

# *Living in the Later Times*

Lesson

I

## **TEACHER TO TEACHER**

In recent years we have come to express Casas' call in one simple sentence: *Our call is to help people close the gap between their present reality and the abundant life promised in Scripture, through the Sunday Morning Experience.* "Closing the gap" is about discipleship or spiritual transformation. "Sunday Morning Experience" references the narrowly-focused process through which we feel God has called us to make disciples. Of course, the Sunday Morning Experience involves participation in two environments uniquely designed to facilitate spiritual transformation: *congregational worship* and *biblical community*.

In the carefully designed environment of a Casas worship service, people have opportunity to encounter God—to experience His greatness, His love for us, our love for Him—and then to commit to following Him.

Adults have opportunity to come together in biblical community in one of our Bible Fellowships. In this nurturing and sustaining environment they have opportunity to grow both spiritually and relationally. In the environment of biblical community, people experience Christ in the Light of God's people and in the Light of His Word. Through their "faith communities," adults, students, and children participate in Bible teaching for life-change, small groups, meaningful service, disciple-making here and abroad, relational care, ministry, spiritual warfare, etc. Each of these growth opportunities has its origin in our Bible Fellowships.

We recently drew attention to our understanding of the stages of spiritual growth through a Bible Fellowship unified study titled *The Prayer God Always Answers: Lord, Make Me a Spiritual Parent at Any Cost*. In that series of lessons we identified seventeen "maturity insights" that serve as milestones in a believer's journey to spiritual maturity. In our second unified study, *Growing Wise*, we studied three topics important to spiritual maturity that we were unable to adequately develop in *The Prayer God Always Answers*: prayer, evangelism, and service.

In *Resisting the Enemy*, we discuss another topic important to spiritual growth that needs further discussion and study: spiritual warfare. Our biblical theology of spiritual warfare is one of the three "streams" of theology that have helped to shape the unique nature of Casas as a Body of Christ. Of course, the other two streams are our biblical theologies of spiritual growth (sanctification) and relationships. Foundationally, this lesson and those that follow are being presented not because the topic is interesting to many, but because effectively overcoming the enemy through spiritual warfare is an essential part of a believer's growth process as he or she pursues becoming a spiritual mother or father.

Simply put, our study of spiritual warfare is about spiritual transformation. It is about "closing the gap through the Sunday Morning Experience." May Jesus empower you to teach in His Name and Authority and may He protect you from the evil one as you participate with Him in making disciples.

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## Studying the Word Together

*A man from Tucson Electric Power was working at my house. He said, "You are Roger Barrier, aren't you? I listen to your radio program every day. My wife and I are both Christians. She's having some problems. In fact, there are times when I wonder what's going on inside of her. Do you believe in demons?"*

*"Yes," I replied. "Why don't you sit down in the kitchen and let's talk."*

*"Several months ago," he began, "we went to a spiritualists church where we were encouraged to pray to receive a spirit guide to help direct our lives. I didn't pray, but my wife did. She hasn't been the same since. Sometimes, it's as if there's a different person inside. Her voice changes; her face contorts; she has an aversion to the things of God. Our marriage is falling apart. She won't go back to our Christian church. It all came to a head last night. While we were arguing, she walked into the hallway, turned slowly, and said with a sneer, 'Don't you know who we are?' Her voice rose to a scream as she repeated, 'Don't you know who we are? Don't you know who we are?'"*

*My guest was shaking now. He said, "I think she is demon possessed like they talk about in the Bible. Can you help us?"*

*"Yes, I can," I replied.<sup>1</sup>*

Dr. Roger Barrier has been teaching and preaching about God's war with Satan for many years. In fact, one of his earliest sermons, entitled "Demonism," was preached in 1972 while pastoring in Penelope, Texas. The story above is a true account of a family embroiled in a serious spiritual battle who sought freedom from spiritual bondage. It is indicative of Paul's warning to Timothy and to us:

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)*

In this verse Paul specifically warns Timothy about the impending danger of apostasy (false or deceptive teaching) inspired and initiated by demons. The phrase "later times" is of particular importance to us. *The United Bible Society's New Testament Handbook*<sup>2</sup> says that many scholars equate this phrase with the expression "in the last days," which means that it refers to the whole time between the resurrection of Jesus and His second coming. It carries weight both for the present and for the future.

We indeed live in the "later days" when Satan does everything he can to destroy the witness and ministry of individual Christians as well as the testimony and ministry of churches.

### **The Reality of Spiritual Warfare**

Faithful Christians often find themselves differing with other men and women of sincere faith when it comes to spiritual warfare and Satan's role in the life of the individual believer. Some believe that biblical stories cast in the God-at-war motif are nothing more than metaphorical references to the metaphorical

conflict between good and evil. Christians holding this perspective believe neither in a literal Satan nor in evil spirits or demons.

