

**Learning Experience 3: Curriculum Development**  
**The Role of the Holy Spirit in Overcoming Spiritual Warfare**

**Patricia Peters**  
**Following in the Steps of Spiritual Mentors: Holy Spirit Weekend**  
**DML 921**  
**Dr. Martin Sanders**  
**May 31, 2023**

**Abstract:**

This seminar series is designed to walk Envision Interns in Mexico City through understanding Spiritual Warfare through the lens of Holy Spirit empowerment and potentially may be reworked slightly as a follow-up module to a Deeper Life Training that District leaders walk through. Often Spiritual Warfare is either sensationalized and the kingdom of darkness is unwittingly exalted or the spiritual realm is largely ignored and people's power and authority is diminished and their suffering is needlessly increased. In seven sessions, interspersed with reflection and practical activities, interns will be exposed to a biblical theology of the Holy Spirit as it relates to spiritual warfare and will be given practical tools and examples for walking authority and victory in their ministry and personal lives. The interns have already received seminars on relevant topics such as Biblical worldview and listening to the voice of God, and have been through Soul Care, thus this will be excluded or treated minimally in the present curriculum. Topics covered will include Spiritual Authority, Perspective Matters: Living From Above, How A Spirit-Empowered Jesus confronted Spiritual Warfare, Weapons of Warfare: How the Holy Spirit Clothes Us for Battle; The Role of Discernment in Spiritual Warfare: How the Holy Spirit Speaks as well as Demons, Demonization, Dreams and Curses.

## **Annotated Bibliography:**

1. Balzer, Doug. Empowerment Pivot: How God is Redefining Our View of Normal. Word Alive Press: 2020. (192 pages).

Balzer contests that the church has become distanced from her supernatural beginnings and has a faith that is more cognitive than experiential, more preaching-focused than mission- and gospel-focused. He says that “our heavenly Father has much more for us.” Challenging the notion that Jesus operated out of his divinity in doing the miraculous, Balzer asserts that everything Jesus did was out of his Spirit-empowered humanity and as his followers we can do likewise. Balzer stresses the importance of hearing the voice of the shepherd in order to walk in His ways and for the church to reclaim her rightful authority.

2. Davis, Chuck. The Bold Christian: Using Your God Given Spiritual Authority as a Believer. New York, NY: Beaufort Books, 2013. (174 pages)

Introducing Spiritual Authority as a key component for a powerful life, Davis outlines the origin of authority, its loss through human forfeiting, and how to Christ regain it through his death, resurrection and ascension. The book has practical examples and tools for prayer, encouraging the believer to live in a way where Kingdom authority is normative.

3. Fenelon, Francois. Let Go: To Get Peace and Real Joy. Whitaker House, 1973. (72 pages)

“Let Go” is a short but profound collection of forty letters by a 17<sup>th</sup> seventeenth century French theologian, emphasizing the importance of death to self in order to live a Godly and peaceful life. True peace, he states, comes from true surrender; an agitated mind and heart reveals areas where further growth is needed. Finally, and perhaps most poignantly, Fénelon articulates that what is truly dead cannot hurt us, thus if we experience pain in the self-life, it is in an area which is not yet dead.

4. Goll, James W. Dream Language: The Prophetic Power of Dreams. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2006. (255 pages)

Goll outlines the role of dreams in the spiritual life of a believer, providing practical tools for posturing ourselves to receive dreams from God and tools for interpretation. He presents dreams as a natural way of God communicating His people and advocates for a recovery of the rich Biblical tradition of dreaming.

5. Goll, James W. The Seer: The Prophetic Power of Visions, Dreams, and Open Heavens. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2005. (192 pages)

Introducing the Biblical concepts of prophet and seer, but focusing on the lesser-known category of seer, Goll articulates that “all true seers are prophets, but not all prophets are seers” (21). While a prophet primarily hears and then speaks, a seer primarily is visual. He

discusses the differences between dreams, visions and open heavens, providing both Scriptural, historical, personal and modern examples of people who have experienced the different types of revelation. He asserts that the prophetic word must be in line with Scripture teaching but never elevated above it, always subordinate to it.

6. Johnson, Bill. Strengthen Yourself in the Lord: How to Release the Hidden Power of God in Your Life. Destiny Publishers, 2013. (176 pages)

A practical theology of how the church can operate in faith and power in the present age. Johnson dismantles the understanding of a typical, powerless Christian life and instead presents a challenge to live anointed and commissioned under the power of the Spirit. He explains how authority originally delegated to humankind was rescinded to the evil one by agreement with the devil. Jesus, through his death and resurrection not only won authority back but returned it to his followers that we may partner with him in seeing God's Kingdom invade earth. Johnson's approach to faith is radical— he believes “For one who has faith, there is nothing impossible and there are no exceptions.” He states that we cannot make excuses for powerlessness nor adapt our theology to accommodate a lack of signs, rather, we need to seek God to understand how to close the gap so we more fully reflect Jesus in Spirit-empowered living, which includes signs and miracles which point to God.

7. MacNutt, Francis. Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2009. (304 pages)

This comprehensive treatment of the biblical background and modern practice of deliverance includes many stories from the author's personal experience as a Catholic priest. MacNutt traces the history of deliverance from the intertestamental period to the present, highlighting practices throughout church history, writing up to the present time demonstrating the resurgence of interest and need. MacNutt concisely explains how deliverance was central to the mission of Christ who “came to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). The background information provides a helpful frame for a theological framework and the biblical context of deliverance as being one of three key ministry actions of Jesus, providing strong evidence that deliverance should continue to be a current practice of the church.

8. Prince, Derek. They Shall Expel Demons. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1998. (368 pages)

Derek Prince recounts both a steep personal learning curve as well as the Biblical background for how to expel demons, including helpful background information on the Greek words behind demons, devils and demonization (not possession). In Jesus' ministry, there was not a clear distinction drawn between healing people's sickness and delivering them from demons; expelling demons was as normal as preaching. Jesus treated deliverance as a means of confirming and applying his proclaimed message: “The Kingdom of God is at hand.”

9. Prince, Derek. Blessing or Curse. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2006. (304 pages)

Derek Prince identifies blessing and cursing as a central Biblical principle influencing human life and activities. Blessings and curses are a result of invisible spiritual forces that govern visible, everyday realities. The power of blessing and curses generally continue generationally until something impedes or cancels their influence. Prince argues that the principle of blessings and curses is consistent across Testaments, and indicative of the way God requires His people to act in each and every dispensation. Since Christ took the curse for us, we can rely on the cross to release us from any curse, applying salvation (sozo) broadly to encompass concepts as deliverance, healing, resurrection and on-going protection from evil.

