I couldn’t stop the addiction. I finally got completely transparent with God and admitted everything. I finally brought Him openly, “awkwardly,” and repeatedly into the middle of my dark little world.

The same is true for every breakthrough in my life. In each situation, that new level of honesty and transparency broke the hold the enemy had on a certain aspect of my life, projecting me into deeper clarity and freedom. It gave God greater access to me, through me, and into my circumstances as it exposed and removed some new inner-blockage of hidden lies. Thus, God’s power and presence were able to flow through me in greater ways and drive out greater enemies.

And He’s not done yet. God is still showing me things I need to be honest about. Things I never knew I was covering up. Things such as pride, self-righteousness, and false humility. Issues I never knew I had. And in each case, as I am completely open and up front about the lie

I'm holding on to—no matter how awkward or deprave—God quickly moves in and fills up that newly exposed space.

So how do we all get to this level of totally flagrant openness? The first big step, at least for me, happened when I began to see God as my teammate, and 100 percent on my side [Psalm 56:8-11]. The irony of this revelation is that it happened the instant I finally gave up and moved over to His side.

Let me put it like this. For twenty-one years I was saved, truly saved, but I still identified with my flesh. I still saw God as holding me back from doing things I wanted to do (I being both me and my flesh). But when I got born again in 2004, I began to see things differently. I was completely sick of following my flesh. It was death, bondage, and I knew it. In the light of that recent revelation I could finally see God correctly. He was the way for me to get out, to receive a helping hand, to be rescued and set free.

That was the moment I moved from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. It was finally clear. God wasn't against me. He was my teammate, my friend. It was me and God against the devil and my flesh. Yes, my flesh was still densely intertwined with me, but I no longer saw it as me. Instead, I identified with my new spirit. I was on God's side, teamed up with Him to eradicate my destructive flesh.

Sure I still had those same fleshly (sometimes intense) desires, but now I hated them. I knew it was satan trying to trick me, to compel, lead, even force me somewhere I no longer wanted to go. But even in those moments, it was so much easier to be completely, scandalously open and honest with God when I saw myself as teamed up with Him and rebelling against satan.

For example, before I was born again, I would see a hot girl, lust would rise up in my heart, and I didn't even realize it was there. I would flirt but truly think I wasn't flirting. I saw lust as part of my personality, part of who I was. It was just me being me (I thought). If God rejected lust, then I thought God was rejecting me.

But after I switched sides I would see a hot girl, lust would rise up in my heart, and I could feel it. I would tattletale on that lust to God. I wouldn't give satan the satisfaction. I would just say, "God, I'm lusting. I just looked at that girl wrong." If I looked back and did it again I would say it again, "God, I just looked back at that girl—did You see it? What are You gonna do about it? It's Your job to kill that lust, to kill the enemy, to destroy it!" Then I would pray for that girl. "God, bring her a man who will love her like You love her, who will see her like You see her, make her into the woman You want her to be."

Do you see the switch? I finally saw God as my teammate, helping me out of the snare of lust, helping me destroy the power of the enemy over me. It wasn't God rejecting me at all, it was God separating me (the real me) from the death I was all twisted up in. Now that I really

understood, it was easy to use complete transparency to bring satan's lies out into God's destroying light, and flagrant honesty kept them there permanently.

A second revelation that has helped me see the importance of *remaining* totally honest and transparent came when I realized *that both God and satan* can visibly and plainly see the current condition of our inner man. There is nothing in us that is hidden from either side of the spirit world.

Ryan Wyatt expounds on this phenomenon in his book *School of the Supernatural*. He talks of a friend from Australia who had his spiritual senses opened and was able to see in the spirit 24/7 for four consecutive months.

The interesting thing was his account of the "aura" surrounding believers and unbelievers. Just like radio waves are released and fly through the air, Ryan's friend saw that thoughts and emotions actually release things from you. What his friend began to realize is that all people create and cultivate their own atmosphere. This atmosphere develops around them depending on what they are thinking or feeling. Negative energy, like worry, anger, and unforgiveness releases frequencies that attract and draw in the kingdom of darkness—creating hard, oppressive atmospheres. While positive energy, like honor, love, and thankfulness releases frequencies that attract and draw in the kingdom of light—creating inviting, peaceful atmospheres. Wyatt describes this "law of attraction" like blood in the water for sharks. In the spirit world, demons and angels can sense a person's inner state from miles away and come running.

Once I realized this was the case, once I realized God knew, that the angels knew, and even the devil and his demons knew exactly what I was believing, thinking, and feeling, I understood that covering anything up was really only fooling one person, *myself*. It was pointless, self-destructive, and even a little embarrassing to be the only person not in the loop.

Interesting Side Note: Ryan Watt's "law of attraction" explains why secular ideas like "positive thinking" actually work. What we allow to go on inside us, what we allow to dwell in us attracts the spirit world around us. Even modern science has proven that a certain thought emits a certain frequency. In 2009, Mattel released the game Mindflex, harnessing this phenomenon. In this game, competing players take turns moving a ball through an obstacle course using nothing more than brainwave activity. Cool stuff.

Battle Tactic 11:

Freedom Ministry (Power of Agreement)

Freedom ministry is like building a house. The work can easily be done by *one* man if he has enough time, but think of how fast a like-minded *team* of men can finish that same job. For example, it took Noah 120 years to build the ark, but it got built. My dad, a construction

superintendent, and his crew built a similarly sized building in just over three years. Nearly 117 years faster! Better yet, a massive team of *Extreme Home Makeover* volunteers can complete similar feats within days. That's crazy fast.

This unified effort is the advantage freedom ministry offers over the enemy. It's a game of numbers. One can put a thousand to flight, two ten thousand [Deuteronomy 32:30]. Freedom ministry is nothing more than coming alongside a brother or sister and helping him or her obtain a goal, a breakthrough more quickly. Simply put, it is the power of agreement (often in prayer) for breakthrough. It's teamwork. Jesus demonstrated this strategy flawlessly. He took twelve men, spent three years aligning them in perfect agreement, and then changed all of history forever.

If your church doesn't specifically have a "freedom ministry," don't worry. Every opportunity to pray in agreement with another believer is technically a freedom ministry session. That's why satan tries to scare us away from taking advantage of these opportunities when they arise. How often do we feel judged or ashamed to open up in group prayer? How often do we bring someone else's prayer needs to the altar rather than our own? That's because the enemy knows the potential power these opportunities hold, the power to catapult us past his current level of control and into newfound freedoms. We must begin to view these precious opportunities as divine setups to spiritually "join hands," kick the devil's butt, and walk instantly into a new level of freedom. Agreeing in prayer should always be exciting and fun because we never quite know what we're gonna get next!

If you can't find a small group or partner to agree with, that's not a problem either. We always have the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as teammates. We are never alone. Remember, as you keep pressing in to Jesus, walking in love, and becoming more like Him, you *will* break through. The breakthrough may not come as quickly, it may take Noah's 120 years, but it will *always* come!

Honestly, I've watched God free me from most everything I've walked through *outside* of some type of formal ministry session. Typically it's at some very average, mundane, completely normal time during everyday life. However, ministry sessions have often played significant roles in advancing my walk and have spring-boarded me into that new area of freedom more quickly. That is a big reason why freedom ministry should be a regular part of every believer's walk.

In my short eight years as a sold-out, born-again believer I've gone through our church's freedom ministry twice and I don't ever intend to stop. Healing rooms and praying with other believers as the Spirit leads is also a consistent part of my life. As God shows me deeper and deeper issues, more subtle and hidden bents, even generational strongholds, it's beneficial to pray through that stuff with other believers who can agree with me. I need other soldiers in the trenches fighting alongside me; a lone "Rambo" can only do so much.

God knew a victorious life would require a faithful partner's continued agreement [Ecclesiastes 4:9–10], so He brilliantly built freedom ministry into our everyday world. It's called marriage! Our spouse should be our number-one freedom ministry partner. The power of agreement within a God-centered marriage is amazing. You may be blown away, as I was, how quickly and how many prayers get answered when prayed within the agreement of a loving, open, honest, God-centered marriage.

Of course, some topics may be too “hot” for a spouse to handle. In those cases, it is better to have a group of loving, uninvolved individuals who can clearly speak truth into the situation. Individuals close enough to compassionately break off any demonic strongholds controlling the circumstances, while distant (or mature) enough to stay unaffected and unswayed as past hurts, situations, or traumas freely arise.

I've noticed the key to success within a ministry session has been to closely follow the direction of the Holy Spirit, to openly and honestly converse about everything the Holy Spirit is bringing up no matter how big, small, dark, or “off the wall” they seem. I've had some of my biggest supernatural experiences when simply following a subtle prompting to honestly deal with issues completely off my radar, things I considered total non-issues (like discreet, subtle pride) as opposed to some of the “cookie-cutter” sessions where we just went through a laundry list of “big” hurts and sins.

There have been several times where I've done a freedom ministry session and felt like nothing really happened and that it was kind of pointless. But there have also been several times where I have literally (physically) felt things lift off and have had major Holy Spirit encounters. I believe both types of ministry sessions are beneficial. The former leads us to deeper faith and trust that something did indeed happen in the spirit even if there was nothing physically or emotionally noticeable. The latter physically demonstrates the legitimacy and need of such sessions and confirms that a tangible (real) breakthrough was in fact reached.

Do be wise in who you confide in, follow the Holy Spirit's lead, but don't let satan scare you away from openly sharing anything and everything. Every believer has demonic strongholds, oppression, and if nothing else, generational bents. It's nothing to cover up or be ashamed of. It's simply a fact of life. Fear of revealing something hidden is just the enemy pressuring us. He doesn't want to be exposed or he will lose his foothold in our heart and influence over our life. If needed, we must pray continually in tongues [1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 14:4] and receive from Jesus even more inner strength (through soaking) [Ephesians 3:16–22] until we have enough inner strength built up that we no longer give in to (or even feel) the pressure of the enemy. Remember, Jesus was a man of no reputation, of complete humility [Philippians 2:7], and had no part of the enemy (no darkness, no strongholds, no compromise) in Him whatsoever [John 14:30]. We must be the same.

I'm gonna rabbit-trail a little here, but I think this is well worth mentioning. I don't care how much people don't think they have demonic *oppression* (demonic manipulation, demonic influence), until their life and heart looks just like Jesus'—until they are free to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit 24/7, until they are daily doing miraculous signs and wonders in love, until the day when they are just like Jesus—they are being oppressed in some area and on some level. The most dangerous believers are those whose lives don't look exactly like Jesus' yet they think they are *not* oppressed. They are far worse—they are deceived. Often, people who claim such things don't truly understand what an enemy stronghold is. They may think a stronghold only refers to something “big,” like a deep dark secret, an overt addiction, or some weird perversion. It's true, those are strongholds and evidence of demonic oppression, but that is only a tiny part of it.

Most often demonic oppression (a demonic stronghold) occurs in the form of a very subtle lie, hidden within a legitimate truth. This half-truth is then embraced and mistakenly held on to as complete truth. Then it is passed on for generations. Often it goes totally unnoticed, passed down in families, and propagated through cultures until it is eventually labeled as “common sense” and normal. Our present-day church is riddled with such lies. Lies like, “God is sovereign, so just go along with whatever happens to you because it must be God's will.” Lies like, “Your loved one died because God needs them more than you do.” Lies like, “God doesn't heal today,” or “God is judging you,” or “Grace is a free pass to do whatever you want.” These are all common lies that can sound good, churchy, even “wise,” but they are lies that will ultimately trick us into submitting to the devil's attacks and schemes.

Why? Because these lies all give the devil authority over us. They keep us from fighting back. They cause us to willingly submit to his evil plans, temptations and attacks. They keep us lethargic and weak. These lies cause misplaced offense and turn our anger back on God. They make God our enemy. They sway and pervert our heart, cloud our mind, and invoke wrong emotions. They make us feel abandoned, helpless, and stuck. They make us feel like we are taking “friendly fire” instead of enemy fire. These lies will compel us to willingly act out against God and even turn our backs on God.

Do not be deceived; these subtle half-truths are the most powerful strongholds the enemy has. The enemy easily sways, tranquilizes, and manipulates believers through such minute perversions. Ever thrown a temper tantrum with God? Ever felt like God was against you? Ever felt drawn by a sin that you can't stop, or don't want to stop? Is it easy for you to become addicted? Are you driven? Offended? Helpless? Hopeless? Jealous? Angry? Manipulative? Proud? Entitled? Self-pitied? Fearful? Anxious? Depressed? Abused? Unmotivated? Discontent? Disconnected? Shy? Then you, my friend, are oppressed. I'm not saying it's shameful to be any of these things. We should freely bring our junk to God and into the open with absolutely no

condemnation. Read Psalms, unashamed and flagrant honesty is extremely Biblical. In fact, it's the only way to total freedom. Still, these negative emotions, subtle traps, and self-focused tendencies are the very definition of demonic oppression operating in one's life. Unfortunately, a large part of our current, bench-warming church is sitting on the sidelines of culture at the top of this list, riddled with oppression, and completely unaware of it.

But we are coming out! God is calling his church back and raising up a spotless bride! He is waking His people, His worshipers, His warriors. They will see clearly. They will worship in truth and love. There will be no oppression, no twisted motives, no compromise. They will be a holy people, blameless in Jesus and walking out His righteousness daily. They will follow the Holy Spirit closely and in every way.

Freedom ministry is simply one more way to help us get there. To help us expose the enemies' strongholds and help us tear them down. Freedom ministry is our way to unify and tenaciously plow through the enemy's blockades into breakthrough.

I'm reminded of a story told by Graham Cooke, a brilliant warrior and man of God (with a great accent). Check out anything he has written or produced; you won't be disappointed. He tells of a "problem couple" in a church where he was headed to minister. They were always out of work, always asking for money, always sick, always in need. They were sucking the pastor and the four hundred-member congregation dry. Something needed to be done. On the plane ride to the church God gave Graham an idea. Once on the ground, Graham implemented the plan. The entire four hundred-member congregation showed up at the couples' house. They piled in, leaving a \$5 donation at the door; all like-minded, all in one accord. There were people everywhere: in the bathroom, filling the halls, lining up the stairs. It was standing room only. On the signal blow of Graham's whistle they all proceeded to speak in tongues for one hour straight.

Graham recounts that about twenty minutes in, the man of the household let out a piercing scream and the demon oppressing him left. After one hour everyone stopped and went home. The change was uncanny. Overnight, the family went from being "trouble couple" to first-rate members.

The husband quickly landed a job, as did his sons. The family went from frozen dinners around the TV to home-cooked meals at the dinner table. Not only that, but the atmosphere was so changed in the house that strangers began to show up daily, claiming they "saw a light" or "felt led to go there." It happened so frequently that the church had to place a team there, twenty-four hours a day for several months just to handle the daily requests. It was all they could do to simply keep up with what God was doing.

That is the power of agreement. That is freedom ministry.

Battle Tactic 12:

Trust (Keeping the Victory)

It had been an all-out war with fear for three and a half years but God had just given me a massive victory! In one moment of sheer Holy Spirit–led brilliance, I managed to stumble into the middle of God’s power and tap into it as needed. In that instant, I felt the unshakable peace of Jesus bubble up and flow from my spirit (which sits right about where our stomach sits) up my chest and into my heart. In that same instant, *all fear was completely driven out*. (Read the whole story “From Stage Fright to no Fear” in appendix A.)

That unshakable peace was with me for more than two weeks. Nothing could move it. Trigger words and trigger situations that normally would have sparked fear in my heart just didn’t. They had no effect at all. I totally expected them to, even “braced for impact” as usual. But they didn’t. It was weird.

For example, my amazing but intimidating boss would suddenly walk into my cubical unannounced. I would brace myself for the internal pang of fear I knew would be following close behind. But nothing happened. Just peace.

I remember the startling scene in the movie we watched at the theatre that weekend. It made my body jump and my adrenaline pump, but my heart remained surprisingly at ease.

Certain social situations where I was currently taking regular emotional “beat downs” no longer affected the state of calm in my heart. It truly was a “peace that passes understanding.” I for sure didn’t get it. But I was loving every second of it!

I thought that was it. The breakthrough was here! The seemingly forever-long battle was finally over. We had won!

But there was one last showdown to go and it was starting right—now.

I wake up and glance at the clock. Midnight. Then it hits! Fear. It’s all over me again. I can feel it in the room around me and I can feel it creeping back in. Ughh. It’s uncomfortable, cold, and clammy. I so didn’t want that back inside. But I know exactly what to do, the same thing I’ve been doing for the last seventeen fear-free days. I simply turn my attention to heaven and say, “Thank You, Jesus, that this is Your fight and not mine!” But this time, fear doesn’t leave. Every other time I’ve said that phrase, it’s left instantly, but not now. Okay, weird. I’ll try again: “Thank You, Jesus, that this is Your fight and not mine!”

Nothing.

I feel that sickening feeling in my heart again. I so don’t want to go back there. Freedom was too sweet and too hard fought. Why isn’t Jesus doing His thing this time?

I feel an old familiar attitude rising up. Something I used to do regularly. Something I was fortunately doing less and less of. But it was still part of me, and although it was ever-waning it would still occasionally rear its ugly head. My thoughts race, *I should just let God have it. Can't He see He is the one not coming through? I should throw a fit and give Him a piece of my mind.*

But for some reason I don't. Instead, I find myself giving in to God. (Again, I totally give all the credit to the Holy Spirit and to some recently memorized Scriptures because it so wasn't me). In the midst of that sickening cold, clammy fear, I relax. I hear myself say, "I trust you, Jesus. If you want fear back inside me (which I knew He didn't [Joshua 1:9; 2 Timothy 1:7; Psalm 91]), then I accept it. It is your call. I trust you." The crazy part was, I sincerely meant it.

And just like that, Jesus showed up. That same warm, liquid peace flooded my heart again and from that day to this, fear has not been back. Sure, fear has externally showed up again on occasion, but never back inside me. Jesus has permanently shut that door. That is the power of trust!

Trust is our provision for keeping the breakthrough, for *living* in the blessing, for longevity. It is the thing that will permanently keep the enemy out. When we truly trust Jesus, He will fight our battles for us with little to no effort needed on our part. But we must truly and completely trust.

If we don't fully trust, one of three things will eventually happen. One, we will begin to engage the enemy ourselves, in our own power. Two, we will shift into some other spirit besides the Holy Spirit, begin blaming God, turn on Him, and attack our very source of protection. Three, we will be moved to look for another way out, our own solution. And once again, we will be back under the enemy's control.

Trust is our permanent release out of this snare. But we must really learn to trust. I always thought I trusted, but I never did. I trusted for a while, and then when I thought I got "sold out," overlooked, rejected, abused, or let down—then I would cry out, throw a fit, and accuse God. I was still following (subjected to) my senses and feelings and not fully, completely trusting.

The first time I cognitively saw this trust principle work in my life was during a picnic lunch. I was at a healing conference, and as we paused for lunch we continued discussing the day's topics. It was all about Job, fear, faith, and healing. I really didn't understand it at the time, but in the midst of the debate the following truth simply welled up inside my heart and then came out of my mouth. It was the truth that *God is always good and the devil is always bad*—every single time. And in that moment, I chose to believe it.

I couldn't really back up my case, but I chose to trust the truth and not be detoured. I can remember how—in the weeks that followed (and even later that same day)—the Bible just started opening up in whole new ways, confirming the new revelation I had been given and had decided

to believe, purely by faith. My personal worldview shifted as my overall worldview became much clearer—simply because Jesus (and truth) had just taken up more “trust real estate” in my heart.

I also began to see the blessings and breakthroughs in my life move up to a new level. So much so that I count this as one of the core beliefs that every true follower must have secured in their arsenal before they are able to clearly see God’s heart, understand how His kingdom operates, and begin to function in “next-level breakthroughs” in their life. And all this happened to me by accident, as I simply chose to trust.

That picnic lunch was the first time I truly saw the direct connection between *trust* and *breakthrough*. However, I never understood what it meant to completely trust until years later. Not until after that midnight fear attack. That night was the tipping point. That night was the night I finally understood that trust is *permanent*. Trust is *always*—whether it feels right or not, whether it looks right or not. Trust is *always*.

This is why Jesus chose to delay His arrival that night. He was not letting me down. He was still coming to my rescue. But He was purposely taking His time. Why? He wanted to see what I would do. More importantly, He wanted *me* to see what I would do. And He wanted to teach me true trust.

His intentional delay gave me the opportunity to move even deeper into trusting Him. Thankfully the Holy Spirit led me there and I followed. That moment of hesitation was to see if I would take up the fight again myself, run back to blame and self-pity, find my own way out, or press deeper into Him. It was my moment of truth. Thank You, Jesus, that I chose to wait on You. Thank You, thank You, that You taught me how to truly trust!

One last revelation. Ephesians 3 (TLB) says Christ will be more and more at home in our hearts as we learn to trust Him. That means trust is not only the key to keeping territory but is the key to taking more territory! The thing in which we truly trust controls that area of our life, or that area of our heart. Whether it is a lie, ourselves, someone else, or the truth (Jesus), trust gives that entity ultimate control (a stronghold) in our heart. It’s that simple. Learning to trust Jesus in new areas will expand His territory, His strongholds in our hearts. It will expand His blessings, breakthroughs, and coverings over our life.

Warriors, this is our key, our strategy, our provision for longevity and permanence in every breakthrough. For each new area in which we learn to totally trust Jesus, that trust will keep our healing, joy, territory, authority, and victory. It’s a simple principle but not always the easiest to execute. We must relax and believe Jesus is taking care of us even when it looks like He isn’t and especially when it feels like He isn’t. Because the truth is—He really is [Deuteronomy 31:6], but it’s our job to *trust*.

Battle Tactic 13:

Holiness (Becoming Unstoppable)

Holiness. Yeah, we've been here a million times before. This is the place where we discuss all the stuff we're doing wrong and how bad we all suck, right? Then we introduce some slightly helpful but extremely debilitating acronym like WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?). We're not entirely sure what it means, but we are pretty sure we can never live up to it. So we make it into a T-shirt, a wristband, and a bumper sticker, but deep down we all know it's impossible to actually implement. Not that we didn't honestly try for a while. But as usual we fail. So instead, we settle for stepping up our church games, putting on a thicker mask, getting better at pretending, and acting like WWJD actually made us feel closer to that "big brother," eye-in-the-sky God. Yeah, we know all about *holiness*. It's lame.

Well, what if it isn't? What if it is actually our best-kept secret weapon of all time? What if it actually makes us superhuman and totally supernatural? What if it makes us untouchable, unstoppable, unshakable, and uncontainable by this world and the devil? What if holiness wasn't hard to achieve? What if it was actually easy and effortless to obtain? What if holiness was the proverbial "red pill," unplugging us from this earth-cursed system and making us like Neo—totally free—within the matrix? What then?

Yeah, I'd say that's a game changer. That's not just big, that's huge. And that's exactly why I've so looked forward to discussing this amazing subject, holiness. First, let's get past the obscure verbiage. The word holy simply means "set apart," or "special." In this light, we could easily call that pristine set of expensive china dishes in your grandmother's dining room hutch "holy" dishes. They are dishes "set apart" from all the other everyday, common dishes. They are dishes to be used only at certain times, only on special occasions. Holy dishes!

In a biblical context, being holy specifically means being set apart from the world. Not only set apart from the world's common way of thinking and living but as a completely new race of heavenly beings [2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:9]. We are a holy, royal priesthood set apart for special use by God. Therefore, *holiness* is simply a holy person doing things by God's holy (set apart and special) way. We call that way, the way of the Kingdom. Now here is where it gets a little confusing (but only a little). Please note: *eternal* holiness (actually being holy) is not the same as operating (daily functioning) in a *lifestyle* of holiness. Simply put, holiness comes in two parts.

The author of Hebrews says, He *has* made perfect forever, those He *is* making holy [Hebrews 10:14 (TLB)]. Likewise, Peter says we are to be holy *ourselves* and also in all *our behavior* [1 Peter 1:15 (NASB)]. Both authors directly point to this two-part distinction. Although our limited vocabulary uses only one word, holiness, to encompass both parts, we must learn to clearly

distinguish between the unchanging nature of who we are in Jesus (our *eternal* holiness), and the ever-changing nature of what we do daily through our words and actions (our *lifestyle* holiness).

Confused much? Let's go back to our "china dishes" example. Like salvation, once a china dish is created it will always be a china dish. It will never change. Whether it wants to be or not, it is now pure china. It is forever holy. This is eternal holiness. However, whether that china dish is utilized for all the "china dish events"—whether that china dish is used for holidays and special occasions (as it was created to be), whether that china dish operates and lives in its full potential 100 percent of the time—is lifestyle holiness.

Notice that the same permanently holy dish can still operate as an ordinary, common dish. There is nothing to stop it from being used for everyday meals if it so desires. It does not have to live the "set apart," "special occasion" lifestyle it was created for. In fact, it can even be used for sub-common purposes. For instance, it can be used as a makeshift bed pan. Yeah, gross. But you get the point. Although the dish is forever china, forever holy itself (no matter how it's used), there is nothing stopping this same holy dish from continuing to be used for everyday, unholy purposes.

This dichotomy—of an eternally holy dish operating in a lifestyle of common (unholy) behavior—is totally feasible. In fact it happens all the time, because the two states of holiness are completely separate.

Interestingly, this same dichotomy reveals why our works can totally burn up, but we will still escape into heaven "as by fire" [1 Corinthians 3:10–15 (KJV)]. This is because our *eternal* holiness determines *where* we spend eternity (salvation), while our *lifestyle* holiness determines *how* we spend eternity (reward). Each "holiness decision" is made separately, therefore each "holiness decision" is judged separately.

One last analogy.

It's like a family—yours or mine. The moment we were conceived we became an everlasting member of that family. I am a Carnevale. You may be a Smith or a Jones or a Goldstein. Whatever our respective family names we became a permanent member of that family at conception, and that membership never changes. We had nothing to do with it. It was done for us. It is totally by grace. All we have to do is receive it and accept it. This is *eternal* holiness. We are forever set apart as <your last name here>. For good or for bad, it's forever. It's by birth and by blood. It doesn't fluctuate. It doesn't change. It simply exists and remains by the grace of our parents.

