BIBLE STUDY

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Winning Spiritual Warfare Through Submission, Truth, and Resistance

INTRODUCTION

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS PRESSURE WITH A DIRECTION

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?”*
>
> **MATTHEW 12:22–23 (KJV)**

Matthew 12 introduces us to a man whose condition was much deeper than what could be seen on the surface. He was brought to Jesus possessed, blind, and unable to speak. His spiritual bondage had affected both his vision and his voice. He could not see what was in front of him, and he could not communicate what was happening inside of him. Yet when Jesus stepped into his situation, He restored both. The man who could not see suddenly saw, and the man who could not speak suddenly spoke. There is something deeply significant about the connection between vision and voice because the enemy still attacks both. If he can distort what we see, eventually he can influence what we say. When we lose spiritual vision, we begin speaking differently about our future, our families, our children, our marriages, and even ourselves. We stop interpreting life through the promises of God and begin interpreting everything through the circumstances surrounding us. Fear begins interpreting our future, discouragement begins defining our possibilities, and temporary situations begin sounding permanent.

This is why we must understand spiritual warfare correctly. Spiritual warfare is real, but that does not mean every inconvenience in our lives is demonic. Every flat tire is not the devil. Every difficult day is not spiritual warfare. Every disagreement is not caused by an evil spirit. We should not become so spiritually suspicious that we see demons behind every problem or blame the enemy for situations that are simply part of living in a broken world. At the same time, however, we cannot move toward the opposite extreme and become spiritually unaware. Scripture clearly teaches that there is spiritual resistance. There are moments when the pressure against us is attempting to move our faith, prayer, worship, family, purity, peace, obedience, vision, and voice in a direction contrary to the will of God. This gives us an important way of understanding spiritual warfare: spiritual warfare begins when pressure attempts to move us in a direction God has not called us to go.

That pressure is not always dramatic. Sometimes spiritual resistance is incredibly subtle. It can be the pressure to quit when God has called us to continue, the pressure to remain offended when God has commanded us to forgive, or the pressure to isolate when we desperately need spiritual community. It can be the subtle voice telling us that prayer is not working, that worship does not matter, that our convictions are too restrictive, or that obedience is costing us too much. It can whisper to a parent that a child has gone too far for God to restore them, or tell a struggling marriage that there is no possibility of healing. The enemy does not always begin by trying to destroy us. Many times, he simply tries to redirect us. If he can move us a little today, a little more tomorrow, and a little more next month, eventually we can find ourselves standing somewhere God never intended us to be. A small deviation repeated over time can eventually become a completely different destination.

This is why discernment is essential in spiritual warfare. One of the strongest principles from this teaching is that what we do not recognize, we will not resist, and what we refuse to resist, we will eventually

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

tolerate. Spiritual resistance frequently arrives disguised as an emotion, an offense, a disappointment, a thought, an appetite, or even what appears to be a reasonable reaction to something that happened to us. We can become so consumed with analyzing how something makes us feel that we never stop to examine where that feeling is trying to take us. Our emotions are real, and Scripture does not require us to pretend they do not exist, but our emotions were never designed to become our spiritual compass. Therefore, instead of only asking, “What am I feeling?” we must learn to ask a more important question: “Where is this pressure trying to take me?”

That question changes the way we interpret our battles. If disappointment causes us to seek God more deeply, then God can use that disappointment to produce spiritual growth. But if disappointment begins convincing us to stop praying, stop worshiping, and stop believing, then we must discern what is happening. If someone hurts us and that pain drives us toward prayer, forgiveness, healing, and the presence of God, God can redeem the wound. But if that same hurt continually tells us to isolate ourselves, distrust everyone, disconnect from the body of Christ, and nurture bitterness, then we must stop simply asking why we are hurting and begin asking where our hurt is trying to lead us. The pain may be legitimate while the direction it is trying to take us is still dangerous.

This becomes especially important in our homes. If frustration with our spouse pushes us toward prayer, honest communication, patience, humility, and forgiveness, then God can work through a difficult season. But if frustration begins pushing us toward contempt, accusation, disrespect, emotional withdrawal, secrecy, or thoughts of abandoning covenant, we need spiritual discernment. The question is no longer simply, “Why am I frustrated?” The deeper question becomes, “Where is this frustration trying to take our marriage?” We can spend so much time fighting one another that we fail to recognize what is attempting to divide the house. Later in Matthew 12, Jesus says that “every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” The enemy understands the destructive power of division, and therefore one of his strategies is to turn the people who should be fighting together into people who fight each other.

Parents must develop this same discernment concerning their children. Sometimes the enemy does not immediately attempt to pull a child completely away from God. He begins by weakening their appetite for the things of God. Prayer slowly becomes boring. Worship becomes unnecessary. Church becomes inconvenient. Biblical boundaries begin to feel unreasonable. Relationships that weaken convictions begin to feel increasingly important, while relationships that strengthen faith begin to feel restrictive. The movement may initially appear small, but parents who understand spiritual warfare learn to recognize direction before direction becomes destination. We do not simply react to our children’s behavior. We pray for discernment to understand what is attempting to shape their hearts, their appetites, their identity, and their future.

We also need this discernment concerning ourselves because spiritual drifting rarely happens overnight. Perhaps there was a season when we prayed consistently, but slowly prayer became occasional. Perhaps we once guarded carefully what entered our minds, but gradually our boundaries weakened. Perhaps worship once flowed naturally from us, but disappointment or offense slowly silenced our voice. Perhaps we still attend church, still know the songs, still understand the language, and still appear spiritually

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

healthy from the outside, but internally something has been quietly moving us away from the place where we once stood. We may not have abandoned God, but we have allowed pressure to create distance. That is spiritual warfare worth recognizing.

The enemy often begins with distraction before destruction. A distracted Christian does not necessarily stop believing in God; we simply stop giving God our full attention. Distraction can eventually produce discouragement, and discouragement can eventually create division. A discouraged believer may continue attending church while slowly losing expectation. A divided family may continue living under the same roof while their hearts quietly move farther apart. A person can still look like a worshiper publicly while becoming spiritually exhausted privately. If the enemy can gradually change what receives our attention, he can eventually influence what receives our affection. This is why we cannot dismiss every distraction as harmless. We must ask where it is taking us.

We must also pay attention to the thoughts accompanying that pressure. A thought can sound like our own voice and still lead us somewhere contrary to God's Word. Thoughts such as, "I will never change," "My children are never going to serve God," "Nothing happens when I pray," "My marriage cannot be restored," "Nobody really cares about me," or "God has forgotten me" cannot automatically receive our agreement simply because they entered our minds. This is where the central theme of this study begins to emerge: spiritual warfare is not simply about what attacks us; it is about what is attempting to gain our agreement. The enemy can introduce a thought, but there is a difference between a thought entering our minds and our hearts signing an agreement with it.

Before bondage becomes behavior, there is often an agreement somewhere. Before bitterness controls us, we agree that we have the right to remain angry. Before fear dominates our lives, we agree that what might happen is greater than what God has promised. Before isolation becomes our lifestyle, we agree that we are safer alone. Before compromise becomes normal, we agree that obedience is too costly. Before hopelessness controls our language, we agree that our present circumstances have the authority to define our future. This is why the battle for agreement is so important. We must learn to recognize the thought, identify its direction, compare it to the Word of God, and refuse to give our agreement to anything that contradicts what God has spoken.

Before bondage becomes behavior, there is often an agreement somewhere.

1 Peter 5:8–9 (KJV) says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith…" Notice the progression of the passage. We are told to be sober, to be vigilant, and then to resist. Spiritual awareness comes before spiritual resistance. We cannot effectively resist something we refuse to recognize. This means we must develop the spiritual discipline of examining the direction of what is happening within us. Is this drawing me closer to God or farther from Him? Is this making me want to pray or making me avoid prayer?

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Is this producing forgiveness or feeding bitterness? Is this strengthening my marriage or creating division? Is this strengthening my convictions or slowly negotiating them away? Is this causing me to speak faith over my children, or am I continually speaking fear about their future? Is this drawing me toward people who strengthen my faith, or convincing me to isolate myself from them?

The direction matters because the enemy does not necessarily need us to renounce God. Sometimes he only needs us to continue taking small steps away from Him. But once we recognize where the pressure is attempting to take us, something changes. We no longer have to passively accept everything we feel, think, or experience. We can recognize the direction and make a spiritual decision: “I see where this is trying to take me, and I refuse to go there.” That is the beginning of resistance.

However, Scripture reveals that there is an order to spiritual resistance. We cannot simply resist however we want. James 4:7 (KJV) says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” We often emphasize the second half of that verse because we love the promise that the devil will flee. Yet the authority to resist is preceded by an instruction to submit. Before there is resistance, there must be surrender. Before we confront what is attempting to control us, we must first place ourselves completely under the authority of God. We cannot demand spiritual authority while rejecting spiritual submission.

This brings us to the first major principle of the battle for agreement: before we can effectively resist what is against us, we must surrender what is within us. Spiritual warfare does not begin with shouting. It begins with submission.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Where is the pressure in my life trying to take me? Instead of only thinking about what we are feeling, identify the direction behind the pressure. Is it moving us toward prayer, obedience, forgiveness, and faith, or toward isolation, compromise, bitterness, fear, and discouragement?

PART 01

SUBMISSION IS THE FIRST ACT OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

01

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*
> **JAMES 4:7 (KJV)**

James 4:7 gives us one of the clearest instructions in Scripture concerning spiritual warfare, but it is important that we read the verse in the order in which God gave it. We often become excited about the words, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,” because we want the victory described at the end of the verse. We want the enemy to flee. We want freedom from temptation, deliverance from bondage, victory in our homes, peace in our minds, restoration in our marriages, and protection over our children. Yet before Scripture tells us to resist the devil, it gives us another command: “Submit yourselves therefore to God.” There is a divine order here that we cannot ignore. Submission comes first, resistance comes second, and the enemy fleeing is the result. We cannot rearrange the order and expect the same outcome.

This confronts something within all of us because we naturally desire authority without always desiring surrender. We want God to deliver us, but we do not always want Him to tell us what must change. We want God to answer our prayers, but sometimes we still want complete control over our decisions. We want Him to break chains while we continue protecting the habits connected to those chains. We want victory over darkness without allowing God to examine every area where darkness may have been given access. Yet spiritual authority does not operate independently from submission. We cannot genuinely say, “Devil, you cannot control this area of my life,” while simultaneously telling God, “You cannot control this area either.” If an area of our lives is outside of God’s authority, we cannot expect to exercise God’s authority effectively within that same area.