10. Seng, Jordan. Miracle Work: A Down-to-Earth Guide to Supernatural Ministry. Westmont, IL: IVP. 2013. (224 pages)

Seng addresses healing, the prophetic, deliverance ministry and the baptism of the Holy Spirit in a practical tone. He contends that supernatural ministries are not primarily intended as demonstrations of God's might, rather, they demonstrate his nature of power and humility. He asserts that to do Jesus' miracles is to participate in his lifestyle and we must be humble and dependent and faith-filled. Seng stresses that growth in the prophetic and in healing and deliverance ministries depends on obedience which begets authority and faith. Kingdom work is more a matter of devotion than of expertise and pursuing empowerment for Kingdom activities will draw us into God's heart.

11. Sandford, John Loren and Mark Sandford. Deliverance and Inner Healing. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2008. (398 pages)

In their comprehensive guide based on both Scripture and extensive experience, father and son John and Mark Sandford seek to integrate the disciplines of inner healing and deliverance, with an emphasis on the practical application of theory to ministry. The Sandford's define inner healing as being a tool of "prayer and counseling" applied to areas of one's life (especially character) where the lordship of Christ and the benefits of salvation have not yet been fully realized. They further explain that much healing needs to occur at the place where "bitter root judgements" or "bitter root expectations" were formed.

12. Storms, Sam. A Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts. Bethany House Publishers: 2013. (224 Pages)

Believing that the predominant problem in the church today is a lack of power, Storms advocates for leaning on the power of the Spirit demonstrated in Spiritual Gifts. Spiritual gifts are not separate from God but God Himself living and active in us. Storms focuses on the gifts from 1 Cor 12:7-10, examining wisdom and knowledge, faith and healing, prophesy and the distinguishing of spirits, and the gift of tongues and its interpretation, though he believes that the Scriptural lists are not exhaustive and other activities and ministries such as deliverance might be included.

**Other recommended reads:**

Reimer, Rob. Soul Care: 7 Transformational Principles for a Healthy Soul.

Reimer, Rob. Spiritual Authority: Partnering with God to Release the Kingdom

Nori, Don. Breaking Demonic Strongholds: Defeating the Lies of Satan

Anders, Max. What You Need to Know about Spiritual Warfare

**Format:**

The course will be delivered remotely via zoom to a group of IWs and interns assembled in person in Mexico City. The IWs who are present are directly involved in the mentoring of Envision Interns. I will currently have been asked to fill one 3-hour session but there is openness to expand that to more depending on how the content develops. Each session will have 5-10 minutes for a structured exercise and there will be a 5-10 minute break every hour. The course will be introduced with some questions to gauge personal experience with spiritual warfare as well as areas of desired growth in order to be able to direct the learning accordingly.

**Proposed Outline:**

1. Spiritual Warfare: An Issue of Authority
2. Perspective Matters: Living From Above.
3. A Spirit-Empowered Jesus confronts Spiritual Warfare
4. Weapons of Warfare: How the Holy Spirit Clothes Us for Battle
5. The Role of Discernment in Spiritual Warfare: How the Holy Spirit Speaks
6. Demons and Demonization
7. Special Cases: Dreams and Curses

## Session 1: Spiritual Warfare: An Issue of Authority

### Opening questions for interaction:

- What do you think of when you think of spiritual warfare?
- What has been your personal experience of spiritual warfare?
- How would you most like to grow in your understanding of spiritual warfare? What would make today successful/useful for you?

Scripture from the beginning portrays that all of human interactions, humans with God, themselves and the world around them is set against a spiritual backdrop. The kingdom of darkness is set against the Kingdom of light. Now, while the kingdom of darkness is an inferior kingdom, it still has power. Many times we think we are fighting a human battle on human plane but we lose sight of where the real battle is and what our true weapons are. We simply cannot fulfill God's call on our lives with human effort and human strategies. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers and powers, therefore, our strategies have to be from above, not from below. Oftentimes, we get stuck in the rut of thinking that spiritual warfare is only about war or battle. It's not. Those are the symptoms or perhaps the backdrop against which life occurs. Spiritual warfare isn't about battle for battle's sake. It is about something much bigger--spiritual warfare is a question of authority. It is a question about which kingdom—the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light—has more authority. In order to understand spiritual warfare we need to understand spiritual authority and a bit about spiritual order.

### Introducing the Main Characters:

Key Passage: Genesis 1-3

In the opening scenes in Scripture, we are introduced to a complex world—one that begins with the Triune God present at the beginning of the world, relational, subduing chaos and bringing forth life. So who is present in this story and what are their roles?

**God the Father:** Creator, possessor of authority, the one who wills

**Jesus the Son:** the second Adam, the perfect sacrifice, does the will of God the Father, empowered by the Spirit, conquers death to re-establish authority structures, but we await the fullness of this

**God the Spirit:** The one who empowers, who communicates the will of the Father, the one who gives gifts to facilitate the work of the Kingdom, the one who brings us into conformity with the character of Christ.

**Humans:** created in God's image. Empowered by the Spirit, sent out on mission by Jesus with his authority, loved by God

**Satan:** fallen angel. Used to be a high order angel, rebelled against God. Expelled from heaven. Other rebellious angels joined his ranks. Has forfeited authority intended for humans. Tries to block people's access to God and the work of the Kingdom.

**Angels:** Different types. Ministering Spirits. Warring angels. Messengers. Do God's will and bidding. Use kingdom of God tools.

**Demons:** Fallen angels. Wage war against humanity, especially God's people. Do the bidding of the enemy. Use kingdom of dark tools.

**The progression of Authority in Scripture:** (depict visually)

1. Authority Given (Genesis 1-2)
2. Authority Forfeited (Gen 3:1, 1 Jn 5:19, Luke 4)
3. New authority structure established. (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11)
4. Authority Embodied in the Incarnation: (John 5:19; John 14:10)
5. Authority Redeemed
6. Authority Given (Eph 1:19-23, 1 Peter 3:22)

**Summary:** Spiritual warfare is about taking back what was given to us at Creation but was given away through rebellion and through failure to trust the goodness of God. Spiritual warfare is taking back what Christ won back for us on the cross. Mysteriously, God allows Satan to oppose His Kingdom, but we are invited to be part of restoring what was lost.

**What are the implications of this theological framework?**

To summarize what Doug Balzer teaches: Your authority is the same authority as Jesus. God's part: He raised you up. Your part is to develop the capacity (through intimacy to activate it).

**What is authority?** Ability to use someone else's power. "Spiritual Authority is the God-given right of rulership, rooted in a relationship with Him through Christ, whereby we superimpose the rules, order, and impact of His world (the Kingdom of God) over our world." Chuck Davis

**What is covered by authority:** Scripture seems to suggest that a lot is covered by authority. This is demonstrated in the life of Jesus. He declared that he came to heal the sick, raise the dead, drive out demons, He exercised authority over destructive elements in creation. He used authority in overcoming direct attacks from the enemy.

