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THE BATTLE AND THE VICTORY

If you knew a thief was planning to break into your home tonight, what would you do? At the very least, you would probably turn on every light inside and outside, and sit up to watch for his coming so you could thwart his plans. That's wise prevention. This is what I want to do in this book—help to forewarn and prepare you to protect your family from the enemy.

This is a book about spiritual warfare, an issue that affects every reader, Christian and non-Christian. Spiritual battles also involve the family, as the book's subtitle reveals. The fact is that Satan, our great enemy, has a well-focused plan of attack against families—husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, and children. Unless we know what he's up to, we cannot protect ourselves against his schemes.

You may be questioning some of these statements. *Well, spiritual warfare may have been an issue during the days of John Bunyan and The Pilgrim's Progress, and it's a problem today in primitive cultures, where animism and witchcraft prevail. But it's not a problem that my family or I will face.* You are not alone in thinking that way. Many evangelical Christians and most Americans relegate the topic of spiritual warfare to the old days. "Back in the Middle and Dark Ages, people weren't as enlightened as they are now," they argue. "We know so much more than those people did, so we don't have to ascribe a supernatural explanation to many of the things that happen to us. Modern science and the principles of psychology can account for many of the things our ancestors thought were supernatural."

Even more Americans believe that spirits are only active in more primitive countries. Here animism rules: people believe that God left His spirits to run the world. Though they don't worry about the good spirits, animistic people spend their whole lives in mortal fear of offending wicked spirits. Americans believe they struggle with real or imagined spiritual enemies because of their openness to them.

Christians rightly reject the animistic view of the world. But while Christians in the Western world believe in the supernatural, many still believe that everything on earth can be accounted for either by natural or scientific explanations. I've met numbers of Christians who don't really believe that the spirit world is real or relevant or needs to be dealt with.

People don't often come out and say that, but they reveal it by the way they react. As Timothy Warner, professor emeritus at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a board member at the International Center for Biblical Counseling, an agency that counsels people suspected of having problems with demonic influences, says, "People may not always live what they profess, but they will always live what they believe."

The Reality of Spiritual Warfare

Your profession level of belief probably is a theoretical or theological statement of dogma; it agrees with your religion. But your true belief is revealed by what you do under pressure. Most of us, during times of pressure, will not consider that a spiritual battle may be underway in our lives.

But we are often in a fierce battle with the enemy of our souls. Spiritual warfare is a biblical reality. The question is not whether we wrestle demonic spirits, but who's on top? Do the spirits have us pinned?

Members of Christian families, and sometimes entire families, are being wiped out left and right. It's not because they don't have the power or resources for victory, but because many of God's people don't take the enemy and his work seriously, much less recognize his attacks and try to resist him. The apostle Paul said he didn't want the Corinthian believers to be ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11), but the church of Jesus Christ today is woefully ignorant of the way our enemy works.

A Daily Battle

Please understand that I am not talking about bizarre happenings or things flying through the air. I have seen visible manifestations of demons in my counseling experience, but these are far from the norm. When these things do occur, I'm usually dealing with people who are so heavily in bondage to the enemy in one way or another that he has an enormous amount of ground to operate in their lives.

For the vast majority of Christians, however, spiritual warfare is another name for the daily battle we wage against "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16).

Even though most of us memorized verses like this when we were children, we still don't understand how Satan works. The church is paying an enormous price for this neglect and ignorance of one of the central truths of the Christian life, the fact that spiritual warfare is real and we are in a battle.

Three in Battle

That's why I thought it would be helpful right up front to give you some insight into the seriousness of the battle by introducing you to three people whom I have met and counseled during the past few years.

Mary, Angie, and Bill are very different people in very different circumstances. But they have two things in common. First, they are sincere, everyday Christians, members of Christian families who could be your neighbors or fellow church members. Second, each of them has come face-to-face with the reality of spiritual warfare and has seen how the battle can affect individual believers and their families.

Mary is in her early fifties, rearing two children with her husband, Rob. Rob is a respected member of his community and a lay leader in their church; yet in recent years he has become harsh toward her and rejected her every effort to express love and concern.