But *how* we choose to live in our family, *how* we choose to view our family, *how* we choose to contribute to our family—this is completely up to us. This is *lifestyle* holiness. We can choose to live up to our name or live down to it. We can make our name great or laughable

simply by our daily actions. We can choose to lean on the power, wisdom, and resources of our family to grow and learn and become better. Or we can ignore that grace, that help, that backing and do it all on our own or be a lazy bum. It's entirely up to us. Our daily lifestyle holiness choices can make us into a president, a prisoner, or any level in between. We choose.

Understanding the two parts of holiness leads us right into our next question: Why?

Why on earth would we put all this extra time, energy, focus, and effort into living holy if *being* holy is the only thing we need to get into heaven? I mean, we are already holy through Christ and His grace keeps us in right-standing with God (in perfect communication with the Father) at all times. We are good to go! Why on earth do we need the hassle of living holy too?

Before we answer this totally legitimate question, let's rephrase it. Maybe then we can plainly expose the error hidden inside. Rephrased: If being a Carnevale (my last name) lets me live in the Carnevale household forever, why should I waste my time living as a Carnevale should—obeying my parents; getting potty trained; doing chores; learning to tie my shoes; going to school; cutting my food; or taking showers? I mean, I am already a Carnevale, so why do I need the hassle of *living* as a Carnevale?

Do you see the error in thinking? It's because living as a Carnevale brings Carnevale principles and standards into the world around me. Living as a Carnevale releases rewards for me. It makes my way prosperous and successful. It gives me a good name and good results every time. It gives me a bright future. It brings all the blessings, favor, honor, protection, and resources of my parents to me. It makes me a contributing member of my family and to everyone around me!

The same is true of our original question, "Why on earth do we need the hassle of living holy?" Because living holy brings heaven down to earth [Deuteronomy 11:18–21]! It releases rewards to us in this life [Mark 10:29–31]! It makes our way prosperous and successful [Joshua 1:8]. It gives us perfect, lasting, unshakable results every time [Matthew 7:24–27]. Like Moses obediently raising his staff, it makes a way where there is no way. Like Daniel in the palace, it makes us ten times better than our peers. Like Daniel in the pit, it shuts the lion's mouth. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, it brings us safely through the fire. It gives us salvation in every situation, *today*, in this life [Deuteronomy 28]. And it makes us a contributing member (an asset, a friend) in the family of God [John 15]!

This is why we tithe. It's not to get into heaven. No, Jesus is our ransom. We tithe so our heavenly Papa can redeem our money from this earth-cursed system, and we can start enjoying a life of abundance and overflow, under His protection here—just like we will in heaven. We are bringing heaven's economy down into our own "little" economy here on earth.

This is why we take communion. It's not to help tip those eternal scales of justice in our favor. No, Jesus alone is our measure. We take communion so we can begin to enjoy and walk in the perfect health that Jesus died to give us—the same health that we will forever enjoy in heaven—right now, on earth.

This is why we love our enemies. It's not to be a witness in our defense when we stand before the Father on Judgment Day. No, Jesus is our advocate. We love our enemies because it releases the same power, truth, life, light, and tangible presence of our Papa God (that we will eventually enjoy in heaven) into our present earthly circumstances, right here and now.

This is one of the most fantastic secrets to life! Lifestyle plus eternal holiness (*total* holiness) puts heaven inside and in charge of everything we release—every work, every word, every action, and every circumstance. It allows our Father's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven! It grows us up. It trains and teaches us. It helps us give back. It transforms us from servants into friends. But best of all, it completely removes the enemy from the equation [Genesis 4].

Do you see it, family? Once a holy people begin living completely holy too, not only do they grow to be contributing members of the family, but the enemy can't do a thing to stop them! How can he? He has no part in them, no part in how they are living, and no part in what they are releasing. Therefore, he has no control over any of it.

Genesis 4 (NLT) says it best: "The Lord asked Cain, 'Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.'"

The holiness secret is right there in verse 7. If sin (satan) *can* control us when we refuse to do what is right, when we do things our way, then sin (satan) can *not* control us when we don't refuse to do what is right, when we do things God's way. Holiness is our ticket to freedom. It makes us completely untouchable and unstoppable.

It's a lot like having an American (holy) embassy on foreign (unholy) soil. Technically the embassy is in another country, but as long as that embassy continues to operate under American law it can not be controlled or swayed by the local government, economy, or culture. Instead, it will continue to enjoy the protection and benefits that come with being a part of the United States and the free world.

But what if that same embassy decides it no longer wants to follow American law? What if it decides that the current foreign law is "more convenient"? Besides, foreign law only requires it to pay 10 percent taxes, instead of America's 30 percent. What if it stops complying with American law and starts complying with foreign law? Well, just as Genesis 4 says, the ruler of the foreign country (satan) will begin to control the embassy. Why? Because the embassy has just

willingly submitted and willingly opened the door to the foreign authority by refusing to obey American laws (sin). So when a sudden uprising occurs in the land and the local government unexpectedly requires a 50 percent property and income tax on all the inhabitants to pay for the complete shutdown of the rebellion, what is America going to do for its embassy?

That's right—nothing! Even though the embassy is still filled with and run by Americans, America will look and see that the embassy freely quit paying its American taxes. America will see that it has willingly moved out from under American jurisdiction. Legally, America's hands are tied. Therefore, the embassy *must* comply with local law. Even if America wants to help, it can't because it would be illegal to do so. Sin has won, satan gains control, and rightfully so.

But what if those embassy "saints" had never stopped paying taxes? What if they had continued to operate in perfect allegiance with their American "heavenly" government? Then no matter what laws the local government makes or what it tries to do to overthrow them, the local government will fail. Why? Because the embassy "saints" will always legally have the full backing and support of a greater American government, a more powerful resource. And they will freely call on it (it's authority, it's military, it's resources) as they have the need. This is total holiness.

Total holiness is a believer who is eternally holy *and* lives a holy lifestyle. It is a believer who is daily operating his or her heavenly embassy on earth, under heaven's rules and laws. That way, when earth tries to come against them, to pass new laws and make the person pay, the embassy can legally call for heaven's backup. It can stand firm and win every time.

Furthermore, when we truly begin to walk consistently in total holiness, we actually become like Jesus. We become totally free of the enemy in spirit, soul, and body. We begin operating completely in heaven's economy, totally superhuman and untouchable! This is our secret weapon.

Family, *total* holiness takes us past the limits of the law. Into places where bread multiplies [Mark 6:35–44], water is walkable [Matthew 14:25–33], teleporting is possible [Luke 4:14], invisibility a reality [Luke 4:29–30], and moving mountains is commonplace [Mark 11:23]—a place where anything is possible [Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 3:20].

Eternal Holiness + Lifestyle Holiness = Total Holiness = *Totally Unstoppable*.

So what *is* stopping us? Besides not having a clear picture of the two parts of holiness and just simply not understanding its amazing, unstoppable benefits, one major problem has been that we haven't clearly understood the distinction between grace and holiness. We've let the enemy blur those lines as well. We have let satan seduce our sin-nature and have allowed grace to become our "catch all," our "excuse" for selfish living and/or complacency. In other words, grace has erroneously become (replaced) our holiness.

But they are not interchangeable. No. They are complementary. If grace is the start, then holiness is the end goal. If grace is the door, then holiness is the house. If grace is the crying, helpless baby, then holiness is the full-grown, wise king.

Grace is our mom and dad giving us a house, food, and clothes (for eighteen-plus years) until we are holy enough to stand, operate, and pay for everything ourselves. Grace is what allows an imperfect “us” to permanently remain a china dish even when we are still acting like a common Tupperware container. Grace is what allows us to grow into complete perfection, into *total* holiness—even when (and while) we aren’t fully there yet.

So in practical terms, what does grace do? Grace gives us permanent access into heaven, until holiness gives us permanent heaven here on earth. Grace is our open connection with heaven (Papa God) through Jesus, not affected by works lest any man should boast [Ephesians 2:9]), while holiness is our physical release of the Father’s will on earth (as it is in heaven) through us (totally *dependant* on our “living” works) [James 1:22–25; 2:14–26]!

Like bumpers on the “bowling lane of holiness,” grace is what allows God to guide us, to keep us out of the gutter, get us back on track, and set us up for a potential strike (perfect results) every time. Those bumpers—our grace connection to God—never go away, but as we grow and mature we need them less and less, until eventually we can get a strike (perfect results) every time on our own.

But grace goes one step further than simply functioning as a guide. It also provides a way (a path) for power and energy to flow—power and energy that gets and keeps the ball moving. This is most often where we fail. We are good at getting our heavenly Father’s guiding (bumper) advice, but we continue to throw the ball down the lane in our own energy and effort, draining and exhausting ourselves. Grace not only provides the continual guidance and direction, but it keeps the “light switch on” (so to speak), continually providing the energy (the power, the wisdom, the desire) to effortlessly throw the ball again and again and again.

I guess we could say grace comes in two parts as well. First, it is a permanent, open, unchanging connection with our heavenly Father through Jesus. It is the ability to boldly approach and openly talk about everything and anything with Him. Second, it is a permanent, open, unchanging connection (through Jesus) to receive anything we need from heaven. The power, resources, revelation, wisdom, joy, peace, understanding, healing, desire, etc., to do anything we cannot do, or anything we can do even better. Simply put, it is the ability to have the fullness of Jesus placed on us [John 1:16]—His connection, His relationship, His abilities.

But grace does *not* replace holiness. Rather, grace works alongside it, surrounding it, directing it, protecting it, motivating it, energizing it. Grace is simply the pathway by which perfect and total holiness can come. Grace is God’s way of keeping us in eternal holiness (in perfect

connection with heaven) while we are stepping in and out of (growing in) lifestyle holiness. Grace is actually what leads us and empowers us to move permanently into total holiness in spirit, soul, and body.

Remember when we were children? How important was grace? It was huge! We pooped our pants. We peed our beds. We repeated what our parents said about our neighbors to our neighbors. We were at the start of our life. We were clueless. We were helpless. We desperately needed grace—tons of it.

But now, not so much. When was the last time you pooped your pants or peed your bed? All that “mess on yourself” grace is still available, but there is no need for it. No sir, holiness (maturity) has been reached. Holiness is a way better place to live. It’s much less stinky, much less messy, and frankly, a lot more convenient for everybody involved. The problem is that when it comes to God and living in His kingdom, we (as a collective body) have all stopped at grace.

Spiritually, we are like the clueless, immature child of a medieval king (the king of Scotland, of course!) We are heirs to the throne, but for whatever reason we are content with living outside the palace, down in the stables, “earning our keep” as a stall cleaner. By grace we were born the king’s child, forever to remain the king’s child. By grace our rightful place is in the palace, enjoying all it has to offer. By grace we have all the money, education, and power of the palace at our disposal. It is available and waiting for us to “wake up” and use it. Yet we are content to use that same life-changing grace, full of promise and potential, as our excuse (even our license) to settle for living in the stables, way below our means, way below our authority, way below our calling, and way below our potential. Grace has been cheapened.

It’s almost as if we have come to the point of being content to poop our beds. We don’t care if we or anyone around us has to lay in our “poopy” mess with us. We don’t want to change. We don’t want to mature. So instead we point to the amazing goodness of God and His matchless grace as our excuse to continue to indefinitely poop the bed (not cool ... so not cool).

Family, we were never intended to remain stuck where we are. God doesn’t want us to squander such an exceptional grace gift and settle for the stables or a poop-filled bed. No, He longs for us to use that priceless gift to rise up, to clean up, to grow up, and to take the palace by storm! We were designed to remain right where grace leads us—in the palace, in holiness, in perfection, in leadership and in total success every time.

Jesus isn’t coming back for a kingdom of complacent believers living on heavenly welfare and food stamps. He doesn’t want an army of ignorant, insecure, poopy-pants babies. That is wilderness living. No. Jesus is coming back for a spotless bride—a family of holy, victorious, overcoming champions! A race of fearless warriors who invade the Promised Land boldly, who

take houses they didn't build, who seize wells they didn't dig, and who obtain businesses they didn't start! A family created, empowered, and raised up by *grace*!

You may not realize it, but we operate in this process of “grace + holiness” all the time. For instance, what do you want to be when you grow up? No, really. Is it a football player, a track star, an astronaut, or maybe a ninja? Okay, those occupations are a bit of a stretch for most of us “regular” folk. How about this? Do you want to be a teacher, a doctor, a plumber, a CEO, or a ninja? ☺ Like eternal holiness, we first decide what occupation we will completely set ourselves apart for. Then we make the continual, daily (lifestyle holiness) choices and adjustments—college, internships, instruction, study, practice—to routinely discipline our bodies, minds, and emotions until our ultimate goal—of operating fully in our desired occupation—is reached. This is total holiness.

More simply put, eternal holiness is the initial, one-time decision determining our future from that moment forward. Lifestyle holiness is daily doing what it takes to shape ourselves into that desired “hall-of-fame” athlete, “cutting-edge” teacher or “stealth killing machine.” (Sorry, ninjas are just so practical.) And *grace* is what we must receive from ourselves and everyone around us as we learn, as we fail, as we practice, and as we grow—until we fully reach that final, matured destination.

Okay, moving on.

There is one more thing that we as a body don't completely understand. That is the relationship between love and holiness. Simply put, love is the power that makes lifestyle holiness effortless and easy to live out [Song of Solomon 8; 1 John 4; 1 Corinthians 13; Psalm 103], while grace is our open connection to freely tap into that love whenever we need it. Love (God's love, not ours) actually *is* the power. Without love, holiness is just a waste of time. In fact, without love, holiness will feel like a chore. It will be boring, frustrating, and annoying. It will be lifeless and will actually work against us, binding us instead of freeing us.

Our enemy has largely confused us on this issue as well. While it is true that all love (God's love) is holiness, it is far from the truth that all holiness is God's love. This is why the Pharisees and Sadducees, who operated in what appeared to be so much lifestyle holiness, were still powerless, dead, and dry. Yes, they operated in outward holiness, but that holiness did not contain any life from within because it did not flow out of God's love.

Paul says we can operate in all the faith and holiness of heaven and earth, but without God's love we are nothing [1 Corinthians 13]. He continues to say that we can even go so far as to be burned at the stake, to give our lives for our fellow man (the greatest act of lifestyle holiness possible), yet if we do this without God's love it is worthless. Interestingly, we actually have a

word for this type of holiness. Holiness without God's love, holiness done in our own love is called *religion*. Religion outwardly looks like God's love but is empty and dead (self-exalting) inside.

Religious acts are like Trojan Horses. They look right, they look loving, they even look "godly" outside, but they are motivated by something (anything) other than God's love inside. These things are death. It's only a matter of time until the enemy hidden within pops out of the "gift" and starts taking your city.

This is why satan loves religion. This is why he loves legalism and unyielding laws. It's because we can do all of those things without God's love. We can do things that appear good, right, and selfless from the outside but with plenty of room for satan to hide, direct, and manipulate them from the inside. Religion is the way satan can continue to pull the strings and maintain control over God's people even if many of them are no longer on their way to hell. No wonder he fights so hard to maintain it.

But love! God's love changes everything! When our holiness is filled with His love, then our holiness is filled with life. It is filled with light. In fact, it is filled with God Himself! No wonder the enemy wants to keep God's love out of it! But God's love is actually the power that makes holiness possible. Holiness is just God's love put into action.

Holiness without God's love is like moving a car without gas. It is extremely slow, difficult and demanding. But moving a car with gas (with God's love) is practically effortless. If we feel like God's ways are hard and demanding, this is a really good sign that we don't have any gas. We are either out of God's love or running off our own love. This means it's time to get in His presence and refill until His ways are easy again [Matthew 11:30].

God's love perfectly flowing through a man was best demonstrated by Jesus. He walked in a power (love) that made it effortless for Him to not only keep the law perfectly but to go far above and beyond it. A power that filled everything He did—every word, action, and deed—giving life to everything He touched.

So what about us? How do we get and stay full of God's love so we can walk perfectly in unstoppable holiness? It's actually much easier than we may think. The secret to filling up on God's love, to walking in continued *lifestyle* holiness comes from one thing: from sitting at Jesus' feet [Luke 10:42] and simply washing in the Word [1 Corinthians 6:11]!

That's it! All we have to do is hang out with Jesus as much as possible. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." [Matthew 6:33]. That's our one thing! Easy.

I know, I know, but in practical terms, what does that mean? It means we can stop trying to be good. We can stop forcing or "willing" ourselves to do the right thing. We can stop pretending to like the things we hate. We can stop pretending to hate the things we like. We no

longer have to worry about looking right, “playing the part,” or making an effort to appear to be living holy. We no longer have to use our will to override our wild emotions, to “try” to change. It means behavior modification is no longer necessary! Instead, we simply make more of an effort to daily rest at Jesus’ feet. To let His Word wash over and through us. To listen and listen and listen and listen [Romans 10:17]! This means we make an effort to fit routine soaking into our day. We fit routine Scripture memorization into our day. We fit more sermons into our day. We meditate. We listen. We make an effort to obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit a little more each day.

Washing in the Word is simply an effort to learn a little more (just one more thing) about God today than we knew about Him yesterday. This is “sitting at His feet.” It isn’t doing, giving, or speaking. It’s absorbing, taking, and listening. And as He changes first our mind and then our heart, the behavior stuff will just effortlessly, naturally fall into place too.

It doesn’t have to be a lot. I started out with just sermons. I found one or two preachers who really made the Holy Spirit come alive in me, captivated and energized me (made me tear up) as I listened to them. I would listen to a message a day. Then (as the Spirit led) I slowly added Christian music to my car rides. Then I learned one Scripture (Joshua 1:9), which I quoted for two or so years before I ever felt led to begin memorizing more. I never even started soaking until a few years down the road.

It’s okay to start slow, even preferred, but start. And do it routinely (if not daily). Because of slow, routine steps I took in the past, I can now easily learn dozens and dozens of new Scriptures a year. (Memorization fits seamlessly into my daily workout time.) Because of slow routine steps taken in the past, I am able to effortlessly spend a much-needed hour or two a day soaking. Because of slow routine steps, I am able (and even have a deep desire) to speak in tongues every waking chance I get. I wash and wash and wash.

There was a time when I was fortunate to be able to listen to almost eight hours of sermons or teachings a day. I was working as a web/graphic designer and could easily listen as I designed or did other “mindless” daily tasks. With so much daily washing in the word, my love and my lifestyle holiness just naturally grew and grew. It took no effort. The only “effort” it took was making the time or finding a way to work more sermons (that I enjoyed listening to) into my daily routine. But all the changes that happened in me because of finding the time just happened. I didn’t have to try. I didn’t have to pretend. I didn’t have to “will” anything. It was effortless. That’s why I can truly say it was all Jesus. I simply made myself available to “sit at His feet” as much as possible.

Again, take it slow. If it’s not fun, don’t do it. Soak for three to five minutes a day at first, until you *want* to soak more. Memorize one small verse a month, or a year, or until you see results and you *want* to memorize more. Listen to one extra sermon a week (by a preacher who

really “speaks” to you) until you *want* to listen to more. Notice the key is that you *want* to. It should be fun, it should be a relationship.

If living holy ever feels like an effort, like a duty or a chore, then we are not living out of the right motivation. This should be a huge red flag to us, screaming, “Religion-alert, religion-alert, our love is gone!” This doesn’t mean we now buckle down and white-knuckle it. No, it means we look for the first available second to break away, get by ourselves, and relax with God (absorbing His Holy Spirit) until we are charged back up and full of God’s love again.

Our only “job” is to work with Jesus to find the time(s) in our day that we can hang. That’s where the Holy Spirit’s guidance is key. Everyone has extra “spare” time in the day—maybe it’s in the shower, on the toilet, during the morning “snooze,” in the car running errands, or sitting in rush-hour traffic. Maybe it’s while we work out, do chores, do the mundane (mindless) tasks in our office or during our lunch break, or while we are helping the kids get dressed—we all have the time, but sometimes we just need help to clearly see it and know exactly how to best take advantage of it. The Holy Spirit is brilliant at directing us in this if we are interested. Then all we have to do is sit back, absorb, and watch the results manifest by themselves!

Mary Magdalene was a great example of this. Mary chose to sit at Jesus’ feet, absorbing as much as she could. Her sister, Martha, was a different story. Martha chose to do “good works” instead. We find her busily preparing a dinner for Jesus and the disciples in her own effort. It’s ironic that Martha is in the very presence of the man who can effortlessly feed five thousand yet she is so self-focused that she totally overlooks that fact. Instead, she becomes angry, frustrated, and fixated on Mary’s lack of helping her feed thirteen [Luke 10:38-42].

But what’s really interesting is what happens shortly after this incident. In John 12 we see Mary show up and prophetically anoint Jesus’ feet with a bottle of extremely expensive perfume. She does this with precision-perfect timing. She does this the very night before Jesus entered Jerusalem like a king, the very week leading up to His death [John 12:1-8]. We also see her show up at His empty tomb, perfectly positioned to be the first person to see Him resurrected [John 20:1-18]. Was Mary really that smart? Not really. But she had sat at His feet. She was forever changed. God’s love was now her guide. Her heartbeat was in tune with His. So naturally she just showed up at all the right places at all the right times, doing all the right things. She was living holy, effortlessly. She was living holy through the power of God’s love, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that her perfume sacrifice even triggered Judas to betray Jesus? That will make your head spin! Yeah, the heart of God stirred Mary’s heart to do something so extravagantly loving that it deeply offended Judas, causing Jesus to rebuke Judas (among others) so sternly that Judas decided to sell Jesus out [John 12; Mark 14]. Mary’s inadvertent, loving obedience ignited the very set of events that would ultimately lead to Calvary and to the salvation

of the world. Thanks, Mary! That's the power of living holy. And yet through all this, where is the "I need help because I'm extremely busy serving Jesus" Martha? Exactly.

This principle is true for everyone. Soaking, washing, absorbing, ingesting, meditating, focusing, memorizing, learning, listening—a.k.a.: sitting at Jesus' feet. This is how we effortlessly become holy in our everyday decisions and everyday living. This is how we rest in His presence and let God's love fill and refill us.

Side Note 1: Redeemed from the Curse of the Law

This is a revelation that directly ties into our "two parts of holiness" discussed above. It has to do with Galatians 3:13, where Paul says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law."

I've always been confused by this statement in comparison to my perceived physical reality. The two never really seem to line up. Every time I compare them, this question comes to mind: If Christ has truly redeemed me from the curse, then why do I have to keep walking out of each curse individually (like porn addiction, depression, allergies, fear, anxiety, etc.)? If Galatians 3:13 is true, shouldn't all my curses be gone instantly the moment I accept Christ?

The key to fully understanding how Galatians 3:13 seamlessly ties into our daily "still walking out from under a curse" reality lies in our understanding of the two parts of holiness.

But first, let's unpack Galatians 3:13 a little bit. If Jesus came to redeem us from the "curse of the law," then what *is* the curse of the law? Simply put, it is death. James 2:10 tells us that if we keep the entire law but mess up just once, we are guilty of breaking the entire thing. This breaking of the law is called "sin," and according to Romans 6:23, the wages of sin is death.

And what is death? Simply put, death is separation. This sucks, because it means that if we only sin once, we get separated from God [Isaiah 59:2], and once we get separated from God, we eventually die physically as well as spiritually [Genesis 2:17]. Like a plant being uprooted or flowers being picked and put in a vase, the instant we are separated from God our fate has been sealed. Although we may not be totally dead yet, although we may be able to outwardly do things to prolong our fading existence, the separation has already been made, and it is really only a matter of time until we die completely.

Yeah, that sucks.

But what sucks even more is that we are born into our earthly father's sin, into our earthly father's separation [Lamentations 5:7; Romans 5]. In other words, we are born directly into that flower-filled vase. Pre-picked, if you will. This means any person born of Adam is born into Adam's separation. Therefore, you and I are already doomed to eternal death (eternal separation) from our life source, from everything good in the universe, from our God simply because we were born

as a descendant of Adam. This separation (this “curse of the law”) is what Galatians 3:13 is referring to.

However, there is good news! Jesus came to redeem us from this eternal separation! As soon as we accept Jesus as our Savior and redeemer, as soon as we ask and trust Him (and only Him) to save us, we are instantly free of this separation from God. We are instantly reconnected and grafted back on to the vine [John 15:1-11; Romans 11:17].

Proof? The proof is that we can begin to hear God right away. We can begin to start picking up on Him in our spirit. We can sense Him, feel Him, and communicate back and forth with Him. And this is permanent! No matter what sin(s) we commit after we accept Jesus, no matter what laws we break, we will never experience separation from God again (unless we are the ones who back off).

This is the promise of Galatians 3:13. It is the promise of our eternal, permanent reconnection with God through Jesus. This is just like *eternal* holiness. Galatians 3:13 is telling us that Jesus has made us eternally free from the curse of the law (eternally holy). Therefore, we can enjoy a permanent and instant reconnection with God. So now the law’s curse of death (of separation) is gone!

Another way to say it is this. Jesus came and replanted us back into the soil of our God. Therefore, Jesus has established our permanent, unchanging connection to our life source. He has established our eternal holiness, our eternal solution once and for all!

So how does this understanding solve my initial dilemma and confusion over this verse? Simple, we must remember that there are two parts to holiness. Even though we are now eternally holy and replanted in Christ (never again to experience separation from God), this is different from lifestyle holiness where our daily decisions can still include or exclude God (still draw from God) as we decide, and as we see fit. In other words, our daily victory and daily redemption from the “curse of the law” all depends on where (or to whom) we go to get our daily mental, emotional and spiritual nourishment.