**Why is authority important and how does it related to warfare?**

If we don't recognize the enemy's authority, if we don't recognize our spiritual authority, and if we don't develop our spiritual authority, we cannot live a victorious life. Punto.

**How do we develop authority?**

- Always flows from relationship.
- Seek fullness of the Holy Spirit.
- Remember it is developmental. (Jesus learned obedience by what he suffered; Grew in wisdom and favour; Consistently walking in God's will)
- We also learn from Jesus at his baptism: Affirmation from God. Intimacy. Identity. Is key.
- As Rob Reimer says: Spiritual authority is rooted in identity, expanded in intimacy and activated by faith. If we don't press into these things, we risk staying where we are, or worse.

- Does not guarantee we will not face trouble. God is very interested in our development and he knows that we often grow in places where we are uncomfortable, thus he does not spare us the battle but arms us in it with weapons that are not of this world (reference.)
- “The closer you get to Jesus, the more of his presence you carry. And the more you carry his presence, the more the Kingdom comes.” (Reimer 179)

**Making it practical:** share personal examples and stories

**Praying with authority:**

- Not fear-based, but faith-based
- Sometimes declarative
- Listening to the Spirit
- On the basis of His character, His will (Lord's prayer and Eph as model)
- Agreeing with God's systems and structures, not rebelling against.
- Character to sustain the authority.
- Authority without intimacy is nothing more than grasping at power. (7 sons of Sceva). Power without character is problematic.

**Potential Reflection Questions:**

- Can you think of a human example of authority you respect?
- Can you think of someone you have encountered who carried authority well?
- Can you think of someone or some institution who used authority poorly?
- Do you have any take-away from this session?
- Is there an area of your life where you think that authority applied would make a difference?
- Where do you tend to operate in human authority when you should operate in spiritual authority?
- What difference do you think authority makes in our spiritual life?
- Where do you need to grow in spiritual authority?

**Applied Activity:**

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore go... Matthew 28

“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.” John 14:12

Ask God, what is the next step I need to take to grow in Spiritual Authority? Are you willing to take that step? How will you do so? When? Pray for each other in small groups for that next step.

## Session 2. Perspective Matters: Living From Above.

When we look at Spiritual Warfare, we often look at things from below. We tend to think that Satan has the upper hand and we assume defensive postures that are fear-based. Often, we hear more stories of spiritual warfare that sound like ghost stories than stories of people who are living victoriously. There is a creepy factor people are drawn to. Our society too, exalts the darkness. My 15 year old was just telling me about the new series on Disney that he decided he wanted nothing to do with called the Devil's Child. Popular tv shows: the pope's exorcist, evil dead rise and dungeons and dragons. (I was just looking for Gordon Ramsey)

Some stories with early exposure to demonic, but lack of understanding what to do and lack of spiritual victory. Growing in understanding the spiritual realm and spiritual warfare has meant a few shifts:

Abstract → concrete

Scary → safe

Dismissive/overly fascinated → taking it seriously but not overly seriously. "*No te preocupes, pero ocupate de esto.*"

Evil seemed really big and to have the upper hand → So very confident in Jesus' victory; not afraid.

Much depended on me (pride/insecurity) → All depends on Jesus and I seek to grow and cooperate with him

When we look at growing in our awareness of what is spiritual warfare and how do we respond, perhaps the most important shift we can make is right-sizing the Kingdom of God. I think the trap we often fall into is supersizing the Kingdom of darkness. Our society certainly does this. As citizens of heaven however, we are called to look at things from a different lens. We need to look at things from above. Scripture says we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. By his death and resurrection on the cross, and at the point of our salvation, we become seated ones. We live on earth, but we also sit with the ruling and reigning one.

I like to think about this as **first things first**. When I put the enemy attack first, it seems bigger in my mind. When I remind myself that God was first, and that He is good, the attack has to become smaller. My confidence in God grows.

God started out the world creating order from chaos. The one who is good spoke goodness over his creation. Only one who is good himself can appropriately measure goodness. Only one who is good can create goodness in His image. Out of the goodness of God there was:

- approval far before there was distance
- before there was hurt there was a healer.
- Before there was hunger there were trees laden with fruit.
- Before humanity walked in a desert they walked in a garden. In the shade of the afternoon with the presence of God beside them even their comfort.
- Before there was exhaustion, there was meaningful work.

- Before there was pain in childbirth there was a God who planned fruitfulness and re productivity.

The very same voice that spoke pleasure over creation, spoke over Jesus at his baptism, spoke to Moses, speaks over us.

We need a right-sized vision of who God is and what his creation was if we want to operate effectively in the spiritual realm. Frequently, as the church, we act as though our role in spiritual warfare is to make things less bad for people, to take the edge off the enemy attack. We forget that we were taught by Jesus to pray for nothing less than the very enactment of God's will on earth as it is in heaven. How often do we bend our plans and prayers to trying to make the best of what is in front of us without raising our vision and our expectation to the very throne room of God? At best we pray triage prayers and contingency plan prayers. We expect God to make the best of a bad situation. We limit his power to our perspective. When we reframe God as the author of all good who loved us before the creation of the world, who chose us in him before time began, when we see God who was prince of peace before there was anxiety, when we remember God made work before there was weariness, God who willed reproduction before there was pain in childbirth, when we know God planned for us to do good work before the enemy lie took hold, we pray and live our lives aiming in the direction of that plan, not steering away from the potholes in front of us. We begin to live on a different plane.

We are Seated ones. Not striving ones. Ones who are fed in the presence of the enemy, not who live in scarcity. Even in the face of enemy threats and death, the extravagant generosity of God spreads before us. We are nourished and nurtured in the hardest places.

We fix our eyes not on what is seen. This is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.

Rob Reimer comments on our need to have a clear idea of who God is saying: "We would pray like Jesus prays because we sit where Jesus sits." He goes on to say, "Imagine if every time we prayed we took stock of our identity in Christ, our position in Christ and prayed from that place of the heavenly throne room. What difference would it make in our prayer life? How would it impact authority?" (93)

One of the singular most significant shifts in my prayer life has been the recognition that both the Holy Spirit and Jesus are constantly praying. The Triune God is in constant communion. We will talk about this a little more later, but I have begun to ask, "Jesus, how are you already praying for this situation?" Then I join my prayers to his. Or I watch what he is doing. I'm telling you, there are times I have been tempted to despair on my own but when God speaks a word of hope, I pray differently. It raises my level of faith and expectation, significantly. When I see the prayers of the throne room, I pray at an elevated level. And what goes on in the throne room trumps what goes on in earth. By failing to lift our eyes, we often become complicit with the enemy who seeks to keep our vision low.

