

Strategies of the Enemy - Counter-Attack

Humanity has an enemy whose chief aim is to keep you disconnected from God and ineffective in your walk with Him.

The enemy employs an array of strategies to accomplish his goal. Most of those strategies involve lies, deception, and misdirection.

Light does not have to fight to dispel darkness. To get rid of darkness, all you have to do is turn on the lights. To overcome the enemy's strategies, we must turn on the light to expose him and the lies he tells. Jesus has already won the absolute victory over the enemy on our behalf.

Jn 16:33 (CSB) - I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”

If all of this is true, if Jesus has conquered the world and all we have to do is expose the enemy's lies with the truth, then why do so many people, even Christians, feel like they are in a losing battle? If dispelling darkness is as simple as turning on the light, why doesn't it always feel that simple?

Luke 9:1 (CSB) - Summoning the Twelve, he gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.

Jesus gave His disciples power and authority to drive out demons—the ability and the right to remove the rulers, the authorities, and the powers of this dark world that Paul refers to in Eph 6.

After His resurrection, Jesus released them to go make more disciples, spreading this authority to even more hands.

Matt 28:18-19 (CSB) - Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

If this authority and power is available to all the disciples of Jesus, then why do so many Christians feel powerless against the enemy?

When we first moved into the house we live in now, the backyard was a horrible mess. I spent months pulling up trees and bushes and tilling the yard so I could plant new grass. When I was done it was glorious, for a while. Then we started accumulating animals. First it was a couple of dogs, and then it was a couple of goats, then it was a couple more dogs. Eventually, that number of animals in a relatively small backyard took its toll on the yard, and I gave up, and the weeds just took over with a vengeance. Every day, I would look out the window and think, oh boy, I need to take care of that yard. But I was busy, the kids were busy, and I never seemed to have enough time to get out and battle the weeds. Finally, it got so bad, and the weeds were so bad that I went out and mowed everything down to the dirt, and I was just going to start over. Finally, I was making some progress. The problem, however, was that after I knocked down all those weeds, it took like a week for everything to return, and it looked just as bad as before. The weeds loved my backyard. I think all I did was spread more weed seeds by mowing it down to the dirt. Finally, it got so bad that I had a friend bring over his tractor, we tilled the yard, and then I nuked it with some dangerously mixed chemicals, and I kept spraying it for the next few weeks until I was sure the ground could no longer possibly support another weed.

That is the best analogy I could think of to describe how the enemy takes advantage of us and uses his strategies to keep us from connection with God and ineffective in our walk with Him. I mowed those weeds down to the dirt. There was not a weed to be seen when I got done. The problem was I did not change the environment that caused those weeds to thrive, so as soon as I mowed them down, they came right back. It wasn't until I changed the environment that the weeds went away.

Spiritual warfare and overcoming the Devil's strategies is not a question of authority and power. You have the authority. You have the power. Jesus won both of those things for you on the cross.

Overcoming the enemy's strategies is a matter of environment—not the one you live in, the one inside you.

Our enemy and his strategies are rarely the cause of our problems. They are the weeds that we allow to grow in weed-friendly soil. The enemy's strategies are entirely powerless when they have no place to take root and grow and when there is no suitable environment for them.

Darkness cannot overcome light, but it does not need to if we forget to turn the lights on.

This morning, I want to give you some ideas about how we can learn to live with the lights on, how we can build an internal environment that is inhospitable to the enemy's plots, plans, and lies.

These are some important things that help build a life that reflects Jesus' victory. They help make our lives resistant to the enemy's strategies.

This is our counter-offensive to the Devil's attacks.

Here are three things that will help you become resilient against the enemy's strategies:

1. Intimacy

I have been consistently involved in church for over forty years. For a long time, I thought that being a good Christian meant attending church as much as possible, reading the Bible as much as possible, praying as much as possible, and worshiping as enthusiastically as possible, all while trying to sin as little as possible. I now realize that this was both wrong and right.

Jesus railed against the religious leaders in His day, the Pharisees. He called them whitewashed tombs. They were doing the right things on the outside but were dead and rotting on the inside. They had wrong motives.

It is possible to do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. Doing those things can be good, however, when they are helping us build intimacy with God.

Relationship with God is the substance of Christianity. It is the foundation of all spirituality. It is the purpose for Jesus' sacrifice, the culmination of the gospel.

Jn 17:3 (CSB) - This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ.

I have been married for 34 years now, and my relationship with my wife is still a mystery. I am always learning more about who she is and how to love her. As the seasons of our lives change, I am learning to love her as we change. I'm constantly learning how to connect with her, support her, and show her I love her.

The Bible uses the metaphor of marriage to draw a picture of the relationship between God and His human family. I love this because it so beautifully captures the intimacy, mystery, and progression of a relationship with God. We are always discovering more of who He is, more of how He loves us, and more of how we can love Him. I used to think that the more I read the Bible, the more I prayed, and the more I worshipped, the better Christian I would be.

I have since decided I don't want to be a good Christian. Instead, I want more of the God who loves me. I want to know Him more and follow Him more faithfully every day.

I spend time with my wife, do things **with** my wife, and do things **for** my wife, but if I am doing those things out of obligation then it doesn't do much to build our intimacy. If my wife says, you never bring me flowers anymore and then the next day I show up with flowers, that doesn't say much to her. You know what she's thinking. The only reason he brought me flowers is because I said something to him, not because he was really thinking about me.

We aren't building intimacy if we do these things out of obligation, because it is our routine, or because we think we can earn God's favor by doing this checklist.

Spending time in God's Word is one way to build intimacy with God.

The Bible

The Bible is not just a book, document, record, or set of instructions. It is so much more. You can read it like a book, review it like a document, study it like a record, or follow it like a set of instructions, and you will get good things out of it. But it is so much more.