This is why we continue to walk out from under the curses that are already active or exist in our lives and why we continue to walk out from under the curses that we are still releasing into our lives. Even though our roots are now planted back in the ground (back into God through Jesus), we must begin to draw from the sustenance of that ground, day by day, as we have the need. We still have to bring heaven to our soul and then to earth, little by little, encased within every word, every action and every thought we entertain and/or release. No longer should we continue to look for life to feed our soul from the outside—not from the world, not from our family, or from the flesh. Instead, we must learn to tap into God’s healing, love, and life-giving power internally, through our Jesus-reconnected spirit. We have been replanted and grafted back into

the vine, so now we must learn how to draw from that vine. We must get our life from our roots, our spirit, our new Holy Spirit.

Let's say it another way. Just because our roots are put back into the soil doesn't mean we have to eat or draw life from that soil. The two are separate. It's like the old adage: we can lead a horse to water, but we can't make him drink. The same is true of us and our reconnection with God. Jesus can lead us to water, but we must drink of our heavenly Father for ourselves. We can be reconnected, replanted, grafted back into the vine yet never learn how to draw from that connection or eat from that new source.

It's like being in prison while having a good, open relationship with our highly reputable, honorable judge, Dad. Certainly, our open relationship remains no matter what we do. Yet if we continue to fight, steal, lie, and rebel, then even with great open communication to our highly respected, all-powerful judicial Daddy—we are not gonna get out of prison. Although our communication goes unbroken, staying open and available 24/7 through Jesus, our Daddy's honest hands are tied. Despite our relationship, we are still stuck in prison because our continued wrong actions and rebellious self-centered heart dictate (even demand) we remain there.

It's only when we start taking our Dad's advice, following His ways, and tapping into His resources and inner strength that our heart, actions, and, consequently, situation can begin to change. Eventually, we will not only walk out of prison free men and women, but we can once again become a contributing member of society—and then go far, far, far beyond.

This is why I could be instantly saved during a thunderstorm at the age of five; I could instantly have a permanent, open connection with my Papa God and yet not walk out of the bondage and the massive static in that connection caused by fear until August 2009. In fact, for twenty-two of the twenty-seven years in between, my selfishness, genuine ignorance, and even unknowing disobedience actually caused that static in my communication with God to grow worse and worse. Yes, my communication with God and my future with God in heaven was permanently established the entire time (I had been permanently grafted back on to the vine [John 15:1-11; Romans 11:17]). But I had to learn how to use that reconnection to actually tap into my new life source in my everyday earthly life. And I had to learn how to use that connection to begin to daily fill my thoughts, actions, and soul with God instead of the fear I was used to.

Then and only then did I begin to walk out of that stronghold of fear in my life. Then and only then did my connection with Papa God become so much clearer. It was a process of continually bringing heaven down and releasing it into my earthly soul, into my earthly world.

Spiritually I was already redeemed from the curse of the law. The reconnection was already in place. Jesus had established the connection in 1982 (when I was five) and was waiting for me to start drawing life from Him. He had been waiting for some twenty-two years! But it

wasn't until August 2004 that I finally started tapping into and actively using that connection to draw that same spiritual reality tangibly into my everyday, physical world. Even then it took five more years (August 2009) before my spiritual reality finally fully crossed over and became my physical reality. However, throughout that entire time Jesus had already redeemed me from the curse of the law. This is how the promise of Galatians 3:13 and the continued curses we see functioning in our everyday life line up seamlessly.

Side Note 2: Why Two Parts?

If you're like me, you're probably asking this question. Why are there two parts to holiness? I mean, if there weren't two parts it would be so much easier to understand and would have been completely understood years ago. What is so significant about two?

Our answer lies in Colossians 2:6 (TLB) where Paul writes, "And now, just as you trusted Christ to save you, trust Him too, for each day's problems; live in vital union [relationship] with Him."

Do you see it? God wants a partnership, a relationship, a *vital union*. He doesn't want a one-time commitment or a one-night stand. He wants intimate, day-to-day, moment-by-moment continued intimacy and continued interaction. Therefore, He created holiness in two parts. Not only to cover all the bases (our eternity/future, and our "now"/present moment), but to ensure that a true partnership, a true teammate effort, a true relationship occurs.

Brilliant! God created a part for each of us to play. A vital and active role for each party involved. Our part is to trust, not only for our eternal salvation, but for our daily (moment-by-moment) salvation. And God's part is to save, not only eternally, but every day and in every situation.

All this requires interaction. It requires close communication. It requires intimacy. It requires relationship. It requires two parts. It requires two.

Battle Tactic 14: Thanksgiving and Praise

I'm not gonna lie. Thanksgiving and praise is probably one of the things I struggle with the most. Of course it's not a problem when everything is going well; that's when I'm awesome at it. ☺ It's more when everything isn't going well, or when everything isn't going as what I perceive as "well" that I tend to struggle with this tactic.

But thanksgiving and praise is the very fabric, the very atmosphere of heaven. It is the very code that the throne room, the Holy of Holies, abides by. It's the very language Papa God

speaks. It is what prepares us to meet the king [Esther 2:12], what brings us into His throne room [Psalm 100:4] and what releases that throne room presence into the earth's atmosphere around us [Psalm 22:3]. It is our new identity, our new attitude, our new man, our new environment (which is probably why my rebellious, self-pitying human nature puts up such a struggle against it).

Esther 2 paints a great picture of how thanksgiving and praise prepare us to meet the king and to enter into His presence. In verse 12 we see Esther undertaking twelve months of preparation. First we find her soaking for six months in “oil of Myrrh” and then six months in “perfumes and preparations.” Oil represents the Holy Spirit (a.k.a. love) and Myrrh represents life. We know our prayers are like perfume and incense [Psalm 141:2] and that perfume and incense bring joy (delight) to the heart [Proverbs 27:9].

With this understanding, we can better see that Esther soaked for six months in the “love of life” and for the next six months in “joy.” Or more simply put, she soaked in thanksgiving and praise! Note that it was for a total of twelve months (twelve is the number of completion and governmental rule) until she was ready to go into the king's presence.

How does this translate for us today? It gives us a pretty clear roadmap to follow—if we too—want to be ready to go into the presence of our king. Like Esther, we must first begin to soak regularly in the love of life (thanksgiving). Then we must soak in His joy (praise).

In other words, we must soak until our personal time of “completion” (our “twelve months”) has come. We must let thanksgiving and praise seep into our souls, our words, our thoughts, and our actions until we become it and it becomes us. That's when we will be ready to go into the presence of our king and to have the king's glory literally show up (literally manifest) in our everyday lives, in our living rooms!

Psalm 100:4 backs this statement up. It tells us that we must enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. This too paints a clear roadmap. Not just a roadmap for anytime we “pick up the phone” and dial into a prayer conversation with our Daddy God, but a roadmap for any time we want to go visit our Daddy personally!

First, it shows us that our connection, our access point, *is* thanksgiving. Thanksgiving *is* the entryway into His house. It is His front door! Second, it reveals that the way back into His house, into His personal throne room (into His very presence) is through praise. Praise brings intimacy. It brings us close to our Papa. Can you clearly see it? Thanksgiving moves us into His house and praise moves us into His lap.

But perhaps the coolest thing thanksgiving and praise does is found in Psalm 22:3. This passage says God literally enthrones, literally inhabits the praises of His people (Israel). This is huge. Unlike the previous two passages this is not just a roadmap to prepare us for His presence or to bring us up and into His heavenly presence. No, this is far better! It is a roadmap to bring

Him and His presence down to us! Did I mention this is huge? Psalm 22 tells us that when we praise and give thanks to God out loud, the actual breath that comes out of our mouth is literally laden with love. It is laden with God and heaven. In other words, God literally inhabits (God *is*) the breath released out of our mouths by our praises, and our praises actually build a throne for Him to sit on and rule from.

This is incredible! This means that when we praise, we are literally releasing the atmosphere of heaven into our surroundings, our churches, our offices, and our homes. Just like the word containers we've previously talked about, when we praise God, Psalm 22 assures us we can be certain our words are fully inhabited by Him!

This means that if we want the atmosphere of heaven manifested around us, if we want to be in the very presence of Papa Himself, we can simply bring the presence of God to us! All we have to do is release it from our mouths. It's that easy.

It's just like a pot of water boiling on the stove. If that pot boils long enough the steam continually being released will eventually fill our home. It will make it foggy, saturated and humid. Eventually, that one pot will change the entire atmosphere of our house.

In the same way, when the fire (the love) of the Holy Spirit begins to stir up and boil the Water of The Word hidden inside of us, we begin to boil and release the steam of praise. We begin to release a literal breath-vapor, inhabited by God Himself. If we boil, if we praise long enough, we can release enough of the presence of God into our atmosphere to totally change it.

This is why we tend to feel the presence of God more strongly when worshipping in a group of people or more quickly when praising in our church congregation. It's not that God is any more present there than at home, rather it's because there are a bunch of people all worshipping at once. The presence of God is being released more quickly and filling up the space at a greater rate. This is just like our house would be, if we boiled a whole bunch of pots on the stove at once.

Then, after the throne is fully built and the new atmosphere is ready, that is when God will show up in full force. This is when church really starts. This is when miracles manifest and transformations transpire. This is when demons flee and heaven dominates.

We see a great example of this take place at the first Pentecost. What are the disciples doing in the Upper Room while they are waiting for the Holy Spirit to show up? They are praising God! Day and night, 24/7, they are worshipping. Finally, when the time was right and the atmosphere was thick, thick, thick with praise and thanksgiving, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the fullness of God was able to show up. That's when spiritual flames of fire manifested physically, tongues broke out liberally, boldness exploded and three thousand new believers from all over the world came into the Kingdom in one very short, not super deep sermon. How did the Holy

Spirit and the atmosphere of heaven get into that room? That's right, through the praises of His people!

Satan knows this principle all too well. Ever wonder why he always tries to get us to grumble and complain? Could it be that grumbling and complaining is the total inverse, the exact opposite of thanksgiving and praise? Could it be that satan's throne is built on the literal breath of grumblers and complainers? Could it be that satan literally inhabits the curses (the complaints) of his people? Could it be that an atmosphere of death, destruction, and chaos is built one grumbling, one complaining word at a time?

I know. Thanksgiving and praise is not always the easiest thing to do. In fact, it's quite often the last thing we feel like doing. But it must become not just a once-a-week-during-church kind of thing. Not even a once-a-day-during-our-quiet-times-and-prayers thing. It must become the very fabric of our being. It must become the way we think. It must become who we are and how we filter all of life.

Thankfully, it starts with a choice. I remember the first time I truly put this principle into practice. I had been out of a job for well over a year, my savings were long gone, and I was scraping by, month to month, through odd jobs and the generosity of family and friends.

Money was a scarcity and so was purchasing frivolous things like gum, shampoo, and vehicle inspection stickers. My suffering hygiene aside, I was on my way to a potential business opportunity. It was with JPS Hospital, the hospital my wife (then girlfriend) was currently working for. Unbeknownst to me it was located directly beside the local police department. Long story short, I didn't get the job but I did get a big, fat "expired inspection sticker" ticket.

Everything in me screamed, "Curse God," but oddly enough something else rose up. Rebellion against rebellion (thank You, Holy Spirit)! Instead I chose a new way that day. I didn't know why, but I just thanked God in faith. I didn't feel thankful (I felt angry), and nothing looked praise-worthy (it looked really pooppy), but I thanked Him anyway.

I took care of the expired inspection sticker and within two to four weeks (I can't remember exactly), I had my first permanent job—the job I had been praying for! Even losing out on the hospital job turned out to be a major blessing in disguise as I was not set up at the time to handle everything they were purposing. It would have been a major headache.

I could tell you lots of other stories where a moment of thanksgiving and praise or continued, daily thanksgiving and praise were the keys to my breakthrough. In fact, every breakthrough I've ever had (and will ever have) will relate to thanksgiving and praise. Why? Because breakthrough comes as more and more of God is released into our souls, bodies, situations, and environments. Thanksgiving and praise is the avenue of that release! This is the power of thanksgiving and praise.

PS—for more great insight, depth, and revelation on this subject check out Katie Souza’s *The Healing School* CD series (blue or red). Specifically check out CDs 2 and 3 in the Blue Series. Also check out Kerry Kirkwood’s *The Power of Worship* CD series.

PPS—Can we put a PS and a PPS in the middle of a book?

PPPS—Hmm, I guess we just did.

PPPPS—Now I’m just being stupid ☺

Battle Tactic 15:

Patience (Winning Every Time)

God never promises we won’t face trouble or persecution. He actually promises just the opposite [John 16:33]. However, He does promise victory over it [Psalms 18, 91], and that He will lead us safely through it [Psalm 23]. In fact, He promises that whoever attacks us *will* surrender to us [Isaiah 54:15 (NIV)]. We may not win every battle, but we will certainly win every war.

So how do we arrive at this place of perpetual and complete victory? *Patience*. Patience will take us there. Patience is our key.

Check out these promises. Ask *until* you receive, seek *until* you find, knock *until* it is opened unto you [Matthew 7:7 (TLB)]. Though a righteous man falls seven times, he gets up again [Proverbs 24:16]. Because the Lord will help us, we know we will not be ultimately ashamed and disgraced. Therefore, we know that we can set our face like flint (like a rock, immovable, unyielding) to face, endure, and defeat our enemies [Isaiah 50:7–9].

Do you see the principle of patience woven into each of the preceding Scriptures? The way we beat the enemy every time is that we simply out last him. Patiently! It’s the violent who take heaven by force [Matthew 11:12]. Or, more accurately, it’s “those in eager pursuit who obtain heaven [in this life] by an open display of force.” In other words, we are to come against the enemy openly, again and again, patiently—for as long as it takes—until we get, until we obtain, until we permanently occupy our Promised Land. Patient repetition and relentlessness is our key to victory every time.

Please note *how* we are to come at the enemy. Not frantically. Not anxiously. Not secretly. Not out of hurt, out of insecurity, or out of revenge. But we come at the enemy peacefully, patiently, honestly, and openly. Yes, it is relentless, unyielding, and without end but always with a feeling of rest, relaxation, and total victory in our soul. Like Isaiah 50 says, we must be totally secure in the fact that the Lord is helping us; therefore, we will achieve victory. No worries how long that victory takes; because of Jesus, it will be achieved.

Of course this is much easier said than done!

Exactly—it's nothing. It's a mere breath, a mere blink. When it's all said and done, we actually gave up practically nothing for a far better, much more fun, much more family filled eternity! I'd say that is more than worth it!

Plus we get to make another baby. If satan somehow manages to destroy that one, we'll make another. And another. And another. And another. And another. And another. And another. And another. No worries; with Jesus we win! That is the power in patience.

Patience frustrates the enemy. He can't stand up to patience because there is no set time limit. We must understand that—like Adam—the enemy has now been cut off from God. Jesus cast him down out of his high place, stripped him of his authority, and took his keys to hell and death [Revelations 1:18; 12:10-11; Luke 10:18; Colossians 2:15]. This means he has limited resources, limited power, limited understanding, and limited time. Sure he may have much more of those things than you or I (by ourselves), but not more than us with God. In God we can defeat the enemy *every time* by simply, patiently, and repeatedly coming against him. Over and over. No rush. No end. It will confuse him, frustrate him, depress him, and wear him out.

Certainly, the enemy can mount a large attack if he knows we are only going to try for a few months, a few years, or even a few decades. But if we just keep coming and coming and coming (with no end in sight), eventually satan has to consider cutting his losses and/or being totally destroyed. He'll move. The sooner we make up our minds to just keep coming, no matter what, the sooner the battle ends in our victory.

A good way to look at it is to never stop until we get to the root, meaning we don't assume we have obtained complete victory simply by destroying some bad fruit in our life. We must look past the outward fruit and never stop until we destroy the innermost root—*all* of the root.

What do I mean by that? Glad you asked.

Fruit versus Root

We touched on this earlier, so let's review. Fruit is like the evidence, the outward display, or the symptoms of a deeper problem. For example, a porn addiction is simply the fruit of the deeper root issue of lust. Likewise, lust can even be a fruit of something deeper like insecurity, abandonment, or pride.

Again, shyness is the outward fruit of a deeper, inner root of fear, and that fear can even be a fruit of something deeper like anxiety or fear of man (fear of other people's opinions).

Like a tree, the root gives life to the branches and the branches produce fruit. If we truly want complete victory in every battle, we must learn to keep on patiently going after the root until

we remove *all* of it. This process and battle will often continue long after the symptomatic, obvious fruit is gone. But once the root is totally removed—true, full, amazing, complete, unshakable, unstoppable, unbelievable, unending freedom comes.

The problem with focusing our efforts on removing the fruit (and only the fruit), is that the fruit will eventually grow back. Sure we can clean up the outward problem for a while. We can contain the symptoms through willpower and/or behavior modification, maybe even through a little accountability, prescription drug habit, or hypnosis. But eventually, if the tree isn't cut down, if the root isn't removed, if the desire still lives somewhere within us (even the tiniest little bit), the fruit will simply grow back. And when it does, it will often grow back more plentiful and stronger than ever.

Let me give a couple of examples from my life.

One is fear. When I finally got radically born again in 2004, the main thing I wanted destroyed in my life was fear. I had always been afraid: afraid to get up in front of people, afraid to perform on stage, etc. I was tired of it.

God gave me Joshua 1:9 as my mantra in those early days. I would repeat it over and over, out loud and in my head. It worked wonders. Within six weeks my performance anxiety was close to nothing. Racing thoughts, cold, shaky hands, knotted stomach, butterflies all went (and continued to go) away.

But that was only the fruit.

I didn't realize all those symptoms were just the fruit growing out of a spirit of fear that I hadn't yet addressed in my heart. In fact, I didn't even know I had a spirit of fear.

So I was left reeling when that spirit came roaring back, manifesting in much stronger and more blatant "in my face" ways a year or so later. That led to a back-and-forth battle for another few years until August 2009 when God gave me total victory. In a single moment of Holy Spirit-led worship, I literally felt peace bubble up out of my spirit and into my heart, totally and completely replacing the spirit of fear.

From that day to this (save the brief moment in which I learned to trust), I have had no fear in my heart. And guess what? All the fruits of that fear—avoiding conflict and awkward situations, experiencing stage fright, an intense motivation to buckle under pressure—were completely gone as well. My heart is now full of a powerful peace, one that truly *surpasses all understanding*.

Even though I had just come into a drastically new level of daily freedom—wouldn't you know—I found out there was an even deeper root to that fear. Once all that fear left my heart, I

was able to pick up on a more subtle fear that remained in my stomach. It was anxiety. Specifically, it was fear of man—of man’s opinion, rejection, and of being misunderstood.

I could have stopped there, but if any portion of that fear root remains in me, then I’m still not truly free and it’s only a matter of time until I’m bound up worse than before [Matthew 12:43–45]. Knowing this, I still continue to eagerly pursue God for my full territory, for my total peace (and piece of heaven), and for my complete victory! And the last three years of my life have been a step-by-step battle for just that.

I’m happy to say God has been faithful! In that time, He has walked me significantly out of anxiety and fear of man. Still, I have not had my final breakthrough moment yet, where it totally flees and is replaced completely by the Holy Spirit. I know this because I can still feel it “flare up” from time to time in the pit of my stomach. But it has grown so weak, it no longer significantly affects me or my actions. However, I’m not stopping until it (like fear) is totally gone. Once it is gone, all the symptoms that come with it—unsettled/tight feelings in the stomach, hesitancy, insecurity, shame, motivation to avoid, etc—will naturally disappear as well.

Quick side note: since writing the previous portion of text, a significant breakthrough has come! What was the secret? Trust. (I should have known!) ☺ The Holy Spirit finally opened my eyes, and I saw that I was not truly trusting, which is why the anxiety kept flaring back up. I was wavering in and out of complete trust. The solution was to admit it! So in a moment of what felt like blasphemous honesty, I told God, “I don’t trust You.” As soon as I admitted the truth, Jesus came bursting in and the anxiety instantly left.

The trust breakthrough came in September (2012). Still, in the subsequent months, anxiety occasionally continues to rear its ugly head. But openly admitting my lack of trust allows Jesus access to instantly drive it right back out every time. No more back-and-forth battle! No more time lost in between, convincing my spirit to rest and trust again.

Okay, back on track.

The key for us walking completely into our God-given victory is to patiently, relentlessly go after the root, to completely destroy it and drive out the enemy. We must settle for nothing less.

My second example is lust. When I got radically saved in 2004 the first thing God had me do (the first freedom miracle I experienced) was to get free of the fruit of a strong porn addiction. God’s tactic was brilliant. It was to simply *replace* my porn addiction with a better addiction! God gave me the idea. Anytime I felt that overwhelming, compelling urge for porn rising within me, rather than getting online and looking at porn, I got online and listened to a sermon instead (and kept on listening until the urge went away). I implemented the strategy, and within three months

the porn addiction was broken, the intense inner desire destroyed (melted completely away), and the fruit permanently cut off!

From that day to this, I have never willingly sought out or looked at porn again. Not that I don't have the limitless, daily opportunity or that I don't bump into it on occasion. Not that I don't think women are God's most beautiful creation on the planet. I still do. But I just don't have that strong desire, that compelling, unstoppable, addicting urge to use those opportunities (or women) for my own selfish gratification. It's just gone!

Yes, I could willingly pick this addiction back up. I could willingly walk right back into it if I wanted to. I am truly free. But I so *don't want* to. I know where it leads. I've been down that dark, cold, selfish, depressed road. I know the control lust has and the dissatisfaction that comes with it. I know the payment far outweighs the pleasure. I've been there. I don't want it.

Let me explain it another way. It's as if my world has flipped. I used to have to "will" or force myself *not* to look at porn. All the while, deep inside, I really wanted to look at it. I was drawn to it. I couldn't help it; I loved it. It called to me and I eventually had to answer. It seduced me, and I eventually had to follow. It controlled me physically. And because my heart loved it, I couldn't stop it—ultimately I was powerless.

But God set me free! Over those three months of battle in 2004, everything changed. My inner world flipped. No longer was there any physical or emotional control. When a temptation sparked in my mind, no longer did an overwhelmingly strong, compelling emotional desire rise along with it. No longer did I have to force myself to stop looking at porn. Deep down inside I simply no longer *wanted* to look! My heart had been changed. I was no longer in love. I was no longer bound. I was truly free!

It's surprising how easy it is to *not* do something you actually *don't* want to do. For example, how many of you had to force yourself not to eat a huge steaming bowl of dog poo for breakfast this morning? Exactly. Not a soul. It's easy to *not* do something you already *don't* want to do. ☺ (Sorry for that mental image ... kind of.)

However, the root of lust runs generations deep in both sides of my family. Even though pornography is no longer a desire in my heart, and truthfully is not even a blip on my emotional radar, in all honesty I still have not totally walked out of the hold that lust has in my soul. There is still a root lingering deep down in there somewhere.

How do I know? Because too much time spent watching certain movies or TV shows can begin to trigger a rise in that attitude, in that draw, in that familiar spirit within my soul. Thankfully, I've been so set free that I can literally feel it when it starts to rise up (even the tiniest bit). It's that subtle discontent, that subtle selfishness, that subtle coldness, that clammy, dark-green feeling. I closely monitor those emotions, and I am very picky about what I watch because of it.

Until I am completely set free, I don't want to watch anything with a spirit of lust attached to it or operating through it. I don't even want to let those movies or shows in my house. As a result, that spirit of lust has grown weaker and weaker in me over the years. It is slowly being starved. Still, I will not stop until it is 100 percent destroyed.

Because I was so set free from fear, I know what complete freedom from a spirit truly is. I know the entirety of what "complete freedom" encompasses. I know that the things I used to notice no longer even trigger my radar. I know those feelings that used to rise up in me whether I wanted them to or not are just simply no longer there. I know how all the emotional temptations and the thoughts just disappear.

With this understanding, if I was truly 100 percent free from lust I would never notice the pull or seduction of the lust spirit in certain forms of entertainment, no matter how weak that pull was. I would certainly still be well aware of it externally (visually), but I would not be affected in the least internally (mentally/emotionally). In other words, if I was truly 100 percent free—I would notice absolutely no type of inner lust desire. I would notice no type of inner selfish 'draw'—even if that draw was nothing more than a heightened curiosity towards it.

In the same way, if I was truly 100 percent free from the root of lust I would never notice the difference between any two girls. I would never feel a selfish "draw" toward one woman over another. While one woman might be more physically beautiful than another, all women would "feel" the same to me on the inside.

That being said, I can still have an overwhelming godly love and compassion rise up inwardly for someone. Externally it might even look similar to lust, but internally it would feel clean, selfless, and comfortable. The fact that I still occasionally have an internal (uncomfortable) lust awareness that rises within me around certain women points to the fact that the war is still going on. No matter how weak the enemy is getting, this awareness confirms that the war is still ongoing. This ensures (no, demands) that I will not stop running to Jesus until that deep-rooted lust is totally destroyed and kicked out. I will not stop.

Now, maybe your deep inner roots aren't lust or fear. Maybe they are gossip and self-pity. Maybe they are rejection and pride. Maybe they are none of the above. Maybe they are *all* of the above and more! Whatever the case, completely destroying the root is how far we all must be willing to go. We must make no treaties, keep no agreements, and have no pity on any of the spiritual squatters occupying our God-given land (our soul). We must keep running to Jesus until we walk fully into our victory, in complete and total freedom.

Total freedom comes when no amount of pressure, beauty, awkwardness, shame, fear, pride—no amount of anything catches our attention or stops us from simply being "us" (in any way). Freedom is when we can just love with God's love, live comfortably in any moment, and

instantly do anything (and everything) God asks us to do. It's when we no longer feel the inward tug, sway, or pressure from any external source, big or small. We must learn to settle for nothing less than this kind of complete freedom.

Patently killing the root will give us that freedom.