Duck vs eagle. analogy

### **How specifically does this relate to warfare?**

- Recall that Satan only has limited authority. Authority that was stolen in the first place. His authority depends on human cooperation. (Chuck Davis)
- Satan doesn't create, he counterfeits. When we notice counterfeit, we need to turn to the creator and ask for a correct vision.
- Our battle is to enforce the victories of Jesus over the powers of darkness so Jesus can be glorified. (Reimer 97); "We carry his presence into our problems."
- Enemy plans are ever and only secondary and reactive to God's good will and purpose. The thief comes to steal kill and destroy.
  - He has to steal something that was given, kill something that was alive and destroy something that was formed. Otherwise, he'd just be blocking God. But Jesus said clearly he steals, kills and destroys.
  - Strategy: When you are under attack or you are sensing the enemy at work, ask God what he is going after.
  - The problem is that we think the enemy is the author and we assume a reactive position.
  - God is the author and the enemy is reacting to his works. So we need to lay hold of the truth and partner with God to restore the original intent.

### **So how does this become practical?**

- Worship is a powerful weapon
- If we are looking for weapons in the middle of warfare, it is likely too late to be very effective. We need to lay hold of what is ours so when the battle comes, we are ready.
- When we agree with God in prayer, we can be far more confident

### **Potential Reflection Questions:**

- How would you rate your current perspective on a scale from duck to eagle?
- What is a key take-away from this session?
- On a scale from easy to difficult, how hard is it for you to see the goodness of God?
- Do you agree theologically that God's goodness precedes difficulty?
- Do you tend towards supersizing the kingdom of darkness or under-estimating it?
- In what ways do you minimize the work of God?
- How do you think it might shift your prayers to hear Jesus and the Holy Spirit praying?

### **Practical exercise:**

Ask Jesus how he is already praying for you or for a situation on your heart? Spend a little time listening to his prayers, looking for them or allowing him to draw your heart to Scripture. Agree with him and join him in those prayers.

## **Session 3. A Spirit-Empowered Jesus confronts Spiritual Warfare**

## Christ as Spirit-empowered

- “Jesus Christ, though he was never ever less than God, for 33 years chose to live as if he were never ever more than man, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.” -Major Ian Thomas; Founder of Torchbearers Bible Schools (Capernwray)
- *I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. 2 John 7 (Apollinarianism)*
- *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.” Luke 4:18*
- *And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love with you I am well pleased. Luke 3: 21,22*
- Kenosis: emptied himself. Didn’t cease to be divine but laid aside divine attributes
- What Jesus knew, he knew through the Spirit
  
- The key question for Jesus was “what is the Father doing?” Then in every situation he simply joined the father in what he was doing. (70 Reimer)
- It is extremely important that we understand that Jesus operated out of Spirit-empowered humanity, not out of his divinity, otherwise there is not an example for us to follow. It would simply be unattainable. Jesus used the power of the Spirit and the word of God to resist the enemy, when we was at a tremendously weakened state.
- Adam was in the garden, with all the creature comforts. It was perfect. But he still succumbed to temptation. So our obedience does not depend on our surroundings. We can’t say, “Well, since Mexico City is so hard, I don’t have a hope of winning the battle against lust or depression or pride or whatever your situation is”. Jesus was absolutely solitary, no comfort, wild animals, no food. Extreme situation and he clung to the word of God and to the empowerment of the Spirit. We can’t wait for ideal circumstances to obey.

## What the Temptation of Jesus reveals to us about Spiritual Warfare

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. (Luke 4:1)*

*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. (Luke 4:14)*

Luke, in his account of the Temptation of Jesus, is extremely intentional in mentioning the role of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is filled by the Holy Spirit, Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert and at the end, Jesus leaves the desert and returns to Galilee in the Power of the Spirit. The repetition and the bookends demonstrate what we might consider to be a through-line or central theme in the whole narrative. **Jesus, the whole time he was in the desert, was full of**

**the Spirit.** He relied on spiritual strength in the fast. He relied on the Spirit to apply the Word of God to his situation, and something about the situation strengthened him. He starts out full of the Spirit. He ends up full of the power of the Spirit.

#### **First temptation:**

- Since you are the son of God, provide for yourself. **Take care of yourself and your needs aside from the will and provision of God.**
- Look at weakness and situation; temptation to fill a legitimate need in an illegitimate way
- Use the power of God for selfish purposes (like first Adam)
- Jesus relies only on Spirit and the word. First things first.
- “We effectively resist temptation in the same way Jesus did: filled with the Holy Spirit, we answer Satan’s seductive lies by shining the light of God’s truth upon them. If we are ignorant of God’s truth, we are poorly armed in the fight against temptation.

**Resolution: I choose God as first and sole sustainer.**

#### **Second Temptation:**

- Jesus had come to win the kingdoms of the world. So that was true. But Satan tempted Jesus to gain what was promised without the suffering, without the cross. **Achieve the ends apart from God.**
- Misplaced worship and stepping out of will of God.
- Again responded by power of spirit and word. Keeping eyes on God.
- Power given by the hands of the evil one is not lasting, true power. Doesn’t come for free.

**Resolution: I choose God as first and sole object of worship.**

#### **Third Temptation:**

- Messianic prophesy that Messiah would reveal himself to Israel by standing on the roof of the temple.
- Jesus was the legitimate messiah. Show yourself. And then throw yourself down so God can rescue you. Would erase any doubters. Like a foil for the cross—displayed as king of the jews, but in weakness, not power. God didn’t “rescue” him.
- Satan is smart. He’s an expert in scripture. Twister of truth.
- Satan’s misuse was countered with correct use of scripture.
- The performance of that miracle would be for glory only.

**Resolution: I choose God as first and only goal of glory.**

#### **What do we learn about temptation and the tempter from this account?**

- Left until an opportune time. He’s no dummy. He doesn’t wait until you are well prepared.

- God tests us, not tempts us. Tests us to strengthen us, just as Jesus was tested in the desert. “God doesn’t test us so we will fail, he tests us so we will pass.”
- How does enemy tempt?
  - Toward independence
  - Toward separation from God
  - Toward self-sufficiency
  - Toward misplaced worship
  - Toward self-promotion
  - Toward avoiding difficulty
  - Toward trying to accomplish God’s will apart from Himself.
- Importance of relying on the Spirit to apply the word of God to our lives.
- What Warfare forms in us—tested authority. We need to understand that without testing, our faith is weak, however, we can take that too far and allow ourselves to be bullied.
- The point is not to remain under temptation and try to come out stronger. Constant, and ever-increasing speed in turning over temptation and attack to the Person of the Lord Jesus.
- **Swift recognition of temptation, swift dethronement of self, swift acknowledgement of the Word and power of God.**

#### **Potential Reflection Questions:**

- Do you agree that everything Christ did, he did out of his Spirit-empowered humanity? Is that difficult or easy to comprehend?
- How does that match with what you learned growing up?
- What difference does it make to you that Jesus was operating out of Spirit-empowered humanity and not divinity?
- Does one of the temptations stand out to you?
- What was a key take-away from this session?