Mary didn't know it at first, but her husband was fighting a losing battle against a particular problem in his own life. His repeated episodes of spiritual defeat had given Satan all the opening he needed to bring destructive temptations into this man's life. And because Mary's husband was not living in isolation, his struggle affected those closest to him.

Mary soon realized that her situation was not just a momentary setback and that Rob's battle was more than a flesh-and-blood struggle. She knew she had a decision to make: whether to give up on the marriage altogether, or stay but surrender to the bitterness and anger, which would give the enemy an opening into her life too.

Thankfully, Mary chose a third option, and God gave her the strength to carry it out. Here is part of the testimony she wrote and gave to me:

This is a testimony to the love and faithfulness of God, who used a very lonely and difficult time in my marriage to draw me to Himself in a deep and intimate way. . . .

Five years passed from the time I first suspected demonic involvement in my husband's life until his deliverance. As I had learned more and more about spiritual warfare, I realized that the heavy and dark spirit that sometimes characterized him was not necessary. He would sometimes take days of prayer and fasting, but with no joy. He was burdened with thoughts he didn't want to have but could not get

rid of. He was cold, rejecting and critical of me most of the time, and I really think he felt badly about that but could not rise above it.

One prayer I prayed during these five years was that if my husband needed deliverance, the Lord Jesus would bring it about in His time and His way. The situation was in His hands, and I knew I must leave it there. I was learning in a special way that I can always trust the Lord Jesus to do what is right and good, even if I don't understand how He is going to accomplish it.

I came to the point where I could tell the Lord that for my husband's sake I would like to see him set free, but for my sake it was all right if nothing ever changed because Jesus Himself was enough.

I am especially grateful that the Lord made it clear to me that He was not desirous of just an outward response of love [toward her husband], but that He was able to give me a heart response of love. That kept me from allowing bitterness in my own life. As a result, when my husband went to Jim Logan and was really set free, our relationship was restored in a beautiful way immediately.

It was a real answer to prayer when Mary's husband agreed to come for counseling. What a thrill it was for me to see him come to true freedom in Christ as I presented to him the very same truths I will share with you in this book.

In Angie's case, I knew the family very well and had dealt with one of her brothers who was having serious struggles of his own. In the course of my involvement with the family, I counseled Angie's father, a man who is thoroughly committed to the Lord, to pray that any hidden problems in the family would be brought to light.

None of us knew at the time that Angie, age sixteen, had been struggling with suicidal thoughts since she was a very young girl. For years she kept the thoughts to herself out of fear that her dad would be angry with her and reject her if she told him she was having these thoughts.

To all outward appearances, Angie was just a teenager who loved the Lord and was really serious about her Christian faith. She thought her problem was strictly a private struggle because she never hinted to anyone that she had it. "Ever since I was a very, very young child I had thought of how I could kill myself and the different ways I could do it." Angie later told me. "I even planned out my suicide note. It was a secret I decided I would never tell anyone."

But as Angie says in her own testimony that follows, when one family member allows himself or herself to come under demonic influence—and this was clearly the source of her destructive thoughts, as I'll point out later—it opens the way for the enemy to bring destructive attacks on the rest of the family.

Eventually God answered her father's prayers. After an incident that happened to Angie while she was on a youth missions trip, she told the leader about her secret problem. This godly man led her to freedom in Christ. Angie found release, and now has only one regret, that she had not come to her father earlier. In her testimony she wrote:

I wish I had told my father about it a long time ago. When I told him he was understanding and helpful, not angry. I can see that it was the enemy influencing me to think my father would reject me because of my problem. Since I recognized the true source of these thoughts and renounced the enemy's influence, to this day I have not dwelt on or considered suicidal thoughts.

I realize now how much ground I had given to Satan by allowing him to intrude these thoughts into my mind and cause me to become obsessed with them. I learned that when one family member [her brother] allows Satan's influence, this gives an open door to the enemy to bring destructive attacks on the rest of the family.

Angie is still free of these thoughts and living joyfully in the Lord. A detailed discussion of the enemy's strategy will come in the following chapters, so let me just note here that Angie's struggle was with what we call "intruding thoughts" from the enemy. As we will see, he does have access to our minds.

