

Fighting Satan on His Turf

Spiritual Readiness in ISM

Introduction

Releasing people from the power of the devil gained notoriety recently when Pope Francis prayed over and blessed a wheelchair-bound man from Mexico. The man's physical responses resulted in some people claiming that Pope Francis had performed an exorcism.¹ Ensuing arguments revealed the misunderstanding many people have as to the nature of demon possession, exorcism, and other elements of fighting Satan. One popular view among both Catholics and Protestants is that getting rid of the Devil requires a ritual that must include formulaic words and actions, under the assumption that these carry power in themselves against an evil being that is afraid of sacred charms and gestures.

"Exorcisms aren't just done according to the rules of the ritual."

"Is Pope Francis an exorcist?" *CBS News, online, May 22, 2013.*

While *exorcism* is not a word we normally use in ISM circles, those working with international students will encounter challenges that may bring them face to face with unseen realities they would rather avoid. Often they are not prepared either to recognize or to deal with the kinds of spiritual bondage that may accompany internationals who come from idolatrous religions or other philosophies based on lies, thinking that the solutions must come from specialists and rituals endorsed by the church, or even from parachurch "clinics" that are dedicated to delivering people from demons—the "deliverance ministries."

Such is not the case. The authority and ability to be victorious in spiritual battles belong to the body of Christ by reason of our identity in Christ. In this seminar we will explore two kinds of battles in which we in ISM need to be spiritually ready for the task of fighting Satan. The first is in resisting Satan's attacks against ourselves. The second is in enabling followers of Christ to become free from their spiritual bondages that have roots in the past. This latter may call for our going into turf that Satan would like to claim belongs solely to him.

All of these are generally covered under the term *spiritual warfare*. Let's understand at the beginning, however, that what is called *warfare* is not a war against people.

- The enemy is Satan, the "god of this world," and his spiritual armies.

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

¹ "Is Pope Francis an exorcist?" *CBS News*. Associated Press, May 22, 2013. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/is-pope-francis-an-exorcist/>.

- The battles are spiritual, not physical.

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

- The arsenal consists of spiritual weapons, not physical.

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4).

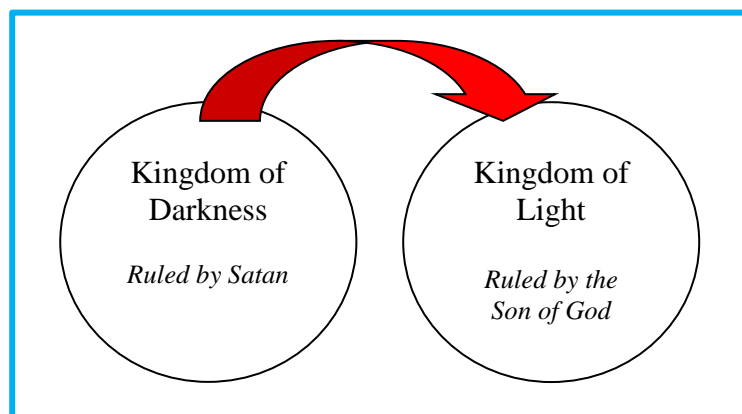
So whether we need to strengthen ourselves or to strengthen someone else, the enemy, the battlefield, and the power to overcome are all ultimately spiritual.

The personal battle against evil

Most Christians learn early in their walk with Christ that choosing to do right is not always easy. God has given us new life and made us new in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). He has given us the Holy Spirit to be a guide that will direct us into the “paths of righteousness” that are promised in Psalm 23. God does not, however, force us to choose what is right and good. He does not take away the personal will that was first given to Adam and Eve. Sometimes we find ourselves choosing to do what we already know is wrong.² Fighting this personal battle against sin is a critical part of spiritual warfare, necessitating God-given strength.

Be strong against the devil’s schemes

Figure 1 Two separate kingdoms



² Romans 6-8 is a good passage to read on this dilemma that every Christian faces.

All humans are born into the Kingdom of Darkness. When someone trusts in Christ, he is transferred from Satan's kingdom in the Kingdom of Light.³ Satan no longer has any right to rule him. Satan will, however, try to defeat citizens of the Kingdom of Light by keeping them from reaching the goal of being made into the image of Christ.

Paul wrote that we should “be strong against the devil's schemes” (Eph. 6:11). He also seems to assume in 2 Cor. 2:10-11 that we should know what those schemes are.⁴ We can summarize those schemes with one word: deceit.