Other Christians believe that Satan is a real spiritual being who is at war with God in a cosmic or spiritual realm, but they do not think he can influence or harm believers living in the natural realm because as the Apostle John said, "...the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Finally, many Christ-followers have a

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worldview that recognizes Satan and his army of demons as literal spiritual beings who are at war with God. They believe that Satan and his minions are dedicated to blinding nonbelievers from the truth of Christ's saving work (2 Cor. 4:4) and to destroying the witness and ministry of the Redeemed (John 10:10; 1 Pet.5:8). This group says, "Spiritual warfare is real. Demonization is real!" This is the biblical worldview that we hold at Casas.

With this in mind, let's now turn our attention to:

- ◆ Defining spiritual warfare
- ◆ Looking at the place of spiritual warfare in our biblical worldview
- ◆ Reviewing Casas' beliefs relating to spiritual warfare

### ► **A Simple Definition**

**W**arfare in general can be defined as the act or fact of engaging in a war, conflict, or struggle. Synonyms include fighting, a conflict, combat, war, rivalry, and feud. The term "spiritual warfare" refers to the ongoing battle, conflict, struggle, or war between God and Satan that will continue until Christ destroys the devil and his demons, establishing His reign on earth (Rev. 20:7-10), ending forever the reign of the "prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

Thomas B. White, writing in *The Believers Guide to Spiritual Warfare*,<sup>3</sup> elaborates on the above definition saying:

*Generally, there are three distinct levels of spiritual warfare. The first is the...ongoing conflict between the Creator and His faithful angels on the one side, and the rebellious hierarchy of evil forces under Satan on the other... Daniel 10 sheds some light on this warfare...*

*The second level of warfare is the battle between the demonic realm and the redeemed...This level of spiritual warfare is the tempting and trying, the taunting and haunting of men [and women] with the possibility and potency*

*of evil. This level of the battle generally has two major dimensions... [one is] a direct [attack] and [the other] an indirect struggle with supernatural evil.*

*The third major level of spiritual warfare is to deceive and bind non-Christians. Paul tells us that "The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the glory of Christ..." (2 Cor 4:4). Describing the Ephesian believers, he points out that they at one time were dead to sin and followed the ways of the world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Eph 2:2). Disobedience to the gospel is promoted by the devil, who holds unbelievers in spiritual darkness and death. Jesus' commission to Paul thus makes sense: "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so they may receive forgiveness of sins..." (Acts 26:18).*

*I may then venture the following definition: Spiritual warfare is a multi-level conflict between good and evil initiated on the supernatural plane with the prehistoric rebellion of Lucifer, and transformed onto the natural plane with the Fall of Man. Satan, man's adversary, continues to work to deceive and divert people from salvation in Christ, and to harass and hinder Christians through the enticement to sin and exploitation of weaknesses.*

### ► **Spiritual Warfare and Our Biblical Worldview**

**D**r. Steve Dowdle<sup>4</sup> says, "A study of spiritual warfare is best approached with a discussion of worldviews." He adds, "Worldview may be defined as the thought system for explaining the world around us and our experiences in it. It is the lens through which we view our world. It is, in essence, what we really believe."

In *The Prayer God Always Answers*,<sup>5</sup> Dr. Barrier provided a list (admittedly incomplete but illustrative) of some critical tenets comprising a biblical worldview. They include:



1. God is love. He is the triune, eternal, transcendent being who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. God can be known by man and reveals Himself to those who earnestly seek intimacy with Him. God is caringly involved in the lives of His children and longs to form them into the image of His Son, Jesus.
2. God created the heavens and the earth. Everything has its origin in His creation. Christ holds Creation together.
3. Man is created in the image of God. He can be viewed as alone, meaning that he has needs that are best met in the context of community or relationship with others like himself. Man is also fallen (naturally sinful) and needs a Savior. Man was led into his fallen state by Satan and continues to be evilly influenced by him.
4. The man who trusts Christ for salvation by faith and faith alone enjoys eternal relationship with God. Unregenerate man is eternally separated from God.
5. The commandments and instructions of Scripture serve to provide the foundation for the Christian's morality and ethics.
6. History is the story of God's caring involvement in the lives of His people.
7. Satan is a spiritual being who, in opposition to God, reigns with power in this present age. While he cannot possess or own believers, he schemes to deceive, harass, oppress, and demonize them in order to neutralize or destroy their witness and ministry.

Spiritual warfare as referenced in tenet seven above is a vital element of our biblical worldview. Roger expanded upon this tenet by saying the following:<sup>6</sup>

1. Our earth is not now God's world. It is flawed as a result of the Fall and

- too often in the controlling hands of the evil one.
2. Christ-followers are in a battle to push back the Darkness. We long for the coming of Christ to retake His world and cast out sin and evil, so that our world will once again be the place He designed it to be.
3. Until then, we face evil and injustice and pain and trials and sufferings. We experience the consequences of our own sin and that of a world fallen into sin. We are instructed by Scripture not to blame God for the troubles we encounter (James 1:2-12; Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-6). Our fight is not against Him (Eph. 6:10-17).
4. We personally battle the evil one. The world experiences the consequences of his power, as well as his influence both over believers and over not-yet-believers.