This is why one of the most important principles we can learn concerning spiritual warfare is this: our resistance is only as effective as our surrender. We may speak loudly, pray emotionally, rebuke repeatedly, and declare victory passionately, but volume is not the source of spiritual authority. Spiritual authority begins when our lives come under the authority of God. There is certainly nothing wrong with passionate prayer. There are moments when our prayers become loud because something deep within our spirit is crying out to God. Scripture contains shouting, weeping, travail, rejoicing, and passionate worship. But we must never confuse emotional intensity with spiritual dominion. We do not become more powerful simply because we become louder. Our authority comes from our relationship with Jesus Christ and our willingness to submit ourselves to Him.

This distinction is extremely important because emotion is inconsistent, while surrender can become a settled way of life. Emotion can be powerful on Sunday and exhausted on Monday. Emotion can rise during worship and disappear when temptation arrives. Emotion can make us feel victorious for an hour, but surrender gives us something deeper than a momentary feeling. Surrender establishes our lives upon the authority of God. When we submit our thoughts, desires, attitudes, appetites, relationships, decisions, and future to Him, we are no longer attempting to resist spiritual pressure from the strength of our personality. We are standing underneath His authority. This is why we must understand that if we are not submitted to God, we may simply be resisting from emotion rather than resisting from spiritual authority.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Submission, therefore, is much more than saying, “Lord, I surrender,” during a prayer service. Submission becomes visible through obedience. Jesus asked in Luke 6:46 (KJV), “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” The word “Lord” implies authority. If Jesus is Lord, then He has the right to direct our lives. We cannot call Him Lord while continually reserving the right to make the final decision whenever His Word conflicts with our desires. True submission says, “God, You have authority over what I want. You have authority over what I watch. You have authority over how I speak. You have authority over my relationships. You have authority over my money. You have authority over my sexuality. You have authority over my marriage. You have authority over the way I raise my children. You have authority over my ambitions, my wounds, my anger, my future, and even the parts of my life I would rather keep private.”

This means the first act of spiritual warfare may look very different from what we imagine. Sometimes the most powerful act of warfare is repentance. Sometimes it is forgiveness. Sometimes it is deleting something from our phone. Sometimes it is ending a relationship that continually weakens our convictions. Sometimes it is confessing something we have been hiding. Sometimes it is apologizing to our spouse. Sometimes it is putting boundaries around an appetite we know has become dangerous. Sometimes it is changing what we allow into our home. Sometimes it is admitting, “God, I have been wrong.” These actions may not appear dramatic, but they represent something spiritually significant: territory is being surrendered back to God.

Before we rebuke the devil around us, we must be willing to allow God to confront compromise within us. This is not because every struggle is caused by personal sin, nor does it mean that every battle proves we have opened a door somewhere. Scripture clearly shows righteous people experiencing tremendous spiritual resistance. But spiritual warfare requires honesty. We should not spend all our energy asking what the enemy is doing while refusing to ask what God is requiring from us. There are battles where our prayer needs to be, “God, remove this,” but there are also battles where our prayer must become, “God, show me what needs to change in me.”

David gives us a powerful picture of this kind of surrender in Psalm 139:23–24 (KJV): “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” David was inviting God into the areas he could not properly diagnose himself. He was essentially saying, “God, do not merely examine what I show everyone else. Search me. Examine my thoughts. Reveal what is hidden. Show me anything within me that is taking me in the wrong direction, and then lead me differently.” That is a warfare prayer because surrender removes our agreement with anything contrary to God.

This becomes especially important in our homes. It is easy for us to pray against the enemy’s attack on our families while refusing to surrender the attitudes that are creating an atmosphere in which division can grow. We can pray for peace in our marriage while continually speaking disrespectfully to our spouse. We can pray for our children to love God while allowing our children to watch us live a Christianity that only functions inside the church building. We can pray for unity while protecting our pride. We can pray against bitterness while repeatedly rehearsing the offense. We can pray for our homes to become places of God’s

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

presence while continually filling those homes with words, entertainment, conversations, and attitudes that work against what we are asking God to establish.

There must be agreement between our prayers and our lives. If we pray, “God, protect my children,” then our parenting should cooperate with that prayer. If we pray, “God, restore my marriage,” then our words and behavior should cooperate with restoration. If we pray, “God, give me a pure heart,” then our digital habits should cooperate with purity. If we pray, “God, give me peace,” then we should examine whether we are continually feeding our minds things that produce anger, fear, comparison, and anxiety. Submission means we stop asking God to bless a direction we are unwilling to change and instead allow Him to determine the direction.

Jesus demonstrates this perfectly in Gethsemane. Luke 22:42 (KJV) records His prayer: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” Jesus expressed what He desired, but He submitted His desire to the mission ahead. Biblical submission does not mean that we no longer have feelings, preferences, fears, or desires. Submission means those things no longer possess final authority. We can tell God exactly what we feel while still saying, “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.” There may be no stronger sentence of surrender than “not my will.” It means my emotions do not have the final word. My appetite does not have the final word. My offense does not have the final word. My fear does not have the final word. Even my plans do not have the final word. God does.

This is why surrender is not weakness. In the kingdom of God, surrender is actually the pathway to spiritual strength. The world teaches us that strength means maintaining control, but the kingdom teaches us that strength comes from knowing whom we have surrendered control to. We are not surrendering to the enemy. We are surrendering to God so that we can resist the enemy. We bow before Jesus so that we can stand against darkness. The believer who kneels before God can stand before pressures that once controlled them because submission establishes the source of our authority.

This also helps us understand why repentance is such a powerful spiritual weapon. Repentance is not merely feeling guilty about something we have done. Biblical repentance involves a change of mind that produces a change of direction. If spiritual warfare involves pressure attempting to move us away from God’s direction, repentance is the decision to turn back toward God. In that sense, every genuine act of repentance is an act of warfare. When we repent, we are breaking agreement with the direction sin was taking us and bringing ourselves back into agreement with God.

We should therefore never view repentance as humiliation. Repentance is liberation. The enemy wants us to hide because hidden things can continue exercising influence. God calls us into the light because what is surrendered to Him can be transformed. Pride says, “Protect your image.” Repentance says, “Protect your relationship with God.” Pride asks, “What will people think if they know I am struggling?” Surrender asks, “What will happen to me spiritually if I continue protecting this?” There comes a moment when we must care more about freedom than appearance.

For some of us, the greatest breakthrough in spiritual warfare may begin when we stop praying only, “God, change what is happening around me,” and begin praying, “God, change anything within me that is

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

agreeing with what is happening around me." Search my heart. Search my motives. Search my conversations. Search my relationships. Search my habits. Search my private life. Search what I watch when nobody is around. Search the things I repeatedly think about. Search my anger. Search my pride. Search my wounds. Search my ambitions. Search my home. If there is anything that has become an agreement with darkness, reveal it so that I can surrender it.

Then, from that place of surrender, we resist.

We can say, "Fear, you do not determine the future of this family because this family belongs to God. Bitterness, you do not get to live here because I have chosen forgiveness. Lust, you do not control my appetite because my body belongs to Jesus Christ. Pride, you do not determine how I treat my spouse because my marriage belongs to God. Discouragement, you do not get to rewrite what God has spoken over my children. Offense, you will not separate me from the people God has placed in my life. I have submitted this area to God, and therefore I will resist anything that attempts to pull it away from Him."

That is spiritual authority operating in biblical order. Submit to God. Resist the devil. He will flee.

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And once we understand submission, we are prepared for the next question: Where has the enemy been given room to operate? Paul gives us a remarkably short but powerful command in Ephesians 4:27 (KJV): "Neither give place to the devil." The enemy does not always need ownership if he can gain access. Sometimes he does not need the whole house. He only needs a room. This is why the next stage of spiritual warfare requires us to identify and close the access points we have tolerated.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Is there an area where I am asking God for victory while resisting surrender? James 4:7 places submission before resistance. Is there a habit, relationship, attitude, appetite, or decision that we want God to change without allowing Him complete authority over it?

PART 02

GIVE NO PLACE: CLOSING THE DOORS WE HAVE LEFT OPEN

02

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“Neither give place to the devil.”*
> **EPHESIANS 4:27 (KJV)**

This is one of the shortest verses we will study, yet it contains an enormous principle concerning spiritual warfare. Paul says, “Neither give place to the devil.” The language itself teaches us something important because if Scripture tells us not to give the enemy a place, then there must be places in our lives that we have the responsibility to guard. The word translated “place” carries the idea of a location, position, or territory. In other words, the enemy does not have to own our lives in order to attempt to establish a position from which he can influence them. There are areas that belong to God, but through carelessness, compromise, bitterness, offense, uncontrolled appetites, or repeated disobedience, we can allow something to occupy territory that should never have been surrendered.

This is an important distinction because sometimes Christians give the devil far more authority than Scripture gives him. We speak as though the enemy can simply take whatever he wants whenever he wants. Yet Ephesians 4:27 places responsibility upon us: “Neither give place.” There are things we must refuse to accommodate. There are attitudes we must refuse to entertain. There are appetites we must refuse to feed. There are conversations we must refuse to participate in. There are relationships we must refuse to allow to continually weaken our convictions. There are thought patterns we must refuse to turn into permanent residences. The enemy is looking for territory, but we have a responsibility not to give it to him.

The context of Ephesians 4 makes this even more practical because Paul is not discussing strange or dramatic manifestations. He is talking about everyday Christian behavior. He addresses lying, anger, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, evil speaking, and unforgiveness. This means that when Paul says, “Neither give place to the devil,” he is talking about the ordinary areas of life where spiritual territory can be surrendered. A person can be deeply involved in church and still give place to bitterness. We can worship passionately and still give place to uncontrolled anger. We can know Scripture and still give place to pride. We can pray for our families while allowing our mouths to continually fill our homes with criticism, accusation, cynicism, and fear. The danger is not always something dramatic entering our lives. Sometimes the danger is something unhealthy being allowed to remain.

This is why we must understand that the enemy does not need the whole house if we are willing to give him a room. We may say, “Most of my life belongs to God,” but surrender to God was never intended to be a percentage. If our entire house belongs to Jesus, then every room belongs to Him. Our public life belongs to Him, but so does our private life. Our Sunday belongs to Him, but so does our Friday night. Our worship belongs to Him, but so does our entertainment. Our church conversations belong to Him, but so do the conversations we have in the car on the way home. Our marriage belongs to Him. Our friendships belong to Him. Our finances belong to Him. Our sexuality belongs to Him. Our phones belong to Him. Our thoughts belong to Him. Our wounds belong to Him. There should not be a locked room in our hearts where we tell God, “You can have everything else, but this belongs to me.”

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

This becomes particularly serious when we begin protecting the very access points from which we are asking God to deliver us. We cannot continually ask God to break a chain while admiring the chain. We cannot ask Him to deliver us from an appetite that we continually feed. If someone is praying for purity while deliberately consuming material that stimulates lust, the problem is not that prayer lacks power. The person is praying against something while simultaneously feeding it. If we are asking God to deliver us from anger while spending hours consuming content that continually produces outrage, resentment, fear, and cynicism, we must examine the contradiction. If we are asking God to deliver us from comparison while repeatedly consuming content that makes us measure our lives against everybody else's life, perhaps there is an access point that needs to be closed.

