

## Week 6

# Fighting the War by Destroying Church and Community Strongholds



## Day 36: Identifying & Overcoming Church Strongholds (Part 1)

Monday, November 4<sup>th</sup>

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“Sir, my concern is not whether God is on my side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.” Abraham Lincoln

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**Today’s Challenge:** Memorize the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17)

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall make no idols.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

The First Sergeant and Commander entered the Air Force Theater Hospital (AFTH), looking around to find their injured Soldier. The First Sergeant had been abruptly awoken by the Desk Sergeant and informed that one of their Soldiers had been involved in a motor vehicle accident on LSA Anaconda around 2 am. The two men were escorted into a large open room inside the maze of modular tentage. The men entered through the door nearly being blown from their feet by the cold blast of air that emanated throughout the room.

They looked to their right and saw their Soldier strapped tightly to a backboard. Jim Waters laid immobilized with a C collar wrapped around his neck and head. He had an oxygen mask strapped to his face and appeared to be mildly hyperventilating. When Waters saw them, a single tear streamed down his face. The First Sergeant wondered what was going through the 18 year old Soldiers mind at that moment. The First Sergeant felt absolutely helpless. He thought quickly about just the right thing to say to reassure his Soldier, but his mind was blank. Maybe just being there, at a quarter to 3 in the morning, was enough. Enough to prove to Waters that he cared.

They waded through Air Force Medical Personnel and came just short of Waters's bedside. The First Sergeant lightly grasped his left arm and nodded his head. The young Soldier looked up into his First Sergeant's eyes and tried to shake his head. "First Sergeant, I'm sorry. I guess I won't be able to drive you tomorrow." his driver softly mumbled, referring to a convoy mission that they were running tomorrow. "(He cursed) you're gonna drive me there and back ya turd! Did ya think that being in a crash was gonna get ya out of it?" The First Sergeant joked with the injured Soldier, who let out a painful chuckle.

The US Air Force Colonel that was in charge of treating Waters explained to the Commander and First Sergeant that Waters's wounds were only minor. He had ran head on into a semi truck on the outer perimeter loop of LSA Anaconda in a non-armored patrol jeep. The First Sergeant had seen the vehicle after it had been towed to the units area, after the accident. The vehicle was smashed to pieces - totalled. It was hard to believe that Waters had not been killed in the collision. 'God had been with Waters, the First Sergeant thought as he secured his rifle and his pistol. "He'll need to be here for a few more hours for observation and then we'll return him to quarters for 24 hours with meds." the Colonel explained pointing to his chart.

"Well, Waters it looks like you won't be driving me tomorrow, ya turd! Try to enjoy your day off." the First Sergeant again joked with his young driver. "First Sergeant, I need to tell you something." Waters stated as the First Sergeant began to walk away. "I fell asleep at the wheel, First Sergeant. I stayed up playing video games all day and then was scheduled to patrol tonight. It was my fault." The First Sergeant looked away from Waters a bit disappointed in the young Soldier. "That could have gotten you killed or gotten other people killed." the First Sergeant replied in a very matter of fact way. Waters tried to nod his head but could not. "We'll figure all of that out later, just recover so we can get ya back in the fight." the First Sergeant explained with a nod, touching the young Soldier on the shoulder...

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"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." Revelation 1:3

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### Daily Reading

Often times in our lives we feel helpless in situations as the First Sergeant did in today's vignette. Sometimes we all do irresponsible things just as Waters did. Both the feeling of helplessness and acting irresponsibly can make us ineffective when fighting on the spiritual battlefield. These same principles can be applied to church, if it does not face strongholds correctly.

Back on Day 33, I said that there are few things worse than having an entire family of Christian Warriors that have been captured and made POWs in their own home. What could be worse is having an entire *family* of Christian Warriors in a POW status within their church body. If you remember back on Day 1 we talked about certain ways that Satan tries to attack the church and instill strongholds within it. In addition to all of these things we can see in the book of Revelation, where John was directed to write to each of the seven churches; on observations of what the churches were doing right and what they were doing wrong. We will focus on these rights and wrongs for each of the seven churches as a guide for what our churches should be as well as where Satan can try to encroach upon the body.

“The Jesus that far too many churches have is not the Jesus who wrote to the churches in Revelation 1” (Evans, 2007). We have talked about this Jesus during this series, but to echo Dr Evans’s quote, that isn’t how most people see Jesus. In Revelation 1:12-18 we see Jesus as the Warrior that He is:

“I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man,[d] dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

Satan has caused us to believe that Jesus is less than the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. That He is not head of the church. With this depiction of Jesus, we should all want to fall like we are dead men at His feet as well. Jesus is Power! He is authority and when He returns, we are shown that He will return not as a baby, but as a King!

It must be understood that in the Bible the number 6 symbolizes Humanity and is a reminder of sin. But the number 7 symbolizes “perfection” and “completeness”. Even though the book of Revelation was written to the seven churches of Asia Minor, it was written to all churches about how they are to function under the Headship of Jesus and in opposition to the Devil’s schemes. In order for us to ensure that our church is functioning correctly we must ensure that we know who Jesus is. His character, His Love, and His Justice.

Jesus is the one and only standard which the people of the church function under. His Word is Law! His Example is perfect! His death was necessary! His Resurrection was Victorious! His Ascension was Glorious! When we function in accordance with Jesus’ standard, then our church does not have



strongholds. We must form, adjust, or continue our programs and ministry of our churches around Jesus and no other standard. Satan often tries to get people of the church to adjust themselves by the standards of other Christians. The church that applies the 7 messages of each church found in Revelation, will beat the Devil in at every turn.

The first church we will look at is addressed in Revelation 2:1-7, The Church of Ephesus. This church was cited in verses 2 through 6 as,

“<sup>2</sup> I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. <sup>3</sup> You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. <sup>4</sup> Yet I hold this against you: You have **forsaken the love you had at first.** <sup>5</sup> Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. <sup>6</sup> But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

The lesson that our churches must learn from Ephesus is LOVE. They had left their “first Love” or Jesus. Now this is not to say that we should not be hard working, persistent, qualify our leaders, rebuke the wicked, and endure hardship, because we MUST! But, church events, activities and programs cannot replace our passion for Jesus! So how do we as a church overcome the stronghold of hate in the church? We must love Jesus!

The second church is the Church of Smyrna. This church detailed in Revelation 2:8-11, teaches us the lesson of FAITHFULNESS. “Church is a lifestyle, not an event” (Penn, 2019). In verses 9 and 10 we see their faithfulness,

“<sup>9</sup> I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup> Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be **faithful**, even to the point of death, and I will give your life as your victor’s crown.”

Faithful to the “point of death”! Jesus is asking a lot of us. Well first of all again, as I have reminded everyone throughout this series, this is not our “Commander and Chief” asking. This is an order! And He has every right to issue this order because we are called to be like Him, and Jesus was faithful to the point of death! He led by example in this area, as He did in all areas. At the beginning of verse 10 the people are told not to be afraid to suffer. Jesus knew what suffering was. He knew the Sacrifice of the Warrior. We all need to remember when times get hard we can’t give up. We can’t throw in the towel,

no matter how much it may hurt. This is a bit easier during the times that we are enjoying seasons of blessing in our lives to do this; but, when we are experiencing the difficult seasons of our lives, it can become harder. “Our job as the church is to please the Lord and not everyone else, and sometimes other people won’t like it” (Evans, 2007). With this being said if our churches are being faithful, not everyone will like us and that’s alright. When we are taking the hard(er) right over the easy(ier) wrong then we will bring Glory to God and in the end that is what is important. How do we fight doubt, worry, and faithlessness as a church? *Stand firm* (Ephesians 6:14) on the objective truth of God, no matter how many people don’t like it!

