

2 Corinthians 10 - The Weapons of our Warfare

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2 Corinthians chapter 10. If you're there, I'm going to go ahead and read through the chapter. You guys follow along, please.

“I, Paul, myself entreat you, (your Bible may say urge you, or appeal to you) by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— ² I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

⁷ Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so are we. ⁸ For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. ⁹ I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters.

¹⁰ For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” ¹¹ Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. ¹² Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

¹³ But we will not boast beyond limits but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. ¹⁴ For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ.

¹⁵ We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶ so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. ¹⁷ "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." ¹⁸ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved but the one whom the Lord condemns. "' (ESV)

Let's stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word here today. We pray that You would speak to us as You are so able to do. And we pray, Father God, that You would show us from these passages what it is that You would have us to lay hold of, and then help us, Lord, give us the strength and courage to appropriate these things in our lives. We ask it, Father God, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

You know, the apostle Paul was the very first man to go to the region of Achaia and to the city of Corinth and to begin to preach the Gospel there. He was the very first one to bring the good news of Jesus and what He did on the cross to that area. They'd never heard, and when Paul would go to an area, and he would begin to share the Gospel in such a way that people would respond.

Eventually, there would be a gathering of people, enough that they could meet together, and essentially a small church would begin to form in that area but Paul, being Paul, couldn't stay there for very long. He was a man who, as he even expresses in this chapter, wants to move beyond. He says, I want, as your faith grows, I want to see our area of influence be enlarged, and so forth, and Paul was always on the move.

He was always thinking about the next town, the next place he could share Christ and so forth, and what that meant for this local church in Corinth is that Paul needed to work hard to raise up a group of individuals whom he would refer to then as elders, and they would be responsible to oversee the flock and to assure their safety.

And the reason that was necessary is because using or sticking with the metaphor of a flock, eventually wolves would show up, and they would try to get into the, among the flock, and they would try to scatter the flock, and you know what that means from a metaphorical standpoint, they would begin to preach other gospels, other teachings, other things that were just going to mess with the people's hearts and minds.

Now, usually, when the body of Christ recognizes that a wolf is among them, they can take some kind of steps to secure their safety at, least to some degree, from these sorts of individuals, but there is, it is particularly dangerous when the flock actually embraces a wolf. Somebody comes in among them with not good intentions, and the body of Christ is all enamored with this sort of a person, and they actually begin to embrace them and so forth, and, of course, when that happens the danger is off the scale for what that wolf can actually do in that place and that is in fact what had been happening in Corinth.

Some wolves had come into the flock, in the way of Jewish legalists. Making their way into the body of Christ and beginning to try to draw people away from the Gospel of Christ to their own teaching and so forth, and in order to do that, what they had to do is they had to talk about Paul in less than kind ways and they did it and they were fairly successful at it. They succeeded at winning over a number of the believers there in Corinth, and they began to say things about Paul that cast a very dim light on his person, his demeanor, and eventually his Gospel.

As we mentioned earlier, and this is not the first chapter we've dealt with in this book where Paul felt obligated to defend his ministry, but we've mentioned earlier in our study that had this been a simple popularity issue, even though popularity issues are fleshly, Paul would have just let it go. Yes, it's a sign of the flesh when we exalt one person above another, or like one person and not another, when both of them are truly trying to just teach us and minister to us and so forth.

But if it would have come down to just being a popularity issue, I don't think Paul would have cared. It was like, big deal, but because these men, these Jewish legalists, were actually attacking Paul's Gospel, now it was personal because Paul knew that what was really under attack was their understanding of grace, and what Jesus had accomplished on the cross, and he knew that the very Gospel and the foundation of the Gospel that he had preached among them was now at risk.

And so, he spends many chapters here throughout this letter exposing the errors and worldly thinking of these Jewish legalists, and so forth, and defending his ministry. He begins again in this chapter, look with me again in verse 1. Paul says, "*I myself entreat you (or appeal to you, he says) by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (and then he uses a tongue in cheek, sort of a sarcastic remark) I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away,*" and that's, by the way, one of the criticisms they were leveling against Paul.

They would say, Paul yeah, he puts up a good fight in a letter, but you get the guy right there in the same room with you and he's a pussycat. There's nothing to him. Boy, don't we know what that's all about with the growth of the internet. I think one of the worst Inventions or additions to the internet was the comment section, because people get very bold when they're sitting at home in front of their computer, and nobody's around them to question or challenge what they believe, and boy they'll say things and they'll actually be very caustic and very mean spirited in their remarks.