#### **Practical Exercise:**

Ask God:

- At what time am I vulnerable to enemy strikes?
- What does vulnerability look like for me?
- What specific strategies can I use when I am under attack?
- Is there a Scripture verse I can use to stand against the enemy?

### **Session 4: Weapons of Warfare: How the Holy Spirit clothes us for battle**

In the final chapter of the book of Ephesians, Paul addresses the spiritual battle, although throughout the book he has been discussing issues of identity, lordship, earthly and heavenly power. If you want to learn more about a heavenly perspective on spiritual warfare, I'd encourage you to camp out in the book of Ephesians for a time. Specifically, in the final chapter, Paul addresses **How do we fight spiritual battles?** We are called to put on the WHOLE armour, not just a little bit. Interestingly, "In the Old Testament, it is the LORD who wears the armor (Isaiah 59:17). He now shares that armor with us." D. Guzik This concept of being clothed with spiritual armour necessarily resonates with the multiple calls to be clothed with Christ. We'll look at each piece of armour individually, what they represent and how to live it out.

### 1. Belt of truth:

**What is it?** This means I accept the truth of Scripture and will follow it with integrity. Greek verb for fasten—gird all around. There are no holes in the truth. Truth is not only on the front or back only but ought to be all encompassing. It is important to note that what we translate as waist might be more accurately translated as loins, representing procreative powers. Truth doesn't just encircle our gut. We are talking about your reproductivity, your ability to be like your creator in creating new life, that's what is under attack. That's what needs to be guarded. Truth guards our creative ability to be like God and produce disciples and make his name known.

**What is Satan's attack?** Twisting the truth. Look back at Gen 1-3. Did God really say? He is the Father of lies. Deception isn't necessarily an outright lie but a twisting of the truth so something essential is distorted.

### Why is truth important?

- **Lies give the enemy ground and destabilize our foundation.** We cannot live in the truth if we are standing on a lie (look for soul care quote here).
- **Lies affect our identity.** Many times in deliverance, once we have dealt with a lie, the demons will leave. Many lies have to do with our identity in Christ or who God himself is. If we don't understand who we are and who God is, we cannot fight effectively. We will doubt the goodness of God. We will doubt he has given us authority to stand strong.
- **Lies affects our mission.** If we do not clearly understand the truth of who God is, who we are and who others are, we risk being on the wrong mission. We might be fighting for something we think is truth, but it might be twisted.

**How do we live out truth?** Soul care. Routinely do inventories of your thought life. As Reimer says, what runs through your mind unchecked runs through your soul unchecked. Interrogate your thought life. Watch your reactions. Invite God to confront any faulty thinking. When you encounter a lie:

- Name the lie
- Ask God what believing the lie has cost you
- Ask for a truth to replace it
- **Renounce the lie, release it to God and ask for restoration.**

## 2. Breastplate of righteousness:

**What is it?** This means I will not harbor known sin and will strive to be like Christ. The verb here is to be clothed. Just like to be clothed with Christ. We are, as the hymn says, “dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne”. **Christ’s righteousness is ours.** It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. (1 Cor 1:30) We do not stand on our own merit. Righteousness protects us from the damaging effects of sin and the resultant hardness of heart. The breastplate protects our vital organs. Above all else guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life. (Prov 4:23). We Need to live in holiness. Enemy will use sin against you to shame and condemn and isolate. When we pick up the breastplate of Christ’s righteousness, it reframes sin for us. It is not about shame. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1) There are two different levels of righteousness: Imputed and imparted. Imputed is the righteousness of Christ becoming our own; imparted is God empowering us to becoming more like him, more holy. That is the work of the Holy Spirit in us which we cooperate with.

“We must count on our imputed righteousness and live out on a daily basis the righteousness that Christ imparts to us. To fool around with sin, to knowingly and willingly tolerate sin in our lives, breaches our defences and makes us vulnerable in the spiritual battle.” (Max Anders, 55)

**What is the attack of the enemy?** Condemnation, emphasis on works-based righteousness, emphasis on external displays of righteousness, tricking us into focusing on lesser things (women in ministry vs personal and institutional holiness).

**How do we live out righteousness?**

- o Routinely ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts
- o When we recognize sin, repent.
- o Accept God’s forgiveness.
- o Announce his righteousness if the enemy attacks and shames.
- o Interrogate the roots of sin. Is this sin a pattern? Is it empowered by anything in my life? Have I confessed it to anyone?

## 3. Shoes of peace:

**What are the shoes of peace?** This means I believe God’s promises and count on them to be true for me. Greek verb: to bind under one’s feet--We live at peace when the acts of the enemy are bound underfoot. Josephus stated that the soldier’s shoes were thick and studded with metal nails. Peace gives us traction when we walk across rough terrain. Shoes of peace demonstrate that I am walking in peace in all my ways.

I live in peace internally and I act in peace towards others.

My peace I leave you, my peace I give you. I do not give peace as the world gives. John 14:27. True peace only comes from God. And peace isn’t just a “should.” Peace is something we are clothed with. Something we are fitted with.

Peace means looking beyond what is in front of us to the power of God. Jesus in the storm on the sea of Galilee spoke peace over chaos. Jesus expects peace to be a by-

product of faith. As we increase our life of faith, our peace necessarily increases as we bring things under the feet of Jesus.

As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)

The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, etc. (James 3:17)

**What is the enemy attack?** Anxiety. Keeping eyes on circumstances. Worldly wisdom. Worldly perspective. From below perspective. Immobilization.

**How do we live out peace?**

- Identify the voice of fear/worry/anxiety. See if there is any lie there.
  - Seek the perspective of Jesus (wisdom from heaven is peace-loving)
  - Recall and declare that you have the mind of Christ. Appropriate that and invite his peace.
  - Bring all things under his feet.
  - Recall and declare the promises of God
  - Worship
4. **Shield of faith:** This means whenever I feel like doubting or sinning or quitting, I will reject those thoughts and feelings and tell myself the truth. The verb is an active one. Not just something we receive but something we take and raise up. (Take up, to raise). The image is of a large oblong shield. Often soaked in water to extinguish the arrows of the enemy. Do we soak our faith in the presence of God so that what comes at us is snuffed out? The verse says with the shield of faith we can extinguish all the attacks of the enemy. Every one. This is inclusive. And it is not just deflect but extinguish. The language is inclusive and decisive. We don't have provision for some attacks but for every one.
- A large part of the gospel depiction of faith is certainty in the character and authority of God. The shield of faith looks like holding on to the power and goodness and ability and willingness of God to act.