The third and final church we will detail for today, is the Church of Pergamum. Revelation 2:12-17 details this church and instructs us in the important lesson of COMPROMISE. Or the *lack of compromise* that we must have as a church, when it comes to the Word of God. God’s Word must guide and direct everything that we as a church do and if it does not then we have the stronghold of compromise in place. In verses 13-16 we are told,

“<sup>13</sup> I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among **you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice (stumbling block) the Israelites to sin** so that they ate food **sacrificed to idols** and **committed sexual immorality**. <sup>15</sup> Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup> Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

The bolded words in the verses above should sting like the cat of nine tails ripping through our flesh! If we are compromising God’s Word in any way in our church, we must STOP! Not next week. Not tomorrow. RIGHT NOW! And then it God commands us in verse 16, we must repent. Satan will do everything he can to deceive us with his “doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)). He will try to get us to compromise at every opportunity. We must hold the line and never compromise!

Tomorrow we will wrap up strongholds of the church by looking at the remaining four churches in the book of Revelation...



Kid Friendly Ideas



## Day 37: Identifying & Overcoming Church Strongholds (Part 2)

*Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>*

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“The church is not a select circle of immaculate, but a home where the outcast may come in. It is not a palace with gate attendants and challenging sentinels along the entrance-ways holding off at arms-length the stranger, but rather a hospital where the broken hearted may be healed, and where all the weary and troubled may find rest and take counsel together.”

James H. Aughey

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### Today's Challenge: Pray with a Friend

The theatre on LSA Anaconda, where the First Sergeant had attended so many Final Salute Ceremonies, was arranged for a very different occasion today. Nearly two months after Operation Lightning had concluded, the Soldiers of his unit were assembled to be honored for their part in that critical operation. The Provost Marshal, the Commander and the First Sergeant all stood in front of the formation awaiting the arrival of the Post Commander.

The First Sergeant looked at his Human Resources NCO who tightly and confidently clutched the bright green and gold unit flag, referred to as a Guidon. He did not know why but he was nervous. As he looked out over his Soldiers, who were all clad in desert camouflage, he felt a great sense of pride well up inside him. Each and every one of them had performed admirably during one of the most critical operations to date of the Iraq War. He took a deep breath, as the Post Commander's arrival was announced. The First Sergeant turned from his Soldiers and faced front to see the Commanding General enter with the Post Command Sergeant Major (CSM)(the most senior Sergeant on post).

The awards ceremony went without a hiccup. The unit had recommended 32 medals to be awarded with the coveted “V” Device (a pin that attaches to a US Military Medal, which signifies that the award was given for “Valorous Action” during a time of war). Out of the 32 recommended all but 2 were approved. There were 29 Army Commendation Medals with V Devices awarded. There was one additional medal awarded.

The General stepped in front of the First Sergeant and then turned to the CSM who handed him a red, white and blue medal which was formed in the shape of a star. The Master of Ceremonies read the citation, which had been changed from the original citation, that might have warranted an even higher award. The General pinned the Bronze Star Medal onto the First Sergeant's Collar and shook his hand. "We haven't *handed* too many of these out to NCOs in this war First Sergeant. You should be proud of your accomplishment." the arrogant General pontificated as though the First Sergeant was not deserving of the Bronze Star.

When the General stepped aside the CSM stepped in front of the First Sergeant and took his hand. Once the General had drawn away from hearshot the CSM quietly whispered, "I went to bat for your medal to be upgraded to the Silver Star, but the higher ups wouldn't have it." The First Sergeant acknowledged the CSMs attempt to save face with a nod, but no words. They had been involved in some of the heaviest fighting in Iraq since the invasion in 2003, and the First Sergeant swelled with an intense sense of pride, as he looked out over them all. His Soldiers had proven their metal. They had made their nation proud...

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"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." Colossians 3:15

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### Daily Reading

Just as the First Sergeant and his unit proved their willingness and ability to hold their enemy at bay in combat, we must do the same in mitigating or destroying strongholds within the church!

The first church we will talk about today is the fourth church addressed in Revelation 2:18-25; the Church of Thyatira. The lesson HOLINESS. We are told specifically in Revelation 2:19-25,

"<sup>19</sup> I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, I have this against you: You **tolerate that woman Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophet. By **her teaching she misleads** my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> I have given her time to repent of her immorality, **but she is unwilling**. <sup>22</sup> So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. <sup>23</sup> I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and



minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. <sup>24</sup> Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets, ‘I will not impose any other burden on you, <sup>25</sup> except to hold on to what you have until I come.’”

This church tolerated sin. It could be said that this is another form of compromise, but the leaders of the church knew what was right looked like (they had not let themselves be deceived by Satan), and they did nothing to correct the wrong that was being conducted. In other words they knew what God’s Word said. They knew what was going on was wrong, and did nothing to stop it. As it says in verses 21 through 23 Jesus will judge our church, if we do not correct wrongs within the church.

Now, onto the fifth Church, at Sardis. This is the church that teaches us the lesson of PROGRESS.

“<sup>1</sup> I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, **but you are dead.** <sup>2</sup> **Wake up!** Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup> Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. <sup>4</sup> Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup> The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels” \_ Revelation 3:1-5

Sardis is sometimes referred to as the “Dead Church”. We know that the purpose of the church is to worship, grow, and serve. As it says in verse 2, we must wake up! If we are the only ones doing it right (verse 4) we need to keep going! And then in verse 5 we see the reward for pressing on. We can not live our lives based on what God did yesterday. We cannot dwell on the past. When we let the Devil stall or totally stop our church from moving forward we have the stronghold of DEATH within our body. We must learn from the past but don’t live in it. Don’t let achievements or failures of yesterday dictate today and steal from tomorrow.

We now move to the church of “Brotherly Love”, Philadelphia. This church teaches the lesson of OBEDIENCE. It is often referred to as the church that was ALIVE! We are told in Revelation 3:8-12 that this was the church that did not quit:

“<sup>8</sup> I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that **you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.** <sup>9</sup> I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and **fall down at your feet** and **acknowledge that I have loved you.** <sup>10</sup> Since you have kept my command to **endure patiently,** I will also **keep you from the hour of trial** that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. <sup>11</sup> I



am coming soon. **Hold on to what you have**, so that no one will take your crown. <sup>12</sup> The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name.”

As we are told in verse 8 the people had little strength but they still held fast to their “first Love”, Jesus. When we stand for Jesus He will take care of Satan for us (verse 9). If we persevere with patience then Jesus will protect us from the “hour of trial” (verse 10). Please do not misunderstand this verse. This does not mean there will not be trials that come along the way of our journey, because there will be. But we will be saved from the trials that the wicked will not be saved from. Verse 11 gives us the promise of reward if we Hold onto Jesus. We can’t deny Jesus and expect Him to fight for us.