And sometimes I'll even read a comment by someone who I know that in person isn't that way, and when you do talk to him in person, they're just, they're much more gentle and reasonable, frankly, but there's just something about it and that's exactly what Paul was being accused of, and that is a fairly fleshly sort of a thing. It's a carnal sort of a thing to, when I'm all by myself I'm something. But then when I get around other people I back down and I actually become somewhat timid, and they were saying that about Paul.

Oh yeah, he's really strong in his letters. He talks a good fight but get the guy in a room alone with other people and he's going to, he's going to back down right now. Paul says here in verse 2, if you look with me again, he says, *"I beg you that when I am present* (meaning when I do finally come to Corinth he says I hope that I'm not going to have to show the boldness that I think I'm probably going to have to show to some people who are accusing us of doing this). *Walking* (he says) *according to the flesh.*"

Because that's walking, when he says walking according to the flesh, he's referring to that idea of being bold in a letter, or bold in the comment section, and then backing down and becoming timid when you're confronted or that sort of thing. That's a, it's a very carnal, fleshly sort of a thing, he says, and I see that some people are accusing us of being that way, so I seriously hope that I'm not going to have to be as bold as I think I'm probably going to, because Paul wasn't afraid to be bold.

He had nothing to lose, and he was prepared to stand up to these false teachers and to anybody who had been sucked into their lies, if the situation warranted it. I mean, Paul is the guy who you'll remember stood up to Peter. Remember he wrote about that in his letter to the churches in Galatia? And Peter, being a pillar and someone who walked with the Lord for those years during his earthly ministry, and the Lord said a lot of amazing things to Peter and a lot of really interesting other things, but it's Peter and yet he was not operating, acting in a way that was consistent with the Gospel.

Paul called him out in front of everybody. It's like, hey, what are you doing, pal? What are you doing? And you guys remember the story that I don't need to go on and talk about it. You see Paul wasn't afraid to deal with this sort of thing, just like Jesus wasn't afraid. In fact, did you notice in verse 1 that Paul begins this whole thing by saying, he says, *"by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you."* Did you catch that? By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I'm now speaking to you.

What is he talking about there? Well, he picked two words that Jesus used to describe himself. Meek and gentle, but you know what? You read through the gospel accounts, and you find out that those words, although Jesus did use them to describe Himself, they don't describe weakness, because Jesus was anything but weak. I mean, good grief, just like Paul, and even more so he called it like it was, and you guys remember that. I mean, in front of the religious leaders and all the people the Sanhedrin, he was like, you *"brood of vipers."* (Matthew 12:34)

He'd say, you guys are blind, and you lead other people in your blindness, and you don't care about people, and he just used strong, strong words and sorts of things. We're not talking about weakness here are we? In fact, what's interesting, I think one of the best descriptions or definitions of meekness is, power under control, and that's what Jesus exercised. He had all power and yet He was controlled. It was power under control, and it came forth in the way of meekness.

We know what power out of control looks like. We've seen lots of situations in our culture where somebody has been elected into office, and they come into that office and suddenly they have power, and that power goes to their head, and they just get out of control, and begin to abuse that power, right? It's not power under control, it's power out of control. and they begin to do things in such a way that eventually they get into trouble, get arrested, get impeached, or whatever.

Well, that's humanity and how we often deal with it, but meekness is power under control, and it comes out in gentleness, where gentleness is needed. What that means is Jesus didn't walk into a situation like a bull in a china shop, and neither did Paul, but in situations where gentleness was needed, there was ample gentleness. Let me show you a prophecy actually, that was given about Jesus. It's from Isaiah, 700 years before Christ was born, Isaiah prophesied that He would come, and in his ministry, it says,

Isaiah 42:3 (ESV)

“a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.”

“a bruised reed he will not break (you know what a reed is that grows in a swamp? Here it's been hit by a boat or something, and it's bruised. It's maybe hanging now, but even though it's hanging by a thread, he's not going to break it. Look what it goes on to say. It says) *and a faintly burning wick he will not quench....”*

Your Bible you may remember this as, it says, snuff out. You ever walked by a candle, and somebody blew out the candle, but there's still that little bit of orange glow on the end of that wick and it's smoking and stuff, and usually we see those things, we walk by it, and we just lick our fingers and go, psst, put it out all the rest of the way.