## **Foundational Principles**

Two important principles undergird our spiritual warfare teachings and practices:

1. Maintain a balanced perspective.
2. Believers cannot be possessed by Satan.

### ▶ ***A Balanced Perspective***

Within the evangelical church there are two extreme perspectives that Casas seeks to avoid. Both views acknowledge that Satan and his demons are real spiritual beings. However, one extreme denies that Satan and his demons can have any influence in a believer's life. In our opinion, this view seems inconsistent with both our understanding of the New Testament and our experience as a faith community.

The other extreme blames all suffering and evil upon Satan. This view is inconsistent with our theology of suffering. It gives Satan far too much credit and encourages believers to deny

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their personal responsibility for the sin in their lives.

A balanced view of spiritual warfare proclaims that the problems, trials, and suffering in a believer's life may have multiple causes. First, each believer experiences the consequences of the sins that have their fountainhead in his or her own sinful nature—the flesh (James 1: 14). We also encounter trials simply because we live in a “fallen world” (Gen. 3). And it is clear that God may permit or introduce suffering into our lives for the purpose of conforming us into the image of Christ (Ex. 9:2-4; Rom. 8:28-29). Finally, believers endure some problems and sufferings that can be fully attributed to the evil one (1 Pet. 5:8).

By holding to a balanced perspective of spiritual warfare, we recognize that Satan and his demons can harass, attack, or torment a believer. However, before attributing—either in whole or in part—a problem to demonic spirits, it is important to consider all possible causes. This keeps us from looking for a “demon behind every bush,” acknowledges the reality in which we live, and encourages Christians to accept responsibility for their sin.

### ► **Christians Cannot Be “Demon Possessed”**

The Scriptures clearly teach that God and Satan are embroiled in an ongoing battle. They also forthrightly teach that the devil can harass, torment, oppress, and demonize mankind—including believers. However, the Bible *does not teach* that Christians can be “*demon possessed*.” In fact, the words “demon possessed” appear nowhere in the Greek manuscripts of the Bible. To be possessed means to be owned. Christians belong to God. We are purchased for Him with the blood of Christ (Rev. 5:9).

However, some English translations do employ phrases which infer demon possession. For example, in the NIV Mark 5:15 the Greek word *daimonizomai*

(dahee-mon-id'-zom-ahee; NT:1139), is rendered “possessed by the legion of demons” (see v. 16 also). But a better rendering of the word might be *demonized*. Of course, this passage refers to a non-believer. Although Christians cannot be possessed by Satan or demonic spirits, they can be spiritually harassed, oppressed, or demonized, leading to the discrediting of their witness and a neutralizing of their ministry.

## **What We at Casas Believe about Spiritual Warfare**

James admonished first century Christ-followers to actively resist the attack of the enemy. James encouraged his readers, saying:

*Submit yourselves, then, to God.  
Resist the devil, and he will flee from  
you. (James 4:7)*

This familiar verse seems always to lead to the question: “How do I resist the devil?” In this section I briefly outline some of Casas’ primary beliefs that provide the framework for *resisting the enemy*. In future lessons we will study each belief statement in detail.

### **1. We believe that learning to overcome the evil one is part of every believer’s journey toward becoming a spiritual mother or father.**

The passages below will be familiar to many at Casas who participated in the study titled *The Prayer God Always Answers* or who have attended Roger’s “Principles of Spiritual Growth” class. They are foundational to our belief that Christians move through stages of development as they progressively mature, becoming more like Christ.



*I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2:12-14)*

Notice that John says twice in this passage that spiritual young men and women “have overcome the evil one.” Learning to engage in spiritual warfare is part of the spiritual transformation process for each believer. No Christian can become a spiritual mother or father without learning to win the battle against the evil one.

**2. We believe that the mind is the principle battlefield in spiritual warfare.**

The mind (part of the soul<sup>7</sup>) is the battleground where most of our spiritual struggles with the demonic take place. One of Satan’s favorite ploys is “playing mind games” or deceiving the believer. For example, the serpent played cunning mind games, deceiving Eve (Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:3-6). Paul told the Corinthians that “the god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4). He also warned Timothy that hypocritical liars with seared consciences and who are deceived by demons would cause Christians to abandon the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-2). Jesus prayed that the Apostles would be sanctified with truth (John 17:17) and be protected from the schemes of the evil one (John 17:15).