Battle Tactic 16:

Wash

In this day of rampant selfishness, of “love gone cold” and bipolar emotions—where abundantly faulty information thrives and gossip “crocodiles” feast openly on their unsuspecting prey—we must (as believers) have a place of stability, healing and recalibration. We must have a place where we can sort out the lies from the truth, where we can distinguish death from life, where we can learn to accurately discern the world and all the spirits in that world, whirling constantly around us. That place is at Jesus' feet, *washing in the Word*. It is our way of staying clean, seeing clearly, aiming accurately, and becoming perfectly focused. It is our way of being watered by His truthful instruction and being washed by His loving speech!

We've already touched on this principle several times throughout our text (see the section on holiness, for example). However, let's continue building our understanding by addressing the tactic of washing in the Word.

In the Bible, water equals words, and words equal water. Anytime we see a biblical text depicting a stream or a river or a sea or any type of water, we know the text is referring to words. Isaiah 55:9–11 gives us the basis for this understanding: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. *For as the rain comes down*, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, *so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth*; It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (emphasis added).

This is a defining verse, a verse where God gives us His specific definition. It is a verse that unlocks a secret, a truth, or an analogy that the author of the Scriptures will continue to use over and over again. In it we see that every word of God is like an individual drop of water and those words function in the spirit exactly like earth's water-cycle functions in the natural. Simply put, God's words flow over and through all who hear them, giving them life, causing them to grow, bud, and produce fruit—giving them daily provision (bread) and provision for the future (seed).

This is why we wash. This is why we soak. It is our daily cleaning. It is our daily watering. It's our time of letting God's Word rain down on us and soak into us. Daily listening, and listening, and listening to God will clean us from the dust of the world: it will cause us to grow, bud, and

produce fruit! We need this water, this *fresh* water, daily. Without it we will become dry, stale, dead, and fruitless.

Washing is not just referring to soaking in the Bible (the written Word of God), although washing definitely includes that. No, washing goes far beyond this. Washing refers to soaking in God's active, daily, and "right now," spoken Word directly to us. This fresh Word (this fresh water, this fresh bread) is literally life to our spirit, soul, and body. Nothing else can adequately substitute.

In other words, we must read a passage of Scripture and then ask God to explain it to us. We must let God show us what *He* wants us to personally get out of His text today! We must let God address hurts that are in our heart at the moment. We must let Him give us wisdom and speak to us about what is on His heart right now. Washing in God's Word (soaking) is an active, two-way, "today" relationship with our Papa God. It goes far beyond simply reading His book while ignoring Him.

Besides understanding our need for daily washing/watering/soaking, understanding this water equals word, word equals water analogy can really help open up the Bible in new ways to us. Passages that might have been a bit confusing or ambiguous open right up with practical wisdom and personal application in the light of this revelation.

For instance, let's check out that famous passage in Mark 11. Jesus says we are to speak to our mountains and command them to "be removed and be cast into the sea." This is a little ambiguous unless we understand that a drop of water is simply one of God's words. In this light, we can see that a "sea" (a large collection of individual water drops) is simply an analogy depicting a whole bunch of God's words put together! Suddenly this passage comes alive! It becomes practical as we can clearly see God is telling us to cast our mountains (our giants, our demons, our huge, immovable problems) into the sea of His Word, into a large quantity of His spoken promises, into His very presence. In other words, our mountains will move as we bring them into God's tangible, manifest presence. They will be swallowed up as we release large amounts of God's Word over them. Our mountains will be completely absorbed by the vast ocean of "who God is" as we simply wash and wash and wash! Makes a bit more sense now, right?

Here's another one. What about "many waters cannot quench the flame of love" [Song of Solomon 8:7 (TLB)]? It's a lovely little analogy depicting the power of love, but it still remains quite vague. What does that statement really mean for *us* today? Well, let's simply reword it according to our water/word revelation: "Many *words* cannot quench the flame of love." Makes more sense now, right? This passage is simply an assurance to us that all the gossip, lies, and accusing words of the enemy cannot stop, quench, or extinguish the love of the Holy Spirit burning within us. Now that's a great promise!

How about Isaiah 59:19, which says, “When the enemy comes in, like a flood the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him”? Again, the analogy is a good one, but we are left clueless unless we apply our understanding. If we know that words are drops of water, then we know that a flood must represent a whole bunch of individual words flowing quickly at once. Now we see that when the enemy comes in, we can defeat him by raising up a standard against him with a flood of words coming quickly and directly from our mouths—specifically by words coming from the Spirit of the Lord! That means we can defeat our enemy by quoting the Word of God (promises from the Bible) and/or by speaking a flood of words in tongues and/or by speaking the words the Spirit puts on our heart in that moment. Wow, now this Scripture has come alive as both a great visual analogy and as a practical, everyday, doable instruction that we can easily use against the enemy as we need it!

Even baptism becomes a practical, brilliant illustration once we realize that water equals words. Think about it. Baptism is the second step in a believer’s salvation-walk. It represents the old man dying, being buried (underwater), and reemerging as a new creation. Nice pretty picture, but practically it’s useless—unless we understand that the *water* represents the Word!

Now think about it. The next step (after salvation) in a believer’s walk is to totally immerse ourselves in the Word of God. To memorize, read, meditate, listen to, and absorb that word until we are completely buried and submerged (and drowning) in it! Then, when we come out in five, ten, twenty, or one hundred years, we are a new creation! We see things in a new way. We see things clearly. We see things as they are. We see things as God sees them, through the lens of all the Scripture living within us. Our old man has been left behind, completely washed away by the *water of the Word*. Now this totally brilliant visual is a very practical (doable) illustration.

Try it yourself. Go apply this key anywhere in the Bible. There are many Scriptures speaking about water, rivers, streams, floods, oceans, rain, dew, etc. Jesus turned water into wine. Jesus walked on water. Jesus calmed the storm with His words. Go see what new revelations open up to you when you clearly understand this simple water equals words analogy.

These are the kinds of things that are revealed to us when we take the time to daily wash in the Word, to not only read the Bible but to ask its Author to explain it to us personally, in simple ways we can understand. Then we take the time to let those same words flow over us again and again, to soak into us, until understanding and revelation grows up out of those words and into our everyday lives—effortlessly, on its own.

Let’s continue. Proverbs 18:4 takes our water equals words key one step further. Not only does it affirm our Isaiah 55 passage by saying “the wellspring of wisdom [*God’s word*] is a flowing brook,” but it goes on to say that a “man’s words are deep waters.” This means *all* the words we hear water us. They affect our growth in some way. It’s not just God’s words that wash over and water us, but man’s words do too!

Furthermore, Jesus said this of anyone who believed in Him, “Out of his belly will flow rivers of *living* water” [John 7:38 (KJV), emphasis added]. This means that our own mouths can contain more than just “deep waters.” They can contain “deep, *living* waters,” waters that are clean and pure. Waters that literally contain “life” from God. Wow, that kind of power is humbling. We have the ability to speak the *living* words of God Himself!

Let’s go even further. If this is true, then the inverse must be true as well. If we have been entrusted with the incredible power and responsibility of releasing God’s *living* words, surely we can speak the *dead* words of any far less powerful, worldly god—the words of our enemy.

Proverbs 18:21 and James 3 tell us this is precisely the case. They reveal that our mouths can contain both kinds of water, water that is polluted, salty and filled with death (water from our enemy) or water that is clean, fresh, and life-giving (water from God).

This brings us full circle to our container analogy. Words are containers of life or death, releasing living or poisoned water to everyone around us. I don’t know about you, but this is even more incentive for me to get in God’s presence daily. Unless I am regularly washed clean, regularly recalibrated by His word, how do I truly know which type of water I am releasing? Even water that is 99.99 percent clean is still polluted.

Interesting side note: modern physics backs up what the Bible has taught for millennia. Words, at the subatomic level, actually function and flow like water. When we speak, our words travel into the air, moving the air particles like ripples of water. Like dropping a rock into a calm lake, those word ripples grow and grow, hitting, washing, and watering everything within the vicinity. Our ears pick up on those pressure-ripples and translate them back into sound for our brain. Words wash over us just like water!

So why wash?

Besides producing the effortless growth and life we’ve discussed, washing in the Word keeps us grounded, clear-headed, and error free.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word [Romans 10:17]. Listening, repeating, thinking about, mulling over, meditating on, visualizing, and focusing on Jesus and on His word is what washes us and effortlessly grows our faith. As we get cleaner and cleaner, as we have more and more revelations, our heart and our beliefs start to change, our faith begins to rise, and our actions (our fruit) follow suit. We begin to see things as they truly are and not through a skewed personal filter of hurts, fears, offenses, anger, jealousy, insecurity, pride, lust, anxiety, self-pity, doubt, or whatever it is that currently warps our perception.

Think about it. God *is spirit*. He primarily communicates to us *through His Holy Spirit*. He asks us to worship Him *in spirit* and in truth [John 4:24]. He asks us to *walk by the Spirit* and to *live by the Spirit* [Galatians 5:25]. Have you ever really thought that over? It’s kind of a crazy request. I

mean, God is asking and expecting us to operate in a realm we can't touch, taste, hear, or see. Not only that, He asks us to predominantly function and even fight in this hidden, counterintuitive world, a *spirit* world where we are helpless, deaf, dumb, and blind beings!

Is that not a completely audacious and totally outrageous expectation? How many opportunities are there for a deaf, dumb, and blind person to stumble into error just walking down a busy city street, much less a deaf, dumb, and blind person trying to actively engage in battle and win a war? What is being asked of us is impossible. But it is impossible for a reason. This impossibility ensures relationship!

It's brilliant. This unachievable request ensures that we have to rely completely on someone else for our success. It ensures that we have to learn *how* to fully discern, intimately recognize, totally trust, and become best friends with our *spirit*-world Father. Without Him we will get nowhere. Without Him we are sitting ducks. Without Him we can run circles indefinitely. Without Him we can be controlled and destroyed on a whim. He is our spiritual eyes and ears. We desperately need Him every second of every day. This is why we must regularly wash in God's written Word and then in His spoken words (directly to us) before we ever hope to operate in the spirit world with any realistic expectation of success.

Unless we have some stable, clear, and unchanging foundation in place (the Bible), how do we know whether the spirit we are tapping into is God's or not? Unless we know His character (His heart), how do we clearly distinguish between God's pure, spoken Word in our spirit and some other seducing voice in our head? How do we distinguish between a great idea and a God idea? The Bible says the enemy can transform himself into an angel of light [2 Corinthians 11:14]. If this is true, then we can't even go by what totally appears, what totally seems "good" and "godly." We must have a "for sure" foundation instilled deep within us, enabling us to catch the impostors and confirm the genuine.

This is why we wash. We must! We must learn what God sounds like. We must learn the way He thinks. We must learn the way He views the world and the way He views us. We must learn the basics, His bottom-line standards. We must be able to compare, analyze, and interrogate every idea, every thought, every voice, every motive, every "unction" that we get in the bright light of God's written Word. Only when the written Word completely, 100 percent lines up and backs up the voice or ideas we are hearing/seeing/receiving will we know 100 percent for sure that it is God's voice and God's idea.

The more we wash. The more we water, bud and grow. The easier this is to do. Eventually we will be so full of the Word, so clean, so fed, so big, and so strong that we can sort out everything coming our way almost instantaneously. The children of Israel knew the *acts* of God, but Moses knew the *ways* of God [Psalm 103:7]. Like Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice" [John 10:3–5].

Quick side note: Not only do we wash, but we practice. Start small, start with things that are “easy” to do. When you get a random thought, a sudden unusual prompting that feels like the Holy Spirit—maybe to pick up some trash, to give someone your umbrella, to say a kind word, to give a hug, write a check, defend a friend, defend an enemy, to speak the truth in a whole lot of love, etc.—test it out. See what happens. This is called practice. Sometimes we nail it, sometimes we miss. If we ask God (and observe the results over time), we can learn from both. If we routinely wash, we will grow from both. Out of routine washing and practice comes understanding. Out of understanding comes intimacy. Out of intimacy comes instant recognition of our heavenly Papa. And out of instant recognition comes permanent, perpetual victory!

Battle Tactic 17:

Taking a Stand (How We Fight)

So we’ve talked about a whole bunch of battle tactics. We’ve discussed how to identify them and tap into them for ourselves. That’s all super important, need-to-know stuff. But now let’s get real practical. What does a “battle” actually look like for us as believers? More importantly, how do we fight? And what do we do when we have fought, but the enemy just won’t change?

Before we jump into answering these questions and more, let’s get to the bottom-line answer of our primary question, “How do we fight?” Bottom line, we open our mouths! Speaking is both the secret and the key to victory in every situation. It is the way we move our mountains and calm our storms. We must not be afraid to open our mouths and say *anything and everything* the Holy Spirit wants us to say.

Okay, now let’s get back to our questions. What is our fight? What does our battle actually look like?

Simply put, our fight is *taking a stand*. All that phrase means is that we set the bar, we raise the standard [Isaiah 59:19], we make the rules [Deuteronomy 28:13], and we don’t run away. Instead, we run *at* the enemy, we face our giants, and we take over [1 Samuel 17]. Make no mistake about it, the bar we set is God’s bar, the standard we raise is God’s standard, the rules we make are God’s rules. But it is up to us to speak out, to expose the enemy, and to enforce those rules. This is the fight.

The enemy hates this. The enemy wants to play by his rules, to use, abuse, take advantage of, and “leach” off God’s goodness, generosity, and people. The enemy wants us to shut up, submit, and go along with his lead—to play along—while he sucks us and God dry.

However, when God’s people actually stand up and call the enemy out on his laziness, selfishness, abuse of the system, manipulation, and injustice, it completely messes up his game.

It stops him in his tracks. It locks him up and puts him back in his place (below truth). He hates this; he wants to run the show. This is the fight.

For example, when the people at my office finally realized I would not gossip about my boss, satan turned their attention (and their gossip) on me. What had been a pleasant, even fun working environment for a good eighteen months suddenly began to grow colder and colder. Flat out ridicule, rejection, and avoidance became the norm. It got bad.

However, I knew God had led me to take the job. I knew it was His will. So instead of running away, I *took a stand*. I stayed. I asked God, and He gave me my first plan of counterattack—to speak in tongues, out loud, on the elevator ride to and from work. For the following three months, things actually got much worse. Partially because the elevator (which was located in a large, highly secure bank) had a video camera and speaker system wired into it. There must have been some concern voiced by the bank's security department about my strange elevator behavior because I went from being the uncool kid in the office to being the "crazy" uncool kid in the office. (That was in addition to the very strange looks and unusual distance the security staff started giving me.)

But then it broke! God took over. Slowly, one by one, people started getting let go at work. Every reason was different: some for attitude, some for poor customer service, some for letting their work and department organization slide, and some for their own personal reasons. However, each departing employee had something in common: each had been a troublemaker. It was as if God was simply going down the list of names. He started with the least of the problem (kind of like a warning to everyone else) and then worked His way up, ending with the main source. It took nine to fifteen months to fully complete the process, but when all was said and done, every single gossipier had been removed. In addition, each "chit-chat" had not only been replaced by an equally talented person but more importantly by a person with a much better spirit.

Now, I want to be clear and say I didn't pray for anyone to be fired or move on. I didn't start getting an attitude—even a self-righteous attitude—in return. (Honestly, it took a lot of daily soaking for that miracle to occur and remain in my heart.) Instead, I actually made it a point to specifically bless them. God had me give certain coworkers gifts (some really nice gifts that I wanted), some He had me pay compliments, and some He had me shower with His love. All I did was my best to stay healed in my heart (soak), follow God's lead (practice), and let the Holy Spirit pray through me (in tongues) for the specific details. It was totally God's decision how best to change me and my environment. I had done nothing but *take a stand*. I had done nothing but stay. Things were still not 100 percent back to normal, and satan continued to shift his tactics to try to move me out of there. But things were finally bearable (even enjoyable) for me again. God had moved that evil, gossiping spirit out, grew me in the process, and changed my office for the better. I had simply *taken a stand*.

How We Fight

Since that time I have learned that taking a stand is only the bare minimum (one part) of our fight. In the months that followed God began to show me the second, more powerful step in our warfare. He revealed how opening my mouth and directly addressing issues would do just as much damage to the enemy as my speaking privately in tongues.

As I spoke up (and began to see immediate results), I looked for more times when I could specifically bring issues up to my boss or to a coworker. I began to casually (and lightheartedly) address issues in daily conversations or in a work-related e-mail. (At the time I still wasn't healed internally enough to initiate direct [nonjoking] confrontation, but I was good at putting it in e-mail form.) It did the trick. I began to see that anytime the enemy was exposed, he became more and more bound while I became more and more free.

So how do we fight?

I've long wondered this question. How do we as Christians fight? I would see people in the Bible like Abraham, Elijah, Joshua, Moses, and David, who kicked butt and took names. I would read passages like, we are more than conquerors [Romans 8:37], we have authority over all the power of the enemy [Luke 10:19], we are the head and not the tail [Deuteronomy 28:13], and we raise up the standard against the enemy [Isaiah 59:19]. As I did, my heart would scream for victory, justice, and giving the enemy a good, old-fashioned Chuck Norris butt kicking!

But then I read passages like, turn the other cheek [Matthew 5:39], love your enemies [Matthew 5:44], if someone makes you go a mile with them, go two [Matthew 5:41], and if someone takes your coat, give them your shirt also [Matthew 5:40]. Somehow these later passages seemed only to translate into my being a "nice" guy and letting the enemy walk all over me in order to "keep the peace." It didn't make sense.

But then God walked me through it. (Yeah, there's nothing like learning by stumbling through it!) Slowly, as I stumbled (less and less "nicely") through attack after attack, the picture of "how to do battle" that God was painting for me became increasingly clear. I began to see how it all works, how we can have the authority and the victory while always turning the other cheek and going the extra mile. How all those "contradicting" Bible verses actually work hand in hand and not against each other.

To fully understand this "butt-kicking yet turn-the-other-cheek" relationship we must first understand that we don't fight with our fists. We fight with our *mouths*! Isaiah 11:4 says it best: "He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked." In addition, we must understand that our fight is *not* with the person [Matthew 5:39], our fight is with the spirit *behind* the person [James 4:7]. Simply put we resist the devil, not the person. Thus, our battle is twofold.

First, we must turn the other cheek, go the extra mile and extravagantly love our *human* enemies. We must remain and endure (walk through) that repeated persecution and abuse they may be continually dishing out at us. We must keep showing up, take a stand and completely, immovably, occupy the land God has rightfully given us.

But we must be totally open, up front, honest, and *vocal* about what is happening to us! We must openly, boldly and unashamedly address the *spirit* that is hiding behind the person—the *lie* that the persecutor (the abuser) is operating in. We must point it out, call it out, and expose it, first to our abuser(s) and then (if the abuse continues) to anyone who will listen. Our speech (our story, our testimony, the truth) is the key to change. It is the key to victory!

Jesus is our best example of how to act toward people in the face of abuse. Look at Isaiah 50:5–6, where the prophet speaks of Jesus going to the cross. “The Lord has opened my ear; *and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide my face from shame and spitting*” (emphasis added).

Do you see how we are to act in the fight? First, we don’t run away or avoid. We don’t pull back or stop showing up. This is what the enemy wants us to do; the enemy wants us to avoid him, to back down. But that is not how we fight. We do not turn away. We do not hide. No. We show up. We stand our ground. We go where we want (where God leads), we confront, and we give!

Second, we are not rebellious. This is huge, so let me say it again. When we do show up, we are not showing up in a spirit of rebellion or self-righteousness. We are not showing up to hurl insults, to punch the enemy in return, to “tell them off” or to loose the “wrath of God” upon them. We are certainly not showing up to silently rebel (offer the “cold shoulder” of rejection) either. No, we are showing up to love them, honor, and serve them. We are showing up to go beyond expectation, to go that second mile, to give, and to sacrifice.

Additionally, we are not rebellious behind their back. We do not spread gossip or slander them to everyone else in our social circle—even if it is all true. Remember our brief discussion on gossip and its consequences at the beginning of the book? Remember the curse that came on Noah’s youngest son when he chose to gossip about Noah rather than honor him, protect him, and cover him up [Genesis 9]? No, we continue to speak highly of them and paint them in a good light, the best light possible. We only tell the detailed facts to those who absolutely need to know (the police, a judge, a spouse, the individuals themselves). Often we never have to expose the detailed facts at all.

But—and here is *the key to our victory*—*we speak up!* Isaiah 59:19 says, “when the enemy comes in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.” We use our

words like a flood to set the standard, to raise it against our enemy. In other words, we boldly confront the controlling, abusive *spirit*, speaking the truth (the Word of God) by being honest, loving, and direct. All the while we continue to honor and love the *person* (to his or her face and behind his or her back), and remain humble (a servant), looking for ways to serve him or her. But we never stay silent about the abuse or how it is hurting or affecting us. In this way, we show God's love and acceptance of that person while we address and expose (fight) the spirit behind the person. James 4:7 gives us this exact battlefield instruction: "submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Do you see our two parts? (1) Submit to God. Don't run, don't get rebellious. In other words, stay humble, loving, honoring, bold, and courageous. Do whatever God says. (2) *Then* resist the devil. Speak up against the devil. Don't go along with what he asks or demands. Expose the abuse. Point out the injustice. Point out the selfishness. When we do this the devil will flee—he runs when his true motives are plainly exposed. He runs when the spotlight clearly turns on him.

One last time, please note, we do *not* fight rebellion with rebellion. We fight rebellion with humility (loving acceptance). Even while we vocally don't submit to the *spirit* of the abuse, we do stay submitted (remain humble) in all our actions toward the abusing *person*. Even in our words. We plainly expose the abuse (and that abusive spirit) while we speak the truth *in love*.

How does this work in everyday life?

Let's say the thought comes, *You're stupid. Stupid*. First we must realize that, "Them's fightin' words!" So we say, "You're right, I am pretty dumb by myself. But I'm not alone, I am in Jesus [Ephesians 2:10]. I am a new creation [2 Corinthians 5:17]. I have the mind of Christ [1 Corinthians 2:16] and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me [Philippians 4:13]! My mind is renewed [Romans 12:2] by the washing of the Word [Ephesians 5:26-27] and everything I do prospers [Psalm 1:3]. Besides, I have been crucified in Christ and I no longer live. It's Christ who lives in me [Galatians 2:20]! ... etc." We continue (or repeat) until the thought flees. Battle won.

Let's say the thought comes, *You're going to die today*. Well, them's fightin' words too! So we say, "Nope! No weapon formed against me will prosper [Isaiah 54:17]. God will satisfy me with a long life [Psalm 91:15-16] and my life has not been long nor satisfied me yet! Besides, everyone who comes against me will surrender to me [Isaiah 54:15 (TLB)]. God's favor surrounds me as a shield [Psalms 3:3, 5:12]. I can safely meet a lion or step on poisonous snakes, even trample them beneath my feet [Psalm 91:13]. God is with me like a mighty warrior so that my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. *They* will fail [Jeremiah 20:11]! Nothing shall by any means harm me [Luke 10:19]! ... etc." We continue (or repeat) until the thought is crushed. Battle won.

Let's say the thought comes, *You're gonna fail and be totally embarrassed*. Again, that voice is picking a fight. We say, "Nope! I can do all things through Christ's strength [Philippians 4:13]. God has good plans for me, plans to prosper me and give me success [Jeremiah 29:11]. Everything I do prospers [Psalm 1:3]. Even if I do fall, the righteous man gets up again [Proverbs 24:16]! God's angels pick me up lest I dash my foot against a stone [Psalm 91:12]! Anyone who trusts in God will not be put to shame [Romans 10:11], because *all* His promises prove true [2 Samuel 22:31 (TLB)]! ... etc." We continue (or repeat) until our heart is confident again. Battle won.

Let's say a well-meaning parent (or authority figure) tries to discourage you from the very thing you know God has called you to do. They reason, "It's a million-to-one odds. You're chasing pipe dreams. Go get a stable job. God wants you to be stable and taken care of. You are being too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. Your family needs that stable paycheck."

Even though these are good-intentioned words, they are still fighting words. Recognize and say, "God shall supply all my families' needs according to His riches in glory [Philippians 4:19]. I don't need to be concerned with what to eat or drink, because my God feeds the sparrow and He will feed my family [Matthew 6:25-27]. God is my provider, my source, not man. It is better to trust Him than the world's Princes [Psalm 118:9]. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me [Philippians 4:13]. All things work together for good for those called according to His purpose [Romans 8:28]. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond what I can ask or even think of, infinitely beyond my highest prayers, thoughts, desires or hopes [Ephesians 3:20]. At the proper time I will reap my harvest if I do not grow weary of doing good and if I do not give up [Galatians 6:9]. I will trust God with all my heart and won't lean on my own understanding [Proverbs 3:5-10]! ... etc." We continue (or repeat) until our heart is at peace again. Battle won.

Let's say an enemy takes you to court and says, "I'm going to sue you and take everything you own." Obvious fightin' words, so we say, "Nope. The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior, so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They *will* fail [Jeremiah 20:11]! When evil men come to destroy me, *they* will stumble and fall [Psalm 27:2]. The Lord will bend the heavens down and come to my defense [Psalm 18:9 (TLB)]! He rescues me from deep waters, from those who hate me [Psalm 18:16-17]. He will speed swiftly to my aid on a mighty angel, with wings of wind [Psalm 18:10]! He is my shield and my defender [Psalm 18:1-3 (TLB)]. He is my rock, where no enemy can reach me [Psalm 62]. He is my tower of safety [Proverbs 18]. His favor surrounds me as a shield [Psalms 3:3, 5:12]! He rescues me from every trap [Psalm 91:3 (TLB)] and rebukes the devourer for my sake! My crops will not cast their fruit [Malachi 3:11]! ... etc." We continue (or repeat) until we are fully confident in our victory through Jesus. Battle won.

Now we don't need to include the chapter and verse reference, and we can use our own everyday lingo. But do you see the pattern? It's just like a schoolyard fight when we were five. It's all that back and forth, one-upping each other. "I'm rubber, you're glue." "I know you are, but what

am I?” “Sticks and stones ...” Except this time we don’t use our own words or silly, meaningless, half-true rhymes. We use God’s words and the bottom-line truth!