**What is the enemy attack?**

Flaming arrows he launches: Doubts, accusations, lies, temptations, discouragement, bitterness against God. Curiosity.

**How do we live out faith?**

- Hold onto Scripture in the face of temptation, doubt, accusation and lies
  - Expand faith by practicing it.
  - Soak in the presence of God—grow in our awareness of his character
5. **Helmet of salvation:** This means I rest my hope in the future and live in this world according to the values of the next. The verb here is "To take, receive, accept, welcome." As in, this is not our own doing. But we must receive salvation. And take Christ's sacrifice as a covering for our mind. We had the mind of Christ. So what isn't in his mind, shouldn't be running around in ours. Our thoughts should be increasingly his

thoughts. We must listen and routinely receive from him his thoughts. Our eternal salvation and citizenship guards our minds and provides a filter we use to reframe current realities.

#### **What is the enemy attack?**

- Move us out of line with eternity
- Incredulity and doubt in the character of God
- Think on a human level
- Fill minds with doubt and fear.

#### **How do we live out salvation?**

- Fill minds with truth of Scripture
- Fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen.
- Ask God for eyes to see and ears to hear what he is saying and doing

6. **Sword of the Spirit:** This means I will use Scripture to fend off attacks of the enemy and to advance the cause of Christ. The Word of God—refers to an utterance. I practiced fencing once. I was not nearly as graceful as I thought I might be. It was hard. Took a lot of practice. We need practice wielding the word of God. We must be in the word of God. We need to know it, memorize it, ask for God to apply it to our lives. Offensive and defensive capability.

#### **What is the enemy attack?**

Distortion of the word of God.

#### **How do we use the Sword of the Spirit?**

Defense: We use the word of God to specifically counter the attacks of the enemy. So if you are frequently tempted to anger, have verses specifically about anger: “Man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life God requires” (James 1:20).

Like we saw in the temptation of Jesus, specific use of Scripture, strategic revelation of the Spirit for the battle you are currently facing, is extremely effective.

Offense: When we learn Scripture, it changes us. As we read more and grow more, we understand the heart of God more. Anecdotally, after deliverance, though I had memorized many books of Scripture prior, my ability to understand, love and follow the Scriptures was significantly increased.

#### **Practical Exercise**

When you look at the list of armour, what comes easily for you? What seems to be more difficult?

Ask God, what area of armour do I need to strengthen currently? How can I strengthen it?

If Satan were to attack you, **how** would he attack you? **When** would he attack you? What would the attack feel like? What might it sound like? What is your divine strategy/ weapon(s) to counter that attack? Listen for a strategy to stand strong.

#### **Session 5: Role of discernment in spiritual warfare: How the Holy Spirit Speaks**

**Key Scripture:** God’s Spirit testifies with our Spirit that we are children of God. Romans 8:16

We live far below our potential in Christ because we operate in our own understanding. I am convinced that solving problems independently apart from God is one of our greatest problems. Elevate our own mind above God's. Scripture is clear that we should not lean on our own understanding. Prov 3. Trust means not leaning on our own understanding. But we infrequently solicit God's direct input. If Jesus walked completely in the power of the Spirit and only did what he saw his father do, why should we do any less?

There needs to be an increase in our awareness. How do we increase in our awareness and in understanding God's will? Prov 3:5-6 **Trust**—trust God's character and he speaks. Often a first step. We trust ourselves and our own assessment more. The enemy sneaks in here and maligns God's character. Is it true that God said? We need to trust him.

**Lean not**—we need to step away from old patterns of solving our own problems. We are very, very used to leaning on our own assessment of things. Ruminating, evaluating, assessing and we miss the truth sometimes.

**Acknowledge**—in all your ways, in all things, we need to recognize the Lordship of God and allow him to establish the pathway forward.

Discernment isn't solely about what we can ascertain through the senses. "The spiritual cannot be discerned by anything that is natural... if we are tuned in only to the five senses, we are getting just a portion of the information we need to make correct decisions." (Nori, 29-30). God can certainly use the senses to speak, and He often does, but we don't want to mistake senses for discernment. The Holy Spirit abides in us and teaches us about the things of God and testifies against that which is not from him. He renews our minds. He communicates tangibly and effectively to lead us into truth. (paraphrase Nori 38).

**What is discernment?** Direct Spirit-to-spirit communication about the things of God.

**Why is it necessary?** We cannot rely on human knowledge alone because we do not live in a merely physical world.

Gal 5—human nature wants things that don't please the Spirit. Spirit wants to change us. Discernment allows us to partner with God and correctly understand his will and how to go about it.

**Charles Spurgeon** who famously said, "Discernment is not simply a matter of telling the difference between what is right and wrong; rather it is the difference between right and almost right."

**What's the difference between general discernment and the gift of discernment?**

**Examples from the book of Acts.**

- **Acts 2**—as we mentioned before, God's spirit being poured out is for young and old, male and female. It is all inclusive. There is a very real receptive element—when God pours out His Spirit, it is a spirit of revelation. Discernment, in a sense, can be used for how we receive and apply the revelation that the Holy Spirit gives us. Dreaming, seeing visions, prophesying. Through His word. If you are curious about this, read the book of Acts. There are multitudinous examples: Peter saw that someone had faith to be healed

- Peter and John at the temple gate noticed the beggar that they had probably walked by many times before and something told them today was the day for healing.
- Stephen had wisdom to speak with courage before the Sanhedrin. He testified about how the Scriptures pointed to God. He **saw** Jesus standing waiting to greet him. That all falls under discernment. (revelation of Scripture, words to say, revelation of Jesus)
- Paul wanted to go to \_\_ but the **Spirit wouldn't let him**.
- He had a **dream** that a man from Macedonia stood begging asking him to come. That's discernment.
- Paul—I can **see** that you are full of wickedness and captive to sin. Simon the sorcerer.

I would argue that all believers, through the Holy Spirit, have the provision for discerning and receiving revelation from the Spirit, but it is a capacity that needs to be developed. We need to develop in how we receive and how we share words (expand).

The gift of discernment, is a supernaturally-empowered ability to understand the will of God in a certain situation or to see what is happening in the spiritual realm, often regarding determining the source of a certain teaching, manifestation or utterance. We often apply this to discerning of evil spirits, but I think that Prophecy, Wisdom, Discernment, Word of Knowledge are a cluster of gifts that have overlapping portions and all serve to speak into the body of God. There is a corporate edge or the ability to apply it beyond one's life more broadly. Jesus demonstrated this gift: "Get behind me Satan" knew it wasn't Peter talking at that moment as much as Satan.