And by the way, lest you think Angie is unusual, far more teenagers and young children struggle with similar thoughts than most of us will ever imagine. My point is that she is a normal and lovely teen who fell prey to one of the enemy's favorite tactics. After all, we'll see later in this chapter that Satan's plan is to steal, kill, and destroy. He doesn't care how young his targets happen to be.

The third person I want to introduce to you is my friend Bill, who did actually try to take his own life on one occasion. Praise God the attempt failed, and Bill finally decided to seek help. Bill was a husband and father with a devoted wife and a houseful of lively children whom he loved dearly.

You might be saying to yourself, *Bill couldn't have loved his family very much if he tried to kill himself. Didn't he know that would only make things much worse?*

Bill did—and does—love his family very much, but the enemy had so twisted Bill's thinking that he actually believed his death would spare his family any more heartache.

What drove this talented and outwardly successful young husband, father, and sincere Christian to try and destroy himself? Bill was held by a particular form of sexual bondage that had a seeming death grip on his life. Bill's problems had begun very early, but his Christian parents never had any idea of his affliction. After Bill tried and failed to

take his life, he sought Christian counseling. He spent a month in a psychiatric clinic under the treatment of one of the top Christian counseling ministries in the country. At the end of this time, he was told he was a helpless sex addict for whom there was no hope of cure. He would have to become part of an ongoing 12-step treatment program every week for the rest of his life.

By the time I was able to see Bill, he had spent a year-and-a-half, and thousands of dollars, on Christian counseling. He was in terrible shape. As we will see in later chapters, Bill's bondage also allowed the enemy to bring destructive attacks upon his family (Matthew 12:29).

The last time you will meet Bill in this book is when we discuss in detail the wonderful work God did in Bill's life and the lives of his wife and children when he dealt with the root causes of his problem. I'm telling you about him here, and about Mary and Angie, just to pull back the corner of the box lid, so to speak, to give you a preview of how satanic influence can affect families and individuals.

The effect of Satan's attacks on families can be devastating, particularly if he can get to the father as God's appointed authority and spiritual protector in the home. When a father yields to sin and opens his life to the enemy's temptation and control, he also clears the way for Satan to reach into his family and attack his children. Or, if he cannot get to Dad, the enemy will often attack the wife and mother, which also affects her husband and children. And if dad and mom are not buying his strategy, Satan is cruel enough to turn his fiery darts on the children.

But I want to say right here that he is a defeated foe! That's the good news God's Word has for you.

Welcome to the War

I have been doing what I call "warfare counseling" with Christians for more than ten years now. This is a ministry that has grown tremendously in recent years as more of God's people become alert to the fact that there's a war on.

My friend Neil Anderson, a former seminary professor and a best-selling author, has his own work called *Freedom in Christ Ministries*. I also work with the Institute in Basic Life Principles, which helps thousands of families each year. Besides ministries like these and our own Counseling Center, warfare counselors like myself and others are regularly invited to teach the principles of warfare at many mission agencies, denominational conferences, and parachurch ministries. We also speak to large audiences of parents, children and pastors.

Of course, I know now that we are not the first generation to learn the truth about spiritual warfare. One of the 400-plus warfare books in

my library is a work entitled *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, written in 1652 by Thomas Brooks! It's one of many classics on warfare written long ago, and they are as up-to-date as today's newspaper when it comes to the principles of warfare. Two later classics are *War on the Saints*, by Jessie Penn-Lewis, and *Demon Possession*, by John L. Nevis.

A Doubter

I must admit, though, that I was not initially a believer in demonic attacks on Christians. Like many evangelicals, I rejected the idea that demons could have any kind of influence on God's people. My unbelief was not at the theological level, of course. Theologically, I acknowledged the existence of evil spirits. I had to, because the Bible taught about them, and I was—and still am—a thoroughgoing biblicist. That is, I accept the Bible as God's inerrant, infallible Word. But as far as the enemy's active work in the world, I pretty much relegated that to the two realms I mentioned above: either the "old days" or in primitive, spiritually backward countries.

For all I knew, nothing would be different in that area when I joined the ministry of a major evangelical mission in 1982. This was, and still is, one of the largest mission agencies in the world, with missionaries in more than one hundred countries. I was an assistant to the president, ministering to and counseling missionaries around the world. It was here that God began to open my eyes to the reality of spiritual warfare.