But the catch is—we *have to know it*. Not only that, we must be able to recall it in a pinch, at any time. And we must speak it. Remember our very first battle tactic (Letting the Lord Fight, and “Replacement Theology”)? Remember how we practiced it and expanded on it daily? Remember how we talked about it being the most important tactic in regard to successful fighting later? This is why. This is *how* to win every battle.

I first saw this play out in my own life only months ago. I was hard at work one morning (probably writing this book), when the phone rings. It’s my wife and she is asking if one of our very sick friends can call me and pray with me on the phone. Our friend is having severe chest pains and needs prayer immediately. I feel completely inadequate, but of course we’ve got to stand together and pray, so I agree! Several minutes later I get the call from our friend. We talk for a bit about what is going on. Then I prayed. I didn’t really know what to pray—so I defaulted. I defaulted to going through a bunch of the verses that I quote every morning on the elliptical as I refocus and command my day (Battle Tactic 1). I began to thank God: “Thank you that no weapon formed against us will prosper [Isaiah 54:17]. Thank you that You have made us impervious to the attacks of the enemy [Jeremiah 1:18 (TLB)]. Thank you that the enemy might attack us one way, but he will flee from us seven ways [Deuteronomy 28:7]. Thank you that You rebuke the devourer for our sake [Malachi 3:11], that this battle is Yours [1 Samuel 17:47], that You crush the oppressor [Psalm 72:4] and that You have given the victory into our hands [1 Samuel 17:47]. Thank you that by Your stripes we are healed [Isaiah 53:5]! That You heal all our diseases [Psalm 103:3]. ... etc.” Not only did it make my prayer meaningful and substantial (much better than me mumbling something in my own words), but it began to work. Later our friend relayed that about fifteen minutes after we prayed, all the symptoms and chest pain just left and she was able to fall peacefully asleep. Battle won.

Fast forward to several weeks later. We woke up late at night and our baby girl, Liberty (then in my wife’s belly), was kicking frantically. Now, Liberty is a mover and a shaker in Jesus. She has always been an active little girl, but this was like she was trying to burst out of the womb. It didn’t feel right, and the spirit in the room didn’t feel right either. Again, I defaulted, “Thank You, Papa, that we can be confident of this, that You who began a good work in us will carry it out to completion until the day of Christ Jesus [Philippians 1:6]. Thank You, Jesus, that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty [2 Corinthians 3:17]! Thank You that no weapon formed against us will prosper [Isaiah 54:17]! Thank You that You will never leave us or forsake us, which is why we can boldly say, ‘The Lord is our helper! We don’t have to be afraid [Hebrews 13:6].’ Thank You that the Egyptians we see today we will never see again, that You fight our battles for us and we don’t have to lift a finger [Exodus 14:13-14].”

Of course we prayed in some tongues as well and probably commanded some stuff too. But the point is, as I was just going down the default list of all the appropriate verses I know, everything changed. Liberty settled down. Peace came back into that room. The weird moment passed. Order was restored. Battle won.

Shortly after that night, this revelation of *how to do battle* finally clicked in me. Not that it only works in prayer or behind closed doors, but that this is the way we defeat our enemy in the open, in the “real” world as well! Like David and Goliath. The war with words happened first. Then the spiritual/physical battle followed suit.

This next statement might take a little religious heat, but it’s true: this whole spiritual warfare thing kind of works like a role-playing game. Our words back and forth set the stage for attack. Then the battle plays out. Then our words set the next stage, and then that battle plays out. But it’s the *words* that determine the victory. It’s the words that direct the players and determine the weapons that will be used in the next attack sequence.

This is why satan can often win, even though he is battling a much more powerful Jesus and much more populous army of heavenly angels. It’s because as untrained, un-memorized, spiritually skittish Christians we verbally set our stage poorly time and time again. We give our side nothing to work with, no sword of the spirit, no rock to stand on, no plan of attack. Meanwhile, our overly verbose, trash-talking, bully-enemy gets knives, spears, darts, guns, tanks, and “F-bombs.”

Why does openly speaking work?

Well, our enemy only operates in darkness [Proverbs 4:19]. Jesus is the light [John 12:46]. Just as darkness flees when we flip on the light, our enemy will flee when we expose the lies of what he is doing to the light of the truth (the light of Jesus) [James 4:7]. No human truly wants to be evil (even if some may *think* they do). In reality, humans only do evil things because they are giving in to emotions and desires caused by evil spirits oppressing and rising up in them. So, as our words expose those spirits and bring our greater spirit, the Holy Spirit, onto the scene, the enemy will flee, and as a result, so will the evil desires of the person. A person no longer motivated by an evil spirit is no longer an evil person. They are no longer a threat. They are defeated.

This is why our battle is to keep on talking, to call on Jesus, to openly question people’s motives, to openly say when something is being done against us (especially if that something is being done covertly or in secret), to openly express our own motives, hurts, and emotions—to vocalize, vocalize, *vocalize*.

Like it says in Ephesians 5:11, we should “have no fellowship [*no agreement*] with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather *expose* them” (emphasis added). Remember, silence *is* agreement.

Even Jesus, the perfect man, a man 100 percent full of God and His power, was able to be controlled and killed simply because He never spoke up! Instead, Jesus went *silently* like a lamb to the slaughter [Isaiah 53:7]. He could have called down twelve legions of angels from heaven [Matthew 26:53], yet He went willingly and quietly to His death [John 10:17–18]. Even when He was examined by Pilate and no fault was found with Him [John 19:4], Jesus never spoke a word in His defense.

This silence is what allowed the enemy to kill Him. Wow. If the enemy can kill a silent Jesus, how much more harm can come to a silent disciple of Jesus, a silent *us*?

But Jesus knew how to fight. In fact, He had been untouchable for three years, speaking boldly to the Pharisees and Sadducees [Matthew 23:13], speaking boldly to the politicians [Matthew 22:34–40], speaking boldly to the people [Luke 4:28–30], speaking boldly to demons [Luke 4:35], and speaking boldly the will of the Father [John 5:30]. He even spoke and defeated the devil himself [Matthew 4:1–11]. Yes, Jesus knew how to fight with His words. So why did Jesus suddenly clam up?

Simple—He wanted to die. That was the plan—to catch the enemy red-handed, to fulfill the law once and for all, and to redeem the entire world by His blood. Jesus went willingly to the cross because that was the only way He could go. Had He opened His mouth even once, He would have immediately stopped the devil’s plan of death. He would have stopped the Father’s perfect plan of salvation, if not permanently, at least until some future date.

Family, this *is* the power we have now! As believers, living in Jesus—as sons of God and heirs to the throne—our power is in the words of our mouth [Proverbs 18:21]. We are as powerful, even more powerful, than Jesus himself [John 14:12]! This is why the enemy wants us to shut up, question nothing for ourselves, be “nice,” and just go along. This is why the enemy will try to bully us, shame us, and embarrass us into backing off and “keeping the peace.” He knows that if we simply start speaking up, asking honest questions, resisting him, “calling his bluff,” and show up to battle (no matter what the odds)—he will lose every time!

Yes, Jesus had to die physically on the cross to fully defeat the enemy. Yes, we are to follow His lead. However, we no longer need to die physically. Instead, we are to be *living* sacrifices [Romans 12:1]. Certainly we are dead to our flesh [Romans 8:13], dead to ourselves [Romans 6:11], but *not* dead physically. Instead we are *living* dead people!

Here is what the enemy doesn’t want us to know: the enemy *cannot* kill a 100 percent, born-again believer. The enemy *cannot* kill people already dead to their flesh, already dead to sin and living in Jesus. God said, it is appointed *once* for man to die [Hebrews 9:27]. If we truly are living

sacrifices (dead men/women alive in Christ), how can we be killed a second time? The enemy cannot kill what is already dead.

The only way the enemy can still kill a 100 percent, born-again believer is to trick that believer into resubmitting to a fleshly/physical death. If we truly are a *living sacrifice*, then the only way for us to die again is for us to *willingly (or unwillingly)* submit—to not openly resist death with our mouth and instead go along in silent “agreement” with it.

The lie of the enemy is that we *must* die or that we are “called” to die. This is not the case. As we previously stated, it is appointed *once* for a man to die [Hebrews 9:27]. After we die completely to ourselves and come alive in Christ [Romans 6:11], we no longer (legally or physically) have to die again. We *can* if we *choose* to. We *can* if we submit to death thinking we have no other choice. We *can* if we want our lives to become a seed. We *can* if we have been satisfied with a long life [Psalm 91:16] and are ready to go home. But if we know our rights and who we are in Jesus, we can simply say *no* to the enemy when he tries to bring death against us—we can raise up a standard against him [Isaiah 59:19], and we will remain.

The apostle John lived this. He was the only disciple who really knew how much Jesus loved him [John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20] and he was the only disciple who really believed (at least for a while) that he was going to remain until Jesus returned [John 21:22–23]. Consequently, he was the only apostle who was not martyred. He knew who he was and whose he was. He was a living dead man. When they tried to kill him (boil him in oil), they couldn’t—so instead, they banished him to an island to die when he was ready to go.

Ever wonder why the enemy tries so hard to get us to commit suicide? If killing us was so easy for him—if killing us was his choice—then why does he have to make *us* pull the trigger? Why does he have to wear *us* down so low that *we* finally agree to death? Furthermore, if we won’t pull the trigger, why does he have to get someone else to pull it? Why does he have to get other people to sentence us to death? If he had the ability to do it, why does he need someone else (a human) to make it happen? Why does he need *us* to “give up” and *us* to “give in” first?

In any case, whether death, abuse, or injustice—our fight remains the same. We must speak up, openly and consistently, against the enemy if we want victory. The enemy works in darkness. As long as some people are still operating in darkness (and/or we are staying silent about the abuse or injustice), the abuse or injustice will remain. In fact, without a voice it will only continue to grow worse.

We must learn to run to Jesus to heal ourselves from that continued abuse, injustice, and trauma in our own hearts while we continue to show up, turn our cheek, and not become rebellious or bitter against our abusers. All the while we must learn to be persistent in calling out that abuse and injustice. We must speak to it even while it is happening. We must bring it up

again later. We must not be afraid to honestly and openly tell how it is hurting and affecting us. If it continues to be a problem, then we must bring it up over and over, to more and more people. This is our fight. This is our path to victory, our path out, and our path to change.

Now, I don't want you to think that I am sitting here spelling out some black-and-white philosophy for all believers to blindly follow, a philosophy that says we never lift a finger in physical combat against those acting in obedience with our enemy and disobedience against our God. No, there are times for war and times for peace [Ecclesiastes 3:8]. It's not wrong to physically go to war to destroy evil or to overthrow it.

As a husband and dad, if some guy came after my wife or my children with intent to physically harm or abuse them, I would not have any problem with my family going all-out against that guy, not only resisting him with their words but with as much physical force as they could muster in Jesus. In fact, I would strongly encourage it. I also would not have a problem showing up and using physical force myself to keep that abuse or harm from happening to my family. However, I think that approach should be a last resort. It should be used only when clear sides have been taken, clear battle lines drawn. Look at Moses, look at Jesus, Elisha, Solomon, the apostles, and the two Revelation 11 witnesses. They battled with their mouths, while God physically took out their enemies. The conflicts, wars, and killings we saw played out in the Old Testament are the things we are to play out *spiritually* now. The reason is because, in this day and age, we have a spiritual antidote. It's an antidote that never used to exist. We have the shed blood of Jesus!

Yes, we are still called to destroy goliaths, completely wipe out the sin of entire cities, boldly confront false religions, remove evil kings, and overthrow wicked authorities. However, we are now able to do all that battle completely in the spirit world, understanding that if we expose and stop the spirit *behind* the man—the spirit motivating, driving, and controlling him—then we have also stopped the man and all his injustice. Furthermore, if we replace the spirit controlling the man with a stronger Holy Spirit (through Jesus), then we not only replace the man's injustice with proactive justice, we also save the man!

If we truly understand this approach, how to command and attack the spirit world *behind* the physical world, we no longer need to bring physical force or violence directly on man himself. This is a much better way of warfare. We completely stop the hand of the enemy while saving the man the enemy is operating through!

Todd White, a modern-day "street healer" has some great insight on exactly this subject. He talks about how to radically and actively love our enemies and has many stories about how God's radical love and healing power has dissipated hate on the spot. Check out his videos and teachings on YouTube or at www.neckministries.com.

In my limited experience, I've noticed that running directly at (rather than away from) the enemy coming against me and loving the people the enemy is using in the process has confused the enemy, exposed true motives, and completely flipped many of my personal situations around.

That being said, if someone is coming after you with obvious intent to physically harm you, by all means, go "spider-monkey" all over him or her while you are calling out to Jesus, commanding those evil, motivating spirits to leave while flowing in tongues like a crazy person. That is, of course, unless you feel led by the Holy Spirit to do otherwise. Personally, I can see cases where both a nonviolent and a completely violent response would be the proper, even biblical way to handle it.

For example, look at the Bible stories of David versus Goliath compared to David versus Saul. Each story encompasses a direct conflict; however, each poses a completely different (and proper) way to handle that same conflict. One calls for a direct, physical, frontal assault while the other calls for running, hiding, and avoiding violence altogether—where even a little cut to Saul's robe gives David a guilty conscience.

So how do we know *when* to use physical force? First, we must follow the Holy Spirit's lead. That is always the most accurate way. Second, when we look at David's two conflicts we see he only used force when coming against an enemy that was forcefully threatening others besides just himself. In addition—in the case of Goliath—David was defending Israel's God-given territory from an illegal outside invasion. Simply put, David was fighting a hostile takeover, a resistance that demanded physical force.

I believe these characteristics can be a great starting line when trying to decide if physical force is necessary, acceptable, or even required. When our enemy is openly against God, forcefully coming against our God-given territory, and when we are standing up for someone else, be it our family, friends, country, an oppressed group, etc,—then, like Jesus in the temple—we can wreak a little Holy Spirit-led havoc.

However, when the attack is directed primarily toward us, when it is not posing imminent physical danger to others, or when God has previously ordained our enemy—then we are most often being called to turn our cheek, and like Daniel in the lions' den, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, like Moses versus Pharaoh, like David versus Saul, we let the Lord walk us *through* it, we let Him fight, without physical confrontation from us.

But in either case, remember our secret weapon? No matter what, we boldly speak up!

Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. had this down pat. He knew how to fight. The fruits of his nonviolent yet very outspoken 1960s Civil Rights movement are still being enjoyed to this day. What could have easily started a second—this time urban—Civil War actually resulted in completely and nonviolently changing our modern culture. This would not have been possible

without the peaceful yet unashamedly vocal leadership of Dr. King. This is the power of fighting battles and removing injustice God's way!

With this in mind, check out the one really interesting thing in common between both of David's fights. It was his *words*! Look at 1 Samuel 17:45–47. As David is running toward Goliath, he is *speaking* to that spirit behind the giant and behind the entire Philistine army. David is hiding nothing. He is telling that spirit where to go, who is really doing the fighting (the Lord), and what he (David) is going to do to them.

Then flip to 1 Samuel 24, we see that the same is true for David's fight with Saul! Although David is strongly led to use *no* physical force against Saul (the Lord's anointed), we still see David boldly confront him in verse 9. He does it with honor and respect. No rebellion. But he also does it openly, directly, and honestly. He doesn't hide or downplay what Saul is doing to him, nor does he add any of his own judgment or condemnation to Saul for doing it. David does this so well that Saul turns around and blesses David. Then Saul goes on to prophecy David's eventual rise to the throne with his own mouth [1 Samuel 24:20]!

I know. This topic could be an entire book in and of itself. It truly is a case-by-case, person-by-person issue. That's why I'm trying to show both sides so plainly, and I'm not giving a true black-and-white, cut-and-dry answer. All that being said, Jesus is still our best example. Until He returns to kick butt, take names, and set up shop, I believe we are to walk as closely to His example as possible. If we look at His life we see He overcame every opponent solely with His words. Even the cross would have been avoided had He not shut His mouth. That is why I believe all our opponents can be defeated the same way.

Still, Jesus had thirty years of training before He started His ministry and starting doing open battle God's way. If you are just a baby Christian or caught in something bigger than you, get out! Don't hang out in a darkness you are unable to yet defeat. Don't stay, just to be destroyed. Get out. Get healed. Learn how to fight. Then go back and kick butt in Jesus! In the end, it all comes down to one thing: simply following the leading of the Holy Spirit in us. This is why we each *must* have our own real, personal relationship with our Papa God. He *always* knows *exactly* what we should do!

General Examples

Let's go one layer deeper and get a little more specific. Let's look at the basic types of conflict: physical, mental, and/or emotional—overt or covert. Generally speaking, how do we handle conflict that is *physically*, mentally, and emotionally abusive? How do we handle conflict that is *verbally*, mentally, and emotionally abusive? How do we handle conflict that is *non-verbally*,

mentally, and emotionally abusive? Let's look at how to implement the tactics we have been learning and discussing. Let's look at how to fight God's way.

What if the abuse is violent and physical? This is the climax of all abuse. If left unchecked, all abuse and every abuser will eventually get to this point of physical violence. In a perfect scenario, we never want to let abuse get to this level. We want to speak up long before it ever gets here. However, if we find ourselves in an unavoidable physically or sexually abusive altercation, what can we do?

First, we cry out for help from Jesus. Loudly, openly, repeatedly! It doesn't matter what we say—"Jesus, help!" is perfect! We also speak directly to the person or spirit attacking us (if we are mentally aware enough to do so). Spouting off a steady stream of tongues is great. Whatever the Holy Spirit leads us to do. Again, it matters far less what we say here—other than that we are openly addressing what is happening at the moment. We can say, "Stop!" or, "Stop in the name of Jesus!" or, "Get out of here!" or, "Go!" We must take charge of that spirit in Jesus' name. Jesus is light and truth, so we must vocally invite Jesus onto the scene. Then we look for the opportunity to escape—God promises to provide one [1 Corinthians 10:13].

If the abuser continues to approach or attack, then we continue to resist. Resist the devil and he *will* flee from you [James 4:7]. We resist and keep on resisting; we speak and keep on speaking. Then when the way of escape comes, we take it! But no matter what, we keep our mouth going.

Now some people may have already made up their minds to willingly give their life in a situation, like a soldier or a hostage or a missionary or Jesus at the cross. In that case, you may feel led to stay silent and go along submissively. However, if that is not the case (and remember, God leaves that call entirely up to us [Psalm 91:16]), then resist and speak, speak, speak.

Remember, *silent submission* gives the enemy authority over us to do anything he wants. Even in the face of fear, bullying, and intimidation, we have the right to say no and to draw a clear boundary at any time. *Vocal resistance* is our right. It is what gives heaven the ability to move on our behalf and affect the situation. Don't let anything stop you from speaking.

I personally struggled with this for years. I literally couldn't say no. The pressure was just too great. I had no real personal boundaries because I didn't know who I really was or what defined me. I never had anybody clearly set boundaries for me or demonstrate how to set them. I was a people pleaser and didn't know where others' selfish desires ended and my personal rights started. I was abuse waiting to happen.

Soaking and taking a stand (Battle Tactics 4 and 17) was my way out of this inner confusion and weakness. As the Holy Spirit daily filled me with God's mighty inner strength [Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:11], it got easier and easier to say no. It also got easier and easier to

see, distinguish, and set clear boundaries. I was able to start confronting, addressing, and stopping abuse long before it turned physical.

Okay, so what if we've given in and quietly gone through the physical abuse? What if it's become a lifestyle? What if it's now turned into a huge source of repeated shame and embarrassment that we can't get out of? Our answer is still the same. Speak. Begin to speak to someone about it. If that person is too close to the situation and can't handle what you've told him or her, speak again. If it is exposed but everyone calls you the liar, speak again. Speak to someone more distant, more removed from the situation, such as a teacher, a pastor, a cop, or a distant friend. Speak to an entire group of people at the same time (through mass e-mail or social media). But please speak.

Again, this is where soaking, memorizing Scripture, and speaking in tongues as much as possible will make us strong enough inside to be able to speak out in the face of all this rejection, shame, embarrassment, and fear. If you are literally unable to speak up because of how much it hurts, how embarrassing it is, and/or how much pressure you feel on the inside, that's okay. That was exactly my story. The way God led me out—and my advice to you—is to start soaking regularly, even daily. Start memorizing Bible verses and talking in tongues as much as possible, even if the abuse continues and you are unable to physically leave or get out. The Holy Spirit will begin to internally heal you. As you are healed, you will grow stronger and stronger (even in the face of the continued abuse). Follow the Holy Spirit's lead. Eventually, you will be strong enough to resist and/or get out. Eventually, you will be strong enough to tell everyone. Eventually, it won't even hurt on the inside when you do. Not because you are numb or dead emotionally but because you have been truly healed and have been given that crazy, supernatural, "mighty inner strengthening" of the Holy Spirit [Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:11].

Remember, even if it feels like we are alone, we are not. Many people have gone through and are going through the same types of rejection. We must look for the support groups God has placed around us. But even if you are like I was and are unable to find one, we must remember, "God will never leave us nor forsake us. That is why we can boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper! I am not afraid of anything mere man can do to me!'" [Hebrews 13:5–6]. He is and wants to be our permanent support group. And I can truly testify—He is the only support group we need!

These same principles, which are true for physical abuse, are also true for verbal, emotional, and nonphysical abuse. Sometimes types of nonphysical abuse can actually be harder to stop simply because there is no plain or visible "evidence" to show for it.

This is especially true for *covert abuse*. Covert abuse is nonphysical mental and/or emotional abuse where one is being secretly ignored, shunned, belittled, and/or avoided for long periods of time. It is abuse where one is being treated more like a hassle than a human, more like a problem than a person, more like a bother than a brother, more like a nuisance than a niece.

Like a geek sitting at the “cool kids” table, this type of abuse is common where cliques, factions, or different perceived levels of society interrelate.

Often, when speaking up about this type of abuse, the abusers will just deny it and then proceed to turn it around and make even more fun of the abused for bringing it up. They may call the abused crazy, paranoid, troubled, a “bad apple,” or any number of things. Ironically, this cold reception and indifference to the “lesser” party’s feelings/voice is actually concrete evidence that the abuse truly exists.

Still, our solution remains the same. Soaking, memorizing Scriptures, talking in tongues, and hanging out with Jesus will heal us internally, while *speaking up* will continue to expose and shut down the enemy externally. In these hidden, covert abuse cases, speaking up many times to large groups of people at the same time will often work best. I would suggest going to the problem first and then including more and more people in the continued confrontations if the abuse remains. E-mail is a great way to handle this, especially if the person being abused is new to speaking up and new to confrontation. Often, the whole thing can be twisted and turned back on the abused during a one-on-one or face-to-face confrontation (as the abused individual’s own “delusional” problem). With e-mail, the person being abused is free to get everything out exactly how he or she wants to say it. The person can plainly say exactly how the abuser is making him or her feel. Best of all, he or she doesn’t have to be there (under that controlling pressure) while trying to accurately deliver such an intimately personal and exposing message.

In addition, e-mail allows for any number of “witnesses” to be included in the confrontation. Especially with covert abuse, the more obvious these “includees” are to the abuser, the better. Often, once the abuser knows everybody knows about the situation (and once the abuser realizes he or she can no longer secretly influence or manipulate the situation without additional vocal, open resistance from the person being abused), it will change his or her behavior.

If you do choose to confront face-to-face, I would suggest getting a third-party mediator. This is someone who has been told the whole situation and is understanding but far removed from it. This is someone who can easily take control and/or shut things down if the confrontation turns hurtful or turns back on the person being abused. Also, it is someone who can be an unbiased witness, so that neither the abuser nor the abused leave the confrontation with a warped perception of what took place.

This may sound strange, but in some ways *overt abuse* is actually easier to deal with than *covert abuse* because overt abuse is done openly. Like conventional warfare—everyone knows where the battle lines are drawn. It’s clear who is against whom. It’s not hidden, slippery, gorilla-style warfare like covert abuse. Nobody can secretly gossip and lie, twist motives, or sway

others perceptions. Overt abuse is exposed. It is public. The conflict cannot be denied. Therefore, it can be dealt with.

In my specific experience, I found that I had to trust God completely through the years of covert abuse. I had to run to Him over and over and learn how to let Him take all the emotional pain dumped on me. And I had to wait until He set up a scenario that took the abuse from covert to overt. That day was a mighty victory for me; the enemy finally overplayed his hand and exposed himself. Things have been changing for the better ever since.

Remember, the enemy will try to shame and embarrass the person being abused out of speaking up. Exposing abuse doesn't prove we are indeed worthless or pathetic (like we may fear we are, deep down inside). No. Exposing abuse shows how evil, twisted, sick, selfish, or sincerely misguided the abuser is—all the shame, all the embarrassment lies with them.

Author's note: Thank you for your grace and understanding throughout this section on abuse. I realize I can only share from my own experiences, observations, and victories. I am no expert. Thus, I can only offer advice from the perspective of what I've walked through. I realize each situation and abuser is unique—my hope is to point you to Jesus, show you that there is in fact a way out, and offer any help I can. For more extensive and comprehensive resources check out: *The Verbally Abusive Relationship—How to recognize it and how to respond*, by Patricia Evans, *Boundaries Face to Face*, by Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend, and/or *Waking Up in Heaven* by Crystal McVae.

Specific Examples: Suffering Silently, Part 1

My first story of abuse ends, but it doesn't end well. Well, at least not in a way that I learned anything constructive from it. However, it does illustrate a great point of what *not* to do, so I guess we're still gonna "go there."

It all took place in my fifth-grade English class. Cluster 5c, I believe. I had an awesome seat next to Caryn, a cute little blonde girl I secretly had a crush on. I had started to notice that "Jack," (let's call him that), was constantly being moved around the room by our teacher, (let's call her) Ms. Johnston. It was kinda pissing me off. Every few weeks or so we would walk into class and BAM—all the desks would be totally rearranged. Bummer. But finally I had a prime location! I was hoping this was it!

