

## Strategies of the Enemy - Introduction

How many of you enjoy playing board games? I really enjoy strategy games. Even though I don't play much anymore, I used to love chess. I don't really like games of chance, like UNO. I have a special dislike for the game UNO. I know there can be some strategy in UNO but basically, the person who draws the best cards wins. Where's the fun in that?

The Carthaginian General Hannibal, is considered by many as the father of strategy. In 216 B.C. Hannibal managed to crush the numerically superior Roman army because of his strategy. Instead of engaging the Romans on the Roman choice of battlefields, Hannibal marched 40,000 infantrymen, 8,000 cavalrymen, and 38 elephants over the Alps mountains into central Italy and took the Romans by surprise.

When it came time to confront the Roman army, a superior force to his, Hannibal was the first known commander to use the flanking maneuver. To this point, armies basically stood across from one another and attacked head-on. Hannibal used the aggressiveness of the Roman army against them. When the Romans attacked, the center of Hannibal's army retreated, drawing the Romans in, while the outside edges of his army moved forward and surrounded the Romans. Instead of fighting the enemy head-on, the Romans fought on all sides and were quickly crushed by Hannibal's army. For the next 17 years, Hannibal ran roughshod over the Romans until he was recalled to Carthage. Hannibal defeated the mighty Roman Empire by his strategy.

If you follow Jesus, you have an enemy with a strategy.  
No, your enemy is not Democrat or Republican, Flat earth or round earth, Socialist or Capitalist, cryptocurrency or cash, or even a Duck or a Beaver.

Your true enemy has been around longer than any of those issues.

### Eph 6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.

Our enemy has many names. He has been called

- a roaring lion
- a thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy
- the tempter
- the ruler of the demons
- the God of this Age
- and the evil one

The **ultimate goal** of this enemy is to possess humanity's loyalty.

**If you don't know or follow Jesus**, he wants to keep it that way. He wants your loyalty to be directed to him, not to the God who loves you.

In a conversation with some Pharisees, Jesus describes the enemy when He says this:

**Jn 8:44**

You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies

According to Jesus, some of the works of the devil are murder and lying. These two sins summarize the character of the devil and his goals. He works to see people destroyed and go to hell (that's murder), and he desires to deceive them into that destruction (that's lying).

**If you are a Jesus follower**, the enemy has no power over your eternal destiny. If you have trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin, you have received the gift of eternal life then nothing, including the Devil, can change that.

Because He cannot change your eternal destiny, his goal is to keep you **ineffective** when it comes to doing the will of your Heavenly Father so you cannot bring glory to God.

Humanity has an enemy, he is Satan, Lucifer, the Devil, and he is a **strategist**. He has a **plan** to fulfill his objective to keep humanity's loyalty.

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Understanding the enemy's strategy can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

In the early fall of 1862, the Confederate and Union armies prepared to face off at the Battle of Antietam. Antietam was going to be a pivotal battle in the Civil War. Had the Union lost the battle, the United States would not look like it does today. On September 13, 1862, two Union soldiers, Private Barton W. Mitchell and Sergeant John M. Bloss, discovered a copy of Special Order 191 with detailed Confederate troop movements, allegedly wrapped around three cigars. A careless Confederate courier had lost the orders while carrying them to Lee's generals. The discovery of the orders by the Union army gave them the upper hand in the battle.

If you are at all familiar with the works of C.S. Lewis you are familiar with a book he wrote called *The Screwtape Letters*.

*The Screwtape Letters*, written by Lewis in 1942 is a novel in the form of imaginary letters written from one demon to another. The senior demon and hellish administrator Screwtape shares advice and lessons with his nephew, Wormwood, who's job it is to tempt his "patient" away from God and toward Satan.

Here are a few quotes from the book:

"Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts,...Your affectionate uncle, Screwtape."

"Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him."

"Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for the church that "suits" him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches."

The book was Lewis' way of exposing the strategies of our enemy.

Understanding our enemy's strategy and casting light on his plans can help us stand against the Devil's schemes, as Paul calls them in Gal 6.

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And so, for the next few weeks we will be talking about the **Strategies of the Enemy**.

We will talk about how the enemy's plan to use **shame, fear, distractions and lies** to keep us in bondage and to keep us from the **good** and **prosperous** plans that God has for us.

But this morning I want to lay a foundation for that conversation. I want to give you some general principles about doing spiritual warfare. I want to lay a foundation for answering the question,

**What do I need to know to engage and defeat the enemy?**

**1. Spiritual warfare is a battle between light and darkness.**

This may seem pretty obvious, but we can easily miss the powerful implications of this fundamental truth.

The Bible uses light as a way of describing God, His kingdom, His purposes, and His children.

The Bible uses darkness as a way of describing sin, the enemy, and his plots.