The final church that we will look at was at Laodicea. In Revelation 3:13-22 we are introduced to this church and hold on because this may be the greatest lesson of them all - COMMITMENT!

“<sup>15</sup> I know your deeds, that you are **neither cold nor hot**. I wish you were either one or the other! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are **lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth**. <sup>17</sup> You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. <sup>19</sup> **Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline**. So be **earnest and repent**.” \_Revelation 3:15-19

“Lukewarm”! Neither Hot or Cold! and go back and look at the part that I bolded and underlined in verse 16. When Jesus tells you He’s about to “spit you from His mouth”, we’ve got some problems! “We have become too successful when the blessing on our lives have replaced God” (Evans, 2007). The most beautiful church building is an absolute waste if we do not use it to further God’s Kingdom on Earth! We can not rest on our laurels. We must stay in the fight. We cannot become complacent in who we are in Christ alone! He has called us to fight in the Great War and we must fight!

Finally, I would like to bring attention to a special blessing the the book of Revelation offers in Revelation 1:3, “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.” If we are well informed in relation to God’s Word and employ its teachings in our daily fight we should be able to be the recipients of this promised blessing. We must know the Bible. It is not enough for us to simply read the words and hear sermons and bible studies; to listen to the CDs and podcast. It is essential that we maintain the decrees that are written, and write them across our hearts and minds.

# THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Church and Community Strongholds



## Kid Friendly Ideas



## Day 38: Identifying & Overcoming Community/Society Strongholds (Part 1)

*Wednesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>*

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“Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough.” Franklin D. Roosevelt

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### **Today's Challenge:** Pray for your Greatest Temptation

Once again the unit was assembled, but this time they were in formation out in front of their home - the Military Police Operations Center that they had built. It was a special day for all of the unit's Soldiers. The Commander of the 52nd Military Police Brigade was on hand for the presentation of their combat patches, to award 35 Combat Action Badges, and for the presentation of the Units Meritorious Unit Citation (MUC).

The First Sergeant and Commander stood in front of the formation, but this time the First Sergeant held the unit guidon. It would be his responsibility today to yield the flag forward as the Brigade Commander tied the dark red Combat Streamer symbolizing the units award of the MUC. This coveted award was not just given to every unit in the army that served in combat. It was awarded for extreme meritorious service during a time of armed conflict to units that maintain only the highest standards of conduct and readiness. There unit would be the first Military Police unit assigned under Joint Forces Headquarters Indiana to receive this honor. The First Sergeant had seen the order authorizing the units MUC. Normally these were signed by the Secretary of the United States Army, but not theirs. It had been signed by Donald Rumsfeld, the United States Secretary of Defense, when he had visited Balad just a month earlier. He took great pride in receiving this award and to be the first unit with the entire Joint Forces Command to receive it during the Global War on Terrorism.

Next, the Brigade Commander personally greeted each Soldier within the unit and handed them the distinctive tan and brown patch of the 52nd MP Brigade. Each Soldier received it in stride, but the First Sergeant knew that as soon as the formation was dismissed that some of the Soldiers already had needles and thread handy to begin sewing the patches onto the right arm of their uniforms. This was

the acknowledgment to all other Soldiers within the army, that they had served in combat. They were combat veterans.

Finally, it came time to award Combat Action Badges (CAB). This award again was not handed out to just any Soldier just because they served in a combat zone. This badge required Soldiers to actually be engaged by enemy fire and the Soldiers in their unit had been engaged on multiple occasions. The Brigade Commander delegated the duty of pinning the CABs to the Provost Marshal. The Senior Officer in the unit pinned the CAB onto the Commander's chest and then she moved to the First Sergeant. "Go ahead and ram it home, ma'am." the First Sergeant said curling his lips under. "I can't do that First Sergeant." she replies taking the backing off of the badge. "Copy that ma'am." he replied as he took the badge from her hand and held the pins of the badge against his chest. The First Sergeant tightly balled his right hand into a fist and slammed his chest with a loud thud; driving the two pins of the badge through his uniform, skin, and deep into his left pectoral muscle. He grimaced and eased pressure back from the badge as he could still feel the badge buried into his chest.

After his pinning, he pinned 32 other Soldiers the exact same way. In the army this was a tradition called earning a "blood" badge. He thrust the badge into Wilson's left breast and she grimaced, noticing that the First Sergeant had slammed his home so hard that there was blood bleeding through the front of his uniform jacket. He looked at Waters and Wilson, who had proven themselves in combat. They had earned this badge as all of the warriors of his unit had...

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"Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always." 1 Chronicles 16:11

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### Daily Reading

"If we are going to turn our communities and nation around, congregations are going to have to join in a unified, national solemn assembly (Joel 1:14) to repent and to throw themselves before the face of Almighty God (Evans, 2014).

Conflict from the heavenly places can affect what is happening in the physical realm, but on the other hand it takes blessing from the angelic realm to fight the effects in the physical realm. If we don't start in prayer, in the spirit realm, we are setting ourselves up to fail in the physical realm.

In Colossians 1:15-16 we see the power and authority of Jesus and the institutions that He created for our world,

“<sup>15</sup> Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: <sup>16</sup> For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:” (KJV)

Jesus created all these things! When the Lord said let there be light in Genesis 1:3, Jesus was there making it happen. This is where the “in Him all things were created” (both in the physical realm and the spirit realm), of what we can and can’t see. Skipping a few words and going down to where we read “through Him and for Him”, we are again reminded as we were in Week 2 that everything belongs to Jesus. Now let’s look at some terminology that must be understood within this verse. For the purposes of our study all these terms will serve as agency in both the physical and spiritual realms.

The word “Dominion” is defined as “1) the territory of a sovereign or government; 2) sovereignty or control” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). It is a territory that is governed or influenced by a throne or a king. “Principalities” are defined as, “a state ruled by a prince” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). These are the people (biblically, not necessarily “princes” but any ruler) who specifically occupy the throne, over a Dominion or power. Powers or as the NIV refers to them “Authorities” are the rules, laws, and traditions that make the throne, that rules, legitimate in its power. These agencies can be ruled in accordance with God’s Will or they can be ruled by Satan.

In the physical realm, evil men who rule are being controlled by the evil spiritual forces, but they are still responsible for allowing evil to continue under their administration. If we have a bad boss or a corrupt Politician in charge of our government, we must go to the Lord for Him to affect change through His Power. A biblical example of this working is where Daniel prayed in Chapter 10 of the book of Daniel. Daniel was being blocked by Satan from doing God’s Will and had to have an angel act on his behalf.

I really like this quote from Dr. Tony Evans regarding Satan’s agenda when it comes to our societies, “Satan seeks to control the soul of a community through its institutions” (Evans, 2007). When Jesus created any institution, whether it be governmental or in the private sector, is was good (in the beginning when He created it). Good things can and in many cases in our society have become evil, through the influence and control of Satan.

As a church, for us to be the most effective that we can be in the community, we must understand the effects that Satan can have upon government, business, industry, education, and culture. He can and

does influence and builds strongholds within institutions the exact same way that he can in us, in our families, and in our churches.

As Christian Warriors, we cannot solely rely on secular society and methods to try to solve the evil that has control over institutions alone. A clear example of this can be seen in the Exodus story. When Pharaoh came to power, he enslaved the Hebrews.