**3. We believe that Satan attacks believers and non-believers in many different ways.**

Roger once said in a Sunday Morning sermon:

*Let’s say from the outset that any study of Satan’s schemes will, by its very nature, be incomplete. The Evil One is smarter and more cunning than any man or woman. Every major biblical character that I can think of except for Daniel and Jesus has met stinging defeat at his hands...However, through the authority and life that we have in Christ we are able to consistently overcome the evil one.<sup>8</sup>*

Satan is described as:

- ◆ A **thief** who comes to steal, kill, and destroy in John 10:10
- ◆ A **liar** and **murderer** in John 8:44
- ◆ A **roaring lion** prowling around looking for someone to devour in 1 Peter 5:8
- ◆ The **accuser** in Revelation 12:10

Tactically, Satan and his demons tempt (James 1:14), deceive (2 Cor. 11:3), harass (Luke 4:33-34), torment (Acts 5:16), defile (Luke 9:37-42), accuse (Rev. 12:10), enslave (Rom. 8:15), entice [seduce] (James 1:14), and trap or ensnare (1 Tim. 3:7).

**4. We believe that Christians can make themselves vulnerable to demonic attack, allowing the devil to establish spiritual footholds or strongholds in their lives.**

In Ephesians 4:27 Paul says to his readers, “do not give the devil a foothold.” The Greek word that is rendered *foothold* is derived from the masculine noun *tópon* (NT:5117) meaning

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“place.” It is used metaphorically in the passage to mean “an occasion or opportunity to act.”<sup>9</sup> So Paul is telling the Ephesians not to give the devil an opportunity to act in their lives. We give Satan an opportunity to act in our lives when we ignore our sin and remain unrepentant.

Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 10:4 Paul describes weapons of spiritual warfare that “have divine power to demolish strongholds.” Synonyms for stronghold are fort, tower, or castle. Such fortified places provide their occupants with a safe haven from which to operate. Paul tells the Corinthians that they have weapons that they can use to demolish the “forts” in their lives from which Satan can operate in unhindered fashion.

Christians can allow Satan to construct a foothold or establish a stronghold in their lives through sin. When we allow a sin to become habitual, we provide opportunity for Satan to turn a foothold into a stronghold.

#### **5. We believe that Christ has full authority over Satan and his demons.**

Jesus demonstrated His authority and power over Satan to resist the evil one when He was tempted in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11), when He cast out demons (Mark 5:1-30), when He extended His authority to His disciples (Luke 10:17), and when He died on the cross and was resurrected (Col. 2:15).

Finally, prior to His Ascension He clearly declared to His closest followers His authority, saying:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations....*  
(Matthew 28:18-19)

#### **6. We believe that Jesus provides us with the tools that we need to overcome the evil one.**

God loves us deeply and does not call us into battle with our potent enemy without properly equipping us for warfare.

Paul, in his letters to the churches, describes believers more than 80 times as being “in Christ.” Because of our position “in Christ” and because we are “seated with Him in heavenly realms” (Eph. 2:6), we have permission to resist and rebuke Satan in the Name and Authority of Christ.

He has given us many weapons that we can wield in His Name:

1. Through Scripture and various spiritual gifts we have a thorough knowledge of our enemy.
2. We are provided with spiritual armor and divine weapons with which to engage the enemy.
3. In united fellowship with other believers, we stand together to defeat the enemy.
4. We obtain greater spiritual potency with which to fight as we grow in intimacy with Christ, becoming more like Him.

#### **► Summary**

When Jesus surrendered His glory and took on the form of man, He continued to battle Satan in the natural realm just as God battles the evil one in the spiritual or heavenly realms. Through Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection from the dead, Satan became a defeated foe and will ultimately be destroyed following Christ’s second coming.

As disciples and imitators of Christ, believers enter into battle with Satan in the natural realm. We are empowered to resist and overcome the evil one through our



position in Christ and our intimate relationship with Him. In addition to battling in the Name and Authority of Christ, we fight with divine weapons that He has provided. Learning to overcome Satan is part of the spiritual transformation process for each believer who progressively moves toward becoming a spiritual mother or father.

### **Application Ideas and Questions**

**W**hen we think about applying biblical principles in our lives, we usually consider relevant ways that we might avoid specific sins or behaviors we might emulate. However, these “how’s” are not the initial things we should consider, but rather the “why.” Often the “why” behind the behavioral application lies in a clear understanding of God’s heart for both us and our fellow men. As we experience God’s heart, we become aware of our heart response to His heart for us. Without such a relational connection (the “why”), application of biblical truths and principles (the “how’s”) can easily seem to flow out of duty or obligation.

The greater “why” that lies behind the reality of God’s war with Satan remains a mystery to us. Yet reality tells that we have been enlisted to fight alongside Christ and the Heavenly Hosts for the souls of the people that Jesus came to save and deliver from Satan’s terrible bondage.

God’s longing for intimate relationship with us and with those who have not yet heard His gospel message moves Him to war against the evil one. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross made possible our eternal intimacy with Him. Our heartfelt gratitude to Him motivates us to fight for both the present and the future coming of His Kingdom in us and on Earth.