The meekness and gentleness of Christ was actually prophesied by Isaiah to say that He would not do that, and obviously this is metaphoric, symbolic language to speak of where there is a need for gentleness among people, right? A tender hand. He will minister a tender hand. But, please understand this, where there is a need for strength, and where there is a need for confrontation, He will do that as well.

He will speak justly and fairly, and He will call it like it is, not out of anger, but out of truth. Very, very important. Paul wanted very much to emulate that, and so he begins this chapter by saying in the meekness and in the gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you all right? So, we don't want to mistake those things ever with weakness. He goes on to say in verse 3.

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.” And the two key words in that verse are “in” and “according,” and what he means by, *“though we walk in the flesh, but not according to the flesh,”* he says we're human. We're walking in our humanity. We live in this body of humanity. We live within the natural realm, right? I breathe air. I have to eat food. I drink water.

It's all part of the natural realm but although I live in the natural realm and operate in that realm, I don't operate in when it comes to warfare, according to that realm. And what he's saying here, essentially, is even though I walk in this body of flesh I do not wage war from the flesh, or in the flesh, or through the flesh, or, if you will, with worldly ways. We don't fight in worldly ways. We fight.

Oh, we Christians, yeah, we're fighters, but we don't fight the way the world fights. We know how the world fights, because we've all been in the world, we've all lived in the world, we've all emulated the world from time to time, but now that we're in Christ, we don't fight that way anymore. We fight differently. Look what he goes on to say in verse 4. This is very important. This is where we're going to focus our time.

Verse 4, he says, *“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,”* and what he means by that is that the weapons of our warfare, the things we fight with, are not of human origin. We know how to fight with things that are of human origin. It starts with maybe putting up my fists, or maybe it's an unkind word, or an accusation, or using power to make life miserable for you, or any number of other methodologies that we've all learned very well from living in the world.

Paul says, we don't operate that way. In fact, he said, our weapons of warfare are not of the flesh. They're not of human origin. Look what he goes on to say. But *“they have (and this is key) divine power to destroy strongholds. (He says) ⁵we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”*

I want to focus on that thing. He says they have *“divine power.”* Now, it tells you for sure these weapons aren't from us that we fight with now in Christ. We know they're not of us because they have divine power, and we do not have divine power in and of ourselves. There's nothing divine about me, in and of myself. I'm very much a human being. But when I go to fight, when I go into battle, rather than fighting the way the world fights, I have the precious privilege and responsibility and blessing to fight with God's instruments of warfare.

To fight with instruments that are of divine origin, he says, and that means they're from God. What weapons is he talking about here? I'm going to put these up on the screen. This is just a list, okay? I'm going to put these up on the screen for you. Here's some things that we fight with when we fight battles in the power of the Lord,

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
- **Swinging the Sword of the Spirit – The Word of God**
- **Faith and TRUST in God**
- **Bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

We fight by **Speaking The Truth**. The truth is a powerful weapon when it comes to dealing with the lies of the enemy and the issues of carnality and the beliefs of man. Man, guys, can I just tell you this, man is so screwed up. I mean, I'm telling you, we are so messed up as people. As the human race, and we think we know things and boy we become very passionate about what we think we know. So many times we are dead wrong, and I mean, usually the world believes the opposite of what is really true.

We enter into a situation speaking the truth, not out of arrogance, not out of a desire to make you look stupid just so I can look good, but so that truth might do what it does best. What did Jesus say about truth? He said, "*you will know the truth* (and what will it do?) *It will set you free*," won't it? (John 8:32) That's what we want the truth to do. That's why we bring it into the arena of where battles take place, because we want it to do what it does best. Set people free. Right?

That doesn't mean they're going to accept it but that's our hope. Look what else we do. What else do we fight with? **We Fight With Prayer**.

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
- **Swinging the Sword of the Spirit – The Word of God**
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Wow! Prayer is amazing! Prayer is truly amazing. It's crazy we don't do it more often. I think we would if we believed more in what it was capable of doing or accomplishing. I think we'd spend more time praying, don't you? I think one of the reasons we don't spend as much time in prayer is because we're not as convinced that it's really going to make a difference. We're not sure the investment of time, effort, energy, whatever, is going to really pay off in the end and so we don't end up spending that much time.