Satan wants all societies to be like Egypt, where the people are content with being slaves. Slaves to whatever evil he can trick them with work, money, comfort, pleasure, and a host of other enticements. We see this in many countries around the world today. Our church cannot allow these doctrines of demons to stand. We cannot allow people to live in a defeated attitude; in a lifestyle where they just accept that their fate is sealed and that there is no way that they can affect the evil institutions, that stand against them. The lesson in Israel's being content with slavery is that we must not give thanks to God for things that come from Satan. Israel's enslavement came from a tyrannical regime, which was under the influence of Satan, not from God.

Continuing in the story, Pharaoh orders all male Hebrew children to be killed. They were content with the fact that they were able to keep their female children, but not their males. Pharaoh did not want to see Hebrew males born, because of the concern that one day those men would rise and form into an army that might topple his kingdom. Satan put a stronghold into Israel's mind collectively that it was okay to accept this persecution. Satan will give just enough to try and make us discontent with what God wants for us or with where he wants a society to go. Remember in the garden, in Genesis, when Satan made Eve focus on the one tree that God said that they could not eat from? He pulled her attention away from the millions of trees that God had said yes to and made Eve focus on where God had said no. Satan wants us to be casualties or better yet POWs instead of Christian Soldiers within our communities.

Eventually, Pharaoh dies. When this happens, the people do something. They "cry out"! Because of that Faith and willingness to surrender, yield, and humble themselves in prayer, the Lord got into the battle on their behalf at that point. Until the nation remembered God, He made them wait. Then He sent Moses!

Power over community strongholds is found in Christ. In Colossians 2:14-15 we see,

*"<sup>14</sup>having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."*

Jesus has disarmed the powers and authorities (the Devil and his angels) in the heavenly places (outside of the physical realm). We need to remember that in Colossians chapter 1, Jesus created the



powers and authorities and we said when he created them that they were good, but after Lucifer rebelled, some spiritual institutions became evil. This is how God can do the same thing against a corrupt politician, misled religious leader, unscrupulous CEO, or other community figure that has turned from the light toward the dark, as He did to Satan.

In order for us as Christian to most effectively help society, we have to ensure that Christians are “voted into office”. That they are instilled in positions of power and authority, from which they will submit to the Power and Authority of the Lord. Then as a result of their submission and faithful prayer the Lord can execute blessing upon the institution that they are serving in. Remember earlier in this series, when we said sometimes it’s not enough just to say Amen? Sometimes the Lord expects us to take a step of Faith first, before He will act. That’s exactly what we saw Him do today in our example with Israeli in Egypt.

Through this “disarming” of powers and authority by His actions on the cross, He has won the Great War and rendered the enemy powerless in the spiritual realm. So, you might ask why if Jesus has disarmed the enemy and relieved them of their authority then why are we still having these issues within society on Earth? Come back tomorrow and we’ll look at that...



**Kid Friendly Ideas**





## Day 39: Identifying & Overcoming Community/Society Strongholds (Part 2)

Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup>

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These are the times that try men's souls." Thomas Paine, 1776

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**Today's Challenge:** Write a Letter to a Missionary. (Let us know if you need help)

It was the First Sergeant's birthday. He would turn 33 years old in Iraq. It was a very emotional day for everyone in the unit though. Today would mark their last day in Iraq. At 21:37 hours (9:37 pm) the unit would load up onto a US Air Force C-17 Cargo Plane and leave Balad for the last time. They would be bound for Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait, where they had originally flown to Balad from.

The First Sergeant and the remainder of the Company Headquarters were trying to stay out of the way of the new unit that had just assumed responsibility for their mission a few hours prior to. Most of the Soldiers were crashed out at the terminal with all of their equipment that they would be taking back with them. The First Sergeant had been making the rounds around the post that day saying his goodbyes to the people that he had gotten to know so well over the last 13 months. It was difficult in some cases. He had grown quite fond of some of them. But at the same time there was an excitement about getting ready to leave. He knew at some point within the day that would need to try to get a hold of his wife, mother and daughter so that they could wish him a happy birthday, but that was in the back of his mind right now.

There was one goodbye that First Sergeant was especially dreading. He had put it off as long as he could. Around 1700 hours (5:00 pm) he arrived at the terminal and appeared through the flaps of the huge tan tent that housed the terminal. He saw many of his Soldiers slumped over or leaning against each other cat napping in the cool of the air conditioned terminal. He looked around to see who he was looking for standing just outside the other end of the tent.

He exited the tent placing a desert camouflage boonie cap onto his head. He found his commander and the man who he had been avoiding most of the day. Hassan stood wearing a brown leather jacket with his characteristic smile. He had no idea what he would say to his Muslim Interpreter. He just let the

Commander and Hussan continue their conversation, until Hussan looked at his watch. "It is time for me to go to the gate now." the Iraqi man said pointing to his timepiece. He shook the Commanders hand and wished him well. Then he turned to the First Sergeant. The two men regarded each other for a few seconds and then Hussan held out his left hand. The First Sergeant took it silently and then felt led to lean into the man who he had come to love. He remembered back to the day that he had first met Hussan and how he had held prejudice in his heart toward the Iraqi Muslim, because of his faith.

The two men embraced and then Hussan touched his arm warmly. "Inshallah ("If God Wills It"), (the First Sergeant's Last Name) Maah salamah (which means "goodbye" in arabic)." The First Sergeant Nodded and then steadied his hand on Hussan's shoulder stopping him from leaving. He bowed his head and lifted the Muslim man up in prayer. After Hussan had left the First Sergeant reentered the tent to find Waters and Wilson setting side by side in front of the tent flap. They had been watching the entire exchange. "You okay, First Sergeant?" she asked with a typical Shirley Wilson smile. "G to G (good to go)." he said with his usual gruff look.

Close to 2200 hours (10:00 pm) the ramps retracted up off of Balad Field and the Soldiers took their seats to get strapped into the 180,000 pound aircraft that would catapult them off the ground in Iraq and then touch them down in Kuwait. Everyone was tired but they were ready to begin this important part of their journey. They could be in Kuwait for a few hours up to a few days depending upon flight availability. There was a possibility that they could fly out the next day to go to Germany and then onto the United States.

The First Sergeant sat close to the window and made sure that he could look out during the steep take off. The bird lifted off into an intense lift and almost raised the nose straight up. He was pushed back into his seat with a crushing force. He did not let that affect him looking outward to see the dimly lit areas around Balad Air Base and LSA Anaconda one last time. He had seen the base so many times from the seat of a blackhawk but only once like this. He was ready to get home, but he couldn't help but think of the people that were staying behind. As the aircraft rapidly ascended the lights of the LSA faded away into the night. The First Sergeant turned his head forward, leaning back into the comfortable C17 seats. He closed his eyes and tried to sleep but he knew that he would not be able to. They were going home...