Figure 2a The Devil's Schemes

One-word summary: Deceit

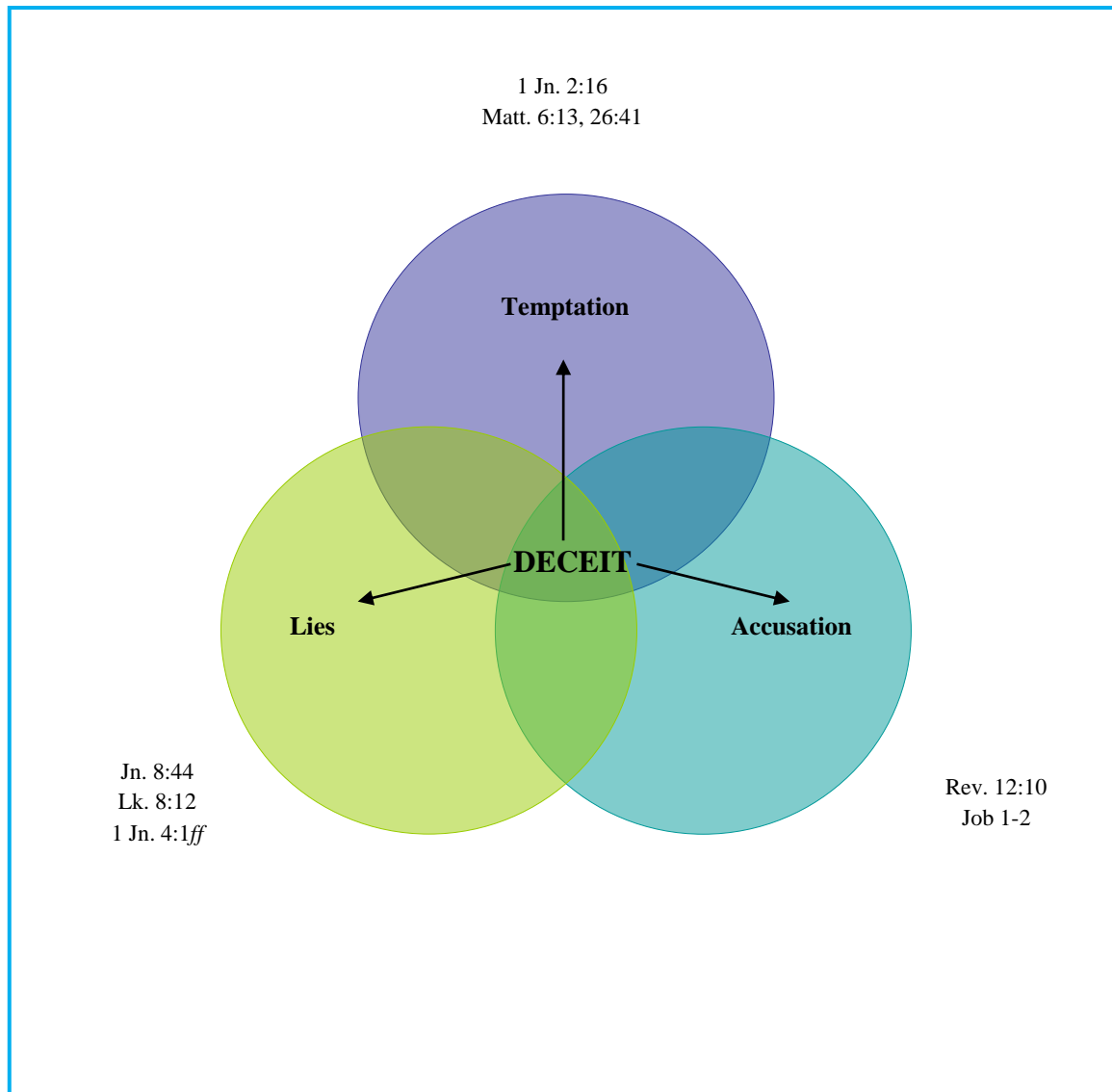
Three aspects of deceit: temptation, lies, accusation

- Examples of temptation, often working through our own evil desires: immorality, cheating, lying, greed, grumbling, jealousy, abuse of others, lack of love, lack of forgiveness, injustice, any form of

³ “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. 1:13-14, *NIV*)

⁴ “If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.” (2 Corinthians 2:10-11, *NIV*)

Figure 3b The Devil's Schemes



Defense against the Devil's schemes:

1. The Word of God—knowing and living its contents: Ps. 119:11; Eph. 6:10-18
2. Faith: 1 Jn. 5:2-4, Eph. 6:16
3. Repentance and cleansing: Ps. 51, 73; 1 Jn. 1:8-10, Eph. 4:25-32



God's honor is at stake. He leads us in paths of righteousness "for his name sake" (Ps. 23:3).