The honeymoon lasted about six weeks. Then it happened—the day Jack's desk "magically" got moved next to mine. I guess Ms. Johnston was finally tired of completely rearranging the room. That or she was totally out of ideas. But for whatever reason, Jack got moved next to me.

We had been sitting in groups of four, each desk touching the next, all facing the center—like little scholastic, four-squares. I was on the left, Caryn was on the right, and—well let's face it—who cares who sat across from us. Then came Jack. He took up his position as the abusive third wheel, sitting awkwardly to my left. His desk was butted up against the side of mine, facing me at a ninety-degree angle.

That's when I found out.

That's when I found out why Jack was always being moved. Every time Ms. Johnston would turn away, he would punch me as hard as he could in the arm. At first I was caught off guard and just laughed it off. But then it got annoying. Then incredibly annoying. Then abusive.

I began to both love and hate that class. An angel sat on my right and the devil on my left. I was stuck.

Here's where the story dies pitifully. I'd like to say that I waited until one day when Jack wasn't looking and then levied upon his tiny frame such a bashing that his lights remained "out" permanently. I'd like to say that I warned him once—nay—then twice, before I loudly and precociously exposed him in front of the entire class (and Ms. Johnston) each and every time he touched me after that. At least I'd like to say I went home and tattled on Jack to my parents so they could go talk to Ms. Johnston and get her to rearrange all the desks again (which is obviously what all the other, smarter kids were doing).

But I didn't. I just silently took the abuse. I endured. And guess what? It remained.

Fast forward. Let's compare this to a similar situation that happened to me in college. I was a buff twenty-something, waiting tables at Chili's. One of the more outspoken leaders of the waiter pack thought it would be funny to just start randomly hitting me. Ironically, it was pretty much the same scenario. I was given several solid punches to that hauntingly familiar spot, my left arm.

Maybe my subconscious remembered Jack, maybe I had grown more impatient since then, maybe it hurt a wee bit more. For whatever reason, I took about two of those hits and then I laid one on the perpetrator that shook him to his core. You know the kind of punch, where you aim through his shoulder! I could see it physically shook him. Both of us played it off with some smiles and witty banter.

He punched me only one more time after that, I guess "testing the waters" to see if I'd do it again. This time I didn't hit him hard. I hit him harder. I don't think I held back much at all. I never got hit again. We remained friends (hung out, even worked out together a couple of times), but the abuse stopped.

Not that I handled that 100 percent correctly. Maybe I should have given him a verbal warning or something first. Maybe I should have *only* used my words. But here is my point. I took close to a full school year of physical abuse in fifth grade because I didn't say anything and didn't fight back—I quietly went along with it. Yet that same abuse was stopped in less than one week ten years later simply because I resisted my enemy. Not the human. In fact, I still like the guy. He really was a hard worker with a likable, charismatic personality. But I just wasn't eating what he was serving. My strong response drove that abusive spirit right out of him. Problem solved. Standard raised.

Suffering Silently, Part 2

I've always had a carefree, "peaceable" attitude. Throughout my life I've generally been willing to give up my personal freedom and comfort in exchange for keeping peace in the room and having fun. Like I said earlier, I've never been good with personal boundaries. I guess I've always expected others to respect my personal space and thus have always defaulted to letting them draw the lines.

So when I finally got truly born again in the summer of 2004, satan immediately began to put this weakness to the test, pushing my boundaries and using my passivity against me. He wanted to contain, control, and bind me. It was quite a brilliant plan. As I began to stand up for Christ and really begin to discover who I was in Jesus, the gossip, rumors and lies began to spread about me—setting up invisible boundaries all around.

Then a few years into the whole process, just at the point where I was becoming completely comfortable in my own skin, truly free, and truly experiencing joy, satan dropped the hammer. He began to make it obvious to me that I was being boxed in. I clearly saw that I was being avoided, talked about, and treated differently. Then I began to see that it had been going on for most of my life. Satan was throwing down the ace that he had been holding up his sleeve. He was sifting me like wheat.

At first I didn't believe it. It took about six to nine months before I was really convinced that any of it was true. But I kept getting hammered day after day, time after time, over and over again. I couldn't help it. It started to sink in. I slowly began to bring it up to people. But they denied it. So I would be quiet again, the silence perpetuating the scenario, letting it build and build and build. It was a weird case. What do you do when you know something is going on, but when you confront people they all deny it? I mean everyone. Then they continue to treat you the exact same, uncomfortable, standoffish way?

Thankfully, God only allowed me to clearly see this after I was totally sold out to Him. Otherwise it would have certainly destroyed me. That is exactly what the enemy intended it to do

to me. In fact, it almost did, even with God 100 percent in the picture. But God had a different plan. He was using it to shake my world, to remove all the lies, the false securities. He was using it to teach me about boundaries, about the games we all play, to sharpen my discernment, to remove my focus off the approval of man, to show me how to fight His way, to completely trust Him, and to completely overcome!

He was my only hope and my only way out. I knew this. So I began to bring it all to Him. I began to soak daily—then twice a day. Every time those offenses and hurts built up, I would lay on the couch (worship music playing in the background) until He showed up, spoke with me, and took them out of my heart. I began to memorize Scripture and quote them to myself all the time. I began to talk in tongues as much as possible. I fasted. I listened and listened and listened to Him. I began to obey in every way I could. When I couldn't obey, I would give it to Him and wait until He changed me so I could. I began to thank Him that He was making a way where there was no way. I began to rely on Him more and more—His love, power, point-of-view, joy, peace, and stability.

As I became more healed internally, I was able to speak up more externally. It took three years before I started openly confronting others, face-to-face, about the things I perceived were going on behind the scenes. Not coincidentally, that year started with a forty-day fast for breakthrough and for breakthrough specifically with my situation (because I knew I didn't have the power to confront within me).

God is good! That year all the gossip, mistreatment, and injustice became openly exposed. It went from covert to overt abuse. No longer could anyone pretend it wasn't going on. I'm sure the enemy meant the overt attacks to be the "straw that broke the camel's back." I'm sure he meant it to destroy me, to finish me off, to put me in my place once and for all.

But it was too late. Jesus had already healed me! I now know what it means to have the *mighty inner strengthening* of the Holy Spirit [Ephesians 3 (TLB)]. I now know what *peace that passes all understanding* really is. I now know what it's like when everything on the outside says you should be totally crushed and destroyed, yet inwardly you can't even feel the pressure. I now know what it's like for the entire world to be collapsing outwardly, yet inwardly it feels like you're going for a relaxing day at the pool.

For three years (with very limited dialog) my problem and my abuse just kept growing. For three years I suffered, mostly in silence, taking it to Jesus like crazy, letting Him heal, strengthen, and change me internally. Then He broke everything wide open! The external breakthrough all started with my words and continued to play out around me as I completely and totally trusted, openly spoke, and obediently followed Him as best as I could.

It's still getting better and better. Not that everyone loves me and understands me. No, the misunderstanding, the disapproval, the hate is still there. But everything is open, very open. I have found that the more people I include in the process, the more the gossip and abuse is quieted. I have discovered that the more open I am about how I will continue to love, respond, and act toward them (no matter how they act toward me), the freer I become.

With each confrontation I have noticed a new level of release—an outward level of pressure lifting while an inward level of pressure (confidence) grows. Even when my abusers were directly confronted and still wouldn't own up to their part (or change), my exposing the abuse to everyone around me and my willingness to openly talk about it continues to bring more and more freedom to me to this day.

The Power of Words

We should never bring a gun to a swordfight! Think about it. Our words are extremely powerful. They are sharper than a double-edged sword, more powerful than any physical force (especially when they are backed up by God's Word). There are countless stories that illustrate this fundamental truth. Here are just a few I have heard or personally experienced over the years.

An assistant pastor at The Village church told this story. His mother called him extremely distressed one very early Saturday morning. Her door was being broken down by a substance-abusing attacker. The pastor (her son) lived more than forty minutes away and didn't know what to do. They quickly agreed to pray for God's protection. Then he told her to call 911. She hung up to call while her son continued to pray.

A few moments later she called him back. The police were on their way! However, by now the door was completely broken down. There she stood, on the phone with her son, face-to-face with her potential assailant. The perpetrator began to move toward her. Then, just as suddenly as he started, he stopped, halted in the doorway. He looked dazed. To her surprise, that is right where he remained. Staring blankly ahead, knife in hand, he never moved. For the five to ten minutes it took the cops to arrive, the strange face-off continued. When the police finally showed up, all they had to do was cuff the stunned man. Instantly, the "daze" lifted. But it was too late—everyone was okay!

That's the power of words.

Peggy Joyce Ruth tells a story in her book *Psalms 91*, about a woman baking pies in her apartment one Sunday morning before church. After answering an unexpected knock at the door her day was forever changed. The man on the other side of the door forced his way into her apartment with total intent to rape her. Immediately, she began to resist. She started screaming, "No! No! No!" as he pushed her into her bedroom and wrestled her to the bed. She began to

repeat, “Jesus, help me; Jesus, help me.” The man told her to shut up, but she would not be silent. Quite a bit more went on (for the complete story see Peggy’s book, p. 138). There was as much vocal resistance as physical resistance by the young woman. Finally she was able to break free and run into the living room. She broke free again and ran out of the locked front door, unharmed. Each time she broke free, it had been her bold, loving, godly words that had literally sucked the strength out of her attacker. When the police arrived on the scene they could not believe how “lucky” the young woman had been. She had struggled with the attacker for more than twenty minutes and only had a few bruises and the attacker’s earring-back to show for it.

That’s the power of words.

I heard a *700 Club* story about a young, up-and-coming gang member who got saved only days before he was to receive a big “promotion.” Instead of accepting the promotion, he showed up and boldly dropped a bombshell. He said he was quitting the gang. The drug boss was furious, pointed a gun in his face, and gave him the option of promotion or death. Again, the young man said he was quitting. Rather than pulling the trigger, the drug boss became suddenly terrified, asking the boy who those “men” were that were with him. Visibly shaken, the boss put the gun down and let the boy go free, even ordering that no other gang member should ever touch or harm him.

You got it. That’s the power of words.

I heard one story about a little old lady (a believer) who got mugged on the back streets of a major city. As they grabbed her purse she simply yelled, “Freeze!” As if being controlled by another force, all the assailants instantly froze. The elderly lady calmly reached up, took back her purse, and quietly walked a block down the street. Reaching her hotel, she turned and again spoke, this time verbally releasing them. Instantly, they became free and took off running.

One mo, ‘gain. That’s the power of words!

Michael Galiga has a great personal example in his book *Win Every Battle*. He tells of an abusive business deal gone wrong: “George” was a pit bull of a man while Michael was a kitten. George owed Michael half a million dollars on a successful deal they had made. However, George had no intention of paying up. It wasn’t that George couldn’t pay or didn’t understand the contract. He just wasn’t interested in ever paying Michael. For Michael, a small-business owner, this meant imminent financial disaster. So Michael ran to someone bigger—God!

Pushing through all the fear and intimidation George kept dumping on him, Michael continued running to God for daily guidance and strength. He began praising God for the victory that only God could bring, and started quoting and standing on the promises of God’s Word. Meanwhile, he continued calling George and politely asking for his money.

Long-story-short, the two arranged a personal airport meeting. It took everything Michael could muster to force himself into that conference room alone with George. But as they sat face-to-face, everything changed. All the color drained out of George's face. He went from angry, beet-red to pale, Xerox-white. He stared intently over Michael's shoulder, obviously captivated by something. Sometime later his color slowly returned. George mumbled something about repaying Michael and left to go home. Several days later the five hundred fifteen thousand dollars George owed was placed where it should be, in Michael's account!

You guessed it. That's the power of words (plus confrontation ☺).

I had a similar business experience happen to me. I was out of work for a good eighteen months right after college. During that time I took all the odd and contract jobs I could find. One such contract job was designing a board game for a faith-based ministry. The ministry was great, but the third-party company they were employing to build the game was a wee bit shady, to say the least. Long story short, I did more than three thousand dollars' worth of work (even completing the project) without seeing a dime. I was broke. I desperately needed the money. My company contact continually told me the check was in the mail. This went on for weeks.

Thankfully, I realized it was a test. I chose to trust God. He knew my situation. If He never wanted me to have the money, then I was happy to have helped them out. I was happy to have gotten some experience and portfolio "filler" in the process. However, God gave me a game plan. I began calling regularly. Not incessantly, but once every two or three (or five) days. Each time I was happy and polite. Each time I simply asked for the latest update on my payment and for a call back as soon as it was convenient. My contact quit answering about three calls into the process. But I just kept it up. I'm not sure how long it was (maybe a month or two), but the day came when my check (for the full three thousand dollars) came in the mail!

Yeah, that's the power of God plus words.

Okay, one last story. This one demonstrates how words not only work on physical bullies and abusers but on spiritual ones (like addictions) as well. It comes from Jackie Pullinger's book *Chasing the Dragon*. In it she depicts her fascinating struggle against the darkness of Hong Kong's "drug den," including its leader, Ah Kei. We catch up with the story shortly after Ah Kei's life has miraculously been transformed and saved. That is, everything except his ten-year, hundred-dollar-a-day heroin habit.

After trying unsuccessfully to quit both heroin and then God—Ah Kei finally agrees to go through withdrawal at Jackie's friend Jean's house. The results were equally miraculous. Without using any methadone (a prescribed substitute drug used in the treatment of heroin addiction), Ah Kei slept peacefully for three days without any painful withdrawal symptoms. If at any time he did wake up and feel a twinge of pain, they advised him to pray in tongues. As he complied, the pain

miraculously disappeared. This went on until the fifth day, when Ah Kei knew he was completely free of the addiction. Once Jackie began to realize that “praying in the Spirit” was the answer for painless withdrawal from heroin, they began to repeat the process with several of Ah Kei’s drug-addicted friends, including Ah’s long-time racketeer friend Wahchai. Each rehabilitation period was met with the same pain-free success!

Okay. Everybody now: “That’s the power of words!”

What Do We Do When the Enemy Won’t Change?

Here’s our conundrum. Let’s say we wash daily in the Word. We have become powerful inside, filled with a significant portion of God’s love and mighty inner strength. We are not rebellious in spirit. We keep showing up, even in the face of abuse. We keep turning the other cheek. We have not been silent. We have actively been outspoken and upfront about the abuse. We have addressed the issues with the perpetrators and then with all those around the perpetration. Let’s say we do all that, but still nobody is truly willing to change. Our abusers continue to make excuses and feel justified in their unloving actions. They continue to hide behind false appearances and shallow lies. The rebellion is still there. The pride is still there. The abuse and the hate remains. What then?

There are three things we can do.

First, we as kings and priests (prophets of God) can call the shots. We see biblical examples of this between Elijah and Ahab [1 Kings 16–18], Nathan and David [2 Samuel 12], and Peter and Annanias/Syphara [Acts 5]. When each prophet directly questioned the abuser about the abuse, each prophet also determined (or was given) the complementary judgment. In David’s case, we see that true repentance will lift the judgment.

However, there is a better way. Jesus and Stephen are our examples. While Peter and the prophets of old brought death and destruction, Jesus and Stephen brought forgiveness, new life, and power. Jesus and Stephen demonstrated our ability to not only call the shots (destroying the enemy) but our ability to save the person from the enemy as well.

For example, Paul (then Saul) was the chief overseer of Stephen’s undeserved death [Acts 7:58]. However, Stephen didn’t speak judgment. Instead, he said a much more powerful thing. He said, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin” [Acts 7:60]. This selfless act gave the Holy Spirit free reign in the situation, to legally show up, determine God’s perfect justice, and then change things Himself. At the authority of Stephen’s forgiving voice, God was justly released to give the man responsible for the unjust murder, Paul (then Saul), a totally personalized, completely customized, life-changing, “Damascus Road” experience [Acts 9]. Not only was the enemy who was deceiving Paul destroyed, but Paul’s life was spared and radically transformed. As a result,

billions more souls have been touched (and all of eternity forever changed) by what Paul went on to do, write, and become. Neither Peter nor the prophets of old were able to get those kinds of results through deserved justice!

The same is true with Jesus. At the authority released on the cross by His words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” [Luke 23:34], the Holy Spirit was justly released to give the men who committed that unjust murder a totally personalized, completely customized, life-changing, “Damascus Road” experience.

Who were those men? Isaiah 53:5 tells us who it was who murdered Jesus: “But He was wounded for *our* transgressions; He was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement for *our* peace was upon Him” (emphasis added).

Yes, friends, it was *us*!

This is why the Holy Spirit can show up and move mightily in each of our lives to this day. We are the murderers Jesus forgave on the cross. We are the ones who justly receive customized “Damascus Road” experiences because of what Jesus unjustly received. That is the eternity-changing, enemy-removing, life-saving power of a prophet forgiving!

Second, we redefine the game.

In other words, we honestly and openly state how we are going to behave in the continued abusive situation from now on, even if the abusers don’t want to admit the abuse is happening or feel totally justified in how they continue to act. When we openly spell out how we are going to approach the situation and act in the situation from now on, it removes that protective cover of “darkness.” It removes the “hidden-ness” that the enemy desperately needs (and abusers secretly love) to operate in. It makes the “game” no longer a game, because now everyone knows everyone is “playing.” It may not completely stop the abuse, but it will significantly shut it down. It will remove the divisive control and put freedom back into us and into the surrounding circumstances.

Remember, we have no control over how others behave. The only person we can truly control is ourselves. Likewise, the only person we can truly call the shots for is ourselves. We can only truly manage how *we* are going to “play” the game.

But in this lies our victory! The victory comes when we openly expose exactly *how* we are going to “play” said game. It is no longer a game of domination when everyone knows the rules. It is no longer an abusive situation when everyone knows we are willingly setting our own boundaries. The power of the abuse is removed because the abuse is no longer hidden. It no longer has free reign.

In practical terms, how does this all go down? We spell it out. We spell out *how* we are going to interact with them from now on. Maybe it is to only meet in public. Maybe it's only to meet at certain events. Maybe it's only to meet when a cop, a judge, or an unbiased third-party is present. Maybe it is to back off completely.

For my situation, I simply let everyone know the boundaries I was going by. The funny thing was that once I set up these boundaries, it was easy to get past them. It was easy to interact and speak up even more than before. That pressure of not knowing how to act had surprisingly lifted. I knew how to act. I had spelled it out. Once again, I was able to just be me.

The following is a segment of the mass e-mail I sent establishing my boundaries. It was to everyone who was already in or close enough to the situation I was personally walking through. If you are facing a similar situation, my hope is that this will give you a more solid idea of what to do and how to respond (because I know when I did it, I didn't have a clue).

Personally, and I'm being totally honest, I don't feel thrilled to walk back into an abusive-type situation. A situation where nothing has changed and yet we are trying to carry on "as normal." I grew up in tension like that and I have no interest in perpetually playing that game again. However, I think it is good that we do move on in some way—and I know Jesus can heal any more hurt (intentional or unintentional) that may occur. I know you all have good intentions and I truly appreciate it (more than you know). I promise to do my best to always assume the best of you all as well. So I'm all in! Let's do this.

To be up front with my game plan, I've been thinking about it and have come to the realization that I can't truly set boundaries for anybody except myself. So here is how I'm gonna play it. These are the boundaries I'm gonna go by, at least initially. I will be polite and respectful, say "hi" and "bye" to everyone, and look for ways to serve you guys and jump into the conversation as I can. I will be open, honest, and happy to address any and all questions or concerns directed Kristy's or my way. But I have to say I don't necessarily feel "safe" or comfortable to just be me in our current environment.

Additionally, I'm not the kind of person who likes to force himself on somebody else. I only feel comfortable when I know everyone else in the room feels comfortable first. So if you see me hanging back (like in the past few years) or if I'm awkward, it's not because I'm paranoid or anything. I just wanna respect each of your personal space and/or I can plainly feel the distance in the room and I try to honor that (sorry, I just really pick up on that stuff well).

Anyways, I'm gonna put the ball in your court and leave it up to you guys individually how much you want to interact with me between the "hi's" and "bye's." I hope that is all right with all of you.

Okay, moving on. What's the third thing we do when the enemy won't change? We continue to address it! We don't have to keep bringing up the past, but if the abuse continues then we continue to lovingly (yet openly) address it. We call it out on scene. We call it out afterward. We address it with the appropriate authorities. We address it with the perpetrators. We address it with our heavenly Papa and with everyone around. We don't stop until the abuse stops.

Moses parting the Red Sea is our example. Isn't it interesting that the Red Sea never started parting until Moses held up his staff? Read the story [Exodus 14]. God is leading them out. Clearly He has orchestrated the exodus. Yet suddenly the children of Israel find themselves stuck between a rock and a hard place. To their front is a massive body of water, the Red Sea, and to their rear is the entire army of Pharaoh. They are trapped!

In their despair Moses cries out to God. In return, God lets Moses know—in no uncertain terms—that He is stuck waiting on Moses [Exodus 14:15]. God needs an earthly act of faith to legally begin to move. So Moses raises his staff and the Red Sea begins to part, exposing a hidden path (placed there from the foundation of the earth) to freedom and total victory.

This is an illustration for us today. If we have done all we can, if we have forgiven, if we have confronted our "Pharaoh" (our source of pain and bondage) yet continue to find ourselves trapped—with a wall of water on one side and our abusers quickly bearing down from the other—this is what we do: we raise our staff!

The staff in Scripture is a picture of the law. Specifically it is a picture of the law's protection. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" [Psalm 23:4]. Why? Because for us as sheep, the shepherd's rod and staff symbolize protection from enemies and rescue from tough situations. The Old Testament rod is a type of the New Testament sword. It represented the spiritual weapon of the day—the law.

Here's what we learn. We must raise our rod if we want God to part our "Red Sea." In order for God to make a way where there is no way, in order for God to expose the hidden path out of our trap, we must openly speak the Word (the promises) of God. We must be vocal. We must raise our "rod" for all to see. We must speak to our storm. We must raise our voice. We must raise up a standard against the enemy. We must boldly call on Jesus. This *is* what allows God to part our Red Sea and destroy our enemy in it. This *is* what allows God to lead us safely through our trouble to victory on the other side.

When Daniel was faced with his trap—worship the king or be thrown in the lions' den—he too boldly raised his staff. As soon as he heard the decree was signed he immediately went home

and prayed publicly out of his open windows as always [Daniel 6:10]. That act of faith (that rod raised) made a way where there was no way—safely *through* the lions' den.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saved by raising their rod as well. When faced with denouncing God or being thrown into a fiery furnace, they spoke up boldly [Daniel 3:16–18]. It earned them a trip to the fiery furnace, but it also allowed Jesus to provide them with safe passage *through* it!

Likewise, when we have done all we know to do, we simply continue to boldly raise that standard, God's standard (our rod, our banner of Jesus). We simply continue to expose the truth, time after time, continuing to speak up and out. We do not bow to the enemy. Yet we continue to radically love and reveal our true motives to all the individuals involved. This is what will allow God to make a way for us where there is no way!

Going on the Offensive

What about “picking a fight”? What if we have moved from our bondage into our “Promised Land” and we want to expand? What if we want to go out and actively engage the enemy, not just stop what he is doing to us? What if we want to pick the fight?

Here's how we do it. We openly, publicly praise and thank God.

A great example of this is David. When he went out to battle he put the praise and worship team at the front of the army. They would lead the army into battle. In other words, they would pick the fight. They cleaned up the atmosphere. They imparted the fear of the Lord into the enemy camp. They sent the enemy demons fleeing, so that only weak, scared men were left.

If we want to expose our enemy, if we want to know who our battle is with, if we want to pick a fight so we can expand our territory, our control over the land, we simply praise. We simply thank God openly and publicly. Remember, the same way we pick a fight is the same way we win our fight. It's by the word of our testimony and by the power of the blood of the Lamb! It's by running head-on at our enemy. By speaking the truth and calling his bluff. Yeah, let's go pick & kick some butt! Well, you know what I mean.

Battle Tactic 18:

God's Love

God's love *is*. It *is* the ultimate offensive weapon. It *is* the power for change. Most of the tactics we have discussed already—soaking, obedience, holiness, speaking in tongues, memorizing Scripture, washing in the Word, etc.—are simply ways to channel, experience, tap into, and

express God's love in greater and greater ways. But God's love, God's compassion, God's joy actually *is* the power—the miracle working power of God flowing in our lives.

Without God's love, there is nothing. Without God's love there is just dry, empty, hollow interaction. Love *is* the oil. Love *is* the wine. Love *is* the bread. If God is the water company CEO, Jesus the homeowner, and you and I the hose—then God's love *is* the water flowing through that hose (through us) and out into the flowerbed of other people's lives. God's love *is* what causes growth. God's love *is* sustenance. God's love *is* life.

This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 that without God's love we have nothing, even if we are moving mountains by our faith and giving ourselves to be burned at the stake. If we are doing these things out of our own love—out of pride, guilt, religious duty, fear, or whatever else we can be motivated by—it is nothing. It must be done out of God's love.

It's like watering the yard without turning the water on. Good works without God's love is just a bunch of toil and pointless effort. It's a bunch of show, useless glitz and glam. It's just a pathetic, delusional man walking back and forth pointing an empty hose at his shrubbery—expecting change, life, growth and getting nothing. It's pointless. It's sad. It's embarrassing. It's ineffective. It's a charade. It's a complete waste of time. It's death. It's nothing.

So what *is* the difference between God's love and our own?

Our love is selfish. It always expects to be reciprocated, repaid, or returned in some way. Our love is idolatry. It gives to others the position and influence that only God should have over us. Our love is lust. It takes what we want, when we want it. It takes at the expense, at the cost, even at the very life of others.

God's love starts where ours stops. When we get to the point where we are totally fed up, where we are just “done” with the person, the relationship, or the situation—this is when God's love can begin.