And so, what do we do? We face an issue, we have a, we have a challenge. We use fleshly, carnal means to fight, instead of doing the most powerful thing we can do, which is get down on our knees and pray and talk to the God of heaven. You heard people say, when something's going on, they'll say, well, all we can do now is pray. What a slap in the face to the power of prayer. All we can do is pray?

No, we get to pray. Let's start praying. Let's pray first before we do everything else. It's a weapon. It's a powerful weapon. It has divine power. What else can we do? Boy, we've been given the **Word of God**.

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
- **Swinging the Sword of the Spirit –
The Word of God**
- **Faith and TRUST in God**
- **Bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

It's called in the Scripture "*the sword of the Spirit*," (Ephesians 6:17) and that's an offensive weapon. Powerful weapon. Goes along with speaking the truth, but there's so many elements of the Word of God that come into play in our lives and in the lives of others. Using the Word of God. When Jesus faced the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, He kept, He quoted Scripture! He used the Word of God. He pulled out the Sword, and you and I are doing everything but. Running for our lives or cursing the devil or whatever we're doing, and He used the Word of God.

It's in your mouth. It's a weapon of warfare, has divine power, right? Oh, and then faith and trust in God. What a wonderful thing it is. Oh, how sweet to trust in Jesus. We sang about it today. And oh, for the grace to trust Him more. For the grace to say, Jesus, I trust you more. I want to learn how to trust you more because when you and I go into a battle situation, we have to walk in the confidence of the Lord. Not the confidence in me and you, the confidence of the Lord. That's what's going to make a huge difference.

And then the last one, and this is not a comprehensive, exhaustive list. The last one here is **Bearing The Fruit Of The Holy Spirit**.

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
- **Swinging the Sword of the Spirit –
The Word of God**
- **Faith and TRUST in God**
- **Bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

Amazing thing it is to go into a battle situation and to exude the fruit of the Holy Spirit instead of the fruit of the flesh, because that's what usually happens when we get scared, when we get confronted, when we get challenged by

something in life. We just flesh out. I get angry. I get panicked, I say things I shouldn't say, I get frustrated, I get hopeless, and pretty soon I'm doing things that are actually making things worse instead of making them better.

And yet the Holy Spirit lives within me and lives within, He lives within you and what He desires to do in you and I during those times is begin to bring forth His own character. Somebody confronts me and gets in my face and says, you're an idiot," and I come back, and I say, "I love you. People don't know how to deal with that, by the way.

I don't know if you've ever noticed that. When somebody's like is in your face and they're like so close you can feel the spit. Isn't that gross? I don't even know why I said that. But you can just, it's just there you're like, and you're just like, love you, man. It just really freaks people out. But you know what it does? It can really pour water on their fire. Bible tells us that a gentle answer turns away wrath.

Well that gentle answer is part of the work of the Holy Spirit to bring forth that fruit of patience, kindness, and love in a very difficult and challenging situation that is used by us as actually weapons of warfare because you see, our desire when we fight battles with people, which we're not really fighting against them anyway, but our desire for them is to see them come to Christ. Not to beat them down to a pulp, you know what I mean? Which is what a fleshly battle is all about.

I want to go back to verse 4 with you again, please, if I could, and I want you to notice what these weapons accomplish. We want to look at this again. Paul says here at the end of verse 4 that they have divine power to do what? "*Destroy strongholds.*" What is a stronghold? Let me give you a definition. It's right out of the dictionary, okay? A stronghold is,

strong-hold

1. A place that has been fortified so as to protect it against attack.
2. A place where a particular cause or belief is strongly defended or upheld.

Now those sound like really positive definitions of a stronghold, don't they? And I like that. I think, wow, I want that in my life. I want that, those strongholds to protect me but what happens when a stronghold is bad? What happens when it's a stronghold of the enemy, Satan? What happens when it's a stronghold of sin, where I have allowed some kind of sin into my life repeatedly over time that it now has become a stronghold in my life, and I just can't penetrate it, and it just keeps knocking me to the floor. What then? You see.

Paul says that the, all these things that God has given us, these weapons of warfare that are not carnal, but in fact are of the Spirit, have a divine nature, have the ability to demolish those things, those negative, dangerous strongholds in our life, and that's what we need to do. And the most important thing to understand about strongholds is that you and I can't touch them.