This is where spiritual discipline becomes part of spiritual warfare. We sometimes want God to remove something supernatural while God is asking us to establish a very practical boundary. We pray, "God, take this desire away," while He may be telling us, "Stop feeding it." We pray, "God, protect my mind," while continuing to place things before our eyes that contaminate our thoughts. We pray, "God, heal my bitterness," while repeatedly returning to conversations where the offense is rehearsed and strengthened. We pray, "God, give me peace," while continually consuming information that keeps our spirit agitated. Prayer is essential, but prayer was never designed to become an excuse for avoiding obedience.

There are some things we need God to deliver us from, and there are other things from which God is telling us to walk away.

Joseph gives us a powerful example in Genesis 39. When Potiphar's wife repeatedly attempted to seduce him, Joseph did not remain in the room trying to prove how spiritually strong he was. Genesis 39:12 (KJV) says, "And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out." Joseph ran. Sometimes running is warfare. Sometimes blocking a number is warfare. Sometimes deleting an application is warfare. Sometimes leaving a conversation is warfare. Sometimes changing a routine is warfare. Sometimes deciding that we cannot go somewhere anymore is warfare. We should never confuse unnecessary exposure to temptation with spiritual maturity. Wisdom does not ask, "How close can I get without falling?" Wisdom asks, "Why would I keep standing near something God has told me to flee?"

This principle is especially important because our weaknesses are not all the same. One person may be able to encounter something without it creating a significant temptation, while another person knows that the same environment awakens an appetite they have struggled to surrender. Spiritual maturity means we become honest enough to know where we are vulnerable. We stop building our boundaries according to what everybody else can handle and begin building them according to what protects our walk with God. A boundary is not always evidence of weakness. Sometimes a boundary is evidence that we have finally become wise enough to understand our weakness.

Proverbs 4:23 (KJV) says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." To keep something means to guard it. We guard valuable things because we understand what is at stake. We lock the doors of our homes at night, protect our bank accounts with passwords, and teach our children not to speak with strangers, yet sometimes we leave the gates of our spirits completely unguarded. We allow

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

almost anything to enter through our eyes and ears and then wonder why our thoughts have become difficult to control. Spiritual boundaries recognize that what repeatedly enters us will eventually influence us.

Some conversations are doorways. Gossip can become a doorway to suspicion and division. Constant criticism can become a doorway to cynicism. Repeated conversations about an offense can become a doorway through which bitterness grows stronger. Some relationships are doorways because every time we spend time with certain people, our convictions become weaker instead of stronger. Some entertainment becomes a doorway because it normalizes what Scripture tells us to resist. Some digital appetites become doorways because what began as occasional curiosity eventually becomes a pattern that controls our attention and imagination. Even repeated thoughts can become doorways when we continually entertain ideas that contradict what God has said.

We must be careful here because the answer is not to become afraid of everything around us. Christianity is not a life of paranoia. The purpose of spiritual boundaries is not fear; it is consecration. We do not guard our hearts because darkness is more powerful than Jesus. We guard our hearts because what God has entrusted to us is valuable. We are protecting our peace, our purity, our marriages, our children, our faith, our calling, our spiritual sensitivity, and our ability to hear the voice of God clearly. Boundaries are not merely about what we are trying to avoid. They are about what we are trying to preserve.

This is particularly important within the home. Joshua made one of Scripture's most powerful declarations when he said in Joshua 24:15 (KJV), "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua was establishing the spiritual identity of his household. He was not merely declaring what he personally believed. He was establishing what his house would serve. Every Christian family eventually has to make similar decisions. What will be normal in our home? What will we celebrate? What will we reject? How will we speak to one another? What will our children hear us say about the church, leadership, other believers, and each other? What will enter through our televisions, phones, music, books, and conversations? What values will shape the atmosphere of our house?

Parents cannot control every decision their children will eventually make, but while God has entrusted children to our care, we have a responsibility to disciple the environment in which they are growing. We cannot pray for the world not to disciple our children while giving the world unlimited access to disciple them. Algorithms are discipling. Entertainment is discipling. Friendships are discipling. Social media is discipling. Music is discipling. The question is not whether our children are being influenced. The question is who and what is being given permission to influence them most deeply.

This does not mean raising children in fear or attempting to isolate them from every person who believes differently. Our children eventually have to know how to stand in a world that does not share their convictions. But there is a difference between teaching our children how to stand in darkness and allowing darkness unrestricted access to shape them. Biblical parenting requires both protection and preparation. We establish boundaries while they are growing, and at the same time we teach them why those boundaries exist so that eventually their convictions become personal rather than merely parental.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

The same principle applies to marriage. We cannot allow resentment to rent a room in our marriage and then act surprised when it begins affecting every other room. We cannot continually use disrespectful language and expect intimacy to remain healthy. We cannot protect secret conversations with other people and simultaneously pray for trust to increase between husband and wife. We cannot continually rehearse each other's failures and expect grace to flourish. At some point a husband and wife must be willing to say together, "This may have entered our house, but it does not have permission to remain here."

Perhaps anger entered. It does not have to remain.

Perhaps distrust entered. It does not have to remain.

Perhaps pornography entered. It does not have to remain.

Perhaps financial fear entered. It does not have to remain.

Perhaps criticism became normal. It does not have to remain.

Perhaps prayer disappeared from the home. It can return.

Perhaps worship disappeared. It can return.

Perhaps affection became cold. God can restore it.

The question is not merely what has entered. The question is what are we willing to continue giving place to?

This requires us to become intentional about our mouths because our words help establish the atmosphere of our homes. We should be careful about continually speaking death over situations we are asking God to restore. There is a difference between honestly acknowledging a problem and constantly declaring hopelessness over it. We may need to say, "My child is struggling," but we should be careful about moving from that reality to, "My child will never serve God." We may say, "Our marriage is in a difficult season," without declaring, "Our marriage will never survive." We may acknowledge, "I am struggling emotionally," without allowing the struggle to become our permanent identity. We tell the truth about the battle while continuing to agree with what God has said about our future.

This is where we must become willing to ask difficult questions. What have we normalized that God has been convicting us about? What conversations consistently leave our spirit worse than they found it? What relationships repeatedly weaken our convictions? What digital habits are shaping our imagination? What offense are we continually feeding? What secret appetite are we asking God to remove while simultaneously protecting it? What atmosphere are we creating in our home? What are our children learning about Christianity by watching us when we are not at church?

These questions are not intended to produce condemnation. They are intended to produce discernment. God reveals an open door because He wants us to close it. Conviction is an invitation to surrender territory back to Him.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

And when God reveals an area, our response should not be negotiation. We should be willing to say, “No more place.”

No more place for bitterness in my heart. No more place for lust in my private life. No more place for constant criticism in my marriage. No more place for disrespect in our home. No more place for relationships that continually pull me away from God. No more place for entertainment that feeds what I am praying against. No more place for fear to determine how I speak about my children. No more place for an offense from yesterday to control my obedience today.

This is what resistance looks like when submission becomes practical. We are not merely shouting at darkness. We are removing its chair. We are closing the door. We are refusing to continue providing territory from which it can influence our lives.

We are not merely shouting at darkness. We are removing its chair. We are closing the door.

Yet closing doors is only part of the battle. Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 12 moves us toward something even deeper. A house cannot simply be emptied; it must belong completely to the right authority. Spiritual warfare is not merely about removing what is wrong. It is about coming into agreement with what is right.

This brings us to perhaps the central principle of the entire study:

Spiritual warfare is a battle for agreement.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Have I given the enemy “place” in an area that should belong completely to God? Consider our conversations, entertainment, digital habits, relationships, bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, pride, fear, and the atmosphere of our homes. Are we protecting an access point while praying for deliverance from what enters through it?

PART 03

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT: A HOUSE DIVIDED CANNOT STAND

03

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.”*
> **MATTHEW 12:25 (KJV)**

When Jesus healed the man who was blind and unable to speak, the miracle produced two completely different reactions. The people looked at what Jesus had done and began asking, “Is not this the son of David?” The Pharisees witnessed the exact same miracle and reached the opposite conclusion. They accused Jesus of casting out devils through the power of Beelzebub. The same miracle was in front of both groups, but their interpretation was completely different. This reminds us that what we see is often affected by the lens through which we see it. A heart filled with faith can recognize the work of God, while a heart shaped by pride, offense, tradition, or unbelief can stand in front of the same evidence and interpret it completely differently. This is why spiritual warfare involves more than what happens around us. There is also a battle over how we interpret what is happening around us.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees by establishing a principle that reaches far beyond their accusation: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” Division eventually produces destruction. A kingdom cannot continue fighting itself and remain strong. A city cannot continually tear itself apart and prosper. A family cannot continually turn against itself and remain healthy. The same principle applies spiritually to us as individuals. We cannot continually live in contradiction and expect to experience spiritual stability. There must eventually be agreement between what we believe, what we say, how we live, and whom we serve.

This is why spiritual warfare is a battle for agreement. The enemy wants our mouths disagreeing with our faith. He wants our habits disagreeing with our prayers. He wants our private lives disagreeing with our public worship. He wants our Monday decisions contradicting our Sunday declarations. He wants us praying in one direction while walking in another. The division does not have to begin dramatically. It simply has to create enough contradiction that eventually our spiritual lives become unstable. Jesus said a divided house cannot stand, and that principle applies when the division is happening inside of us.

We can genuinely love God and still struggle with areas that have not yet come into agreement with Him. We can come to church and sincerely worship while still wrestling privately with appetites pulling us in another direction. We can pray, “God, I want Your will,” while another part of us continues saying, “But I still want this.” We can believe God’s Word intellectually while our emotions continually preach something different to us. The struggle itself does not make us hypocrites. Every believer experiences conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. The danger comes when instead of bringing that contradiction into surrender, we begin accepting it as normal. We stop fighting for agreement.

Galatians 5:17 (KJV) says, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other…” Scripture does not pretend this internal conflict does not exist. There are desires within our flesh that will not naturally agree with what the Spirit desires. Therefore, spiritual maturity is not reaching a point where we never feel another pull in the wrong direction. Spiritual

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

maturity means that when those competing desires appear, we know which voice receives our agreement. We do not have to agree with everything we feel simply because we feel it.

This distinction is extremely important. Feeling something is not the same as agreeing with it. A fearful thought can enter our mind without becoming our confession. Anger can rise without becoming our master. Temptation can appear without becoming obedience. Discouragement can visit us without becoming our identity. An accusation can enter our thoughts without becoming our conclusion. We may not always control the first thought that enters our minds, but through the power of God we can determine whether we give that thought a permanent place to live.