Simply put, *God's love* is the love we show others solely out of love and obedience for God. It is 100 percent God's love for that individual because in and of ourselves we have none. When we get to the point where we are only loving others the ways God is showing, leading, and telling us to love them, then (at that point) we are just starting to operate in and release the life-giving power of God's love on that person.

This is why Jesus says in Luke 14:26 that we must hate our family, our wife, our kids, even our own life in order to be His disciple. In other words, we must have zero selfish love for all those around us. That way we have room to be 100 percent full of God's love instead!

The problems come when we continue to maintain some amount of our *own* love for others. Our own love gives them (and their approval) influence over us, influence that rightfully

belongs to God. It leaves a door open for offense, when we feel like they are not returning our love adequately. It leaves room for fear and anxiety to eat us up when they disapprove, don't reciprocate, and/or reject our love.

See, when all of our selfish love (for others and ourselves) is replaced completely by God's love, that's when we become unshakable, unwavering, and unyielding. Why? Because we no longer expect anything in return and no longer give anything of our own, of ourselves, away.

This is why we are no longer offended if others don't reciprocate the initial sentiment. This is why we are no longer inappropriately influenced, overly controlling, or left rejected. Not because the love we have for others is so great that we aren't affected by their rejection but because none of the love we have for them is ours. None of the love flowing out of us is coming from us!

Pretend I give you a check for ten thousand dollars. It's all yours. My only request is that you give two thousand dollars to your parents. They are amazing people. I really love them. I know you really love them too. I want to show my love for them in some tangible way.

But there is a problem. I don't know them and they don't know me. In fact, we don't know each other at all. Awkward! But they *do* know you. And thankfully, so do I. I'm simply asking you to be my middleman, to help me out and pass the money along.

Thankfully, you also love me. So you kindly agree. You surprise your parents with the two G's the next day.

How will their response affect you?

Simply put, it won't.

If they gush all over you, you'll enjoy it, it will bring you closer together, but still you'll say, "This isn't from me, it's from my friend who wanted you to have it. Really, he's a great guy; you guys should meet sometime."

If they politely turn it down, you'll just urge them, "Are you sure? This isn't my hard-earned money. A friend gave this to me. He wanted you to have it. In fact, he even paid me extra to give this to you. Please, keep it."

If they rip up the check and spitefully throw it back in your face you'll excitedly exclaim, "Are you sure? For sure, for sure? Well, okay, now I get to keep it. Thank You, Jesus!"

Do you see how their reaction no longer affects you in any way? If they dote and gush all over you, you won't get a big, prideful head because you know that it wasn't actually your money. If they make fun of you and reject you for being a showoff, it doesn't hurt because it wasn't your gift. You were just the messenger. If they keep it and never repay you, that's okay too because you weren't expecting to get repaid in the first place.

This is how stable we become once we begin to operate solely in God's love. We never get a big head. We never get hurt. We never get offended. We never fluctuate.

Even in the worst-case scenario, the scenario in which they completely misunderstand our gesture (where they tear up the check and throw it back in our face), even then we are cool, calm, and collected. In fact, this is probably the best-case scenario as it is the biggest witness to the power of God's love in our lives. Think of how extremely confused and awed they would be by the overly excited, joy-filled way in which you react to their complete, abrasive rejection.

This is how it works with God's love. When we are simply passing God's love on to others—His love through us—then who cares how the recipients react to that love? Their reaction is merely a response toward the giver, not of the messenger. Does the post office get offended when you return a letter they brought you? Does the phone company get anxious when you willfully reject or accept the phone calls they provide? Does the electric company complain when you decide to turn on or off a light and start controlling the electricity they supply?

Even if others begin to take advantage of God's love in us, or begin to “steal” it from us, they aren't taking anything from us that wasn't already freely theirs. They aren't taking anything that can't be easily and freely replaced in us. Simply put, you can't steal a free, replaceable gift.

This is God's love.

If we want to see a man who fully exemplified the unstoppable nature and explosive power of God's love, we must look to Jesus. Jesus was so powerful that He could walk untouched right through the very mob trying to throw Him off a cliff [Luke 4:28–30]. He was so secure that He couldn't be tricked or swayed by the devil himself [Luke 4:1–13]. He could cast out legions of demons at a word [Mark 5:1–20]. He could cast out demons that others could not [Matthew 17:14–21]. He stood up to and exposed all the tricks and scrutiny of the religious leaders [Mark 11–13]. He calmed the storm [Mark 4:35–41]. He walked on water [Matthew 14:22–33]. He healed the sick [Matthew 8:5–13]. He raised the dead [John 11].

Jesus was so unstoppable that all the power of death, hell, and the grave could not hold Him [Acts 2:24; Hebrews 2:14]! He freed the captives, ransacked hell, and took its keys [Matthew 27:52–53; Revelation 1:18]. He exposed the devil [Colossians 2:15]. He took His rightful position as our advocate (the accuser's replacement) [1 John 2:1] seated at the Father's right hand [Mark 16:19].

But what made Jesus so unstoppable and powerful? Was it His own love? No, it was God's love in Him [Colossians 1:15; John 14:9–10; 5:30]. Jesus did all these things as a *man* walking in 100 percent of the Father's love, joy, and compassion. God's love *was* His power.

For example, what happened right before Jesus healed the multitudes? We see in Matthew 14 that the power of God's love and compassion rose up in Him as He looked out and saw them “as sheep without a Shepherd.” It was that power that healed their sick [Matthew 14:14]!

Likewise, what happened right before He raised Lazarus from the grave? The most powerful verse in the Bible happened. Jesus wept [John 11:35]. God's love and God's compassion overwhelmed Him. It was that overwhelming power that raised the dead!

That same power-filled love and compassion arose in Him just before He taught and fed the five thousand [Mark 6:34–40]. It is what moved Him to the cross [Hebrews 12:2]. It is what moved Him through the garden of Gethsemane [Luke 22:42]. It is what He based His entire existence on [John 5:30]. It *was* the life, the *living* water, the power that flowed through Him.

What's crazy is that we too can have that same love! We too can have that same power!

In fact, we need that power to walk in the supernatural. Without it, we are nothing. Without it, we can do nothing. If we pray selfish, loveless prayers, nothing will happen. It can't. Like a water hose without water, those prayers are empty. They have no power to help anyone. Praying for somebody without God's love or compassion flowing through our soul is a dead, dry, worthless prayer.

This is the problem with the American church at large (myself included). We are still operating predominately out of our own love and compassion. This is why miracles (although ever increasing) are still few and far between. Our prayers are predominantly dry. Our hearts are predominantly cold. The love of God is trying to flow through, but it is largely blocked. I believe we would see a virtual explosion of the power and presence of God if we, as a body, began to truly tap into His love.

Religion, the Counterfeit Exposed

Religion has a big problem with what we are discussing right now. Religion has a big problem with God's love being a person's only motivation. Religion has a big problem with anyone who begins to live in God's love, with anyone who begins to live like Jesus did—above and beyond the powerless, unloving, distant, hard law.

Don't agree? Look at Jesus' biggest opposition. Was it the common man? No, they loved Him. They wanted to crown Him king [Mark 11:9–10; John 6:15]. Was it the Roman government? I mean, Jesus would certainly have to overthrow it in order to set up His new earthly kingdom of Heaven, right? No, Pilate washed his hands and declared Jesus innocent [Matthew 27:24].

Who was it then?

It was Jerusalem [Matthew 2:3], the religious epicenter of the world. More specifically, it was the governing religious leaders residing within [Mark 11:27–28]. It was the Pharisees and Sadducees [Mark 12:13; 12:18]. They are the ones who conspired, sentenced, and killed Jesus [Mark 12:12; 14:53–65]. Jesus' opposition was spearheaded and carried out by *religion*.

So why is religion so opposed to Jesus? Why is religion so opposed to the power of God's love?

It's because religion is dead inside. Religion *is* the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Religion worships self. It longs after wicked things. It operates in human love. It desires man's approval. It loves sin. It does *what it wants* to do. It puts "me" on the throne, in control of "my" life. It sees God as a stepping stool for me. Religion *is* the ultimate Trojan Horse. It is the shell and appearance of God, but whatever it wants to be underneath.

Religion is the enemy's best counterfeit of God's love. Rather than relying on God's love to fill, motivate, and guide, religion is motivated by law. It is motivated by *self*-effort, by pride, and by externally doing the "right" thing. Religion promises that if we look right and act right, we will eventually begin to feel right and ultimately even "be" right inside.

The problem is that religious perfection is unobtainable. Furthermore, it cannot fix, heal, or restore an already broken relationship. It can't even sustain a growing one. This is why religion is powerless, tiresome, and dead. It can only maintain, destroy, or kill. By its very definition, religion is nothing more than a man deeply in love with his own waterless hose! (It is a man looking to his empty hose for salvation, rather than to the life-giving water his hose could carry.)

Here is the lie of religion. Religion is like believing that if we keep our house spotless and tidy, doing so will actually fix the problems in our marriage. Religion is like believing that if we simply wear the right Air Jordan shoes, we will be able to jump and play ball like Michael himself. Religion is like believing that if we build a racecar, we will know exactly how to race. But it is a farce, a hollow promise. It's nothing more than busy work. It's vanity—a chasing after the wind. It's unobtainable. It's unending. It seems right, but it leads to failure. It leads to confusion. It leads to death.

Frankly put, religion is a way to hide a wicked heart. It's a way to outwardly appear "okay" without ever truly changing inwardly. It's a way to stay busy without ever moving forward. It's a façade, masking selfish motives. It's a cover story to keep from being exposed. Like Adam and Eve—it's a fig leaf to replace God's glory. Religion says if we look like a racecar driver, we must know how to race. It says if we dress like Michael Jordan, we must be able to dunk from the free-throw line. It says if we appear to have it all together, we must know God. If we do all the right things, we must have God's love. Religion is simply an attempt to hide a waterless hose (a selfish heart) behind all the right gestures. This is why religion puts on a distracting performance. This is why religion always points away from itself. It avoids individualistic thinking. It frowns on direct, honest questioning. It avoids genuine emotion. It appeals to theology and man's opinion rather than God. It does these things because it knows it has no depth. It is empty inside.

Religion will even go so far as to blame others (most often God) for its own powerlessness and lifeless results. All the while religion continues pretending like the relationship is okay; pretending like the water (God's love) is actually flowing. Religion thinks, *As long as it appears okay to others, then it is okay*. But it's an act. It's a lie. Bottom line, religion can't race. Religion can't dunk. Religion doesn't know God. Religion doesn't have God's love.

In fact, I would venture to say religion doesn't *want* to live in God's love.

Look at all the things we've discussed in this book, things that help us to tangibly tap into the love of God—speaking in tongues, soaking, following the Spirit, radical obedience, speaking to our mountains until they move, resisting the enemy, giving generously, healing, etc.—all these things are excused and/or rejected by religion. Religion *wants* a distant, unloving, all-controlling, impersonal God. It *wants* a reason to continue living in its own selfishness. It *wants* a reason to bury its talent [Matthew 25], to not be held accountable. Certainly it doesn't want to go to hell, but it doesn't want to get to know God either. Religion would rather just do things for God and learn things about God than actually get to know Him personally.

Okay, enough of that. Let's explore our same "why" question from another, slightly different, more-modern angle. Why does religion still "freak out" today when it sees other believers living freely like Jesus did, "above the law"? Why does living in God's love ruffle so many religious feathers?

First, it's because religion thinks it already knows God. It thinks it already knows God's love. But if knowing God is more than "following a big list of impersonal rules," if knowing God is an organic, moment-by-moment, intimate relationship with a living, breathing *person* that we must be able to hear, see, and interact with—then suddenly religion's structured, rule-based, by-the-book world has collapsed. Its gaping insufficiencies are exposed.

For example, we can religiously "interact" with anyone based on a set of rules or traditions we follow—the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, or Troy Aikman. It doesn't mean we know them or even that they are real. However, we can't do that with a living, breathing, real, emotional lover. They need feedback. They need intimacy. They need romance and passion. They need us to listen and care and respond appropriately. They need relationship.

Furthermore, if the black and white of life is no longer a concrete checklist of "dos" and "don'ts" but becomes about *why* we do and *why* we don't—then life has become a much deeper issue. Life has become a heart issue. Heart motivation is something religion can do nothing for. This too exposes religion's vast inadequacies.

For instance, how can we do the right thing, at the right time, in every situation, with the right motives, for every person involved, every single time, perfectly? In ourselves, it's impossible. Only open communication with an all-knowing, all-loving, all-wise, all-powerful God can solve this

dilemma. No list of rules can help us. Religion becomes worthless. This is an issue only remedied by a real, interactive, ongoing relationship with a living Christ Jesus.

Second, religion looks at believers who live above the law (in God's love), and because religion has no real heart change it cannot understand what is restraining those believers. If there is no law, what is keeping their heart in check?

Religion doesn't realize that those believers are not playing a game. Religion doesn't realize that there truly has been a heart change—a heart change that is now motivating and fueling the continued outward changes. It doesn't understand that the outward and the inward lives of those believers are actually completely in sync.

Religion has this problem of understanding restraint simply because it doesn't understand God's love. Therefore, it doesn't understand that God's love restrains. Religion thinks that one cannot be restrained without the law. Religion knows that deep within its own heart is a longing for evil. It realizes the law is the only thing that keeps it from following those internal selfish desires.

Religion does not understand that those desires are simply flowing out of an internal love for lawlessness—an internal love for self. Once that internal selfish love is replaced by God's love, those internal selfish desires will get replaced too.

Herein lies the dilemma, and the deception. The twist, if you will. Religion thinks it has love. Religion thinks it knows love. Religion thinks that one must have the law for restraint because (according to its own life experiences) love cannot restrain you. However, this is not the case! It is not that love cannot restrain, the truth is that religion has no love! Certainly, religion has a type of love, but it is not *God's love*. Religion has *none* of God's love.

But it is God's love that restrains us.

For example, some people don't kill their family solely because of the law. They simply don't want to go to jail. The law is the thing that keeps them from killing, because there is no real love to do so.

On the other hand, let's say that we love ("God's love") our family. If that is the case, it doesn't matter what they do, we are not going to kill them. Why? We don't *want* to. God's love has restrained us! God's love has tangibly changed our inner desires. It has replaced the law. It has superseded the law. And guess what? We never have a heart change (no matter what our family does to us) simply because we can always get more of God's love anytime we need it!

But God's love will take us much further than that. It will not only keep us from killing them, it will drive us (yes, compel us) to produce a bigger family. God's love will actually inspire

us to create new members and expand the family, to make something out of nothing, to create life where there was none. This is something the law *cannot* do.

Here is a good analogy.

You can put a dog who doesn't want to be by your side on a leash. A leash will keep that dog by your side. Outwardly, it will look like that dog *wants* to be there. Outwardly, it will look like that dog loves you. You will get results, maybe even the desired results. To a passerby, it will all "look" right. But the bottom line is; it's all wrong. It is all appearance. The dog still hates you. The dog doesn't really want to be by your side.

Let's prove it. Let's take the leash off and watch that dog start running—as far as he can—chasing rabbits, jumping fences, doing whatever he wants to do. Go ahead, call him; he's not coming back.

But train that dog. Spend time with him. Teach him what you like and what pleases you. Give him treats and rewards. Enjoy the process. Let him enjoy the process. Fall totally in love with that dog and let that dog fall totally in love with you.

Now take him off the leash. That dog will stay by your side. It doesn't matter if the leash is on or off. He'll wait. Even when he sees rabbits that would be fun to chase, or fences that would be fun to jump, or some other dog with a nice bottom to sniff, he'll wait. He won't go. Not until you give him permission. Even then, if you call, he'll come right back.

See how both versions of our dog look the same to an outside observer? In both cases he stands right beside his master. However, one stands willingly and free. The other stands unwillingly and bound. One enjoys every second of being with his master while the other one hates it. Do you see the internal difference?

The trained dog is free to go as far as he *wants* to go. And he does! He *wants* to stay right there beside the most fun person in the world, his master. His desire for the master, his *love* for the master restrains him. He would rather be with his master and keep his master's approval than doing anything else. He does not need a leash. He does not need the law.

Furthermore, the master can say, "Go over there! Come over here! Go run around in the park!" Then the trained dog can run and play. He is completely free. Why? Because there is no need for the limits of a leash—limitless love is controlling him. The love in his heart, the desire for his master is his invisible restraint. Not a leash. Not the law.

Conversely, the leashed dog is unable to do any of that "free" stuff. Why? He is bound by a four foot leash to his master. Again, if we take that dog off his leash, he is *not* coming back. Why? There is no love (and now no law) restraining him.

This is what religion feels like. It feels like being stuck on a leash. It feels like it *has* to be somewhere, even though it doesn't want to be. It doesn't like it, but it doesn't know how to get out of it. All it knows is that it doesn't want to go to hell for forever, so this is what it *has* to do.

Religion doesn't realize the struggle it feels is simply the absence of God's love in its own heart. So it tries to fix the problem with more restrictions and more rules to follow—in the hopes that more restrictions will lead to more freedom. When it doesn't, instead of getting honest with God and admitting its lack of love, instead of asking God to change its heart, religion turns its ugly, unhappy head on others and begins to bind them the same way.

Now let's be clear; we are not "law bashing." What we have discussed is not an excuse to call everyone trying to live right a "legalist." Neither is it an excuse to continue living an unholy lifestyle. It is not an excuse for continued sin. Certainly, for God's will to be done in our lives (and on earth, as it is in heaven) we must live holy. Holiness (powered through God's love) is freedom. However, the *motivation* for our holiness must come from God and *not* us. This is the secret. This is the key. This is the truth we are attempting to uncover.

Yes, religion and holiness look the same outwardly. Yes, religion and holiness can achieve very similar external results. But the internal difference is black and white. The internal difference is night and day. The internal difference is death or life, separation or intimacy. That difference is motivation. That difference is the heart. That difference is God's love.

We must ask ourselves these questions. What is the real motive driving our outward living? Is it fear, will power, pride, selfishness, control, etc.? Is it some type of wrong motive? Or is it God's love growing in us, compelling us to do selfless things we wouldn't normally do?

We must conclusively know the answer to these questions or we may end up in a very different place than we expected at the end of our lives. The Bible says there is a path that seems right to a man. It is a path having a form of godliness while denying its power [2 Timothy 3:5]. It is a path looking like God on the outside while making excuses for not having any of God's powerful love inside. In the end, that path leads to death, not life [Proverbs 16:25]. We must know which path we are on.

So how can we tell which path we are on? Simply put, freedom.

A true legalist, a true religious zealot, will not be free. He or she will get more and more bound, judgmental, condescending, manipulating, self-hating/self-loving, and defensive. They will become more and more unloving toward others. He or she will see God as a hard master, as distant. The zealot will not understand God's ways because he or she does not understand God's character. Life will become more about "I'm right and you're wrong" than about having a relationship or deeply connecting with others as a person. A legalist will use rejection, manipulation, and avoidance over honesty. A legalist will pull others down rather than help them

up. A legalist will always point to what he or she does, rather than how he or she feels. Sadly, the deeper the legalist goes, the worse (the more bound, the colder, the more unloving) he or she will get.

True believers, true followers of Jesus (those living out of God's love), will be free. They will become more and more uninhibited, forgiving, accepting, comfortable in their own skin, grace-filled, and loving. They will see God as perfect and just, yet merciful. They will see Him as a close, intimate, loving Father. They will understand His out-of-the-box, never-the-same-way-twice ways because they understand His stable, unchanging character. Life becomes more about intimate, personal interaction, "how can we connect, what do we have in common?" than it is about who is right or wrong. *Born-again* believers will use honesty over rejection or avoidance. They will pull others up to their level rather than put others down to step on. They will always point to how they feel over what they do. The deeper they go, the freer they become.

This is the difference between *God's love* and the false (self) love of *religion*. The twist is subtle, but the eternal implications are enormous. If you are religious, all this talk probably leaves you sitting in one of two camps right now. Either you are vehemently opposed to everything you just read and are looking for any way to discredit it (or me) so you can internally justify putting that religious mask right back on—or you want out.

Let's address the latter. If you want out, just be open and honest with God. Ask Him to show you what His love is, what it feels like, what it looks like. Ask Him to show you what a true, interactive relationship with Him is. Ask Him to help you see Him as He really is. Just be honest. Even if you don't want out but think there might be more—start there. Tell Him that. Ask Him to reveal more to you. Ask Him to reveal the truth (not just what some random, no-name author is telling you in his book on spiritual warfare). Then sit back, look and listen for Him to speak, and accept the truth when He reveals it (whether you personally agree with it or not). Remember, we are not looking for the truth to match our opinion. We are looking to shift our opinion to match the truth.

Family, do we see how important God's love is? With it there is life, freedom, growth, stability, and victory. Without it there is torment, death, restrictions, and volatility. God's love is huge, powerful, and endlessly flowing. Our love is small, powerless, and limited. This is why we must learn how to be full, and stay full, of God's love! We must strive to enter the rest [Hebrews 4:11] of God's love.

Battle Tactic 19:

God's Joy

I really don't know why God is having me add this topic to the book. I have had very little experience with God's joy in my life. It is actually the thing I am currently moving toward, striving to attain. I'm laboring to enter the rest of God's joy.

However, I was beginning to feel it.

It was about three years into my born-again experience. There were several occasions where God's joy just hit me like a ton of bricks. The best way to describe it is that it feels like an incredible excitement (an explosive energy) that just overcomes you. It is so powerful that it makes you want to literally jump out of your skin. It makes you feel so full of life that it's as if your body is too small to contain you anymore. It almost hurts it feels so good. That is the best way I can put God's joy to words.

Of course shortly after I started having these joyful encounters (I had maybe two or three), satan came to sift me like wheat. He hit me in the one area where my house (my stability) was built entirely on sand.

Sand, in the Bible, represents people. That's shifting, movable, double-minded people (not the immovable rock of our God). I had built my entire self-worth on other people's approval and on my popularity and looks. I felt like I was validated to speak up only because of those things. Unfortunately, all of those things are shifting sand. All of those things are subject to change under the enemy's manipulation.

All satan had to do was get everyone to start disapproving of me, to remove the popularity and the acceptance. All he had to do was reveal an issue that had been walling me off for years, but I had been oblivious to. He did it, and my joyful house came toppling down as all the sand (people's opinions and approval)—my own included—shifted underneath it.

But God is good. Everything I have learned, everything I have put in this book (and much more) has come from my learning to trust (to rest) in Jesus and allow Him to lift me up out of that sand and stand me firmly on the rock (the unchanging promises) of our God. It has come from learning how to build and rebuild my house securely on Him, to trust Him in others, even when I can't trust the flesh in others, to trust Him in myself, even when I can't trust the flesh in myself. I learned to obey even when I don't know why, to throw myself at His feet and let Him change me and make me into what He wants me to be—if He wants me to be it.

I have had to learn how to be filled with the mighty, inner strength of the Holy Spirit daily, so I can boldly speak up and out. I've had to learn how to desire His approval over man's controlling and fickle approval. I've had to learn how to do things simply because I know it's God

prompting me to do them and because they are the right things to do. I've had to learn how to do them even in the face of open opposition and man's disapproval and rejection. I've had to learn how to give up my pride, my reputation, and my friends. I have had to learn how to let go.

But I have learned (and am learning) how to stand on that unshakable rock of God and His word! I am learning how to draw 100 percent off of Him and no one else. I am learning to love in His love, to speak with His words, to be full (and stay full) of His Spirit. I am learning. And I will not stop until I am walking, breathing, and living 100 percent in His joy, in His love, in His compassion, and in His tangible presence—with Him every day and night—24/7!

This is slowly but surely moving me back into His joy. It's been five long years, but I'm starting to feel little twangs of His joy every now and again. Nothing as strong as before, but getting close! I am slowly entering and remaining in the rest of His joy. If you want a deeper resource on this topic, check out Ann Voskamp's bestseller, *One Thousand Gifts*, you won't be disappointed.

I promise to write more as I learn more, as long as you promise to do the same. Let's do this together! Let's blaze a clear trail for the next generation to follow.

It's time for a brand new race of believers to be born [Revelation 12:2]! The race Jesus died to create. It's time for a race of superhuman, completely filled, completely blameless, totally unstoppable, perfectly powerful, compassionate children of God! It's time for a race of children walking in complete dominion, in His full manifest presence, 100 percent of the time. Children taking territory, occupying their land and freeing captives at will. As they need it. As they see fit! Children completely ruthless to their spiritual enemy. Holy terrors, ferociously living and loving. A band of brothers and sisters. True warriors operating in spirit and in truth. A Benjamin generation, united and fighting as one. A generation willing to stand even if no one else will. I am speaking of you and me. I am speaking of *us*. It will cost us everything, but we will gain so much more! I'm in; are you?

Closing Thoughts

We did it! We just got done discussing nineteen different tactics that we can use to expose, resist, and destroy our enemy. Nineteen different ways to more deeply experience, release, identify, and stay full of God's love. That's nineteen different battle strategies and we didn't even touch on all the fruits of the spirit like kindness, meekness, or self-control. Not to mention fasting, intercession, or all the new tactics God will reveal to each of you in your own individual journey (and enemy butt-kickin') with Him.

Still, this is a lot to think about. How in the world can we do all these things? It's crazy. It's overwhelming.

Our answer lies in this: Seek first the kingdom of God (and His righteousness) and all these things will be added unto you [Matthew 6:33]. Every single thing we have talked about in this book has come out of *one* thing: seeking God first. Simply asking, “God, how can I get to know You a little more today than I knew You yesterday? How can I take one more little baby step toward You today? What is it that You are trying to teach me right now? What are You trying to talk to me about in this moment?”

That’s all it is. It’s just *one* thing. It’s daily moving toward a deeper, more intimate relationship. It’s finding new ways to tangibly connect. It’s finding more time to just “be” with God (and not heartlessly “do” for God).

This book simply gives us a jumpstart. It simply outlines different ways for us to seek God more intimately. It details different paths that have worked for me, so you can be sure they will work for you too. Paths that it took me years to find (or stumble through) I am showing to you right off the bat. I am revealing different things that *for sure* kick the enemy’s butt, so you are not just wasting your time trying to figure out how to beat the enemy.