One day during that time a missionary came to me and said, "Jim, there's something wrong with my partner. I think she has a demonic problem."

Becoming a Believer

I can't tell you how stunned I was when she said that. These women were veteran missionaries who had impacted the world for Christ. The missionary this woman was talking about had forty years of experience on the field. So I said to this missionary who was concerned about her partner, "No, she doesn't. That's impossible."

"Well, impossible or not, you better call her in, because you're the counselor of the mission."

I didn't want to call this woman in either way, because what if it were true? I wouldn't know what to do. I had no training or background to deal with something like this. As I said, I only believed in demons because the Bible talked about them.

Of course, as the counselor for the mission, I made arrangements to see this career missionary. When she finally entered my office, I knew something was seriously wrong. I understand now that she came under a demonic attack.

Her behavior was bizarre. She would spout religious clichés, for example. The demons were mocking me and my feeble attempts to help her. Much later I realized that she had religious spirits, although of course I didn't know it at the time.

I believe these are spirits like those Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 4:1, whose particular assignment is to deceive people with false religious ideas rather than enticements to evil acts. The effect, though, is the same: deception and eventual bondage.

In my years of counseling I've found that these are the most deceptive spirits. This dear lady wasn't doing anything outwardly wicked. On the contrary, she seemed to be incredibly pious. But something was out of whack. She scared me, to be honest. Her body was there at the mission headquarters, but she, the person inside, was completely out of control.

I learned later that she was an illegitimate child who was adopted by her family. We'll talk more about this later in relation to the work of the enemy, because a person's background is very important in this area. We'll see how iniquities are passed on generationally and how this gives the enemy an advantage in bringing destructive attacks on the family (Exodus 20:5).

I'm convinced this woman's spirits were ancestral, an "inheritance" from her birth family. She had a whole notebook full of insights the demons had given her.

I couldn't do anything to help her, so I called a man who is a highly respected theologian and very knowledgeable in this area. I felt desperate by now.

We sent our missionary to see him, but he couldn't help her either. In fact, she wound up in a mental hospital for four days in a straitjacket. It really bothers me to think about what she had to go through—most of it needlessly. But she finally came to full freedom, and has a wonderful testimony of how God set her free. Today, she is still impacting the world for Christ.

Understanding the Battle

That eye-opening and scary incident was my introduction to the reality of spiritual warfare. It suggested to me that any Christian, even a missionary or pastor, could be open to satanic influences. I began to wonder if I had missed something in all my years of Bible study, teach-

ing, and preaching. I realized I needed to go back and read what the Bible has to say about demons.

My re-education began with reading the entire New Testament and marking every verse that dealt with spiritual warfare. Then I did Greek word studies on each of those verses and counseled with godly New Testament professors and theologians to make sure I had a handle on the verses. Since then I've gone through the New Testament many, many times, and the Old Testament as well. I've also read more than four hundred books on spiritual warfare over the past ten years, and I still re-read some of the classic works regularly.

This book is the fruit of these years of study and ministry. Along the way you will also read the testimonies of a number of believers: Christians of all ages and from all walks of life whose lives were thrown in the ditch spiritually by demonic attacks because they did not understand the vital truths about our enemy, our identity, and our armor.

Our Enemy

1. *The enemy is strong.* This is the first vital truth. A battle is underway for the hearts, minds, and even lives, of God's people. Satan is the enemy, and he and his followers have a definite strategy to come against us and defeat us. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

I put it this way to the people I teach and counsel: Satan hates you and has a terrible plan for your life. Unlike the good news of God's love, Satan's plan is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

First, he wants to steal the eternal significance of your life. He wants to get you so wrapped up in your problems and circumstances that you never reach out to others. That way, you're no threat to him at all. Satan wants to steal the fruit of the Spirit in your life. That's why every attack of the enemy is designed to get your eyes off of Christ (Hebrews 12:2) and onto yourself and your problems.

Second, Satan desires to kill you. But he can't do that without God's permission, so he'll tell you to do it for him. Most of the people I deal with have had serious thoughts of suicide because like Bill, they're convinced it's the only way out.