The enemy understands the power of agreement. If he can convince us to agree with a lie long enough, eventually we will begin living as though the lie were true. If we continually agree with the thought, “Nothing will ever change,” eventually we stop expecting change. If we agree that prayer does not matter, eventually we stop praying. If we agree that our marriage is beyond restoration, eventually we stop investing in restoration. If we agree that our children are too far from God, eventually our prayers for them can become weaker. If we agree that we will always be controlled by a particular appetite, we may stop resisting it. The enemy wants more than to introduce a lie. He wants us to sign our name to it through agreement.

This gives us a very important question to ask throughout this study. Instead of only asking, “What am I fighting?” we must also ask, “What am I agreeing with?” Sometimes we spend years fighting something that we continue agreeing with in our thoughts, our language, or our behavior. We ask God for freedom while repeatedly describing ourselves by the name of our bondage. We ask God for a different future while continually speaking as though yesterday has already determined tomorrow. We pray for God to change something and then spend the rest of the week agreeing with every reason it cannot change.

Amos 3:3 (KJV) asks, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” In the immediate context, Amos is emphasizing that walking together requires agreement. Applied as a spiritual principle, agreement affects direction. What we continually agree with will influence the direction in which we walk. When we agree with fear, fear begins accompanying our decisions. When we agree with bitterness, bitterness begins influencing the way we interpret people. When we agree with offense, offense begins filtering conversations. When we agree with hopelessness, hopelessness begins interpreting our future. But when we bring ourselves into agreement with God’s Word, faith begins changing the way we see the same circumstances.

This does not mean we deny reality. Biblical faith is not pretending a problem does not exist. If our marriage is struggling, agreement with God does not require us to pretend everything is wonderful. If our child is away from God, faith does not mean ignoring what is happening. If we are financially struggling, sick, wounded, disappointed, or afraid, we do not have to lie about our circumstances. Faith tells the truth about the battle without allowing the battle to become the highest truth in our lives. We can say, “This is difficult, but God is faithful.” We can say, “My child is struggling, but I will continue praying and believing.” We can say, “Our marriage needs healing, but we will not agree with division.” We can acknowledge what we see while remaining submitted to what God has said.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

There is a major difference between acknowledging a condition and agreeing with its conclusion. We can acknowledge that something hurts without agreeing that we will never heal. We can acknowledge that we failed without agreeing that we are failures. We can acknowledge that we are under attack without agreeing that the enemy will win. We can acknowledge that our children are struggling without agreeing that their present season has determined their destiny. We can acknowledge that our home is experiencing tension without agreeing that division has the right to remain there. The enemy wants our circumstances to become conclusions, but faith refuses to put a period where God may still be writing the story.

This is especially important concerning our language because our mouths often reveal where our agreement has settled. James 3:10–11 (KJV) says, “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” James exposes the contradiction of using the same mouth for blessing and cursing. We should examine whether our speech agrees with the faith we profess. We cannot continually ask God to give us a voice of faith while using that same voice to spread gossip, accusation, cynicism, fear, and hopelessness.

Our homes need this desperately. Imagine the contradiction when we stand in church and sing about God’s faithfulness, but our children hear nothing except negativity from us at home. Imagine asking our children to trust God while they continually hear us speak as though God cannot provide. Imagine teaching them to honor the church while they constantly hear us criticize believers and leaders at the dinner table. Imagine telling them prayer is powerful while they never see us pray outside the church building. Our children learn Christianity not only from what we teach them but from what they observe in us.

This was beautifully illustrated in the message through the story of Aunt Grace and Uncle Hubert. After an extended fast, the family gathered around a table filled with food. Yet instead of rushing into the meal, prayer became so natural to them that thanksgiving turned into extended prayer, and the food eventually became cold. The significance of the story is not that every family should pray until dinner gets cold. The significance is that their private life agreed with their public faith. Prayer was not something reserved for the church building. It lived at the dining room table. Their relationship with God was not merely something they displayed publicly. It shaped the atmosphere of their home.

That is the kind of agreement we should desire. We want our private lives to agree with our public worship. We want to be Christians at church and Christians at home. We want our spouses to encounter the same spirit in us that people see when our hands are lifted in worship. We want our children to know that the person they see worshiping on Sunday is the same person they encounter on Monday morning. Authentic Christianity does not require perfection, but it does require integrity. When we fail, we repent. When we speak wrongly, we apologize. When we lose our temper, we take responsibility. We do not create a religious image publicly while protecting an entirely different life privately.

The enemy would love the opposite. He wants our altar to look spiritual while our home is filled with anger. He wants us to appear patient at church while treating our family harshly. He wants us speaking about

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

grace publicly while refusing to forgive privately. He wants us raising our hands in worship while secretly feeding appetites that are destroying our spiritual sensitivity. He wants a divided house because Jesus already told us what happens to divided houses: eventually they cannot stand.

This is why we cannot win spiritual battles while continually living in spiritual contradiction. We cannot pray in one direction and deliberately walk in another. We cannot keep declaring freedom while agreeing with bondage. We cannot continually ask God for vision while choosing things that blind us spiritually. We cannot ask God to restore our voice while filling our mouths with words that contradict His promises. At some point our prayers, words, habits, relationships, and decisions must begin moving in the same direction.

The goal is not merely to stop agreeing with darkness. We must intentionally come into agreement with God. Agreement with God means that when fear says, “There is no way,” we bring that thought underneath what God has said. When shame says, “Your past defines you,” we bring that accusation underneath the truth of God’s grace. When the enemy says, “You cannot change,” we remember that transformation is possible through Jesus Christ. When discouragement says, “Stop praying for your family,” we continue praying. When our flesh says, “Compromise would be easier,” we choose obedience. Agreement with God is not merely something we believe intellectually. It becomes visible through our choices.

This is where the statement from the message becomes so powerful: stop being polite to your bondage. There are things we tolerate because we have learned how to coexist with them. We manage them, explain them, rename them, and sometimes even build our identity around them. We say, “That’s just the way I am,” when God may be saying, “That is something I want to transform.” We say, “Everybody in my family has a temper,” as though generational repetition gives anger permission to remain. We say, “I’ve always been negative,” or “I’ve always struggled with this,” and slowly our history becomes an excuse for continuing agreement.

There comes a moment when spiritual resistance requires us to become decisive. We must stop negotiating with what is undermining our future. We must stop treating bondage like a permanent roommate. We must stop making peace with something God has called us to resist. There are moments when we need to stand spiritually and say, “I will no longer agree with this.”

I will not agree with the lie that my family cannot be saved. I will not agree with the lie that my marriage cannot heal. I will not agree with the lie that my past has permanently disqualified me. I will not agree with fear concerning my children. I will not agree with bitterness simply because I was genuinely hurt. I will not agree with lust simply because temptation continues to appear. I will not agree with discouragement simply because the answer has not come yet. I will not agree with the accusation that God has abandoned me simply because I do not understand what He is doing.

Our homes need moments like this. A family should be able to establish spiritual agreements together. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. We may face battles, but we agree that Jesus is Lord over this house. We may experience disagreements, but we agree that division will not become our culture. We

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

may become angry, but we agree that anger will not control the atmosphere. We may make mistakes, but we agree that repentance and forgiveness will always have a place here. Our children may struggle, but we agree that we will continue praying for them, loving them, teaching them, and speaking God's Word over them. We may go through financial pressure, sickness, disappointment, and seasons we never expected, but we agree that circumstances will not replace God as the authority defining our future.

Agreement does not mean the battle disappears immediately. It means we have decided which side of the battle receives our cooperation.

And this brings us to another crucial dimension of spiritual warfare. Once we break agreement with a lie, we cannot simply leave an empty space. The man in Matthew 12 did not merely have something removed from him. Jesus restored what bondage had taken. The man who could not see saw, and the man who could not speak spoke.

Biblical freedom is not merely about removal. It is about restoration and replacement.

We do not simply remove fear. We replace it with faith.

We do not simply reject lies. We replace them with truth.

We do not simply leave isolation. We move into godly community.

We do not simply silence negative confession. We learn to speak the Word of God.

We do not simply tear down strongholds. We build our minds around truth.

Spiritual warfare is not only casting something down. It is replacing what was there with something that agrees with God.

Spiritual warfare is a battle for agreement.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

What have I been agreeing with? Are there statements we repeatedly tell ourselves such as, “I will never change,” “My family will never be restored,” “My child is too far gone,” or “Nothing happens when I pray”? Which of those conclusions actually agree with God’s Word?

PART 04

PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS: WHEN A WOUND BECOMES A WORLDVIEW

04

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”*
> **2 CORINTHIANS 10:4–5 (KJV)**

Paul tells us that we are involved in warfare, but he immediately makes an important distinction concerning the weapons we use. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” In other words, spiritual battles cannot be won with fleshly weapons. Anger is not a spiritual weapon. Manipulation is not a spiritual weapon. Sarcasm is not a spiritual weapon. Control is not a spiritual weapon. Drama is not a spiritual weapon. Our personality is not a spiritual weapon, and neither is our stubbornness. We can fight very hard in the flesh and still accomplish very little spiritually because we are using the wrong weapons against the wrong enemy.

This is especially important in our families because sometimes we fight the person standing in front of us without discerning the spiritual pressure affecting the relationship. A husband and wife can spend hours fighting each other while never recognizing the division attempting to enter their marriage. Parents can become so angry with their children that they spend all their energy fighting the child’s behavior while giving very little attention to the influences attempting to shape the child’s heart. We can fight people in the church while never confronting the accusation, offense, suspicion, or pride that is poisoning the relationship. We can even spend years fighting ourselves because we have believed a lie concerning our identity. Paul reminds us that if the battle is spiritual, fleshly weapons will never be sufficient.

Paul then tells us that our spiritual weapons are “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.” A stronghold is not simply a bad thought that entered our minds yesterday. The picture is something fortified, established, reinforced, and defended. Spiritually, there are ways of thinking that can become so deeply established within us that they begin influencing how we interpret everything around us. A thought becomes a pattern, the pattern becomes an assumption, the assumption becomes a belief, and eventually the belief becomes a lens through which we see our entire life.

This is why Pastor Tisdale’s statement is so important: “Be careful that your wound doesn’t become your worldview.”

Be careful that your wound doesn’t become your worldview.

A wound is something that happened to us. A worldview is the lens through which we interpret what continues to happen to us. The danger is that something painful from our past can become the filter through which we interpret our present and predict our future. The original wound may have been real. What happened may have genuinely been wrong. We may have been betrayed, abandoned, rejected, mistreated, disappointed, or taken advantage of. Christianity does not require us to deny that pain. But we

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

must be careful that yesterday's wound does not become today's lens.