I mean, there's nothing we can do to break them down in and of our flesh or in and of ourselves, although we try, Christians try all the time. They'll see a stronghold, we actually will recognize it in our lives, whether it's a stronghold of sin or unforgiveness, or a stronghold of thought that has just grabbed us from the world, and we're just indoctrinated or whatever and we'll try to change, we'll try to do this, we'll try to do that, but you know what, we need divine power, and that's what the weapons of our warfare offer us.

Divine power to demolish those strong holds, and in fact, I want you to know about this divine power of which Paul speaks. This is our birthright. As believers in Christ, we have a birthright for power. It's ours, by birthright because we are in Christ is what I mean. You don't have to go looking for this power. You don't have to plead with God, please give me this power. It's yours! It's yours already. Paul talked about it when he wrote to the church in Ephesus. Let me show you this on the screen from Ephesians chapter 1. He says,

Ephesians 1:18-20 (NIV)

"I pray also 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 the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his might strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised Him from the dead..."

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, (that you may know) the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, (then look at this, look at this) and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Then he describes that power. He says,) That power is like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead..."

In other words, the power of the resurrection, the power that is exerted in raising Christ from the dead, which means conquering death, is yours, is what He gives to you and I. That power, is yours and mine, by birthright, and Paul prays to the church in Ephesus, he says, I pray that your eyes would be opened, that you could see this. That you could see this power because I know that it's going to

change your lives. It's going to change how you think. It's going to change how you deal with these attacks that come against you.

You're going to walk into greater confidence of the Lord because you know that the way you address those things from this point onward has divine power. That's what Paul's praying for. It's amazing when you think about all that God has done for you and I, in terms of giving us the things to be able to stand and fight, so that we can come against the work of the enemy which always intends to ruin the work of God. The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. No surprise.

You and I have been given divine power by birthright to come and ruin his work. Here's the deal, and this is the part that's so sad. There are so many believers today who are either not aware of what they have by birthright in terms of the power of God to address these battle scenarios that come up in their life, or they just are ignoring it and they're addressing those issues through the methodologies and the ways of the world. It happens all the time.

I mean, I see it happening and I'm not going to focus on this, well, too much, but one of the areas where I see it happening the most, I just have to tell you, is in the area of marriage. I just have to tell you that when I see Christians going through marriage struggles, typically the last thing they do is reach for what God has given them, the weapons of warfare that he's given them, that have divine power to address those issues, and the first thing I see them doing is reaching for fleshly weapons.

What I mean by that is they try to figure it out in their own strength, their own ability, their own understanding, or they use the methodologies of the world. Whatever the world is doing, we just bring it into the church. We try to christen it a little bit, make it sound a little less worldly, but it's essentially the same thing. It's pretty much just the methodologies of the world. We've brought them into the church and tried to make it work for us too, and we're frustrated and we're hopeless because these things don't work.

And so, we see it again, I see it happen in marriage relationships all the time, and I'm talking about two believers here now, right? Two believers who love the Lord, who believe in Christ, who have accepted Him as their Savior and Lord, and they're having marriage problems, and by the way, that happens sometimes, and it even happens among people who love the Lord. You have marriage issues. Good grief. I'm going on, Sue and I are going on 40 years now. We're in our 40th year of marriage, and I know all about problems. Been there, done that.

Still doing that, but, when those things happen, our response is often very telling. If a Christian couple becomes very, very frustrated about seeing any change in their marriage, often they will just bring out the carnal weapons of anger, bitterness, and escape, and they just use those. No divine power, no spiritual capability in those things. All they can do is destroy, and yet that's often what I see Christians turning to.

And then, for those Christians that do want to save their marriage, often they bring out other weapons to try to fight the thing, but they're just as worldly as anger and bitterness and escape. They're no less worldly. Can I just be honest with you about something? We've made a god out of counseling. There's nothing wrong with good Christian counseling, but we've made a god out of it anyway, and often what we want when we say we want Christian counseling is we want worldly counseling, and that's disappointing because biblical counseling is usually not what you expect.

People say they want Bible based counseling. What they want is a place where they can come in and shoot volleys of ammunition at one another and have me referee the process. I'm not interested. Biblical marriage counseling is about sitting down with your Bible open on your lap and saying, here's what it says, now do it. See, people aren't really interested in that. "We want to talk pastor."