The corporate battle against evil

Christians and the powers of evil

Although Satan's ultimate defeat is guaranteed,⁵ his kingdom will still be fighting battles against the people of God, individually and collectively, until his final destruction at the end of the age.⁶

Spiritual warfare is not just personal. The classic New Testament passage on spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10-18) addresses the church, the body of Christ, with grammatically plural commands. *We* are to be strong, putting on the armor for *our* fight so that *we* can stand firm against the enemy. These plural words definitely have an individual application. The invisible weapons of faith and truth, for example, must be used to fight personal battles against the temptations with which Satan bombards each one of us. We also use standards of righteousness to fight societal evil around us, whether it be offering an alternative to abortion, strengthening laws against sexual offenders, or wrestling with poverty and addiction.

Christians know from Scripture that Satan, hell, and demons exist. But because they are of a different reality than that which is promised to believers, they are often relegated to the realm of

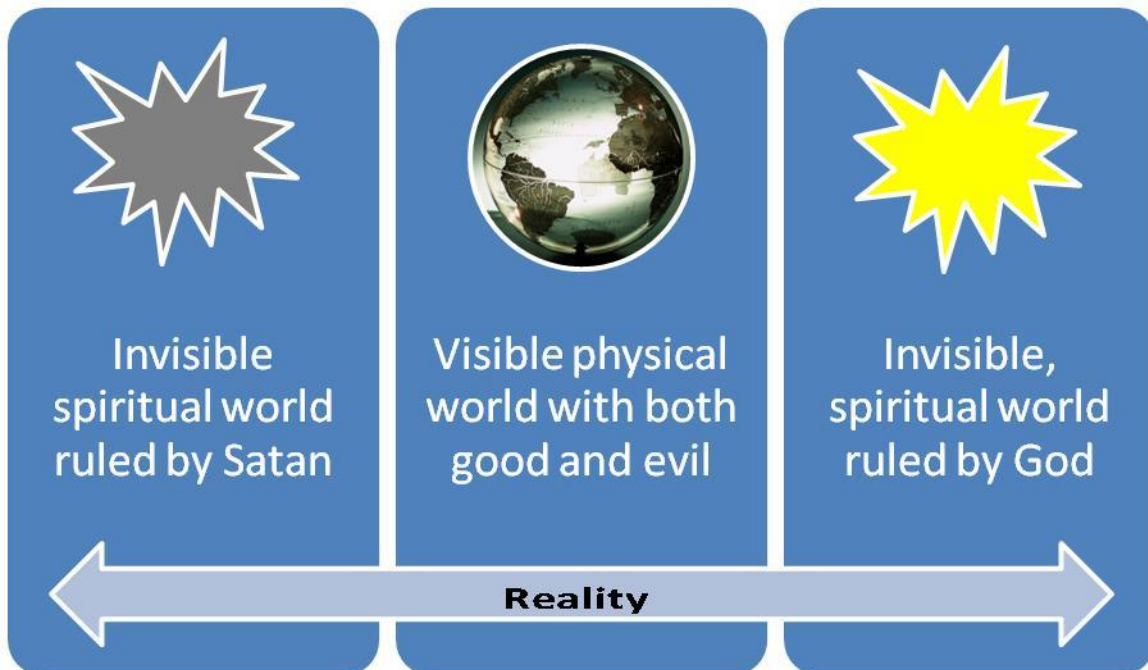


Figure 4 Reality: visible *and* invisible

⁵ Satan was defeated at the cross, but the Scriptures are clear that the battles are not over (Jn. 12:31, 16:11; Col. 2:13-15; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:8-10).

⁶ "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

the permanently invisible and therefore not real. It is a mistake of language, but the mistake can render us unprepared to deal with the evil side of spiritual reality experienced by those coming to Christ from false beliefs. Those in the West who have been highly influenced by the Enlightenment and scientific realism have largely rejected realities that much of the rest of the world readily admits and appeases.

However, the invisible, spiritual world cannot be explained by the logic of physics. The realm of the invisible overlaps physical reality. Physical space, to our perception, may be full. Yet, from Scripture we know that God and his angels are present in our world without demanding their own physical space. The visible and the invisible are two, overlapping dimensions. They coexist side by side.

When an international student decides to become a follower of Jesus Christ, his mind may say *yes* to Jesus, but the invisible gods whom he has been serving may not let him go without kicking and screaming. With his mind, he wants to follow Christ. Satan, however, can throw up severe obstacles, including the possibility of evil spiritual beings manifesting themselves in the physical world. This is Satan's attempt to prevent another member of his dark kingdom from becoming a full-fledged citizen of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. What should be our response when such things happen?