For example, perhaps someone experienced abandonment early in life. The wound says, "Someone I trusted left me." That may be completely true. But when the wound becomes a worldview, the conclusion changes to, "Everyone I love eventually leaves me." Now the past is no longer simply something that happened. It has become a prophecy about the future. Every relationship is interpreted through abandonment. If someone takes longer than usual to answer a message, fear immediately says they are pulling away. If a friend becomes busy, the mind assumes rejection. If a spouse needs space after a disagreement, the wound begins preaching, "Here it comes again. They are going to leave too." What began as a painful experience has now become a lens interpreting experiences that may have nothing to do with the original wound.

Perhaps someone was betrayed. The event was real, but if betrayal becomes a worldview, the conclusion becomes, "Nobody can be trusted." Now innocent people begin paying the price for something somebody else did. We protect ourselves from being hurt again by refusing to become vulnerable, but eventually the walls we built to keep pain out also keep healthy relationships from getting in. We may call it wisdom when it is actually fear wearing the clothing of wisdom. The stronghold begins defending itself by telling us, "Never trust again. Never open yourself again. Never let anyone get close enough to hurt you again."

The same can happen financially. Perhaps someone was manipulated or taken advantage of financially. That wound can eventually become a worldview that says, "Every time someone talks about generosity, they are trying to use me." Now the person no longer evaluates each situation according to truth and wisdom. Everything is interpreted through what happened before. A past wound has gained authority over present obedience.

This is why healing is not simply about forgetting what happened. Healing involves refusing to allow what happened to become the authority that interprets everything that happens next.

Our wounds deserve compassion, but they do not deserve lordship.

Jesus must remain Lord over the way we interpret our lives.

Paul continues by telling us to "cast down imaginations." This is powerful because our minds have the ability to take limited information and construct entire realities around it. Something happens, and immediately we begin filling in the missing details. Someone sends a short text message, and we assume they are angry. Someone does not shake our hand at church, and we begin wondering whether they have something against us. Someone does not respond the way we expected, and our minds begin writing a story explaining why. Before long we are angry, hurt, anxious, or offended over something that may never have actually happened.

An imagination does not always begin with something completely false. Sometimes there is a small piece of information that we take far beyond what the information can support. We make one bad decision and say, "I always make terrible decisions." We experience one failed relationship and say, "Nobody will ever love me." We go through one difficult season and say, "My life is always going to be like this." We

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

experience a disappointment in ministry and conclude, “God cannot use me.” One moment becomes a pattern, the pattern becomes an identity, and the identity becomes a prediction about the future.

We must learn to recognize when our minds are catastrophizing our circumstances. One mistake is not our identity. One rejection does not determine our worth. One failure does not determine our future. One bad season does not mean every season will be bad. One difficult chapter does not give us permission to write the ending of the entire story.

This is why Paul does not tell us to negotiate with imaginations. He says to cast them down.

There are thoughts that do not deserve another meeting.

There are accusations that do not deserve another explanation.

There are fears that do not deserve another night of our attention.

There are imaginary conversations that do not deserve another hour of rehearsal.

There are conclusions we have drawn that need to be brought down because they have exalted themselves above what God has said.

Paul describes “every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.” A high thing is something attempting to rise above what we know to be true about God. We know God is faithful, but fear says He has abandoned us. We know God is merciful, but shame says our failure is greater than His grace. We know God can restore, but hopelessness says nothing will ever change. We know God hears prayer, but disappointment says there is no reason to continue praying. We know what Scripture says, but another thought attempts to position itself above that knowledge.

That is where spiritual warfare becomes a truth battle. We must decide which voice receives the highest position in our minds.

Not every thought deserves authority simply because it is loud.

Not every fear deserves leadership simply because it feels real.

Not every suspicion gets to pastor our spirit.

Not every memory gets to become our master.

That last principle is particularly important because memories can become extremely powerful. Something that happened ten or twenty years ago can still influence how we respond today. The memory itself may never disappear, but it does not have to remain in authority. We can remember without remaining captive. We can acknowledge what happened without allowing what happened to dictate who we are becoming. The goal is not necessarily to erase our history. The goal is to place our history underneath the lordship of Jesus Christ.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Paul says we are to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Notice the reversal. The enemy wants our thoughts to take us captive, but Scripture tells us to take our thoughts captive. We do not have to become prisoners of everything that enters our minds. Through the Spirit and the Word of God, we can examine our thoughts and ask, “Does this agree with Jesus? Does this agree with Scripture? Is this thought leading me toward faith, truth, obedience, and godliness, or is it leading me toward fear, bitterness, accusation, temptation, and hopelessness?”

If the thought does not agree with Christ, we do not have to give it permanent residence.

This requires discipline because thoughts become stronger through repetition. A thought entertained once may be a temptation, but a thought entertained repeatedly can begin forming a pathway. Eventually we stop questioning it because it feels familiar. Familiarity begins feeling like truth. We say, “This is just how I think,” without realizing that the way we think may have been shaped by years of repeatedly agreeing with the same lie.

This is why we must be careful what we continually entertain in our minds. What we entertain consistently can eventually become what we inhabit permanently. The thoughts we repeatedly welcome begin creating the internal architecture in which we live. If we continually entertain suspicion, we begin living in distrust. If we continually entertain comparison, we begin living in dissatisfaction. If we continually entertain fear, we begin living as though disaster is always around the corner. If we continually entertain offense, we begin living in a world where everyone becomes a potential enemy. If we continually entertain hopelessness, we begin building a future in our minds where God has already lost.

But the opposite is also true. If we continually fill our minds with God’s Word, truth begins shaping the architecture of our thinking. If we continually remember God’s faithfulness, gratitude begins challenging fear. If we continually meditate on His promises, faith begins influencing the way we interpret circumstances. If we continually bring our thoughts to Jesus, our minds can gradually become places where truth is stronger than accusation.

Philippians 4:8 (KJV) gives us a powerful pattern: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report… think on these things.” Paul does not simply tell us what to stop thinking about. He teaches us what should replace unhealthy patterns. Biblical transformation is not merely the removal of a thought; it is the renewal of the mind.

This is especially important for parents because our children are developing thought patterns that may follow them for years. We must be careful what identities we repeatedly speak over them. A child should not grow up hearing, “You are lazy,” “You never do anything right,” “You are the difficult one,” or “You will never change.” Correction is necessary, but correction should address behavior without turning temporary behavior into permanent identity. There is a difference between saying, “What you did was dishonest,” and saying, “You are a liar.” There is a difference between correcting irresponsibility and repeatedly defining a child as irresponsible. Our words can help shape the internal architecture of the people God has entrusted to us.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Our homes should therefore become places where lies are confronted with truth. When fear enters, we remind each other of God's faithfulness. When one of our children feels inadequate, we remind them that their identity is not determined by comparison. When failure occurs, we teach repentance without creating shame. When someone is wounded, we create space for healing without allowing the wound to become their identity. When anxiety rises, we pray together. When a lie begins repeating itself, we bring Scripture into the conversation.

Sometimes we need to become very practical about this. If our mind continually says, "I am alone," we should not merely sit with that thought until it becomes stronger. We bring it to Christ. If the thought says, "Prayer is not working," we continue praying. If discouragement says, "There is no reason to keep fasting," we refuse to allow discouragement to determine our spiritual disciplines. If the thought says, "Your family will never change," we return to the promises of God and continue interceding. If shame says, "God cannot use you because of your past," we confront shame with the truth of redemption.

This does not mean we use Scripture to pretend painful emotions do not exist. Bringing a thought captive is not emotional denial. Sometimes we need prayer, conversation, accountability, pastoral care, or professional support as part of the healing process. But whatever help we receive should ultimately move us toward truth rather than strengthening a lie. We are learning to tell the difference between what we feel and what we will allow to rule us.

This battle matters because the enemy understands that if he can shape our thoughts, he can influence our choices. If he can influence our choices long enough, he can begin shaping our habits. If he can shape our habits, he can influence our character and direction. Therefore, some of the greatest spiritual victories in our lives may happen quietly, in moments when nobody else knows a battle is occurring, when a thought enters our mind and instead of agreeing with it we say, "No. That does not agree with what God has said."

We pull it down.

We bring it captive.

We replace it with truth.

And then we continue walking.

The stronghold may have taken years to build, and some patterns may require persistent renewal rather than disappearing in a single moment. But we should never confuse a long battle with an unbeatable battle. Paul says our weapons are "mighty through God." Strongholds can come down. Minds can be renewed. Wounds can heal. Patterns can change. Fear does not have to remain our worldview. Abandonment does not have to define every relationship. Failure does not have to become our identity. Yesterday does not have to become the architect of tomorrow.

But to pull down a lie, we must know the truth that replaces it.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

This is why the next dimension of spiritual warfare is absolutely essential. Jesus said in John 8:32 (KJV), “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The enemy does not always need enough power to overpower us if he can convince us to believe something that is not true. From the serpent’s question in Genesis, “Yea, hath God said?”, to Jesus standing in the wilderness declaring, “It is written,” Scripture reveals that spiritual warfare is fundamentally a battle over truth.

Before spiritual warfare becomes a power battle, it is often a truth battle.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Has a wound from my past become the lens through which I see my present? Has abandonment taught us that everyone will leave? Has betrayal convinced us that nobody can be trusted? Has failure convinced us that we will always fail? What happened to us may be real, but has it been given authority to define everything that happens next?

What thought needs to be brought into captivity today? Identify one thought that repeatedly produces fear, shame, anger, insecurity, comparison, hopelessness, or accusation. What Scripture can we place against that thought so that God’s truth becomes the greater authority?

PART 05

IT IS WRITTEN: WINNING THE TRUTH BATTLE

05

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*
> **JOHN 8:32 (KJV)**

If spiritual warfare is a battle for agreement, then truth becomes absolutely essential because we cannot break agreement with a lie unless we know the truth that contradicts it. Jesus connects freedom directly to truth. He does not say that our feelings will make us free, that our circumstances will make us free, or even that an emotional spiritual experience by itself will make us free. He says, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” This means that one of the enemy’s greatest strategies is deception. He does not always need enough power to overpower us if he can convince us to believe something that is not true. If a lie can shape the way we see God, ourselves, our families, and our future, then eventually that lie can influence the way we live.

We see this strategy from the very beginning of Scripture. In Genesis 3, the serpent does not physically overpower Eve. He does not grab her or force her to eat the fruit. His attack begins with a question aimed at what God had spoken. Genesis 3:1 (KJV) records the serpent asking, “Yea, hath God said…?” That question reveals something about spiritual warfare that remains relevant today. The first attack was against the reliability and authority of God’s Word. Before the enemy attempted to change Eve’s behavior, he attempted to change her relationship with what God had said.