While we don’t fully understand why the battle rages still, we willingly enter the

fray. Our courage to resist and overcome the enemy is anchored in the knowledge that we do not fight alone. Rather, we fight in the power of Christ, standing against the enemy alongside those believers with whom we are unified. As a soldier enters battle for the country he or she loves, we go to war for the King and Kingdom that we love.

The members of your Bible Fellowship or faith community will likely be at different places with the idea of spiritual warfare. That really is okay. This lesson and those that follow have been prepared to communicate not only our beliefs but also the practical aspects of “overcoming the enemy.” As pastors and shepherds, we desire that those entrusted to our spiritual care will find unity in belief as well as skill in doing spiritual battle together.

For some, the first step toward learning to effectively resist the enemy will be the “renewing of their mind” (Rom. 12:1-2)—deconstructing old patterns of thought in order to construct new ones. Said another way, their first step will be reshaping their biblical worldview.

Others will need to examine their present capacity to trust Christ sufficiently to accept and employ the weapons of warfare that He provides. Of course, we realize that deeper levels of faith require deeper levels of intimacy with Christ. It is spiritual young men and women who have learned to overcome the evil one (1 John 2:12-14).

Others may have sufficient faith and be ready to move to the frontlines, but first must learn to put on their armor and skillfully wield the divine weapons given to them for use in dismantling footholds and tearing down strongholds.

**A**pplication here is about taking a next step. It about some movement forward in becoming Christians who more fully reflect the glory of Christ and more courageously and compassionately minister in His Name and Authority.



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<sup>1</sup> Roger Barrier, from sermon titled “Dealing with the Devil” delivered at Casas Adobes Baptist Church December 1, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> *UBS New Testament Handbook Series*, copyright © 1961-1997 by United Bible Societies.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas B. White, *The Believers Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, copyright © 1990 by Thomas B. White, published by Vine Books (a division of Servant Publications), Ann Arbor, MI, pp. 20-23.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Steve Dowdle has served Casas as Minister of Counseling and Associate Pastor since 1979. He is a scholar with expertise in spiritual warfare and has been responsible for developing and teaching Casas’ core class on spiritual warfare.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Barrier and Jerry Wilkinson, *The Prayer God Always Answers: Lord Make Me a Spiritual Parent at Any Cost*, copyright © 2005 by Casas Adobes Baptist Church, p. 10-4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10-6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11-4.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Barrier, from a sermon titled “Strategies of Satan” (s-944), preached at Casas Adobes Baptist Church May 17, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Bible and the Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, copyright © 1991, 1992, 1994, 2002 by AMG International, Inc.

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# Commentary

Contributed by Dr. Steve Dowdle

Worldviews are seen as falling into categories. What follows is a review of some of the broader groupings and a brief explanation of how they are similar or divergent from a biblical worldview.

Animism is the oldest and perhaps the most widely-held worldview. It is the dominant worldview of primitive peoples the world over. Native American religion is animistic and continues to have some influence in our country as Native American culture and religion are given credence by the media. The animist sees the world in two interrelated dimensions: the spirit world and the realm of men and things (the natural world). Spiritual power is seen as impersonal. Animists believe in a creator or god(s), but see their god(s) as being distant and difficult to contact. They see the spirit world as inhabited by good and evil spirits and believe that all things (animal, plant, and mineral) have spiritual power. Ancestral spirits also play an important role in their religious rituals. Both Eastern and Native American religions believe in ancestral spirits and have traditions of ancestor worship that are practiced with great intensity and belief. The animist believes in the constant interaction between the spirit world and the realm of men and things. It is often assumed that when something bad happens it is the work of the evil spirits, and that they must be appeased in some way or dealt with by an alliance with the good spirits. The shaman or witchdoctor is the medium who is in contact with the spirit world and can effect a change in one's condition by contacting the spirits, usually in a ceremony or ritual of some kind. In keeping with their worldview, the objects used in these rituals are believed to have spiritual power. Consider the Navajo sandpaintings used in healing ceremonies

and the Hopi kachina dolls used in Kiva ceremonies as examples of such objects and their importance to the animist.

The Western worldview is relatively new in comparison to the ancient roots of animism. It has been formed in the crucible of thought and experience of the age of reason and the scientific revolution beginning in the seventeenth century. The discoveries in astronomy and physics by Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton had profound influence over how we think about our world and our understanding of how the laws of nature operate. The great philosophers like Kant, Bacon, and Locke moved us to understand truth in terms of what we can prove through careful and logical examination. If some concept or belief could not be proven to be valid through the five senses, then it was labeled as superstition and invalid in an age of scientific reason and exploration. The realm of religious beliefs was seen by many of these thinkers as meaningless and at best unverifiable. For example, the debate about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin was pictured as ridiculous and a total waste of time—and an indication of just how irrelevant religion was to the world we were in the process of discovering. Dr. John Newport states: Science offered the language of facts, which it proclaimed to be “really true” and before long most people gave unthinking priority to the world of scientific fact as the world of the “really real.”<sup>1</sup> Following the so-called “age of enlightenment” of the eighteenth century, much of what was believed to be “true” in terms of religious beliefs was rejected. Western culture increasingly moved in the direction of being dominated by a materialist, rationalist worldview.