The Bible is the revelation of the One True God, our Creator, Sustainer, and Savior. He has given us His Word so we can **know Him**.

To develop intimacy with God, you must read the Bible a lot. Reading the Bible will not automatically make you closer to God, but if you want to have a truly intimate relationship with Him, you cannot do it without His Word.

Heb 4:12 (CSB) - For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

Prayer is another way to build intimacy.

Prayer

Communication is the lifeblood of any relationship. When we communicate, we share information, emotions, thoughts, hopes, dreams, and so much more.

Prayer, simply put, is communication with God.

There is no more tangible expression of His love than the idea that God would want to talk with me. Prayer connects us with the reality of God. It familiarizes us with His character, intentions, and thoughts. It helps us experience His presence during trouble and pain.

Prayer is giving thanks, confession, intercession, petition, and praying for those who don't know Jesus. But prayer is also listening to God, learning how He speaks to us, and how we need to listen to Him. As we share our hearts and God reveals His, we grow in intimacy.

Worship

Worship is the most heavenly thing we can do on earth. It is for God, not for us. But it is interesting that God seemingly cannot help but give us something in exchange when we worship Him. It has been in worship that I have had my deepest moment of intimacy with Him. It has also been in times of worship that I have experienced the most healing and peace I have ever felt.

A mind fixed on worshipping God is impenetrable to the enemy's lies. Worshiping Him puts everything else in my life into proper perspective.

Worship is simply the act of expressing love to God. There is no trick, no three-step method; it is just an act of love.

Intimacy is into me you see. Intimacy is being seen. When we worship Him we are confessing who He is and we see him rightly which allows us to connect with Him and allows us to have intimacy with Him.

If your heart can worship, whether your life is joyous and overflowing or empty and dry, then you will have the building blocks of a life that can stand against the enemy's strategies.

If intimacy is the foundation of your relationship with God, then community is the house you build on top of the foundation.

2. Community

We all need community; we all need to belong to a tribe. We were created for a relationship with our Heavenly Father and relationships with one another.

When God created man, he saw that it was not good for him to be alone, so He created woman. Human beings are fundamentally designed for relationships. Even our relationship with God is designed to function best in the context of community. The Bible is full of passages that encourage connection, friendship, and unity.

Here is a reminder from King Solomon:

Ecc 4:9-12 (CSB) - Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

In his letter to the Galatians, in Gal 6:2, Paul says that bearing one another's burdens is part of fulfilling the law of Christ.

We are designed to be surrounded by connections with other people. We need people who pour into our lives with wisdom, experience, and insight. We need people with whom we can run our race. We need people with whom we can share our wisdom, experience, and insight. We need lots of different types of relationships, but we really need friendships—friends who will help us stand when the enemy is at work to bring us down.

Jesus was as connected to the Father as anyone could be, yet He still had friends—multiple layers of them. He had the multitudes who followed Him, the Twelve who were His closest disciples, the three (Peter, James, and John) who were His close friends, and then one friend who was His closest: John. If Jesus needed friends, indeed, we do as well.

— Jackie Hill Perry, *Gay Girl, Good God*

“So, to leave that community for another one was terrifying, especially when the transition was being made into a community that seemed to be everything but safe. But the group of Christians I began to know and enjoy were ones that did more for me than the gay community could've ever done. They showed me God. The community I called home for a season of my life were all full of laughter and what I'd labeled “life.” But the reality was that my gay community was indeed lifeless. They were what I had been, dead. They were still image-bearers, still friends, they still mattered. I still loved them, but I loved God more. They could not help me love who they did not know themselves. The difference between the gay community and the Christian community was not skill, intellect, comfort, humor, or beauty; it was that in one and not the other, God dwelled.”

We all need to be with people who will lead us toward Jesus. A community where God dwells.

We are never more vulnerable and at risk than when we are alone.

Community is usually not something you stumble on. It is not finding the perfect group of people you mesh with. Community is something you build on purpose. It takes intentional effort.

Community is built from the connections you forge with the people around you—connections you choose, build, steward, and grow.

Please do not let the enemy trick you into thinking that community is unimportant or unnecessary.

The last element that will help you cultivate an environment where the lies of the enemy can't take root is:

3. Momentum

If you know Jesus, then God's design and His heart is that He is changing you. He is transforming who you are so that you, in increasing measure, reflect God's glory. God intends for us to grow. There are certainly seasons and circumstances where we grow more than other times but there should always be some forward momentum in our relationship with God.

2 Cor 3:18 (CSB)—We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at, the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Col 2:6-7 (CSB)—So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him, being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude.

We are designed to live a growing life, a life with forward momentum, becoming more like Jesus and when we are not doing that and there is a lack of momentum in our relationship with God, we quickly forget who we are.

A lack of momentum in our life is a vulnerability that is easy for the enemy to exploit. We tend to forget who we are when we are not being who we are. When we are not practicing and living out our identity.

If a man does not exercise his arm he develops no biceps muscle; and if a man does not exercise his soul, he acquires no muscle in his soul, no strength of character, no vigor of moral fiber, nor beauty of Spiritual growth.

- Henry Drummond

When we develop good spiritual habits, and when we put ourselves in a place where we are intentionally growing in our walk with God, it creates an environment that does not allow the lies and deceit of the enemy to take root.

In addition to momentum, when we are cultivating intimacy with God and community with people who will lead us toward Jesus, we are creating an environment that will not allow the weeds to grow. This is what it means to live with the light on so we can expose the enemy's strategies. This is our counter-attack against our enemy.

Intimacy

Community

Momentum

Is there an area you have been neglecting? What can you do to begin cultivating that area of your life?