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<sup>30</sup>"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one." Ezekiel 22:30

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## Daily Reading

Alright I left you all hanging yesterday wondering why I Jesus has already disarmed the powers and authorities in Heaven why they haven't been disarmed on Earth. Let the Apostle Paul answer that question,

“<sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup> he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is **his body**, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” \_ Ephesians 1: 18-23

So the simple answer to this question is: if Satan is still in charge at our workplace; still in charge at your school; still in charge at the local bakery; still in charge in the White House, it is because “His body” (the church) is not praying him out of those institutions! I have said many times, I believe to the disgust of some members of the body, that “we can't disciple within the four walls of the church”. Now some will say that is where discipleship takes place and it is, but what I mean by that statement is that discipleship inside the church is relatively easy, because for the most part people are like-minded. But when my 8 and 10 year old sons led their football team in prayer on the football field, in a secular environment, in front of hundreds of people, probably to the great dismay of some in the crowd, that is how we change a culture!!! That is how we plant seeds in the hearts of the lost that will produce fruit! As Christian Warriors we know inside our defensive position within the church is safe. It's comfortable. It's generally not where we are going to be openly attacked. It's also not where we are going to have the most impact for the Kingdom. We must get out in the world where Satan is controlling people and institutions!

Great Christian Warriors like Daniel, Nehemiah, Jonah, and Jehoshaphat) all brought about change changes in societies, by starting one way – through faithful prayer and obedience to God. In another great scripture we can see as Christian Warriors what our responsibilities are in our communities in Ephesians 3:10-11,

“<sup>10</sup>His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, <sup>11</sup> according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



“Through the church” or through us, we are supposed to communicate to the world (the institutions within society) God’s Will, so that people can understand. So that people at least understand what they are supposed to do even if they refuse to do it. Verse 11 specifically tells us as the church, that we are mandated to try and affect change in this fallen world, even when we can say no thanks I’ll stay out of politics. I don’t need to fight that battle against pro-choice. I know that a corporation is treating its employees unfair, but it’s not my problem. It is our problem. Because we are Christian Warriors and have been mandated to fight! I am often echo a quote that Sir Edmond Burke said in 1968 which says, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” If 3% of American Colonists had not stood up to the mightiest nation on Earth during the Revolutionary War, the world would be a much different place today. Christian Soldiers must go and we must fight, everyday to advance the Kingdom of God in this fallen world!

I want to highlight why we need to pray for the people in our community who are in positions of authority, but 1 Timothy 1:1-2, can do it better,

“I urge, then, **first of all**, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people- 2for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

It is our responsibility, **first of all**, to pray for the “kings and all those who are in authority” because they are the people within our society that make things happen. They control the ways that laws are made. They direct how public works and social programs are administered. They command the military, police, and emergency responders who protect us from all kinds of evil. They make the policies that can lead our society ahead in the light or into cast us into the darkness.

If we want to save our communities, our schools, or our governments we must pray! We must lift prayers up to Heaven on the behalf of these institutions like no other church has before. As we stand shoulder to shoulder, shields locked, swords up, we must remember the greatest offensive weapon that Jesus has placed into our arsenal – Prayer! A Israeli Soldier was once interviewed during the “Six Day War”. For those who don’t remember this physical conflict, it occurred between June 5 and June 10, 1967; by Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. This conflict resulted in a great victory for the tiny country of Israel. A reporter asked this Soldier if he thought they (the Israeli Military) had any chance of victory in this war. The Soldier smirked and laughed. The reporter looked at the Soldier in total surprise. “Obviously, you have never heard the story of David and Goliath.” The Soldier snapped and moved out to fight. We are Christian Warriors. If we humble ourselves before God and fight through His Power and His Authority we can overcome any evil that threatens our society...



# THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Church and Community Strongholds



## Kid Friendly Ideas



## Day 40: Healing Church and Community/Society Strongholds

Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup>

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“If Christianity goes, the whole culture goes.” T.S. Elliot,

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**Today's Challenge:** Pray for 5 lost people

The First Sergeant was up early. He had went outside wanting to see the sunrise over the desert one last time. The Kuwaiti Desert was cold. This time, however, he had his Soldiers bring their cold weather gear, so he sat a bit warmer than 12 months before. He and his Soldiers had gotten a relatively good night's sleep, being warm and toasty in their sleeping bags, and he had a cup of coffee with cream and sugar. Life was good. He kept reaching for his rifle but they had already been secured and were under guard. it certainly was different here and it would be even more different today. In a few hours they would go through the most rigorous US Customs inspection that any of them had ever been through.

Later, The First Sergeant had just passed through customs, where they had searched every piece of gear he had. It took 20 minutes to pass through the scan and now the waiting process would begin. The unit had to remain in a secured area where they would be monitored on closed circuit cameras for at least the next 8 hours, until they were cleared to leave. US Central Command's policy was once you enter the area you could not leave or you were subject to another customs inspection. If no US Customs Agents were available for the reinspection, then a Soldier would have to remain in Kuwait until they could be reinspected and then sent home on the next available flight, which might not come for several days. Ordinarily sitting in a hanger with nothing to do would be torturous, but the First Sergeant didn't mind this time. They were going home and this was just one more set of hoops to jump through to get them closer.

As hour by hour passed, the First Sergeant was able to look back over the last 14 and a half months of his life. All the way from leaving home, to coming through Kuwait, to going into Iraq. He thought about the many missions that they had been assigned. He thought about the many places that they had traveled through Iraq and a couple places he had gone that he couldn't even talk about. He thought about the times which had brought them joy, surrounded by chaos. He remembered the times rolling through the streets of Baghdad, going from IP Station to IP Station, which usually went without



incident. Then on occasion they did not go without incident. He reflected deeply about how He had grown, painfully, closer to God during the deployment. He thought about the ways that he had changed. Ten hours into the waiting period, without any knowledge of how much longer they would have to wait, the First Sergeant made a conscious decision. Instead of thinking about the last few months and trying to process it all, he would WAIT. He would YIELD. He would LISTEN. He would spend the remaining hours that he had in silence except when he was needed for something.

About two hours later a US Customers Agent entered the room and announced that their plane was on the tarmac. The Commander led the unit out of the cramped waiting area and forward to the commercial airliner that sat awaiting them to board. The First Sergeant was the last Soldier out of the facility, making sure that all of his Soldiers and equipment were accounted. The Commander waited for him at the bottom of the steps leading up into the plane. The two men regarded one another and took a final look around as the sun was beginning to set over the horizon. "Let's go Top." the Commander said motioning to his First Sergeant to get on the plane...

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"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word, I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning." Psalm 130:5-6

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### Daily Reading

Waiting is sometimes a very hard thing to do, no matter what it is for. Waiting when you are anticipating that something is going to happen may be even more difficult. Today as the First Sergeant waited, instead of becoming anxious or frustrated at how long the process was taking and not knowing exactly when it would end, he chose to wait on God. When we are waiting for healing within a church body or within a Society it may take years or even decades. We saw this in the healing process of our nation over the Vietnam War. It took years for Vietnam Veterans to feel like they were really welcomed home. In fact, most of us who publicly thank those veterans for their service don't just say, "Thank you for your service" like we do to other veterans. I always make it a point to say, "And welcome home" after thanking them.

When Luke authored the book of Acts around 80 to 90 AD, he wrote of what a healthy church should look like in Acts 2:41-47,

<sup>41</sup>Those who **accepted his message were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. <sup>42</sup>They **devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**. <sup>43</sup>Everyone was **filled with awe** at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were **together** and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>They **sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need**. <sup>46</sup>Every day they continued to meet **together** in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate **together** with **glad and sincere hearts**, <sup>47</sup>**praising God** and **enjoying the favor** of all the people. And **the LORD added to their number** daily those who were being saved."