The Western worldview is described as

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divided into two functional realms: the supernatural realm and the natural realm. All spirit beings, including God, angels, and demonic spirits are believed to exist only in the supernatural realm which has little or no functional contact with the natural realm. There is a chasm separating the supernatural and the natural realms that we can label as scientific rationalism. One realm really doesn't relate to the other in a functional sense. For example, the miracle of Jesus walking on water—the control of the law of gravity—doesn't fit in the realm of scientific law. The skeptic must then determine that there is a rational explanation for this story. His reasoning might go like this: The laws of gravity are irrefutable; therefore, this could not have happened as described. Perhaps then it was an invention of the disciples to try and present Jesus as all-powerful. Perhaps they just perceived he walked on water when he stood on a protruding rock next to the ship—and the reasoning goes on and on.

**W**e understand that our evangelical worldviews have been formed within the context of the predominant Western worldview. Most of us have been educated in secular schools and colleges and have spent far more hours being influenced by the media than by the Bible. Some perhaps want to believe that God enters human suffering with the healing power Jesus demonstrated on earth, but struggle to reconcile their cultural conditioning with the testimony of a fellow believer. Dr. Charles Kraft states that liberal theologians have rejected a belief in miracles, demons, and most of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. “However, evangelicals, especially those with theological training, also tend to resist embracing spirituality beyond that grudgingly allowed by our Western worldview.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Kraft goes on to advocate that “Interpretation of life and interpretation of the Scriptures and Christian experience go hand in hand. Thus Western worldviews influence the ways Western Christians interpret the Scriptures just as strongly as they influence our interpretation of life in general.”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Greg Boyd in his book *God at War* states: “It is just possible that the intensely materialistic and rationalistic orientation of the Enlightenment has blinded us to certain otherwise obvious realities. It is just possible that our chronocentrism—our tendency to assume that the worldview we hold at the present time is the ultimately true worldview—is preventing us from seeing significant features of reality.”<sup>4</sup> He believes it is clear that biblical authors do espouse a worldview that is in stark contrast to the Western worldview and which “demonstrates many similarities to the warfare worldviews of other cultures.”<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting to note that a biblical worldview has some parallels with the animistic worldview in that both hold to the belief that a spirit world exists and is in contact with the human realm. As we begin to discuss a biblical worldview, we do so at a very foundational level that missionaries have found to be a common point of understanding with primitive peoples. The Bible presents the spirit world as real, alive, and in daily, constant contact with the affairs of men. Both the Old and New Testaments portray a conflict between God and the forces of evil. This spiritual battle is vividly described in the New Testament as Jesus and his disciples encounter the demonic forces of Satan (Luke 4:31-37) and Jesus himself personally confronts Satan (Luke 4:1-12). The way in which Scripture portrays this warfare worldview differs significantly from that of most other cultures.

<sup>1</sup> John P. Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*, copyright © 1998 by William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity*, copyright © 2002 by Chosen Books, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, copyright © 1997 by InverVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

*Notes* **RESOURCES  
NEEDED:**

- ◆ 2-sided copies of Lesson Notes / Take-Home pages
- ◆ Pencils or pens for each person
- ◆ Dry erase markers and marker board or felt tip markers and a flip chart

**TIMEFRAME:**

- ◆ 35 minutes
- ◆ **Note:** If your lesson time is 35 minutes, your timeframe will be tight with this lesson. Plan your remarks carefully.

**Suggested Lesson Plan**

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** This *suggested* lesson plan contains many elements that, if employed, will help maximize learning for life-change in your Bible Fellowship. If you are an experienced teacher, you have freedom to create your own plan based upon the “Studying the Word Together” section. If you are less experienced, we suggest that you “stick to the plan.” However, even less-experienced teachers should feel free to modify the plan based upon the needs of your Bible Fellowship. This plan is designed to be presented in 35 minutes. It is important, therefore, that you carefully plan your presentation so that you communicate the main points with brevity and clarity.

**Important Scripture  
References:**

- ◆ 1 Timothy 4:1
- ◆ James 4:7
- ◆ 1 John 2:12-14

**Teaching Goals:**

- ◆ **Learn:** Help department members become more aware of their worldview as it pertains to spiritual warfare
- ◆ **Learn:** Lead department members to understand Casas’ basic beliefs about spiritual warfare
- ◆ **Experience:** Thanksgiving for God’s presence *with* them and His provision *for* them as they resist Satan

**Before Class Begins:**

- ◆ Assign each of the seven tenets (Step Two, subparagraph 3), to department members who read aloud well.
- ◆ Distribute handouts.