Your response will depend upon how seriously you believe that you have authority in Jesus' name to deal with Satan. Will you use your spiritual armor to fight for those who have "begun to believe" who don't yet know the power available to them for defeating Satan? If a student were physically injured, you would do what you could to apply first aid or call the paramedics. If he were emotionally injured, you would attempt to empathize and give counsel. What will you do for those who are being attacked in the spiritual realm?

We don't need to run or look for those who claim to be professionals in this area, the so-called deliverance ministries. We ourselves, as members of the body of Christ, can fight. We can also empower new believers to fight Satan even when we are not there to intervene. After all, victory is achieved neither in their power or ours but in the power of Christ. Such power is available to every believer, no matter how long he or she has been in the Kingdom of God.

Some guiding principles

In the following, the person who is experiencing spiritual attack will be referred to as the counselee, and the person who is trying to help as the counselor.

1. Be grounded in God's truth.

Scripture, properly interpreted, tells us all we need to know about Satan and his schemes.⁷ It also gives us a complete armory of spiritual weapons to use against him. Being ignorant of Scripture will weaken or defeat our efforts to help someone else who desperately needs to be freed from Satan's attacks. At the same time, going beyond Scripture can engage us in unnecessary, fruitless, and even potentially spiritually dangerous battles.

Not only do we need to be grounded in the truth ourselves, but we also need to be able to express the truth of Scripture in ways that will be understood by the counselee, who must believe and use it. We need to explain spiritual concepts in everyday language, without theological jargon.⁸ Speaking truth exposes and demolishes lies that are deluding the counselee, but to be effective it must first be understood.

2. Be spiritually discerning.

Spiritual discernment is essential for determining whether the demonic is involved in any particular case. The counselor should neither dismiss the possibility nor assume the actuality without careful listening and questioning. Take seriously the counselee's description of what is happening, asking for God's wisdom to grasp the nature of the problem. Seek help and advice when necessary while maintaining confidentiality.⁹

3. Set reasonable goals.

The goal should always be to see the one Satan is attacking use faith in Jesus to gain spiritual victory. Achieving victory will most likely not be a one-time encounter (such as casting out a demon) but a process of teaching and using God's truth.

4. Teach the believer how to use his spiritual armor.

The one whom Satan is attacking will have to face the demons, not the one who is counseling him. It is unlikely that the counselor will be around when the attacks occur. The victim must learn his position in Christ Jesus, the nature of Satan's attacks, and how to stand up to a lying, defeated enemy.

5. Teach the believer his power and authority in Jesus' name.

The power to fight Satan is from Christ; it does not originate from us. It requires no special gift. Even a child can learn to speak Jesus' name against the Enemy.¹⁰

⁷ The Apostle Paul indicated that he and his readers were aware of Satan's schemes (2 Cor. 2:10). The context of his warning to the Corinthians shows how easily we can forget and be led astray.

⁸ Jargon is the legitimate language that is used by any specialty. Theological jargon has its proper place, but when it is spoken outside of the community where it was intended to be used, it is mere babble.

⁹ When working with difficult cases, it is often advisable to work with a team consisting of persons who are knowledgeable and skillful in other disciplines, such as medicine and psychology.

¹⁰ The effectual power is not in the word *Jesus* but in the person that name represents.

6. Consider the influence of family religion.

If someone from an idolatrous religion were to tell us of having problems with spirits, we might naturally connect such experiences with the nature of the religion, for Scripture tells us that demons are linked with the worship of idols.¹¹ Similarly, those involved in New Age practices who have invited spirit guides to enlighten them give us cause to suspect demonic association. When a person has freely given himself to a spirit other than the Holy Spirit, we can anticipate greater difficulty in obtaining freedom.

A mistake often made by evangelical Christians is assuming that the moment a person says “Yes, I believe,” that person is automatically freed from any former ties to the unholy realities of a former religion. This may indeed be the case for many, but not for all. Satan does not easily give up on those who once were dedicated to his worship.

7. Guard yourself.

The biblical counselor must counter another’s deception with God’s truth, but in so doing he or she becomes involved in the war. The wise counselor will remain on guard, always aware that Satan will try to disarm the counselee’s allies in any way possible.

Being able to help someone else in spiritual warfare, whether it involves conquering temptation or defeating something that is openly demonic, does not require a sinless life. But it does require a spirit of humility that remains keenly aware that we, too, are vulnerable. Paul warns us in Gal. 6:1 that we need to be careful whenever we are trying to help someone else who has fallen into Satan’s trap: “But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”

8. Be diligent in prayer

Paul’s concluding words in his list of spiritual armor is that we should remain alert, but at the same time constantly be praying in the power of the Spirit. As much as counselees will allow you to do so, pray for them and pray with them. Encourage them to participate in the praying.