So here we can a simple guide to tell if our churches are healing or have been healed after strongholds existed within the and were removed. If the church had people that are "accepting His Message and being baptized" then the church is carrying out Task # 1 (from Day 25) of the Great Commission. By people within the body "devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching" the church is fulfilling Task 1 (Day 25) of the Great Commission. The people of the church are showing a willingness to be discipled and learn God's Word. Their willingness to "fellowship" is an example of the closeness of the body and an example of their love for one another. The "breaking of bread" is the symbolism of Christ, the Bread of Life, being broken on the cross for our sin. When the people of a church "break bread" together they publicly acknowledge their reliance on and willingness to follow Jesus. A Church that "Prays" together consistently will be a great threat to the armies of darkness. When the members will humble themselves to do this together before the Lord this says much about that body. A body that is full of "awe" displays a true love and fire for what God is doing within their body. The word "together" denotes unity within the body. When a church is charitable, helping those in need they are not only displaying the love of Christ, but showing that they have a true understanding of what He did for us. A church of people that have "glad and sincere hearts" that are "praising God" are believers who are thankful for their blessings and are again, making public acknowledgement of God. They are giving Him the Praise that He deserves. Through the efforts of this healthy church they "enjoy the favor" of God and He "adds to their number".

In many cases healing communities, societies, nations, or cultures might be considerably harder and might take a significant amount of time when removing strongholds. I believe there are some key scriptures within the Word of the Lord that give us an indication of how to heal our land:

"if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

Here we see God saying if His people (us) "humble" ourselves and "Pray" (where we show our reliance on Him to meet our needs), and "turn from our wicked ways" (the repentance of our sins); He will "hear" (take our prayer requests) us and "forgive" us (for those sins we repented and turned from) and maybe the most important part of societal healing, He "will heal our land".





A second piece of scripture that I feel needs to be addressed for societal healing is Isaiah 58:8-12 (NASB):

“Then your **light will break out** like the dawn, and your **recovery will speedily spring forth**; and your **righteousness will go before you**; The **glory of the Lord will be your rear guard**. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry, and **He will say, ‘Here I am.’** If you **remove the yoke from your midst**, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, and if you **give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted**, then **your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday**. And the **Lord will continually guide you and satisfy your desire** in scorched places, and **give strength to your bones**; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those from among you will **rebuild the ancient ruins**; You **will raise up the age-old foundations**; and you will be called the **repairer of the breach**, the **restorer of the streets** in which to dwell” .

This is a beautiful picture of how a society can be lifted from the curse of strongholds and be rebuilt. “Light breaking out”, “recovery will speedily spring forth”, “righteousness going before”, the “Glory of God being a rear guard”, and our “light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday” are all examples of how God can bring change upon a society. In other words these are all ways that the Lord sheds the Grace of healing and protection down upon a society. When He says, “that I am here”, God is acknowledging to us that He has heard our prayers and will be present. “Removing the yoke” is where we lift the stronghold. In many cases this can only come when we have done the things required of us in 2 Chronicles 7:14. The giving of ourselves to the “hungry and satisfying the desires of the afflicted” is where we have turned from our wicked ways and have adopted a lifestyle of serving, rather than being served. Then the promises start: “the Lord will continually guide you and satisfy your desire”, “give strength to your bones”, “rebuild the ancient ruins”, “will raise up the age-old foundations”, and says what people of a nation such as this will be called, “the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets”. In short, The Lord will restore the land, by delivering His blessing, and then allow the land to prosper, making something new from what was old.

“If we are going to turn our communities and nation around, congregations are going to have to join in a unified, national solemn assembly (Joel 1:14) to repent and to throw themselves before the face of Almighty God (Evans, 2014).

### CLOSING

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” Jude vs 24-25 (KJV)



# THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Church and Community Strongholds



**Kid Friendly Ideas**



## Day 41: Homecoming!

*Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>*

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“If the devil can cause us to be unsure of our personal relationship with God, then he can undermine everything because everything is based on that. The assurance of salvation comes through looking to Christ, not to ourselves.” Billy Graham, 2005

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### Today's Challenge: Make a Gratitude List

In today's challenge you are tasked to make a Gratitude List. A Gratitude List is a list of items that you are thankful for that the Lord has blessed you and your family with.

The bus pulled up to the gymnasium and grinded to a halt as the air brakes engaged. The Soldiers all sat, eyes glued upon the building, where they would soon be entering. The First Sergeant's was preoccupied on exactly how he would move his unit into the gym in an organized manner. He had been to the gym facility a hundred times throughout his career, but he did not exactly what to expect inside the facility. He looked back upon his Soldiers who all sat around the bus smiling and cutting up awaiting the cold march to the gym.

Once the unit was formed up the First Sergeant marche them up the ramp to the rear of the facility. The Soldiers stood not knowing what to expect but knowing that they were ready. After almost 13 months of sustained combat operations in Iraq, they were ready for anything. An unidentifiable noise came from inside the gym. The First Sergeant smiled slightly as he looked at his Human Resources Sergeant to tightly clasped the unit Guidon. The First Sergeant took in a deep breath of the cold December air and let it out slowly.

He felt a rush of emotion flow through his body as the huge overhead door cracked loose from the icy ground and began to raise. The thunderous sound of human voices raised in excitement penetrated under the door and became more intense with every foot that it raised. When the door has raised enough The First Sergeant audibled at the top of his lungs, “Forward, march!!!”

The unit of Soldiers marched into the gym surrounded by at least 500 people who were cheering, screaming, and celebrating the return of the loved ones, that had been gone for so long. The First

Sergeant focused his eyes straight ahead trying to concentrate through the deafening noise. He wondered if he would be able to sound off loud enough to stop his unit where he wanted them, but when the time came he gave the command and they all stopped. He turned toward them with his back to the crowd. His Guidon Bearer quickly ran to his position in front of the formation and posted himself facing the ecstatic crowd. 'One more minute and it's on', the First Sergeant thought as he took a deep breath inward. He gave the command for the Soldiers to fall out (authorizing them to leave their formation) and they all ran past him toward their families.

He spun around to see a sea of people embracing his Soldiers. He saw their laughter, which were accompanied by their smiles. He saw their intense happiness, that was accompanied by their tears. He saw their relief that their Soldiers were home. He was numb. This raw flood of joyful human emotion that filled the room was staggering. It overcame him, especially when he saw his daughter. He turned toward her and stood a bit standoffish from his position. Then he saw her lip begin to quiver and her eyes tear. He slowly walked toward her seeing the remainder of his family waiting several steps behind her. They had all agreed to stay back while the First Sergeant and her were reunited. The First Sergeant stepped up to his 10 year old daughter and took a knee embracing her with a love that he had never felt before.

Then the remaining members of his family; his wife, mother, father, brother, and extended family, came forward. They all held up signs saying "welcome home"; all being dressed in unit t-shirts which depicted the units deployment dates. He stood up taking his daughter in his arms. His wife leaned in and wrapped them both in a tight embrace. Then his mother and father came forward extending the embrace of people that wrapped around the First Sergeant. He could not even speak, he was so overwhelmed with emotion.