**STEP ONE: GETTING  
READY TO LEARN  
(4 MINUTES)**

1. Direct everyone to “What Is It?” at the top of their handout. Ask them to review the three definitions of spiritual warfare and place a checkmark by the box they believe to be the most accurate. Allow a minute or less to decide. [Hint: All three are correct, but don’t tell your group until they have completed the task.]
2. Next ask your group to read the three perceptions of spiritual warfare under “What’s Your View?” on the handout. Request that they checkmark the statement that most nearly reflects their own view of spiritual warfare. Again, allow one minute or less.
3. Explain that our belief about spiritual warfare is one of three “streams” of theology—along with our beliefs about spiritual growth and relationships—that help shape the unique nature of Casas. The third “What’s Your View?” statement is Casas’ worldview of spiritual warfare.

**STEP TWO: THE REALITY  
OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE  
(7 MINUTES)**

1. Read Roger’s story about the Tucson Electric Power repairman (p. 1-2). Explain that Roger has taught on this topic for more than thirty years.

# Resisting the Enemy

## Lesson 1

Living in the Later Times

Notes 

2. Have someone read 1 Timothy 4:1 from their handout. Explain that Roger's illustration is one example of such deception. We are living in the later times that Paul describes.
3. Refer your department to the seven tenets of a biblical worldview on their handout. Remind them that you discussed this when we studied *The Prayer God Always Answers*. Have pre-assigned members read the tenets. Then read Roger's four "expansion" statements (p. 1-4) that elaborate on tenet seven. Explain that these statements summarize Casas' beliefs about spiritual warfare.

### STEP THREE: PRINCIPLES & WHAT WE BELIEVE (17 MINUTES)

#### Foundational Principles

- ◆ **A Balanced Perspective.** Explain the importance of maintaining a balanced perspective. Summarize the views that we believe to be extreme and clarify why a balanced view is crucial.
- ◆ **Christians Cannot Be "Demon Possessed."** Help department members understand the difference between being "demon-possessed" and being harassed, tormented, or oppressed by demons.

#### What We at Casas Believe about Spiritual Warfare

- ◆ Ask someone to read James 4:7. Clarify that we are to actively resist the attack of the enemy.
- ◆ Next, introduce your group to the six brief statements that outline our beliefs about how Christians engage in spiritual warfare. If you only have 35 minutes for teaching, you will have an average of just over two minutes for each statement. *Explain that future lessons expand each of these six belief statements.* You may

extend your explanations if you have a longer teaching period. [Hint: Write out your explanation for each statement and time your presentation before you attempt to lead your group through this step.]

1. *We believe that learning to overcome the evil one is part of every believer's journey toward becoming a spiritual mother or father.* Ask someone to read 1 John 2:12-14. Point out the three stages of development and how learning to overcome the evil one is an essential part of growth toward spiritual maturity.
2. *We believe that the mind is the principle battlefield in spiritual warfare.* Briefly give scriptural examples of this truth.
3. *We believe that Satan attacks Christians and non-Christians in many different ways.* Quickly overview the types of attacks.
4. *We believe that Christians can make themselves vulnerable to demonic attack, allowing the devil to establish spiritual footholds and strongholds in their lives.* Briefly overview how this occurs.
5. *We believe that Christ has full authority over Satan and his demons.* Give examples of His authority and power.
6. *We believe that Jesus provides us with the tools we need to overcome the evil one.* Summarize our position "in Christ" and the weapons we can wield in His Name.

### STEP FOUR: APPLICATION (4 MINUTES)

- ◆ Use the material in the Application and Questions section of *Studying the Word Together* to develop some suggested applications for your department. Encourage members at various levels to take a next step in understanding and practice.

*Notes* **STEP FIVE: CLOSING****MEDITATION (3 MINUTES)**

- ◆ Draw your department's attention to the poster used to promote this study series.
- 1. Explain that it represents Christ and His Heavenly Hosts who battle Satan with us.
- 2. Remind them that maturing believers are called to overcome the evil one (1 John 2:12-14) and to resist the devil (James 4:7).
- 3. Ask them to prayerfully bow their heads and imagine that such a warrior is standing beside them as they take specific action to "resist the enemy" in some specific way.
- 4. Next ask them to thank God for His presence with them and His provision for them as they resist Satan.
- 5. Close by leading your department in a prayer of thanksgiving for the tools that God provides us as we stand with Him in overcoming the evil one.

**Lesson Notes Blanks:****Foundational Principles**

1. Maintain a *balanced* perspective.
2. Believers cannot be *possessed* by Satan.

**We Believe That...**

1. Learning to overcome the evil one is part of every believer's *journey* toward becoming a spiritual mother or father.
2. The *mind* is the principle battlefield in spiritual warfare.
3. Satan *attacks* Christians and non-Christians in many different ways.
4. Christians can make themselves *vulnerable* to demonic attack, allowing the devil to establish spiritual footholds and strongholds in their lives.
5. Christ has full *authority* over Satan and his demons.
6. Jesus provides us with the *tools* we need to overcome the evil one.