**Developmental**—in both forms. If we don't practice it, we can tune it out. Just like learning Spanish. I am interested in languages but they can be noise in a crowd if I don't know them. But I'm immediately drawn to Spanish in a crowd because I know it. I like to think of discernment the same way. God's voice, as we learn its syntax and nuance and vocabulary, draws us, calls to us from other noise. We can pay attention to it at a different level when we learn it. Takes time: "I had to make sure there was sufficient time alone with the Lord in my calendar so the flow of the spirit into my life was greater than the flow of the spirit out of my life" (Reimer, 154)

### **Temptation:**

Be cautious to not be judgmental, critical, or impatient

Don't only look for what is wrong.

Be aware the enemy can also hijack these same pathways to cause confusion. Take up spiritual authority over your mind, body, soul and spirit, daily. Forbid enemy interference.

If you can recognize what is happening, name it as best you can. Then forbid the enemy from using that pathway and lean on Christ's empowerment.

What does discernment in warfare look like?

- a. Identification—what is the source of the problem?
- b. Direction—what to do about it?

- c. Empowerment—strengthening to stand against the enemy; specific strategies
- d. Examples

### **Potential Reflection Questions:**

- How well-developed is your discernment? Is it something you rely on often?
- What is a key take-away from this session?
- How might you go about developing your discernment?
- What is your greatest fear about discernment?
- Have you seen someone who models discernment well? What do you notice from their life?
- What spiritual gifts has God used in your life to build up the body? Are there any you are curious about?

### **Practical Exercise:**

In small groups, ask the Holy Spirit for a word or picture for one person in your group. Share with each other.

### **Session 6: Demons and Demonization**

Key Scripture Passage: Matthew 9 and 10

Given that you have already discussed deliverance, I won't spend too much time on this topic, but I do think it is still important to address. If the church you grew up in was anything like the church I grew up in, demons weren't really talked about a lot. Yet, they have a lot of potential to influence, both internally and externally. I didn't know demonization was an issue Christians could deal with and there was much in my own life that I thought were my own issues. Praying and I would always have to sort out if the Jesus I was seeing was "real Jesus" or "false Jesus", Waking up always hearing "I hate my life"; Intrusive thoughts; Random illnesses that no one could explain; When my step-mother, who was abusive was going through chemo, I would get physically ill at the moment she would even though we weren't in the same place. Terribly oppressive dreams where things would chase me down to kill me. Oppressive sexual dreams and images. Weird things like that. And then there was just the pervasive sense that I couldn't get my faith from my head to my heart. I believed in God and I studied and memorized Scripture. I prayed. But I didn't believe, no matter how hard I tried, that God was for me and loved me. It always felt like there was a wall between me and the Spirit, between me and the deeper life, between me and joy. Deliverance seemed to clear out a lot of the clutter so I could begin to go after these things.

Dog illustration with hidden stick in paw that wouldn't heal?

I had a fellow IW question me on it. "I don't believe in deliverance," she said. "How do you know that what happened to you is true?" I told her I didn't yet have a theology but I could tell

that things that I feel very different. But I was committed to forming a theology. So I read through Scripture over and over and realized that Jesus, everywhere he went, was driving out demons. It was normative for him. He called his 12 disciples to do it. He sent out the 72 to do it. After Pentecost, the apostles were still driving out demons.

I started seeing breakthrough in discipleship that I hadn't seen before. Life transformation I hadn't seen before. Resolution of recalcitrant issues before. People meeting with God. There is not a demon under every bush and not every Christian is demonized. But, you might be surprised at how many are and live under the condemnation of trying hard and feeling far from God and powerless.

### **How demons act? (C Buchanan):**

- They Entice (James 1:14)
- They Deceive (1 Timothy 4: 1&2)
- They Enslave (Romans 8:15) Addictions
- They Torment and oppress (2 Timothy 1;7) Fear, condemnation, doubt
- They drive and compel (Luke 8:29) lust, murder, assault
- They Defile (Titus 1:15)
- Their function is to Harass
- They often work in groups (e.g. anger, fear, violence, defiling, rejection)
- They fight
  - o against our peace
  - o against our personal harmony
  - o against our peace of mind
  - o against our physical well-being
  - o they cause disruption with other people, especially those close to us

### **Symptoms of demonization:**

- Intrusive thoughts
- Suicidal ideation
- Frequent illness/sickness
- Condemning voices
- Night visitors
- Senses of fear, terror, doom
- Addictions
- High levels of rage, control, depression, anxiety, etc.

### **How do demons enter?**

1. Generational sins – family patterns and curses (Ex. 20:5); Hosea 8:7; Numbers 14:18)
2. Soul ties – emotional or sexual (1 Cor. 6:16; Gen. 2:24); smothering, or controlling authority figures
3. Forgiveness – areas of offense allow Satan to take advantage (2Cor. 2:10-11)

4. Specific events of trauma or abuse (Matt. 18:6) Kraft says like rats to garbage
5. Inner vows/agreements with lies – Matt. 5:33; James 5:12; words like ‘never, always’
6. Occult/New Age involvement – opens doors for legal right to Satan (Lev 19:31)

### What do we do?

Ephesians 4:27 “and do not give the devil a foothold.”

Definition: **“Foothold”** - [**topos**]a spot (general in space but limited occupancy) location, opportunity, other uses of this same word –

Romans 6:13 (place, places, room, seat, area)

### “A door we open for the enemy.”

"Do not **offer the parts of your body to sin**, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

**“offer”** - yield - [**paristemi**] - to stand beside [**para / histemi**] near / stand

The key take-away is we ourselves do not want to live under oppression and we don't want those we minister to continue under oppression. We want to create more space for the Spirit of God to be at work.

### Potential Reflection Questions:

- What is a key take-away from this session?
- Do you have any specific questions?
- How did your church and your family growing up handle this topic?
- Have you been through deliverance?
- Do you see symptoms of demonization in yourself?
- Are there any condemning voices that you wonder could belong to the enemy?

### Practical Exercise:

Depending on time and need and the group, could field questions, demonstrate a deliverance, do a test, do a group deliverance. Or, be prepared with: Ask Jesus if there is any demonic voice within or without that he would like to silence today? Take action as a group by identifying the voice, countering it with Scripture and expelling or resisting in Jesus' name.

### Session 7: Dreams and Curses

There are certain times when warfare can seem more pronounced. Under stress, illness, at night, during isolation, on the cusp of something new, after a period of significant growth. But

for our final session, I'd like to address two special cases: that of dreams and curses. Dreams are nighttime interactions that can be positive, negative, or neutral while curses can result in long-standing, intractable barriers or oppression unless specifically dealt with.