After the embraces ended the Command Sergeant Major and the Command General of Joint Task Force 91 came up to his position. "Welcome home First Sergeant." the General spoke extending his hand toward the First Sergeant. His hand was cupped so the First Sergeant knew that there was a Commander's coin coming his way. Even though he had been awarded the Generals Coin once before this one had a special meaning. Then he knew that he would receive the CSMs Coin. Again he had been awarded this coin on two separate occasions but this one who have a special place in his coin case.

The welcome home ceremony ended all too soon. The Soldiers would have to board the bus to return to Camp Atterbury for four days of outprocessing, before being released to go home. Prior to getting his Soldiers back into formation to take them back outside, the First Sergeant's father approached him. The usually stoic and reserved man, stood regarding his son with an envelope in his hand. The First Sergeant's eyes gazed down toward the large shipping envelope and he knew exactly what it was. His father handed the envelope to Senior NCO and the First Sergeant nodded. He embraced his father and touched the back of his head, laying his cheek against his. This had been only the second time that he

had ever seen his father cry. Then he stepped back and readied himself to go. "See you all in a few days." The First Sergeant said to the crowd of people who had shown up to welcome him home.

When they were all back on the bus the First Sergeant stood at the front looking back over his Soldiers who were all still mental psyched about being home. He felt the same great sense of pride that he had felt so many times before. He looked to where James Waters and Shirley Wilson sat and with a cocky grin gave them a wink of his right eye. The young Soldiers both smiled at him and then at each other. He was so proud of the two, 18 year old, US Army Military Police combat veterans.

He looked to his right where his Human Resources Sergeant sat clutching the green and gold flag with the deep red combat streamer. It was surreal being back home. The First Sergeant looked again to his right, but this time he looked to his right arm, underneath the American Flag that was sewn onto his shoulder. He gazed at the 52nd Military Police Brigade Patch that now occupied the place of honor, signifying the the First Sergeant was a "combat veteran". He looked back to his Soldiers and with a deep reverence and humility, thanked God for returning them all back alive. They had earned the right that all Soldiers who have known war have - the right to return to their country and their family. They were heroes...

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"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Jude vs 24-25 (KJV)

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### Daily Reading

As you can see from today's vignette, coming home is an extremely emotional time for any Soldier. It is overwhelming. It is surreal. It is a time of great change. It is a time of reunion. It is a time of great blessing, in most cases. I think that in some ways coming to the end of our journey in this challenge is somewhat reminiscent to coming home from war. But before we start taking down the "yellow ribbons off the ol' oak tree" let's do a quick review of what we have learned over the last six weeks.

Week One: The Nature, History, Expansion and Scope of the Battle

In this introductory week to the series, we looked at the 4 major areas Satan will attack us in and gave some general examples of how he tries to execute his attacks. Continuing the study, we examined some

different worldviews which included: The Naturalistic/Materialistic/ Scientific Worldview, Spiritual Worldview, and God's View. After this, we engaged on the Essence and the Location of the Battle where we talked about the three Levels of Heaven and in general terms of how angelic forces are arrayed. In a two-part devotional on the History of the Battle, we found in Ezekiel 28:11-19 how the Great War started, with Lucifer revolting against God in Heaven. The study details Lucifer's great position, his turning from light to darkness, and then progressing down through the transformation to and fall of Satan. In the section entitled, Expansion of the Battle, we see how God added Humans into the Great War. We acknowledge that He made us "just a little lower than the angels" and "crowned us with Glory" (Psalm 8:5). We were shown how God chose us to replace Satan, strengthened by His Power and Authority, as the rulers of the Earth. In Genesis chapter 3, we see where Satan deceives Adam and Eve through his lies and trickery, which ultimately in Genesis 3:6-24, details the fall of man. Concluding week one we detailed the Source of the Battle found in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, establishing that much of the Great War exists within our own minds and selves, which leads into the in-depth study of strongholds in weeks four and five.

### Week Two: Authority of the Warrior

On Day 8 we talked about Jesus's Person. We discussed the meaning of the Hypostatic Union and how Jesus was man yet at the same time He was God. We also reviewed Jesus's Position. He has been exalted to sit at the right hand of God (the ultimate position of authority) (Luke 22:69). The final point of day one was that Jesus was the Payment for our sins. Day 9 took us into the Agency of Authority which on Earth is the church. We as a body of believers must cross the lines, which society tries to use to separate us (gender, race, color, creed, ethnicity, culture, social and economic classes, etc.) to come together, and proclaim that Jesus is Lord! A church that is doing what God want them to be doing: cannot be stopped by Hell and Hell cannot overpower the church. We also reviewed the importance of being connected with a local church body in order to reap the benefits of fellowship. Day 10 was a listing of why our authority to fight in the Great War comes from Christ alone. Day 11 we saw where God granted us the secret weapon of Grace to employ in the fight. On Day 12 we detailed how to access the authority that we have in Christ, through Prayer. Prayer is the primary means that we communicate with God and that prayer is an offensive weapon. During Day 13 we looked at the concept of standing firm and the three parts to that: Jesus has already won the war, we must defend ground already taken, and Satan will try to rob us of these blessings. Day 14 introduces the Armor of God and gives a basic description of what the armor is and what it does.

### Week Three: Ways of the Warrior



This week addressed the art of Spiritual Warfare. Each day was broken down by an intangible characteristic that I feel is important to be an effective Spiritual Warrior. Day 1 was entitled, Will of the Warrior. We talked about the definition for what will is and how a Christian Warrior must control their passions and make decisions, based upon the will of doing God's Will and not our own. Day 2 is called the Spirit of the Warrior. In this critical day we examined the spirit in which we must fight in the Great War. We detailed how our spirit must align and unify itself with the Holy Spirit. Love of the Warrior was the subject addressed in Day 3. We highlighted the fact that it is the love of a Christian Warrior that allow them to fight the hatred and evil that are employed against us. Day 4 was called, Courage of the Warrior, where we looked at courage from a biblical perspective and pointed out that courage comes in different forms. Sacrifice of the Warrior was the title for Day 5 and cleared up a widely held misconception that sacrifice for Christian Warrior is not we are called to do. Sacrificing or "Denying ourselves" (Luke 9:23) from sin allows us to keep in step with God. Day 6 spoke to us about the Duty of the Warrior, and what that duty is specifically. In Legacy of the Warrior on Day 7, we highlight the legacy that all warriors should leave within their families and the world.

### Week Four: Tools of the Warrior

Weeks four through six addressed the science of Spiritual Warfare. In Week 4 we started by discussing our Battle Plan (Prayer Strategies) in general terms, which led to the outline for the remainder of the week's devotions. Offensive versus Defensive Operations on the Spiritual Battlefield were talked about in detail, referring to the physical world definitions of each type of operation. We detailed the tactical tasks contained within each type of operation, using Crosslife Church's Monthly Homeless Ministry as an example of how to employ offensive operations in the physical world. The mission of a Christian Warrior, which is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) was detailed on Day 25. We took the Great Commission and dissected it into Task and Purpose and provided the great promise that Jesus gave us, when delivering this pivotal mission to us. We spoke in detail about Terrain Analysis of the Spiritual Battlefield and the ways that Satan will try to use this terrain against us in daily battle. During the devotion on developing a Battle rhythm we looked at the importance of managing the time that God blessed us with, to protect us from Satan's distractions. On the final day of this week we dove deeper into the offensive weapon of prayer as the central strategy for the Battle Plan. As part of that strategy we talked about praying in each piece of the Spiritual Armor that make up the pieces of Gods Armor.