# Resisting the Enemy

## Lesson 1

Living in the Later Times

### Today in My Bible Fellowship

**What Is It?** Spiritual warfare is...

- An ongoing conflict between the Creator and His faithful angels on the one side, and the rebellious hierarchy of evil forces under Satan on the other
- An attack by the demonic realm against Christians, to tempt, try, taunt, and haunt them with the possibility and potency of evil
- Satan's activity to deceive non-Christians to prevent their belief in the Gospel

**What's Your View?**

- Biblical stories of God at war with Satan, evil spirits, and demons are merely metaphors describing a metaphysical conflict between good and evil
- Satan is a real spiritual being who is at war with God in a cosmic or spiritual realm, but he cannot influence or harm believers living in the natural realm
- Satan and his army of demons are literal spiritual beings who are at war with God and are dedicated to blinding nonbelievers from the truth of Christ's saving work and to destroying the witness and ministry of the Redeemed

#### Seven Tenets of a Biblical Worldview

1. God is love. He is the triune, eternal, transcendent being who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. God can be known by man and reveals Himself to those who earnestly seek intimacy with Him. God is caringly involved in the lives of His children and longs to form them into the image of His Son, Jesus.
2. God created the heavens and the earth. Everything has its origin in His creation. Christ holds Creation together.
3. Man is created in the image of God. He can be viewed as alone, meaning that he has needs that are best met in the context of community or relationship with others like himself. Man is also fallen (naturally sinful) and needs a Savior. Man was led into his fallen state by Satan and continues to be evilly influenced by him.
4. The man who trusts Christ for salvation by faith and faith alone enjoys eternal relationship with God. Unregenerate man is eternally separated from God.
5. The commandments and instructions of Scripture serve to provide the foundation for the Christian's morality and ethics.
6. History is the story of God's caring involvement in the lives of His people.
7. Satan is a spiritual being who, in opposition to God, reigns with power in this present age. While he cannot possess or own believers, he schemes to deceive, harass, oppress, and demonize them in order to neutralize or destroy their witness and ministry.

#### Foundational Principles

1. Maintain a \_\_\_\_\_ perspective.
2. Believers cannot be \_\_\_\_\_ by Satan.

#### We Believe That...

1. Learning to overcome the evil one is part of every believer's \_\_\_\_\_ toward becoming a spiritual mother or father.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the principle battlefield in spiritual warfare.
3. Satan \_\_\_\_\_ Christians and non-Christians in many different ways.
4. Christians can make themselves \_\_\_\_\_ to demonic attack, allowing the devil to establish spiritual footholds and strongholds in their lives.
5. Christ has full \_\_\_\_\_ over Satan and his demons.
6. Jesus provides us with the \_\_\_\_\_ we need to overcome the evil one.

#### Today's Scriptures

##### 1 Timothy 4:1

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

##### James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

##### 1 John 2:12-14

I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

#### Next Week's Lesson:

#### Spiritual Warfare Is Part of Every Believer's Journey

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s****Daily Reflections**

**B**egin each daily reflection by meditating a few minutes on the suggested Scripture passage. Seek to listen to the Holy Spirit as He speaks to you. Then consider the comments and questions about the passage. Be aware of both your thoughts and your feelings. Respond to God through both.

**Monday:** *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)*

As you meditate upon this verse today, focus your thoughts on recognizing that we live in the “later times.” Thank Jesus for giving you His Word and the Holy Spirit to teach you the truth, so that you can discern false teaching initiated by deceiving spirits.

**Tuesday:** *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (James 4:7-10)*

Read these verses several times. Read them silently and read them aloud. Notice the flow of key thoughts: submit to God; resist the devil; humble yourself; then, God will lift you up. We do not resist Satan in our own prideful strength. Rather, we stand submissively and humbly alongside Christ and He lifts us to victory.

**Wednesday:** *“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27)*

Unresolved anger—bitterness—gives the evil one an opportunity or “place” to operate in your life with little impunity. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you—Holy Spirit to human spirit—any footholds that Satan might have in your life. Prayerfully seek His leadership in dealing with the sin that has allowed Satan to gain the foothold.

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

Has the devil been able to build a fort or stronghold in your life through some habitual sin like an addiction, ongoing sexual sin, regular gossiping, stealing, etc.? If you recognize a stronghold in your life, ask God to point you to the divine weapons through which you might tear down the stronghold. If you have no strongholds, thank Jesus for His grace and mercy.

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

Celebrate that you have weapons given by God for the destruction of any strongholds. Thank Him for permission to resist Satan in the Name and Authority of Jesus, the Christ. Thank Him for the privilege of prayer and worship. Thank Him for the spiritual armor that He has provided. Celebrate!