The Bible often uses the image of light and darkness to illustrate the interaction between these two forces. But light and dark are not equal opposites. God and Satan are not in a battle of equal forces. Light does not just have an advantage over darkness. The forces of good are not just stronger, and they do not just outnumber the forces of evil.

Darkness is nothing but the absence of light. When I walk into my office and turn on the light, there is no struggle for the light to dispel the darkness. The darkness

does not peel away in layers like a stain being scrubbed from a floor. The darkness does not slowly retreat like a puddle blown by the wind.

The darkness is gone when light is present.

The battle is not about whether light can defeat darkness; the battle is about whether the light is on or not. Whether the light is present or not present.

In **1Jn 3:8** it says

The one who commits sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the devil's works.

Why did Jesus come? He came to destroy the works of the devil. He came to reclaim territory that the enemy was occupying.

That is why, after Jesus was tempted in the desert for 40 days, he leaves the desert and begins his ministry, Matthew quotes the prophet Isaiah concerning Jesus.

**Matt 4:16**

The people who live in darkness have seen a great light, and for those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.

In **Jn 8:12** Jesus says this about Himself

Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

Drawing closer to Jesus, eradicates the darkness because He is the light.

God's Word is also referred to as light.

**Ps 119:105, 130**

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

130 The revelation of your words brings light and gives understanding to the inexperienced.

As we allow the light of God's Word to permeate our lives, it leads us as it dispels the darkness.

And finally, look at what Jesus says about those who follow Him.

#### **Jn 5:14-16**

14 "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

We who follow Jesus, are literally, reflections of His light and so as we reflect Him in our homes and our relationships and in our community, we are bringing His light into those places. These places that the enemy wants desperately to control.

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If light does not have to fight to dispel darkness, then why do so many Christians experience the negative effects of spiritual warfare? Why do so many Christians feel harassed by the enemy? Why do so many feel powerless? There are probably many reasons for this but I find that the solution to many of these challenges is found in this second fundamental truth

#### **2. Spiritual warfare is primarily a battle of perspective.**

The battle is whether we choose to see things the way God wants us to see them or the way the enemy wants us to see them.

The enemy really has a field day in our lives when we take his perspective on things, instead of taking God's perspective and being connected to how God thinks about those things.

Several weeks ago when I dropped the freezer on my leg and couldn't walk very well for a couple of weeks, I spent a lot of time watching documentaries. I watched one story about a Japanese soldier at the very end of World War II.

This particular soldier was put in charge of a commando unit that was fighting in the Philippines near the end of the war. He was instructed to undermine the

Allied forces in the area by any possible means until he received further instruction. During this time, the soldier and his unit got cut off from the chain of command. They continued following their orders, undermining and attacking any Allied forces they could find.

Shortly after this, the war came to an end. Japan surrendered, but because this soldier and his team were disconnected from any communication, they continued to fight. Their fighting continued for weeks, then months. Local authorities blasted loudspeakers into the jungle where the soldiers were hiding, telling them that the war was over and they could go home. They assumed this was just propaganda, a trick to get them to surrender. One by one the soldiers died, were captured, or surrendered until only one was left. His surviving comrades wrote notes, explaining that the war had been over for some time now, which were duplicated and air-dropped over the jungle.

He assumed that his friends had been forced to write the notes, a trick so that he would be captured as well, so he continued to fight and hide. Japan surrendered in 1945, but the soldier continued to fight until 1974.

A Japanese student who heard the story of this soldier traveled to the Philippines, found the soldier, and convinced him to come home. The soldier agreed on the condition that his commanding officer come and officially relieve him of duty. The student returned to Japan, found the officer, who had long since retired, and returned to the jungle. The soldier was officially relieved of duty and returned home to Japan. He had been fighting in the jungle for twenty-nine years.

This soldier spent a huge portion of his life fighting a battle that was already over. I know many Christians who have spent way too much time fighting battles that Jesus already won on the cross. They exhaust themselves fighting for a victory that already belongs to them. Spiritual warfare is primarily a battle of perspective. If we do not stop and realign our perspective with God's—reconnect with the chain of command so to speak—then we run the risk of wasting our time, energy, and pain on a battle that is nothing more than a trick and a lie.

The Apostle John talks about overcoming those who would lead you away from the truth.

#### 1 Jn 4:4

But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

And so that is what we are going to do over the next few weeks. We are going to claim our victory over the things that would keep us being and doing what God has planned for us and we are going to realign our perspective with God's on some of the biggest issues the enemy uses against us.

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We all have some tendencies to take the enemy's perspective over God's. What is an area in your life where the enemy has a foothold and you have been listening to his voice over the voice of your heavenly father? It could be your perspective on a relationship or a perspective on your circumstances or one of many other facets of our life that can fall into the trap of a skewed perspective.

When God brings that thing to mind ask him to begin to change your perspective and bring it into alignment with His.