### Week Five: Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds

This week focused on the introduction and definition of what strongholds are. It gave us a general synopsis in identifying strongholds using The Seven Deadly Sins, as outlined in Pastor Travis Penn's 2017 sermon series, regarding those sins and their effects. Through a further two-part study, we detailed how to identify and counter the effects of strongholds in our personal lives using some of the ways Satan will attack us in Day 1. On Days 33 and 34 we looked at strongholds within the family structure. Using points from Day 1 we identified in greater detail how Satan will try to attack the family and install strongholds amongst the members. Day 35 was entitled, Healing Personal and Family Strongholds. We addressed some key scriptures and presented the concept of a stronghold in a different way using Psalm 144:1-2, where we establish God as our stronghold!

### Week Six: Fighting the War by Destroying Church and Community Strongholds

In Days 36 and 37 we used the two-part study regarding identification of and counter measures of strongholds within the church. These measures were based around Pastor Travis Penn's 2019 sermon series, "Letters to the Church". During these days we looked at the seven churches in the book of Revelation and the lessons that are taught from each church. We also focused on the specific ways that Satan was attacking each church. Next, we addressed Cultural and Society Strongholds. In this study we saw how Satan tries to attack society and the ways that we can best defeat these attacks. We also examined some scriptural healing processes for churches and societies during this final week.



**Kid Friendly Ideas**





## Day 42: Soli Deo Gloria

Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup>

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“It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.” Charles Dickens, 1859

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### Today's Challenge: Pray for the Members of Crosslife

In today's challenge you are tasked to pray for the members of our church. The church is a family and must be prayed for just as earnestly as you pray for your own immediate family. Take as much time as the Spirit leads, to lift each person within the congregation up, by name and specific situations/circumstances (if you know any that they are dealing with). Prayer is a powerful weapon in a Warrior's Arsenal, use it wisely and as without ceasing.

On the evening of his second day home, the First Sergeant quietly slipped out the back door of his new home. He had a large shipping envelope in his left hand, that he had retrieved from his father the day before. In his other hand he carried a lighter. The December wind blew cold and he shivered, as the sun crept down toward the horizon. He knew what he had to do and there was an anticipation coupled with an anxiety that surrounded the duty.

He stopped at the rear of the lot and looked to see several white, letter-sized, envelopes that contained the “death letters” that he had written over a year ago. He pulled the first letter out that had been addressed to his wife. Without even opening the letter, he remembered some of what he had written to her. As he took the letters from the shipping envelope, he remembered bits and pieces of what he had written in each of them. It was not important that he could not remember what each of them said exactly, only that he had cared enough to write each of them. To tell the people in his life how much they had meant to him, in the event of his death. The First Sergeant had faced death so many times while deployed, but each and every time, God had protected him and saved him “from the sword”. This seemed a fitting end to this season in his life.

He held the letter up in his left hand and struck the lighter in his right. He placed the corner of the letter into the flame and watched it slowly begin to consume the paper, turning it a brilliant shade of

orange and yellow. As the flames engulfed the envelope, he placed it onto the ground and took the next letter out. He held the letter from his daughter up and repeated the exercise, as the ash from first letter sputtered out on the ground. Then he ignited the next letter. Then the next, until all the letters laid in a pile of ash in front of him on the ground emitting a weak plume of smoke against the freezing night air.

He looked toward the sky and took a deep breath, realizing the great gift that he had been given by God. He had been returned safely to his home and family; but the war was long from being over, and he knew that there would be many more trials that lay ahead for him. For now, he felt a peace in the fact of knowing that he had done his duty, he had run the race, and stayed the course. He lowered his head, closed his eyes, and thanked the Lord for what he had been blessed with.

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“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” \_ 2 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV)

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### Daily Reading

Soli Deo Gloria (For the Glory of God Alone):

Day 42! For those who began this challenge that are still here, bravo! Praise be to God! You have done it. You have completed the Crosslife Warrior Challenge. 42 days ago, you embarked on a road that hopefully took you from one place on your journey of faith to a place where you now have a deeper intimacy with God and your fellow church family. The road has not been easy, but very few things in life that are worth fighting for are easy. Some people who participate in this challenge didn't even realize that they could be "Warriors" in God's Army.

Some of you may be saying, "Thank the Lord it's over!", but what I hope you are all asking is, "When does the next challenge begin?!" For those hearty souls that have that question on their lips, the answer is RIGHT NOW and everyday for the rest of our lives on Earth. This challenge was not Divinely laid upon us just to teach about Spiritual Warfare, gut out 42 days worth of challenges, and then just go back to our lives - business as usual. This was not just another sermon series or bible study. This challenge should have changed our paradigms on how we view our daily lives. If there has been no change in your daily life, routine, thinking, or activities, you might want to go back to Day 1 and start all

over again. Somewhere along the way you lost sight of what God was trying to do in all of our lives with this series. This was not a check the block devotional.

In the forward to the series (if you haven't read it on Day 1 you missed this part), Pastor Travis Penn cited a quote by Mr Tim York, who was the National Moderator for the Indiana Revitalization Conference in 2019, where he said, "We are trying to build the church with toddlers rather than warriors." A warrior says, "When does the next challenge begin? Where is the next hill that needs to be taken? Where is the next giant that needs to be taken down? When is my next call to service?" RIGHT NOW warriors! We all need to be those Christian Warriors that Tim was talking about.

The warriors that God will use to further His Kingdom on Earth! The warriors that will tap into our authority in Heaven to fight and win the battles from this day until the end of time. The warriors who will have the Will of the Warrior, to take the hard right over the easy wrong. The warriors who will fight with the Spirit of the Warrior, surrendering our spirit to that of the Holy Spirits to align ourselves with it. The warriors who will have the Love of the Warrior, so that all will know that we are Jesus' disciples. The warriors that will display the Courage of the Warrior, to stand against injustice, even when it's hard. The warriors that will serve with the Duty of the Warrior, to ensure that we Glorify and Honor God with our service. The warriors that will leave the Legacy of the Warrior, the hearts and souls of those who our lives touch.

It is bittersweet for me to close this series. I have grown so much during the time that I spent being led by the Holy Spirit, who is really who authored this devotion. I drew closer to the Lord than I thought that I could. It is my hope that what God imparted throughout this study, will be used by you all to fight in the Great War everyday from this day on.

I would like to leave you with some final words which I hope will inspire you all to fight each and every day of your lives to win as many battles as we can in the great war:

We are facing an enemy that is committed to our complete and total destruction! An enemy that rebelled against the Lord our God and taunts us to sin daily. An enemy that thrives on conflict and hate; so we must fight! I would tell you all that the greatest challenge that faces us as Christian Warriors is not the might of the angelic armies of darkness, but the challenge of doing what must be done to defeat them; without compromising who we are in Christ! Through our belief, through our spirit, and through our love the people of the world will be able to see that we are followers of Jesus! I believe that we should have only one fear, that we might lose ourselves, and all the things that Christians have stood and died for, in this fight. That we might be pulled away from where God wants us to go. Compared to such as loss, we should not fear Satan or all of his armies!!!

<sup>20</sup> "He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen." \_Revelation 22:20-21



# THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Church and Community Strongholds



## Kid Friendly Ideas