Yeah. It is a rare thing, I will tell you, to see a married couple incorporate the divine weapons of warfare. It's a rare thing. When it happens it's delightful, and it's powerful, and it makes great impact in their lives, but it's rare. I put that partial list up earlier of the ways that we can fight with the warfare, the Spirit, the divine. Let me put those up again.

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
- **Swinging the Sword of the Spirit –
The Word of God**
- **Faith and TRUST in God**
- **Bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

Let me apply this now just to marriage for just a moment, although I don't want to just stop at marriage. I'm talking about any battle you're fighting. These are some of the weapons of our warfare. **Speaking The Truth.** How desperately we need to speak the truth in marriage, but not to our spouse necessarily, to ourselves. One of the things I really get tired of is sitting down with married couples who just want to argue in front of me and accuse each other in front of me.

The thing I want couples to sit down and do is to say, how have I contributed personally to the difficulty of this marriage? What have I personally done? Boy, that's the truth we rarely want to sit and listen to. But you know what? God will speak to your heart if you're willing to listen. We often aren't. All I want to do again is throw volleys her way. Make sure she knows I'm upset, and you haven't been pulling your weight.

But to allow that truth, the truth, wow, what a powerful thing. **Fighting In Prayer.**

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
- **Swinging the Sword of the Spirit – The Word of God**
- **Faith and TRUST in God**
- **Bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

You know what happens when people have marriage problems? They fight each other. They start having arguments, and those arguments become fights. They're fighting one another. What a ridiculous idea. How should we be fighting? We should be fighting in prayer. We should be on our knees, praying, crying out to God for His solutions. For what He wants to do, what He wants to accomplish, for Him to make the kind of changes that are necessary in our relationships. Praying.

I have often, I've never had the guts to do this. But I've got to tell you, I have wanted to institute a time clock, literally a punch clock, where people had to pray so many hours before we even sit down and talk. I've heard of churches that have done it, and I've always applauded it, and I thought, that is cool. You have to come into your counseling session and bring your timecard with you and show that you've put in time in prayer first before you can sit down with somebody else.

I thought, wow, how cool is that? You just wait, I might do that someday. We need to start being people of prayer when we're battling things. The Bible says, concerning Jesus when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, it says, "*and being in agony, He prayed more earnestly.*" (Luke 22:44) Isn't that an amazing thought? And being in agony He prayed more. That convicts me because I'll pray, but then if nothing seems to change and my agony increases, I get up from my place of prayer and I start running around like a chicken with my head cut off, which doesn't help anything.

Taking the **Sword of the Spirit** and using **The Word of God**.

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
- **Swinging the Sword of the Spirit –
The Word of God**
- **Faith and TRUST in God**
- **Bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

By the way, that's not using it as an offensive weapon against your spouse. I'm talking about allowing the Word of God to speak to your own heart to challenge you because you see, again, in biblical marriage counseling, you sit down with your Bible open and you say, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. (Ephesians 5:25) Wives, respect your husbands and the calling that he has, in the Lord to be the head of the home. (Ephesians 5:22)

And we start looking at what the Bible says, and we start saying, now before we do anything else, let's apply ourselves first to the Word of God. You see, people want to talk about marriage without applying the Word of God. After 30 some years of doing this, I'm just not interested, because it goes nowhere. I actually love sitting down with people, and if you've got some issues you want to sit down and talk about, great. But I just want you to know, we're going to fight with the tools that we've been given. We're not going to ignore them, right?

We're going to sit down with the Word of God and say well, here's what it says. Now, what can we do about doing this because that's where strength and stability comes from, right? Remember the parable Jesus told about the man who built his house on the rock and the man who built his house on the sand? Where was the strength and stability? It was in the house that was on the rock. He said that was the man who hears the Word of God and does it. That's where strength comes from.

Don't look to me, don't look to the discussion process of counseling to bring strength into your marriage. Start with obedience to God and His Word, and then build on that foundation, right? That's where it really needs to begin. **Faith and Trust In God.**

- **Speaking the Truth**
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I have to be honest with you, by the time people usually call me up and want to sit down and have, and do marriage counseling, one or both of them has already given up. That's true. They often will not contact me when they need to. They'll contact me when they're done, and it'll be like one of those things where, okay, I'll go to counseling, fine. And they know they're done, but they're just going to, they're just going to do it for the sake of, okay, I can say I did it. I went to counseling.