The serpent’s strategy was to create enough uncertainty around God’s Word that Eve would begin interpreting God’s command differently. Once the Word became questionable, disobedience became reasonable. This pattern still appears in spiritual warfare. The enemy continues to attack the Word because the Word establishes the boundaries within which we live. “Did God really say holiness matters? Does forgiveness really have to happen? Does it really matter what I allow into my mind? Does God really care about how I speak? Does obedience really matter that much? Does my body really belong to God? Does God really expect my house to serve Him?” The language may change from generation to generation, but the strategy remains familiar. If the enemy can make what God clearly said seem uncertain, eventually what God prohibited can begin appearing acceptable.

This is why spiritual warfare is often a truth battle before it becomes a power battle. The question is not simply whether the enemy is attacking us. The question is whether we know enough truth to recognize the attack. A lie becomes much more dangerous when we do not know that it is a lie. If we do not know what Scripture says about our identity, then accusations can define us. If we do not know what Scripture says about purity, culture can define it for us. If we do not know what Scripture says about marriage, relationships, forgiveness, generosity, worship, and obedience, then whatever voice speaks most frequently can gradually become the voice we believe.

This is why the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is so important. Jesus shows us what it looks like to confront spiritual pressure from a place of complete agreement with the Father. The enemy comes to Jesus after an extended period of fasting and attacks Him at a moment of physical weakness, yet Jesus does not respond from His feelings. He does not enter into a long emotional argument with Satan. He

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

does not allow His hunger, circumstances, or discomfort to redefine what is true. His repeated response is simple and powerful: “It is written.”

Those three words establish a boundary.

“It is written” means my appetite does not determine truth. “It is written” means my circumstances cannot rewrite truth. “It is written” means temptation does not get to reinterpret truth. “It is written” means culture does not possess enough authority to revise what God has spoken. “It is written” means even when my emotions are saying something different, the Word of God remains the final authority.

The first temptation reveals how the enemy can attack us through physical appetites and immediate needs. Matthew 4:3–4 (KJV) says, “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Jesus was genuinely hungry. The physical need was real. Hunger was not imaginary, and eating bread was not inherently sinful. The issue was whether Jesus would allow an immediate appetite to move Him outside the will of the Father.

This is extremely relevant to us because not every temptation begins with a desire for something inherently evil. Sometimes the battle is over whether a legitimate desire will become more authoritative than obedience. The desire to be loved is legitimate, but that desire cannot lead us into a relationship that continually pulls us away from God. The desire for financial security is legitimate, but it cannot become greed. The desire to be understood is legitimate, but it cannot justify bitterness when someone misunderstands us. The desire for sexual intimacy is God-given, but it must remain within God’s design. The desire to succeed is not wrong, but success cannot become more important than integrity. Spiritual maturity means our appetites are submitted to truth rather than truth being rewritten to accommodate our appetites.

Jesus answers, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” In other words, there is something more necessary for life than satisfying every immediate appetite. We live by the Word of God. This is why fasting itself becomes such a meaningful spiritual discipline. Fasting teaches our flesh that an appetite can be real without becoming our master. We can feel hunger and still say no. In the same way, we can experience temptation and still obey. We can experience anger and still forgive. We can experience fear and still walk by faith. We can desire something intensely and still say, “If this contradicts the Word and will of God, then my desire does not receive the final vote.”

The temptation also attacks Jesus’ identity. Immediately before the wilderness, the Father had spoken concerning Jesus at His baptism: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Then the tempter comes and says, “If thou be the Son of God…” The attack comes directly against what the Father had already declared. God said, “This is my Son.” The enemy says, “If you are the Son.” This reveals another common strategy of spiritual warfare: the enemy challenges what God has spoken in an attempt to make us prove something God has already established.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Many of our battles become unnecessarily exhausting because we are trying to prove an identity that should be received from God. We want people to affirm us, recognize us, approve of us, and validate us because somewhere inside we are still asking, “Am I really who God says I am?” When our identity is insecure, criticism becomes devastating because we need everybody’s agreement in order to feel secure. Rejection becomes unbearable because we interpret someone’s rejection as evidence that something is wrong with us. Comparison becomes constant because we need to know where we stand in relation to everyone else.

But Jesus does not perform a miracle simply to prove His identity to the devil. He does not need Satan’s agreement concerning what the Father has already spoken.

There is freedom in learning this. We do not need the enemy to agree with what God has said about us. We do not need every person to understand our calling. We do not need everybody to affirm our obedience. We do not have to win every argument, correct every accusation, or convince every critic. There are moments when our confidence must simply rest in this: God has spoken, and His Word is enough.

This becomes especially important for our children and young adults because they are growing in a culture constantly asking them to establish their identity through external affirmation. Social media can turn identity into a public vote. Approval is counted through views, likes, comments, followers, and reactions. Comparison becomes almost unavoidable because we are constantly seeing edited versions of everybody else’s lives. If our children do not learn to receive identity from God, they will inevitably search for identity somewhere else. And whatever gives us identity eventually gains enormous influence over us.

Our homes should therefore be places where biblical identity is continually reinforced. Our children need more than rules about what Christians should and should not do. They need to understand who they are and whose they are. Conviction becomes much stronger when it grows from identity. We do not pursue holiness merely because our parents established a rule. We pursue holiness because we belong to Jesus. We do not guard our bodies because bodies are evil. We guard them because Scripture teaches that our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. We do not separate ourselves from certain influences because we are afraid of the world. We establish boundaries because we know what God has called us to become.

The wilderness temptation also exposes the danger of needing public affirmation. Satan takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and tells Him to cast Himself down, even attempting to use Scripture in the temptation. The temptation essentially invites Jesus to create a dramatic public demonstration that would prove who He is. This reminds us that even Scripture can be misused when it is separated from its proper meaning and submitted to selfish motives. The enemy can quote words from the Bible while still attempting to lead us away from the will of God. Therefore, knowing isolated verses is not enough. We must know the Word in relationship with the God who gave it.

Jesus refuses to build His identity around spectacle. He does not need to manufacture a moment that forces people to recognize Him. This challenges us because sometimes we want visible evidence that proves our significance. We want the position, the title, the platform, the recognition, the relationship, the

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

achievement, or the opportunity because we think it will finally confirm that our lives matter. Yet identity that depends upon applause will always remain vulnerable to silence. If people's approval gives us our identity, people's criticism can take it away.

The third temptation exposes another strategy: shortcuts. Satan shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world and offers them in exchange for worship. The temptation offers a destination without the path of obedience and suffering. Jesus came to establish His kingdom, but the enemy offers Him something that appears to resemble the destination while avoiding the cross. The offer is essentially, "You can have something that looks like what you came for without going through what obedience requires."

We will all face shortcuts.

There will be opportunities to obtain something we desire by compromising something God has spoken. There will be moments when dishonesty appears easier than integrity, when compromise appears faster than obedience, when leaving appears easier than fighting for restoration, or when giving up appears easier than enduring. The enemy loves shortcuts because shortcuts often promise the destination while bypassing the transformation God intended to produce through the journey.

But some things cannot be rushed without being damaged.

God may promise something without promising that it will happen immediately. The time between promise and fulfillment often becomes the place where our character is formed. If we become so desperate for the promise that we are willing to violate God's principles to obtain it, then the promise has become more important to us than the God who gave it.

Jesus refuses the shortcut because He understands that who we worship determines whom we serve. There are things we must be willing to lose rather than bow. There are opportunities we must be willing to walk away from. There are relationships we must refuse if keeping them requires us to compromise our worship. There are financial opportunities that are not worth the spiritual price attached to them. There are forms of success that are actually failure if reaching them requires us to become someone God never called us to be.

In every temptation, Jesus answers with the Word.

This is why Scripture cannot remain something we only hear preached. The Word must become something we personally know. Pastor Tisdale made the point powerfully: we cannot resist with a Bible we never open. We cannot swing a sword we never pick up, and we cannot answer lies with truth we have never hidden in our hearts.

Psalm 119:11 (KJV) says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." The psalmist understood that there is a difference between having access to Scripture and having Scripture hidden within us. We live in a generation with extraordinary access to the Bible. We can carry hundreds of translations on a phone. We can search any verse within seconds. We can listen to sermons throughout the day. Yet access to information does not automatically produce spiritual formation. The question is

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

whether the Word has moved from our screen into our heart.

We hide the Word before the battle because pressure reveals what has already been placed within us. When temptation comes, what is inside begins speaking. When fear comes, what is inside begins speaking. When our children enter a crisis, what is inside begins speaking. When the diagnosis comes, when the financial pressure arrives, when someone hurts us, when our marriage enters a difficult season, or when we wake in the middle of the night with our thoughts racing, we discover what has been stored inside.

This is why our families need Scripture before the crisis. We should not wait until our children are under attack to begin teaching them what God says. We should not wait until a marriage is falling apart to discover biblical principles for marriage. We should not wait until temptation becomes overwhelming to begin establishing convictions. We should not wait until anxiety controls our thoughts to begin hiding Scripture in our hearts. We build before the storm. We hide the Word before temptation. We learn truth before deception comes looking for agreement.

Every believer should begin developing an “It is written” response for the areas where we repeatedly experience pressure. If fear repeatedly attacks us, we need to know what is written about fear. If shame repeatedly attacks our identity, we need Scripture concerning grace, redemption, and who we are in Christ. If our family is under pressure, we need Scripture that anchors our prayers and decisions. If our mind continually moves toward hopelessness, we need truth strong enough to interrupt that pattern. The goal is not merely to memorize words as though Scripture were a magic formula. The goal is to know God’s Word so deeply that when another voice attempts to reinterpret our lives, we recognize immediately that it does not agree with the truth.

When the enemy says, “You cannot make it,” there must be an “It is written.”

When fear says, “God has forgotten your family,” there must be an “It is written.”

When temptation says, “Everybody does this,” there must be an “It is written.”

When shame says, “Your past is stronger than God’s grace,” there must be an “It is written.”

When discouragement says, “Stop praying,” there must be an “It is written.”

When culture says, “God’s boundaries no longer matter,” there must be an “It is written.”

When our own emotions say, “I do not feel like obeying,” there must still be an “It is written.”

The power is not in repeating a religious phrase. The power is in bringing our thoughts, appetites, emotions, and decisions back underneath the authority of what God has spoken.

And perhaps this is where the battle for agreement becomes most practical. Every day voices are asking for our agreement. Our emotions speak. Culture speaks. Our wounds speak. Friends speak. Algorithms speak. Fear speaks. Temptation speaks. Our past speaks. The enemy speaks. But above all of those voices stands the Word of God.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

The question is not whether other voices will speak.

The question is which voice will have the authority to define truth.

Jesus settled that question in the wilderness.

“It is written.”

We must settle it too.

Yet Scripture also reveals something surprising about spiritual warfare. Sometimes after we have submitted to God, closed doors, broken agreement with lies, pulled down strongholds, and stood upon the Word, the battle does not immediately disappear. Sometimes we pray for God to remove the resistance and He allows part of the resistance to remain.