My hope is that this book saves you all the wasted time of my journey—that it can become a shortcut, a “direct route,” if you will, to success. Yes, it will still be a process, but hopefully a much shorter process—a way to hang out in the wilderness for the forty-day trip, not the forty-year trip.

Again, the bottom line is simply seeking God first. The reason I’ve had so much success is because I’m just seeking Him and He’s telling me (or leading me in) what to do. I took it slow. Step by baby step. But as I did, the breakthrough eventually came. Eventually His kingdom arrived in greater and greater ways in my life. Heaven slowly moved more and more to earth, into my surroundings, into my home, into my body, and into my life.

There is so much more that everyone who reads this book can learn beyond what I’ve shared. This is only the very tip of the iceberg. It’s only getting our feet wet (and maybe our ankles). As you too begin to seek first the kingdom of God you can write your own books on how you found your breakthrough(s). Instead of one man tapping into God and all of us tapping into that fallible man, let’s all figure this out together. I don’t have this all down, but I’m sharing what I have learned so you can take it and run with it. When you get your breakthroughs, let us know how you arrived there. We will feed off each other, we will all learn and grow together!

All His best! God bless!

Connect

One last thing. I have to give you the opportunity—the opportunity to connect!

I'm *not* offering religion. I'm not offering church every Sunday. I'm not offering a new social club. I'm not offering a bunch of new rules. I'm simply offering you a permanent connection to your Father God who loves you, who knows everything about you, who made you and desperately wants to get to know you personally. I'm offering you a way to get help, to get power, to get answers (to every question you ask) from your heavenly Daddy. I'm offering a way for you to openly communicate with the creator of the universe! That is all I'm offering. There is nothing else needed. Nothing else attached.

This connection is through Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one gets to the Father, no one communicates with the Father, except through Jesus [John 14:6].

To start talking with and experiencing your Daddy God today simply say this and mean it with all your heart. Out loud or silently is fine. "Jesus. Help. Come into my heart. Connect me with my Father. Change me in every way. Let me start hearing and seeing and understanding who I really am and who You really are. Papa, please start communicating with me today. Right now, in every way! In Jesus' name. Amen."

Now, if you've just said and meant that ... and you immediately want to go deeper, the real power to change (beyond simply communicating) is with the Holy Spirit. Just like we asked Jesus to come in and be our connection (or doorway) to the Father, let's ask the Holy Spirit to come and be our permanent power, our permanent rest, our permanent Holy Spirit Guide: "Holy Spirit. Help. Come into my heart, my mind, my soul, and my life. Come into every fiber of my being. Lead me into the full presence of my Papa God. Bring me the power to change, the power to defeat the enemy completely. Fill me with Your strength, Your love, Your power, Your peace. Help me, change me in every way. In Jesus' name. Amen."

And finally, if you are not interested in any power or any communication with your creator, but you don't want to go to hell (or you want to know more truth), simply say this: "God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I don't love You. I don't really want to know You. But I also don't want to spend eternity in hell. If You are the truth, if You are real, if You are the way, make Yourself plain to me. If my heart does need to change, then change it."

|

Connect on-line

My heart in writing this book is to really explain "how to" connect with God—"how to" connect, be filled, and stay filled with the Holy Spirit—and for all of us to start working/growing together. If you have any questions, comments, and revelations, or your own secrets, breakthroughs, and stories—please share them at: www.elciProductions.com/feedback

Likewise, if you have questions—maybe I didn't explain something thoroughly or you want to know more specifically "how to"—feel free to email me at: red.pill@elciproductions.com I will do my best to respond or post a reply on the feedback page listed above.

APPENDIX A

My Story | From Stage Fright to no Fear

This is my story about how God walked me out of fear. All fear. Into a peace I never thought existed, one I never thought could exist. I guess I had always heard about it, read about it, this “peace that passes all understanding,” but I thought I was already experiencing it. Boy was I wrong.

Here is that story.

I grew up in a family unknowingly seeped in fear. I felt fear (butterflies in the stomach) at a very early age. Instead of ignoring them and pushing through, I was actually coached to give in to them. And so I did. More and more. For a good twenty-six years.

As a young child, nothing fazed me. I loved to have fun and act crazy and didn’t know a stranger. But through hurts and my own willing submission, fear slowly crept in and took over. I can remember times in middle-school when just the teacher announcing to the class that we were going to do an oral book report made my heart pound so hard in my chest it felt like it would explode.

Instead of facing my fears, I learned to run and run ... oh, and run. So by age twenty-six (when I got born again) I was more than bound, I was caught in this constant tug-of-war between my calling (which required me to be up on a stage) and my fear (which made me want to run far, far from that).

But the desire to perform and create music was so strong that even intense fear couldn’t keep me offstage. However, it did severely hinder me. I could barely sleep the night before. I would get a knotted stomach and not be able to eat for hours if not days before a show. My hands would get shaky, cold, sweaty, and stiff—not very conducive to playing an instrument, much less guitar. Of course along came the butterflies. But worst of all, my mind would race. I couldn’t control it. It would focus one second and then be off on a tangent the next. Instead of just playing the song, thinking about the next riff, and having fun, my mind would jump. It would suddenly begin to worry about messing up, start second-guessing everything I was playing, wander to what people were thinking, or just go blank. Every performance—even if only a simple three-minute song—turned into an intense, raging internal battle.

That’s why, when I got born again, this became my number-one fight. I took Joshua 1:9 as my life verse and made up my mind that with Jesus’ help, if I only ever got free of one thing ... it would be fear.

Thank God He's done so, so much more than that. He totally freed me from fear in fewer than five years. But at the time, it was such a huge hurdle and I was so unfamiliar with the Kingdom that it felt like it could be a lifelong battle. And I was ready to take it.

After making that decision I felt led to memorize Joshua 1:9 and then repeat it out loud over and over. I usually did this in the car—and especially anytime I felt fear rise up or was specifically on my way to a gig.

I'll admit the first time I did this it felt totally crazy. This was way outside my "box" and my comfort level. Even with no one else around and in the confines of my car doing seventy down the Texas highway I almost felt embarrassed. But I was so sick and tired of fear and being bound by it that I was willing to do anything.

That first car ride lasted about twenty minutes. I quoted Joshua 1:9 out loud the entire time. Funny how you begin to see new things in a two-sentence verse just by quoting it out loud, over and over. Then it hit, at about ten minutes in. I felt this weird burning sensation rise out of my gut and into my heart. It totally freaked me out.

I know now that it was just the Holy Spirit. But that was the first time I ever felt the Holy Spirit while I was intentionally doing something spiritual. Looking back, this was probably the half-dozen (or so) time I had felt the Holy Spirit in my entire twenty-six years of life, but it was definitely the first time I actually cognitively, intentionally recognized it (I had absolutely no bearing for it whatsoever).

But I kept on going (quoting, that is). The burning or "fiery" sensation lasted maybe a minute or two and then faded. I continued quoting the rest of the drive.

It's funny how Satan will play with your head. After I felt that fire, and I really felt it, I still had to battle all these thoughts, *Maybe I really didn't feel anything ... maybe I made it up*. But I knew I had felt something. It had lasted just long enough and was such a unique and foreign feeling that I knew I hadn't just made it up.

In reality, in the spirit world, what was happening was that the Holy Spirit was taking back some of the territory in my heart—the territory that fear had been holding on to. Of course I didn't have a clue. I just knew I felt some weird burning. I didn't know much, but I did realize that I was on to something. Never in my eighteen years of prior church experience had I felt anything like that.

So about a week later, when the next gig rolled around, I did it again. This time I felt the burning only for a few seconds, maybe ten tops (and it was less intense), but now I was certain I wasn't making things up. I continued to do this before and after each gig for the next four gigs. And while I never really felt the burning sensations again—over the following six-week period—a

shift took place. I could now eat right up to gig time. I could sleep peacefully and totally the night before. My hands were much less shaky and/or cold. My thoughts were much more focused.

I continued to quote Joshua 1:9 before each gig (in addition to any other time I felt fear rise up in my heart), and I just watched as the fruits of fear continued to simply melt away, becoming less and less each successive gig.

Then I had a dream. Fear showed up in my dream and placed one hand on my chest and one on my back and started squeezing the air out of me, to kill me. Only by God's grace did I react correctly. I looked up and just laughed. Then, with my last ounce of breath, I told him to "go in the name of Jesus." He held on for a split second after that and then let up and left.

I had won! Or so I thought. If I had known then what I know now, I would not have stopped with Joshua 1:9; I would have continued filling my heart up with other Scriptures as well. I would have kicked out the entire root of fear and not been satisfied with destroying only its outward fruits. But I was clueless.

Matthew 12:43–45 says that when an unclean spirit is kicked out of a man it will eventually return, and when it returns, if it finds the house (the man's heart) clean and in order but still empty (i.e., not filled with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit), it will go get seven other spirits more wicked than himself and come back to take over.

In a sense, this is what started happening to me. Because I only knew Joshua 1:9 and had not continued to fill my heart with any other memorized Scriptures (and because I didn't yet know how to let Jesus fight my battles for me), after about a year, fear started coming back stronger than ever.

It started in Costa Rica. We took a vacation down to my father-in-law's jungle beach house. It was really fun, relaxing, and fairly uneventful until one midnight about halfway through the week. I woke up, and fear was all over me. It felt like fear was standing in the corner of the bedroom. I rebuked it instantly and loudly ... probably spouting some tongues as well. Kristy was instantly awake and flew into some tongues of her own, a gift she didn't have (or didn't think she had) one second earlier. (We still laugh about that to this day.)

It probably didn't help that prior to the trip I had heard a couple of stories about increased spiritual activity in other countries. But the subconscious seed had been planted and satan jumped all over it. Fear came. I rebuked, but it never left. I rebuked again and again. Still nothing. I'm pretty sure I freaked out her folks, as I was really loud and the walls were paper thin. But they never brought it up, so I let it slide too.

I finally just had to shift my mind to positive things and go back to sleep. It never left. For the remaining three nights we were there, I just never rolled over or opened my eyes. But the door to my heart was cracked again, this time to both an external and internal fear.

But that wasn't really what got me. A month or so later, back in the "safety" of home, I woke up in the middle of the night. It felt like a literal hand on my shoulder nudged me awake. I rolled over (facing away from my wife, who I assumed was sleeping beside me) and looked up toward the bathroom door. Instantly someone walked out toward me. It was Kristy, but I currently thought she was still in bed with me. Costa Rica still fresh in my mind, I jumped back and spouted some tongues (totally freaking us both out!).

We had a good laugh about it. But the door to my heart was now wide open. As soon as I walked into that bathroom about five minutes later for a quick late-night pee, fear exploded in and around me. The only way I can explain it was like literally jumping into ice-cold water. You can't catch your breath, everything feels cold (even your skin), and your heart goes crazy. I had never felt fear that intense before. Fear was back and had significantly stepped up its game.

That sparked a full-on battle. Unfortunately, I knew nothing about spiritual warfare. I only knew what all the sermons I listened to said (that I was more than a conqueror, an overcomer, etc.), so I did the dumbest thing I could ever do. I began to take on fear myself, in an identity that I was only told about by others, not in an identity that was realized in me personally.

It became this continual back and forth. I would step it up, and fear would step it up. I would step it up, fear would step it up again. For example, I began to soak daily. (Soaking is where you put on some praise music and just hang out with God – listening to Him and letting His presence fill you). Then gossip and open rejection toward me started increasing and flying at work. So I began to soak twice a day (before and after work). Then satan started waking me up at night with thoughts racing through my brain. So God showed me to start sleeping with my Bible under my pillow. (FYI—that alone did solve about 75 percent of the restless nights.) Then satan started attacking me before gigs again. So I created a worship CD to play on the way. Then it was also on the way to work. So I created a "Gospill" CD (an idea I got from Andrew Wommack) of me quoting Scriptures over music to listen to on the way.

All these things helped, but it was still a weekly, sometimes daily battle. I would add something to the mix and would get several weeks of freedom. Then satan would step up his game. It was back and forth for at least a good year.

Finally, as I pressed in and God led, I began to stumble into the real solution. I was still waking up with random unstoppable thoughts (worry) about two or three nights a week (down from seven). So God gave me the idea to memorize Psalm 91. Up until this time I had simply been quoting my Joshua 1:9 verse, but it was too short and wasn't working anymore. Psalm 91 was perfect and long. I memorized it on the way to work by rewinding and replaying my Gospill CD over and over. It was golden. It was so long, the nights I would wake up I only had to quote through it once or twice before I was soundly back asleep.

But what God had me actually doing, inadvertently, was beginning to spiritually fill up my heart on the Word. Now I not only had Joshua 1:9, I had the sixteen verses and all the promises of Psalm 91 as well. There was less and less room for fear in my heart and mind. I didn't have a clue, but I was crowding it out.

As I continued to memorize more Scriptures, God also began giving me mental pictures to focus on. Snippets from movies that showed no fear, no self-regard, only selfless love and/or faith in the midst of battle. Or pictures of Him, to shift my thinking and my heart. It was kinda like God porn.

During this time of memorizing Psalm 91 God gave me two dreams, two experiences, that taught me the secrets to spiritual warfare. In the first dream I was talking with two friends about Jesus, having a good discussion. Then I became aware of myself, that I was dreaming. As soon as I had that awareness, the two friends turned into demons. One was fear, and I believe the other was self-pity. I confronted them and commanded them gone in Jesus' name. And they froze, but they never left. Instead, fear began flipping faces, trying to find one that scared me. It didn't work and I woke up.

I asked God what that was all about. Over the next week or so, through some messages I was listening to and His own instruction, He showed me that it was not my fight to fight. It was Jesus'. That is why they never left. Because I continued to engage them. I continued to look at them. I leaned in and confronted them. But that wasn't my job, that fight was Jesus' fight, that battle was the Lord's [1 Samuel 17:47].

I repented (changed my thinking), and several weeks later I had a second dream. Just like the first I became fully aware of myself and that I was dreaming, and as soon as I became aware the ceiling disappeared from my bedroom. A very tall (nine foot-ish), extremely thin (almost cartoon-like), very slow, sour, and long-faced spirit of religion appeared at the end of my bed. I could see his flowing robes and bishop-like hat. This time I was like, "Ah-ha, I got this!" Lesson learned. It's not my job to confront, it's Jesus'. So I just turned away and ignored it. But it kept coming. Very slowly it walked around the end of my bed and up alongside me. Still ignoring it, out of my peripheral vision I saw it slowly raise something (like a dagger) to stab me. At the last second I realized, "Oh, crap! It's not leaving, I'd better do something". So I called out, "Jesus!" Instantly it disappeared and I woke up.

Again I was like, "God, what's up? What was that? I did what You said, I didn't confront. I turned away to let You do the fighting, and I almost got stabbed. What up?! What up, with that?!"

He showed me. It takes two things to fight the enemy: (1) call on Jesus and (2) turn my attention away from the enemy (and toward Jesus, preferably).

Or biblically put, it takes: (1) the word of our testimony (our authority) and (2) the power of the blood of the Lamb [Revelation 12:11] (His power).

God revealed if I keep silent and simply ignore the enemy, the enemy will just keep on doing his thing—of quietly destroying me. The enemy can do whatever he wants as long as he is going “unchecked” or stays “hidden in the dark.” For example, the enemy was even able to destroy Jesus because Jesus kept quiet before Pilate and was taken willingly as a lamb to the slaughter. But all it would have taken was one word, at any point, for Jesus to stop it all [Matthew 26:52–54]. That’s sacrifice!

Conversely, if I do correctly call out to Jesus but then continue to engage the enemy (like much of the Church currently does), then I am taking on Jesus’ fight myself. But it’s *His* blood that wins, not mine. Satan is way more powerful than I am. If I try to out-power him, I am going to get my butt handed to me on a platter. For example, if a group of NFL referees were asked to not only call the game but to play it as well, it wouldn’t matter if the opposing team was just the practice squad, the refs would quickly get their lights bashed out. Why? Because they only have the authority (through the backing of the NFL), not the raw, physical power and proper equipment like the opposing team’s players.

Just like us. We only have the authority over satan [Luke 10:19], but God has the power (the blood of the Lamb). It’s a partnership. We have to use our authority to “blow the whistle,” so to speak—to open our mouths and call the penalty, but then to quickly turn and move aside—allowing Jesus to come and do all the butt kickin’, game playin’ Himself.

When a referee calls a good game, the correct team (the truly more talented team) is able to win every time. Conversely, in a game where the referee quits calling anything, all talent and teamwork quickly become obsolete. Instead, the rules dissolve into “whichever team cheats more will win.” (And God never cheats.)

God’s people not calling the devil out, gives the devil the advantage. It gives him the ability to cheat and win. (For example: murder only works when there is no FBI to hunt you down, lying only works when no one speaks up with the truth, stealing only works when there is no judge to make you repay, death only works when you can’t come back to life.) Why do you think satan hates it so much when people start calling him out? He does everything he can to shut them up because a fair game is always a losing game for the guy bluffing.

Us coming into alignment with God is just the same as if a ref and a football team “teamed up,” and the ref begins calling the game again. The game is restored and in fact becomes lopsided in God’s favor because God is by far the better team. Where separately both parties were potentially beatable (one beatable by power and one beatable by cheating), together

they become unstoppable. It's a divine partnership—earth's authority plus heaven's power. Both need the other!

Thankfully God taught me that lesson engaging the super-slow spirit of religion and not some quick-moving demon. ☺

Then, in the third week of August 2009, the biggest victory of my life (up to that point) came. I was soaking late at night and suddenly it felt like fear came in the room. I know exactly where it was standing—by the bar counter in our kitchen, in front of our sink. Still to this day I have no idea why I got the urge to react as I did (other than the grace of God and the Holy Spirit directing me). I had this sudden burst of courage and ran right into the middle of fear—to the exact spot where it was standing. Then I raised my hands and praised God. I said, “Thank You, Jesus, that this is Your fight and not mine!” Instantly I felt peace bubble up—like a liquid—moving from my stomach up into my heart. It pushed all the fear I was feeling out. In that instant I was totally free!

I later realized that in that one simple phrase, “Thank You, Jesus, that this is Your fight and not mine,” I had inadvertently done the two things God had showed me to do when fighting the enemy. I had called on Jesus and turned away from the enemy at the same time! With the same phrase I engaged with Jesus and ignored the enemy. Perfect battle. Flawless victory!

I'd love to say this was the end of the story, but there is one last part. Trust. The key to longevity, the key to permanence is *trust*. To keep the spirit of fear permanently out I had to learn to truly trust.

So for about two-and-a-half weeks I experienced true peace. I mean I had gotten a ton of peace when I got born again (totally sold out to Jesus in 2004). I had gotten even more peace when I found out (and started doing) my purpose several months after that, but this was a completely new level. I finally knew what the Bible meant when it said *peace that passes understanding*.

I mean, this was unshakable peace. For example, someone would say something that usually sparked fear in my heart—and nothing. Just peace. My usually intimidating boss would suddenly walk around the corner—and nothing. Peace. Or something (like a movie scene) would physically startle me, make my body jump and my heart pump, but there was absolutely no fear inside. Just peace. It was peace that I couldn't comprehend, I couldn't explain, a peace that shouldn't be. You could truly say that it “passed all understanding.” It was awesome!!

On several occasions in that two-and-a-half-week period I felt fear start to come back, internally. Each time it did, I did exactly what I had done at first. I raised my hands and said, “Thank You, Jesus, that it's Your fight and not mine!” And each time fear instantly left as Jesus kicked its butt.

Then at midnight about day seventeen, I woke up and felt it one last time. Fear came on me and came on me hard. I instantly prayed, “Thank You, Jesus, that it’s Your fight and not mine!” Nothing. “*What?*” So I prayed again: “Thank You, Jesus, that it’s Your fight and not mine!” Still nothing. “*What?*”

Then and there I came to a crossroads. Up to this point what I usually did (albeit they were getting fewer and farther between) was gripe, complain, and accuse God of not coming through or selling me out. (Throw a fit). But this time, again for some Holy Spirit–led reason, I didn’t do that. Instead, I simply surrendered. I said something like, “Jesus, I know You work. I just experienced the greatest two-and-a-half fear-free weeks of my life, and if You want me to live in fear, if You are allowing fear to come back on me, I accept it. I trust You. It’s Your call.”

Instantly, fear left. Peace came roaring back! Since that day, I have not had a drop of fear in my heart again! Praise Jesus! He delayed just a minute or two that last time, just to see if I would trust Him. It was the decision to simply trust, no matter what, which allowed Him to permanently take over as peacekeeper of my heart and shut the door to fear forever.

Life in perfect peace is amazing! Yes, I’m still walking completely out of all anxiety (they are different—who knew?). Anxiety you feel in your stomach—not in your heart like fear. However, in my heart I have had only perfect peace since August 2009! God is so good.

And you can have it too! This isn’t just for me, it’s for anyone who will—anyone who will trust Jesus! But like I said, it’s a process. First fill yourself up on some Word, to crowd that fear out and to give you something to do with your mind to shift your focus. Second, when fear comes, thank and praise Jesus that it is His fight and not yours. Finally, just trust Jesus. If you don’t trust Him, just tell Him that. ☺ If it seems like fear is still hanging around, keep memorizing more Scriptures and praising Jesus and trust that He will take care of you. If He wants you to feel fear (which He doesn’t), trust your heart completely to Him and praise Him full of fear anyway. You will become unstoppable! And free! I so can’t wait until you experience this level of peace for yourself.

Side Note and Update

It’s 2012 now, and trust was also the secret to shutting the door on my fight with anxiety. I finally had to realize that I actually didn’t trust Jesus. And in what felt like a blasphemous moment of truth I told Him just that. I was finally honest and just said I didn’t trust Him. That blatant honesty finally opened the door fully to Jesus, and anxiety left completely! This revelation came in September. It is now December, and I still have to occasionally tell Jesus that I’m sorry I don’t trust Him. But every time I do, anxiety is busted and instantly removed. It’s His fight! And He’s so good! Jesus rocks.

Side Note and Update Too

It's mid 2013 and this book is about to go to print. Since the last update I've had two more significant breakthroughs in this battle through anxiety. One came in late December 2012 as I was listening to the first CD in the series, *The Power of Peace* by Dennis & Dr. Jennifer Clark. It speaks of "dropping down into our spirit" any time fear/anxiety begins, and it spells out how to visualize/practically do this—in American pop culture we call this "going to our happy place." It clicked instantly and (despite numerous attacks that weekend) I experienced four days of unshakable peace in my gut (no anxiety). I began to practice this concept regularly and it revolutionized my life.

A second major breakthrough came in April. I began to see that victorious confrontation, conflict and persecution was not about looking good or "coming out on top." Rather, true victory was simply about being willing to walk through it, to speak up and to serve. As my definition of victory changed, I began to see all the awkward situations (that I was trying to avoid)—when embraced and engaged—actually caused power (the Holy Spirit's power) to grow internally in me—even when I felt and looked stupid or bumbled and stumbled through them. Once I no longer cared about the outcome (or how I looked), once I gave all that to God to sort out, I began to feel the growth in Holy Spirit power. I began to thank God for putting those situations in my life, "Thank you God, may I have another!" I began to ask Him for daily opportunities to grow in power. That God-given revelation radically changed my world. It turned all the social situations that were meant to destroy me (or at least beat me down) into bread, life, growth, and power.

Anxiety still rears its head from time to time, so I don't think my final breakthrough (like I experienced with fear) is here yet—but it is very, very close. Once I get it, I'll be sure to include it in a future manuscript. I can't wait! I'm still learning.

Here's to complete freedom for all of us in every area! God bless. ☺

APPENDIX B

Pastors “Quick List”

SOME OF THE BEST TEACHING & TEACHERS I’VE FOUND

Sid Roth	www.sidroth.org
He Burns for Me	www.heburnsforme.com
John Bevere	www.messengerinternational.org
John Paul Jackson	www.streamsministries.com
Graham Cooke	www.grahamcooke.com
Todd White	www.neckministries.com
Pete Cabrera Jr	www.petecabrerajr.com
Lance Wallnau	www.lancelearning.com
Joseph Prince	www.josephprince.org
Gateway (Robert Morris)	www.gatewaypeople.com
Breakaway (Ben Stuart)	www.breakawayministries.org
Andrew Wommack	www.awmi.net
Brady Boyd	www.newlifechurch.org
Jimmy Evans	www.yourtrinity.org
Creflo Dollar	www.creflodollarministries.org
Jessie Duplantis	www.jdm.org
Priscilla Shrier	www.goingbeyond.com
Christine Caine	www.equipandempower.org
James Robison	www.lifetoday.org
Tony Evans	www.tonyevans.org
Beth Moore	www.lproof.org
Judah Smith	www.thecity.org
Mars Hill	www.marshill.com

XP Ministries (Patricia King)	www.xpministries.org
Jennifer Toledo	www.gcmovement.org
Heidi Baker	www.irismin.org
Gary Keesee	www.faithlifenow.com
Steve Dulin	www.masterplanministries.org
Bob Hamp	www.bobhamp.com/blog
Zach Neese	www.zachneese.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fledgling author Luke Carnevale is a nobody. He gets that. When God put the call of author, producer and culture shaper upon his life, he was the first to bring that glaring fact to God's attention. Seemingly undaunted, God's call remained. So Luke answered. *Desktop Revelations, Volume 1, Spiritual Warfare* is a frontline response to that call. Luke is still (and remains) a nobody, but he now gets to live a life that forever points to *The Somebody*—and that is a life he wouldn't trade for anything. He looks forward to the books that will follow and to all that God has for him in the future.

When he's not busy being a nobody, Luke enjoys hanging out with his family, making the best music he can, and laughing—a lot. He also enjoys a nice cool glass of Limonada every now and again. He lives with his growing family in D/FW Texas. God bless Texas!

Go deeper: www.elciProductions.com