They've already given up. Why did they give up? They've lost their faith. They've lost their faith in God and what He can do. Listen, I understand marital problems. It was marital problems that brought Sue and I to Jesus Christ. We get it. But when people look at me and they tell me about woe is me and here's all the problems and here's all the issues and here's all of our marriage things, my response is, where is God in all this? Right? Where is He? You haven't talked about God once. You haven't said, but God.

The best thing that you and I can do when we're having marriage issues and say, you know what, this is beyond me, but not to God. Nothing is impossible for Him. I'm going to put my faith in Him. Faith and trust. Boy, that's a weapon, you guys. We don't use it near enough. Jesus, I'm going to trust You. This thing looks like it's dog meat, but I'm going to trust You. That's what Sue and I did. Our marriage was so blown out of the water after five years that it, there was nothing left.

We were just on the verge of getting a divorce. Absolutely on the verge, but we prayed and said, Lord, we've ruined this thing, but if You can do something with this, we give it to You, and we said, we're going to trust You with it. And now it's been 40 years. Well, next June it'll be 40 years. That's God, you guys, that's not Paul and Sue. Do you get that? That's not us. Don't look at me and go, ooh, you're cool. I am so uncool. In fact, you know what? All I know about marriage is how to mess it up, because I've been there and done that.

It's God who heals. You get me? It's God who heals marriages. He's going to do it so put your faith in Him! Not you and not your spouse. Don't look to them. They're just as helpless as you are, for heaven's sakes. Why do you think they

can do something you can't? It's God who's going to take care of it, right? And then **Bearing The Fruit Of The Holy Spirit**.

- **Speaking the Truth**
- **Fighting in Prayer**
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- **Bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

Boy, that's hard, isn't it? I've talked to so many married couples where the love is gone. They'll actually come in and sit down and say, the love is gone. It's gone. It's been gone for a while. Yeah? Okay. I get that. Been there, so, what are you going to do, just give up? There's a work of the Holy Spirit where He begins to bring the Fruit of His life to bear through our lives, and you see, it is possible for me to love even when the love is gone, because it's His love now, taking over and filling me with something that I don't have in and of myself, but through His Spirit, through His power, through His ability, He's got it.

And believe me, He's got it good. Let me tell you something. God can restore even lost love in a marriage. I've seen it happen. It happened in my own marriage. Putting our faith in God and beginning to walk out the fruit of the Holy Spirit, I'm going to be patient even though my flesh doesn't want to. I'm going to start showing love even though I don't feel it. I'm going to start being kind even though maybe the other person isn't being kind back.

Let me just end with one of the main reasons why we don't look to natural warfare methodologies. It's from Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, put it on the screen for you. Paul explains,

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

“..we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

You see, “*we're not wrestling against flesh and blood.*” That means your spouse isn't the problem. It means though, that person you're dealing with, that relationship, that's not the deal, that's not where we battle. It's not where the battle. I know that's the person that's in your face, I get that, but that's not where the real battle is waging. He says we're actually fighting “*against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the* (There are) *spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*”

Those are the real issues that are going on and you can't address those in the flesh. You can't shake your fist at those powers in heaven that are set out against you in the heavens, if you will. You can't do that. You can't fight those things in the flesh. Let me end with just a couple of quick very, very quick thoughts. In fact, I'm going to end with the passage in James. We're going to skip down to the very end. James chapter 4, verse 7. Can I just share this with you quickly? It says,

James 4:7 (ESV)

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

It's funny, we quote this Scripture, and you know what people often say? They leave off the first part and they just say, *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”* And we forget the part about *“Submit yourselves therefore to God.”* See, if you're going to start fighting the enemy, if you're going to start going into spiritual battle, where you need spiritual elements and so forth to, fight, if you haven't submitted yourself to God, you're going to deal with a problem.

You're going to find that the enemy is not going to be thwarted at all, and here's why. You've continued to give him a foothold. Paul says, don't give the devil a foothold. He says that in Ephesians. If you haven't submitted yourself to God, in some area of your life, there's maybe some area of sin, some area of whatever that's going on, and you know that it's wrong but yet you see this battle in front of you. It's like, I'm going to resist the devil. Yeah, good luck.

That's why we're told here by James. Listen, let's start with this. Submit yourself to God, first and foremost. Then, go out and resist the enemy.

With all those weapons of warfare that you and I have been given, that's how we resist, but it starts with submitting our hearts to God, amen?