That does not always mean we have failed.

Sometimes the battle itself is training us.

Judges 3 tells us that God intentionally left certain enemies in the land so that a generation that had never experienced warfare could learn how to fight. Psalm 144 describes the Lord as the One who teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight.

There are battles God delivers us from, but there are also battles through which God develops us.

And that brings us to another essential principle:

Do not waste the fight.

Before spiritual warfare becomes a power battle, it is often a truth battle.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

What is my personal “It is written” for the battle I am currently facing? Do not wait until the next attack to search for truth. What Scripture do we need hidden in our hearts concerning our marriage, children, purity, identity, fear, calling, or future?

PART 06

DO NOT WASTE THE FIGHT: WHEN GOD USES RESISTANCE TO TRAIN US

06

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof.”*
> **JUDGES 3:1–2 (KJV)**

There is something surprising in this passage. God had brought Israel into the Promised Land, yet He did not immediately remove every enemy from their surroundings. Judges tells us that certain nations remained so that a generation that had never experienced the battles of Canaan could learn war. This does not mean God delighted in Israel’s suffering, nor does it mean every battle in our lives has been directly sent by God. But it does teach us an important principle: God can use resistance to develop something within us that comfort could never produce.

We naturally want every battle to end immediately. When we pray, we usually pray for removal. “God, take this away. Change this situation. Remove this temptation. Fix this relationship. Open this door. Heal this pain. Deliver my family from this pressure.” There is nothing wrong with praying that way. Scripture repeatedly teaches us to bring our needs to God. But sometimes we become discouraged when the answer does not come as quickly as we expected because we assume that if the battle remains, something must be wrong. We may begin questioning our faith, our prayers, or even God’s faithfulness.

Judges 3 gives us another possibility. Sometimes while we are asking God to remove the battle, God is teaching us how to fight.

There are things we learn about God only when our faith is required to stand under pressure. We can believe God is faithful when everything is going well, but there is another dimension of faith that develops when circumstances appear to contradict the promise and we continue believing anyway. We can talk about prayer when answers come quickly, but something deeper develops when we have prayed for months or years and still return to the altar. We can speak about forgiveness when nobody has deeply wounded us, but forgiveness becomes warfare when we have every emotional reason to remain bitter and still choose to release the offense. We can talk about holiness when temptation is distant, but conviction becomes established when temptation stands directly in front of us and we still say no.

Some battles teach our hands to war.

Psalm 144:1 (KJV) says, “Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.” David understood that spiritual strength is learned. There are things God teaches us through resistance. We learn discernment because we have encountered deception. We learn endurance because we have experienced delay. We learn dependence because we have discovered the limitations of our own strength. We learn to use Scripture because we have needed an “It is written.” We learn to pray because there have been situations we could not fix. We learn to worship through pain because there have been seasons when worship became an act of faith rather than a response to favorable circumstances.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

This changes the question we ask during difficult seasons. Instead of only asking, “God, when will this end?” we can also ask, “God, what are You teaching me while I am here?” What is this battle revealing about my prayer life? What is it exposing in my character? What is it teaching me about dependence upon God? What weakness is becoming visible? What Scripture am I learning to stand upon? What spiritual muscle is developing because I have been forced to use it?

This does not mean we glorify suffering. We do not need to call evil good or pretend painful situations are pleasant. Israel’s enemies were still enemies. Warfare was still warfare. The point is that an enemy does not get the final word simply because it has appeared in our story. God is so sovereign that even something opposing us can become an environment in which He develops us.

The Apostle Paul experienced something similar with what he called his “thorn in the flesh.” 2 Corinthians 12:8–9 (KJV) says, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Paul prayed for removal. Three times he specifically asked God to take it away. Yet God’s answer was not immediate removal. His answer was sufficient grace.

That is difficult for us because we often define victory as the disappearance of the battle. God sometimes defines victory differently. Sometimes victory is not that the pressure disappeared. Victory is that the pressure could not move us. Sometimes victory is not that temptation never returned. Victory is that temptation returned and we still said no. Sometimes victory is not that fear never spoke again. Victory is that fear spoke and we refused to agree. Sometimes victory is not that the family problem disappeared overnight. Victory is that the family kept praying together while walking through it.

We must not confuse continued warfare with spiritual defeat.

The presence of a battle does not automatically mean the absence of God’s power.

Paul still had something he wanted removed, but he also had grace sufficient to stand. There are seasons when we discover that God’s grace does not merely rescue us from difficulty; His grace sustains us inside difficulty. We discover that we can remain faithful when circumstances are not favorable. We can worship without understanding. We can obey without seeing the outcome. We can continue praying when nothing appears to be moving.

This is where spiritual endurance is formed.

Perhaps some of the things we have been asking God to remove immediately are teaching us how to depend upon Him daily. If every temptation disappeared the moment we prayed, we might never learn resistance. If every prayer were answered instantly, we might never learn persistence. If every problem disappeared before it became uncomfortable, we might never discover how deeply God’s grace can sustain us.

There are battles that teach us to stand.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Ephesians 6:13 (KJV) says, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Sometimes after we have prayed, obeyed, repented, fasted, forgiven, established boundaries, spoken the Word, and done everything we know to do, Scripture gives us a surprisingly simple command: stand.

Do not go backward.

Do not surrender the territory God has already given you.

Do not reopen the door you closed.

Do not return to the relationship God delivered you from.

Do not return to the appetite you surrendered.

Do not abandon the conviction simply because keeping it has become difficult.

Do not stop praying because the answer is taking longer than expected.

Do not stop believing for your children because you cannot yet see what God is doing.

Stand.

There is tremendous spiritual maturity in learning that every battle does not require a new strategy. Sometimes we already know what God has told us to do, and the battle is simply whether we will continue doing it. The enemy would love to exhaust us until we reinterpret delay as denial and resistance as evidence that obedience is not working. But there are moments when our greatest act of warfare is continuing to do tomorrow what God told us to do yesterday.

This is where Pastor Tisdale’s statement becomes so practical: “Don’t waste the fight.”

Don’t waste the fight.

If we are going through something difficult, we should come out of it knowing God more deeply. We should come out praying differently. We should come out with stronger convictions. We should come out with Scripture hidden in places in our hearts where it was not hidden before. We should come out more compassionate toward other people who are struggling. We should come out knowing which doors must remain closed. We should come out recognizing spiritual pressure more quickly. We should come out knowing how to stand.

We should not fight the same battle for ten years without learning anything from it.

If fear has attacked us repeatedly, we should become students of what Scripture teaches about fear. If our marriage has experienced repeated pressure, we should become intentional students of biblical marriage,

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

forgiveness, communication, humility, and covenant. If one of our children is struggling spiritually, we should learn how to intercede rather than merely panic. If temptation repeatedly approaches us through the same doorway, eventually we should know where that doorway is and establish stronger boundaries around it.

Do not let your habits become hiding places.

Sometimes we say, “This is just something I struggle with,” and that language can slowly become permission to stop resisting. There is a difference between acknowledging a weakness and building a house for it. We can say, “This is an area where I must remain vigilant,” without saying, “This will always control me.” The battle may continue, but our response to the battle should mature.

Perhaps at first temptation surprises us. Eventually we should recognize it.

At first we may fall before understanding the pattern. Eventually we should recognize the pattern.

At first we may need someone else to remind us of the Word. Eventually the Word should begin rising within us.

At first we may only know how to cry, “God, help me.” Eventually we begin saying, “It is written.”

At first we may not know where the enemy is attempting to take us. Eventually we recognize the direction before we reach the destination.

That is what it means to learn war.

This principle becomes especially important when we think about our children. We naturally want to protect them from every battle, but our responsibility as parents is not simply to raise children who never experience spiritual resistance. We must raise children who know what to do when resistance comes. Eventually they will encounter temptations we cannot remove. They will hear ideas we cannot filter. They will develop relationships we cannot completely control. They will experience disappointments we cannot prevent. At some point they will have to know how to fight for their own faith.

Our goal is not merely to build a wall around our children. Our goal is to build the Word within them.

We teach them why we pray. We teach them why we worship. We teach them why holiness matters. We teach them why certain boundaries exist. We teach them how to recognize temptation. We teach them how to repent when they fail. We teach them how to forgive. We teach them how to discern voices. We teach them that feelings are real but feelings are not Lord. We teach them that culture can change without truth changing. We teach them how to open their Bible and find an “It is written” for themselves.

There comes a moment when our children must know more than “My parents don’t allow this.” They need to be able to say, “I don’t agree with this because I belong to Jesus.”

That is when a parental boundary is becoming a personal conviction.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Our homes therefore need more than rules. They need spiritual language. Our children should hear us talk about why certain things are not allowed in our house. Not everything needs to become an argument about whether something is technically sinful. There are things we simply recognize as spiritually unhealthy for our family. There are conversations we will not normalize. There are forms of entertainment we will not bring into our home. There are ways we will not speak to one another. There are attitudes we will not permit to become our culture.

This is where we learn the power of saying no.

Our generation celebrates the freedom to say yes, but spiritual maturity is also revealed by what we are willing to say no to. We are not defined simply by the doors we walk through. Sometimes we are defined by the doors we refuse to enter.

There are moments when we must simply say:

No. Not allowed.

Not because we are afraid.

Not because we believe the enemy is stronger than us.

Not because we are attempting to earn salvation through rules.

But because we understand what God has entrusted to us.

There are things we should be willing to say concerning our homes: “No, we do not speak to each other that way here. No, we do not dishonor one another here. No, we do not allow pornography into this house. No, we do not feed bitterness here. No, we do not entertain gossip here. No, we will not allow cynicism to become our family language. No, we will not allow the world to have unrestricted access to the minds of our children. No, we will not let offense separate us from the body of Christ. No, we will not allow prayer to disappear from this home.”

There is something powerful when a family learns to say together, “Not in this house.”

That declaration is not magical. The words themselves do not create spiritual authority. Their power comes when they represent a submitted life, biblical conviction, practical boundaries, and consistent obedience. “Not in this house” means we have decided whom this house belongs to. It means we are no longer negotiating with everything that knocks on the door.

Joshua 24:15 (KJV) still speaks to us: “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Serving the Lord requires both yes and no.

Yes to prayer.

Yes to worship.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Yes to forgiveness.

Yes to Scripture.

Yes to holiness.

Yes to generosity.

Yes to accountability.

Yes to godly community.

Yes to repentance.

Yes to the presence of God.

And because we have said yes to those things, there will inevitably be other things to which we must say no.

This is how resistance begins becoming a lifestyle rather than merely a reaction to crisis.

Eventually we begin understanding something remarkable: spiritual warfare is not about living terrified of what the devil might do next. It is about living so completely surrendered to Jesus that we know what belongs in our lives and what does not. We know whom we serve. We know what God has said. We recognize the enemy's direction. We guard the territory God has entrusted to us. We bring our thoughts captive. We refuse agreement with lies. We stand when resistance comes.