Conclusion

Our end goal is to strengthen the children of God, whether new believers or experienced followers, so that they can gain not just theoretical but actual freedom from the power of Satan. We must enter the battlefield to accomplish this, not just stand on the sidelines. At times we may personally need to fight Satan on behalf of others, but the long-term benefit will be in helping them learn and experience the power to which God has already given them access.

¹¹ Deut. 32:16-17, Ps. 106:36-38, 1 Cor. 10:19-21, Rev. 9:20.

Suggested Reading List

Anderson, Neil. *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1990.

The Bondage Breaker was first written as a dissertation for the author's second doctorate from Talbot Seminary. It is available in several editions, including Kindle and online. Anderson's other books on spiritual warfare are also valuable: *Victory over the Darkness*, *Steps to Freedom in Christ*.

Arnold, Clint: *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997.

The three questions addressed are (1) What is spiritual warfare? (2) Can a Christian be demon-possessed? (3) Are we called to engage territorial spirits?

----- *Powers of Darkness: Principalities & Powers in Paul's Letters*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992.

Available in several editions, including Kindle. Part 1: First-century belief in the Powers; Part 2: Paul's teaching on the Powers; Part 3: Interpreting the Powers for today.

Beilby, James K. & Paul Rhodes, Eds. *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

The four views are presented by authors who uphold those views with responses from the others: (1) "The World Systems Model" by Walter Wink; (2) "The Classical Model" by David Powlison; (3) "The Ground-Level Deliverance Model" by Gregory Boyd; (4) "The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model" by C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood.

Breshears, Gerry. "Rogue Deliverance." 2003. Online.

"Rogue Deliverance" is not a description of the nature of the deliverance. It comes from the Rogue River in Southern Oregon, where one of the participants of the group that devised this document lived.

https://onedrive.live.com/view.aspx?cid=BF87D3DB01941350&resid=BF87D3DB01941350!418&app=Word&authkey=!AO0o7O_2vAVeWpo.

----- "Three Models of Deliverance." Online.

This outline lists and gives the main points of three current philosophies in gaining victory over Satan: conversion encounter, power encounter, and truth encounter.

https://onedrive.live.com/view.aspx?cid=BF87D3DB01941350&resid=BF87D3DB01941350!419&app=Word&authkey=!AO0o7O_2vAVeWpo.

Breshears, Gerry, and Mike Wilkerson. "Basic Principles for Dealing with the Demonic." Online.

https://onedrive.live.com/view.aspx?cid=BF87D3DB01941350&resid=BF87D3DB01941350!415&app=Word&authkey=!AO0o7O_2vAVeWpo.

Eldredge, John. *Waking the Dead: The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive*. Nashville: Nelson, 2006.

Amazon.com description: “There is a glory to life that most people—including believers—never see. In this insightful new book, John Eldredge presents the heart as central to life. Not only is the heart essential; the heart God has ransomed is also good. Building on these foundational truths, Eldredge shows readers why real Christianity is a process of restoration, where the broken parts of our hearts are mended and the captive parts are set free.” Part 1: “Seeing Our Way Clearly”; Part 2: “The Ransomed Heart”; Part 3: “The Four Streams”; Part 4: The Way of the Heart.

Kay, William and Robin Parry, Eds. *Exorcism and Deliverance*. Paternoster Publishing, 2011.

Amazon.com description: “Since Jesus of Nazareth made exorcism a cornerstone of his own ministry, the Church has seen itself as engaged in a battle against the demonic. Exorcism has continued to play a role throughout Christian history in this conflict, although it has received different emphases in different times and places, and has been practised in a range of different ways. *Exorcism and Deliverance* aims to shed new light on the phenomena of possession and exorcism by looking at them from a range of disciplinary perspectives.”

Payne, Karl. *Spiritual Warfare*. Washington, DC: WND Books, 2011.

From the Amazon.com description: “Christians must be strategic in their reactions..., learning how to fight biblically and effectively rather than just sincerely. In *Spiritual Warfare*, Dr. Karl Payne—pastor of Leadership Development and Discipleship at Antioch Bible Church and Chaplain for the NFL's Seattle Seahawks—has written a guidebook for defense that is simple, biblical, and transferable. Through his teaching on how to recognize and resolve attacks from the world, we learn that we are more than conquerors in Christ.

Comments? You may contact the author at carmenhills@comcast.net.