I might as well end it all, they reason. Others think, *My situation is hopeless; I might as well give up and divorce my wife.* And some believe, *Oh, I'm just born that way. I've got bad genes, or a physical problem.* Each abandons hope he or she can be useful to God; they move to the sidelines as injured servants of God.

Third, the enemy seeks to destroy our relationships. Churches and pastors are being shredded by the enemy's work in tearing apart relationships.

But Satan is a toothless lion. He was stripped of his power at the cross of Jesus Christ (see Colossians 2:15). So in 1 Peter 5, the apostle goes on to say, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith” (v. 9).

If this is true, why do we see all of this happening? Because we have been delivered from the power, not the presence, of darkness (Colossians 1:13). The whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). Since Satan is defeated, his power is in the lie. I’ll have a lot more to say about that later.

Our Identity

2. *Our spiritual identity as children of God gives us the authority and power to repel the enemy’s attacks.* We are to be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). In the following chapters, we’ll see who we are in Christ, primarily from the book of Ephesians.

Our Armor

3. *God gives us mighty armor to resist the enemy’s attacks.* We need to “put on the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11) to resist Satan successfully.

I speak regularly at conferences around the country and overseas. No matter the audience—missionaries, pastors, or parents and their children—I find that every child of God is a target of Satan’s attacks. But I also find the armor of God is sufficient for every person’s battle. The armor, consisting of truth, righteousness and much more (Ephesians 6:10–18), is the only way to resist Satan’s attacks. And it is, thank God, the effective way.

Waging Successful Warfare

The good news is that not every believer falls prey to these attacks in the way Bill did. There are believers, young and old, across this country and around the world who have been trained and equipped from Scripture to deal successfully with this area of the Christian life. And many of these people are helping other believers who have fallen victim to the enemy and are being held in various degrees of bondage.

Being Aware

That’s why I have attempted to write a book that will be helpful to readers like you on several levels. First, I want to make you aware of the spiritual battle going on around you and equip you to wage it successfully.

As I said, every believer is subject to Satan's schemes. But if you don't know the source of the thoughts and temptations that you encounter each day, you can be tripped up and eventually wiped out.

For example, what would happen if you really believed that every single wrong thought which enters your mind originated from you? Worse yet, what if you believed that because it was your thought, you had to welcome it, entertain it, and act on it? You'd be a mess, to put it simply.

You say, "That's ridiculous. I know that I don't have to accept and act out every thought that enters my head." You're right. But that's exactly what the enemy has convinced some Christians to believe and to do, and it's destroying them.

Being Equipped

So my first purpose is to alert you that there's a battle going on. My second purpose is to help equip you to fight the good fight of faith, to stand in the victory Christ has provided. You see, I don't ask people, "Do you have the victory?" That's the wrong question. What we need to ask is, "Are you standing in the victory you already have in Christ?"

Helping Others

A third purpose is to help you deal with someone else who is coming under demonic attack. Angie's father had already been trained in warfare ministry and prayer and was active in his role as spiritual protector of his family when her problem was brought to light and dealt with.

Many of my counselees have gone home from my office and led their wives, husbands, or children through the steps to freedom I will share with you in these pages. I believe you will find that the principles in this book are usable with your own family and can easily be taught to others.

The methods and Scriptures I use in my counseling—which, by the way, is a week-long process—are neither mysterious nor magical. Thousands of pastors, missionaries, and lay people have been trained to recognize the signs of demonic involvement and lead someone to freedom in Christ.

You could say I'm trying to work myself out of a job. By the time a person calls our office for an appointment and travels across the country or even from overseas to spend a week in Sioux City in intense biblical counseling, that person is in pretty bad shape. We receive 5,000 calls a year from all over the world. Sometimes our secretaries can hardly handle the phone calls, they are so tragic.

But no believer in Jesus Christ needs to get to that critical stage. Since spiritual warfare is every Christian's common experience, God has equipped every believer with every spiritual weapon necessary to fight a winning battle. The following chapters will show you how.

The first thing we'll do in chapter 2, however, is deal with an important question which, if it hasn't already occurred to you, will come up very soon.