Key Verses:

*In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.*  
Acts 2:17-18

We spend approximately 1/3 of our life sleeping but frequently we consider it as neutral territory. It is important to remember that night is not necessarily neutral because we hope or think it will be. It is an area where the spiritual world can infiltrate. Just as many attacks occur in war under the cover of night, so too many spiritual attacks occur at night, when we are tired, our guard is down, we might be unsupported relationally or we just think it is "down time". Now, God designed rest and it is important for our bodies to rest. It is important for our minds and hearts to rest. But no space is ever really neutral so we have a choice of bringing night time hours under his authority so we can really rest or just hoping for the best.

Personal Stories

#### **Biblical picture of dreams:**

- Birth Narrative of Jesus
- Role of the Holy Spirit in giving dreams and interpreting dreams.
- Daniel, Potiphar's wife, how many dream narratives surrounding Christ's birth? (Luke especially seems very interested in laying a foundation for this)

#### **Why have dreams have been discounted in the church?**

- Aquinas
- Greek culture
- Modern rationalism

#### **Dreams can originate from :**

- Natural man
- Holy Spirit
- Demonic

#### **How do you determine what dreams mean?**

- encouraging a posture of intercession, humility and seeking counsel from others. We are to “earnestly desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit,”<sup>i</sup> receive His messages with faith, pray promises back to God, be willing to engage in spiritual warfare, seek confirmation and believe and obey.<sup>ii</sup>
- First recall various dreamers in Scripture. People were sometimes confused by their dreams but they generally were rulers and not God-followers. Is this true? Was there always an understanding or interpretation provided?
- Joseph needed wisdom and maturity. Interpretation was perhaps correct but limited in perspective. He didn’t see the suffering that was coming to develop his character.
- Understand different tones: (Analysis)
  - directive
  - demeaning/disruptive
  - dull

#### **Practical steps:**

- Invite God to speak through your dreams. Give him clear access
- Begin to pay attention
- Journal
- Ask questions of God and others
- Look for Scriptural similarities
- Pay attention to recurring.
- Be open to symbolic meaning, not just literal meaning

#### **Brief sampling of imagery from dreams**

- Personal
- Biblical
- Metaphorical (commonly understood)

Personal examples:

#### **Curses:**

There are two clear categories in Scripture of spiritual power. Blessings are vehicles of beneficial supernatural power while curses are harmful, negative spiritual forces in the world. Prince argues that the principle of blessings and curses is consistent across Testaments, and indicative of the way God requires His people to act in each and every dispensation—hearing and obeying his voice equals blessing while rebellion against his voice equals curse. Sometimes they are overt; sometimes they are more hidden.

Overt curses might be more tied to religious ceremonies or witchcraft. For instance, I was doing a deliverance with a woman once and I was sensing there was a strong curse at work in her life. I asked her if it was possible if she was cursed and she said, “Oh yeah, that time someone cut a lock of my hair while I was sleeping and brought it to a witch doctor who buried it with a dead person and then pronounced a curse on me. I couldn’t sleep for a few days then I

found myself on the top of a roof talking utter nonsense and about to throw myself down and they admitted me to a mental hospital and tied me to the bed. She eventually was healed but it was through placing her hands on an idol and having idol transferring power to her.”

So both the curse and the healing were dark and we needed to renounce those curses and and illicit healing and ask for true healing instead and for Christ to take on that curse.

Not all curses are so direct, however. Sometimes they just show up as invisible barriers says Derek Prince. Often, we don't question them. It might look like repeated sickness or accidents in someone's life. One girl I worked with had all sorts of accidents happen. In a single day, cut herself on glass, and then was walking underneath an apartment when a pane of glass fell out and landed on her and cut her jugular and only because a doctor was right beside her did she not bleed out. And they rushed her to the hospital. There was demonization and curses at work in her family and dark spiritual powers.

Sometimes curses aren't so clear.

### **Curses can come from three main sources:**

#### **1. Religious Curses**

As Reimer says, “All religion is ceremonial and covenantal”. Any ceremony in any. Other name than Jesus is a curse, even if it is intended as a blessing. So dedication, initiation, fertility, prosperity, protection or power ceremonies or weddings in the names of deities, which we saw lots in Cuba, function as curses and need to be broken.

Oftentimes there are other elements involved: water, fire, blood, light, ash, oil.

#### **2. Word Curses**

Words that are spoken repeatedly over people, even words that we speak over ourselves can function as a curse. You will never amount to anything. You'll always be poor.

As Reimer says, “dark emotion gives the enemy access”

It is important that we don't just break curses but we bless the people who cursed us. That is kingdom activity. It is our job to bless and It is God's job to do the supernatural work.

#### **3. Repeated Family Sin Pattern Curses**

The bible is clear that family sin continues for generations. So familial sin patterns can continue unchecked with both demonstrated power (we learn by watching and experiencing) but also spiritual power. The power of blessing and curses generally continue generationally until something impedes or cancels their influence.

Christ is the only solution for curses since he became curse for us.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What role do dreams play in your spiritual life, for good or for ill?
2. How is your sleep currently?
3. Do you sense more, less or any spiritual activity during the night?
4. If something were to cause you fear at night, what would it be?
5. If something were to bring you peace at night, what might that look like?

6. What are your current nighttime liturgies? Does your nighttime receive as much prayer attention as your daytime?
7. What has been your experience with curses?
8. Have you ever cursed someone?
9. Do you think you have ever cursed yourself?
10. Were there slogans in your family growing up that might potentially function as a curse?

### **Practical Exercise:**

Do you notice any invisible barriers or any places where you think a curse might be functioning. As a group, I will pray to breaking off of curses. Listening time to see if anything stands out to the group.

### **Closing:**

#### **A few closing thoughts:**

Jesus said I will build my church and the gates of hell won't prevail against it. Ancient cities were surrounded by walls. The gates were the place where rulers gathered and held court, people conducted business transactions and deliberated on public matters. Gates, thus, can be understood as "counsels, designs, machinations, evil purposes". The enemy might scheme, but he will not win ultimate victory over the church. The Power of death will not have the final say. So we stand with God for the kingdom to break in among us, for the kingdom to break down the gates of hell. The enemy might scheme but with Christ's death, resurrection and ascension and in the power of the Spirit, we stand strong. (or possibly develop Rev Garden contrast with Gen 1-3)

- Time for Questions
- Discuss key Take-aways
- Time for Meeting with God

Is there more for you? What is your petition for God? Pray for that and pray for fullness of the Holy Spirit and strengthening for the battle.