And through every battle, God is teaching our hands to war.

Perhaps we have prayed, "God, why am I still fighting this?"

Maybe part of the answer is that the fight is teaching us something we will need for the future. Perhaps what we learn in this battle will one day help us protect our marriage. Perhaps it will help us disciple our children. Perhaps our children will survive a battle because they watched us remain faithful through ours. Perhaps somebody else will learn how to stand because we can testify, "I know what it feels like to want to quit, but I also know that God's grace is sufficient."

So we do not waste the fight.

We learn.

We mature.

We establish boundaries.

We teach our children.

We strengthen our homes.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

We keep praying.

We keep resisting.

And when we have done all, we stand.

This brings us back to where the entire study began. James did not say that the devil would never approach us. He told us what to do when he does:

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

The goal of spiritual warfare is not to make us obsessed with darkness. The goal is to make us deeply submitted to God, firmly established in truth, discerning about agreement, and confident enough in Jesus Christ to say to anything attempting to move us away from Him:

No. Not allowed. Not in my mind. Not in my marriage. Not in my children. Not in my worship. Not in my future. Not in this house.

We belong to Jesus.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

What is the battle teaching me? If God has not removed the resistance yet, what spiritual strength may be developing through it? Are we learning endurance, discernment, prayer, humility, dependence, boundaries, forgiveness, or a deeper knowledge of Scripture?

What do we need to say “Not in this house” to? What has slowly become normal in our family that should no longer be normal? Anger? Disrespect? Prayerlessness? Unhealthy entertainment? Constant negativity? Isolation? Gossip? Fear? What boundary needs to be established?

PART 07

WHEN JESUS RESTORES WHAT THE BATTLE TRIED TO TAKE

07

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.”*
> **MATTHEW 12:22 (KJV)**

We return now to the man who introduced us to this entire teaching about spiritual warfare. When he was brought to Jesus, something had affected both his sight and his speech. He could not see, and he could not speak. Yet when Jesus intervened, Matthew does not merely tell us that the oppression was removed. Matthew specifically tells us what was restored: “the blind and dumb both spake and saw.” The man left the encounter able to do what bondage had prevented him from doing. This gives us a beautiful picture of what Jesus desires to accomplish in our lives. Spiritual warfare is not merely about getting something bad out of us. God desires to restore what the battle has affected. If fear has silenced our voice, He wants us speaking faith again. If disappointment has distorted our vision, He wants us seeing through faith again. If offense has damaged our relationships, He wants forgiveness and healthy connection restored. If discouragement has weakened our prayer life, He wants us praying again. If spiritual exhaustion has silenced our worship, He wants worship coming from us again.

Sometimes we become so focused on what we want God to remove that we forget to ask what He wants to restore. We pray, “God, take this away. Remove this fear. Remove this temptation. Remove this pain. Remove this attack.” Those are legitimate prayers, but perhaps we should also ask, “God, what do You want to put back into my life when this is gone?” The question is not only, “What am I trying to get free from?” but also, “What am I becoming free for?” God does not deliver us merely so that we can become empty. He delivers us so that our lives can once again function according to His purpose. The man in Matthew 12 received sight so that he could see, and he received speech so that he could speak. In the same way, when God brings us through a battle, He wants the areas that were attacked to become useful again.

This is important because after a long or painful season, we can become accustomed to living with diminished expectations. We survived, but something within us stopped functioning the way it once did. We still attend church, but we stopped dreaming. We still pray, but we stopped expecting. We still love our family, but we stopped believing certain relationships could heal. We still worship, but something inside of us has become guarded. We survived the battle, but part of us remained in survival mode. Jesus wants more than our survival. He wants restoration.

Perhaps the enemy attacked our vision. At one time we could see possibilities, but after enough disappointment we began seeing only problems. We once looked at our children and imagined what God could do through them, but now all we can see are their present struggles. We once looked at our marriage and saw covenant, companionship, and purpose, but now every disagreement seems to confirm that something is permanently broken. We once looked at our future with expectation, but disappointment has trained us to expect the worst so that we will not be hurt again. That is damaged vision. The enemy does not always have to make us stop believing in God completely. Sometimes he simply tries to make us stop seeing what God can do.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

This is why Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:18 (KJV), “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling…” We need God to continually restore spiritual vision. We need the Holy Ghost to help us see beyond what is immediately visible. Faith does not deny what is happening, but faith refuses to believe that what is happening is all that can happen. We need restored vision concerning our families. We must be able to look at a struggling child and still see someone God can reach. We must be able to look at a wounded marriage and still believe God can teach us how to forgive, rebuild, and love. We must be able to look at our own failures and still see a future beyond them. We must be able to look at a difficult season and remember that seasons change. The enemy wants the battle to become our vision, but God wants His Word to shape our vision.

The man in Matthew 12, however, had not only lost his sight. He had also lost his voice. This is significant because what we see eventually influences what we say. If our spiritual vision becomes dominated by fear, fear will eventually begin speaking through us. If all we can see is hopelessness, hopelessness will begin appearing in our conversations. If we continually see ourselves through shame, we will speak about ourselves from shame. If we see our children only through their mistakes, our language toward them will eventually reflect disappointment rather than faith. The enemy would love to silence the voice of faith in our homes. He would love for us to stop praying aloud, stop speaking Scripture, stop blessing our children, stop encouraging our spouse, stop telling our testimony, and stop worshiping when circumstances become difficult.

But when Jesus restores this man, he speaks again. Perhaps there are voices in our homes that need to come back. Maybe we need to pray aloud in our homes again. Maybe we need to begin blessing our children again. Maybe we need to speak encouragement to our spouse again. Maybe we need to begin telling our testimony again. Maybe we need to sing again. Maybe we need to worship while the battle is still happening instead of waiting until everything has been resolved. Maybe we need to stop allowing discouragement to determine what comes out of our mouths.

Psalm 107:2 (KJV) says, “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” The redeemed have something to say. This does not mean we speak empty positive words or pretend problems do not exist. Biblical confession is not pretending. It is bringing our speech into agreement with truth. We can acknowledge, “I am hurting,” while also saying, “God is still faithful.” We can say, “I do not understand this season,” while continuing, “But I will trust Him.” We can say, “My child is struggling,” without declaring that our child is permanently lost. We can acknowledge that our marriage needs healing without agreeing that division has the right to destroy it. We can admit that we have failed without making failure our permanent identity. Our voice becomes an instrument of agreement with what God has said.

This is also why spiritual warfare requires replacement. We do not simply reject fear; we cultivate faith. We do not simply stop negative speech; we learn to speak truth. We do not simply remove unhealthy entertainment; we fill our homes with things that strengthen our spirits. We do not simply leave unhealthy relationships; we pursue godly community. We do not simply stop thinking destructive thoughts; we renew our minds with Scripture. We do not simply repent of prayerlessness; we begin praying. Biblical freedom is

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

not merely about removing something that was wrong. It is about establishing something that is right.

Jesus teaches this principle later in Matthew 12 when He describes an unclean spirit leaving a person and eventually returning to find the house “empty, swept, and garnished” (Matthew 12:43–45). The problem was not that the house had been cleaned. The problem was that the house remained empty. Something had left, but nothing greater had taken its place. This should teach us something important about spiritual freedom. Christian freedom was never intended to produce empty houses. Our hearts were created to be filled with God.

Our homes need the presence of God. Our minds need the Word of God. Our mouths need praise and truth. Our relationships need grace. Our schedules need prayer. Our children need discipleship. Our marriages need spiritual intimacy. It is not enough for us to say, “We don’t do that anymore.” We must also be able to say, “This is what we do now.” Perhaps anger once dominated our disagreements, but now we are learning to communicate, forgive, pray, and humble ourselves. Perhaps everyone in the house once disappeared into separate rooms, but now we intentionally create moments of connection. Perhaps we once consumed whatever appeared on our screens without thinking about it, but now we have established boundaries. Perhaps negativity once dominated our conversations, but now we intentionally practice gratitude. Perhaps prayer was something that only happened at church, but now prayer has entered our home.

This is how spiritual victory becomes a culture rather than simply a moment. We are not merely trying to experience one powerful prayer service where God touches us. We want the presence of God to reshape the way we live after the prayer service is over. That is particularly important for our children. They need more than stories about what God did at church. They need to experience what it looks like when the Holy Ghost influences everyday family life. They should see repentance. They should see forgiveness. They should hear prayer. They should hear Scripture. They should see generosity. They should experience grace. They should watch Mom and Dad disagree without destroying one another. They should see us admit when we are wrong. They should watch us make decisions according to conviction even when those decisions cost us something. That is how we replace darkness with discipleship.

We cannot simply tell our children what they should not become. We must show them what following Jesus looks like. If all Christianity becomes is a list of things that are forbidden, eventually they may begin viewing holiness as restriction rather than relationship. They need to see what fills the space created by our boundaries. We do not simply say no to the world; we say yes to something infinitely greater. We say yes to the presence of God, yes to prayer, yes to worship, yes to the Word, yes to healthy relationships, yes to purpose, yes to purity, yes to peace, and yes to the joy that comes from walking with Jesus.

This also explains why isolation is so dangerous during spiritual battles. One of the things the enemy often attempts to take from us is healthy connection. When we become wounded, ashamed, discouraged, or tempted, the natural reaction can be to withdraw. We stop answering messages. We stop talking honestly. We stop asking for prayer. We stop coming close to people who might recognize that something is wrong. Isolation convinces us that we should handle everything ourselves, while pride tells us not to let anybody know we are struggling. Shame adds another voice and tells us that if people really knew what was

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

happening inside us, they would think differently about us. Yet God repeatedly works through the body of Christ, and there are battles we were never intended to fight alone.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:19–20 (KJV), “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask… For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Notice that word again: agree. The enemy wants agreement with lies and isolation from people, but God calls us into agreement with truth and connection with His people. Sometimes spiritual warfare looks like calling someone and saying, “I need you to pray with me.” Sometimes it looks like a husband and wife joining hands in prayer when a few minutes earlier they wanted to continue arguing. Sometimes it looks like parents laying their hands upon their children and praying over them. Sometimes it looks like bringing something hidden into the light and asking trusted spiritual leadership for help. Sometimes victory begins with enough humility to admit, “I am struggling, and I don’t want to fight this alone.”

This is why the enemy loves division. Jesus already told us that a divided house cannot stand. If he can separate husband from wife, parent from child, believer from church, and friend from friend, he can weaken relationships that God intended to become sources of spiritual strength. Therefore, restoration must include rebuilding godly agreement. We pray together again. We communicate again. We forgive again. We worship again. We trust again. We open the Bible again. We gather again. We speak again, and we begin to see again. This is exactly the picture Matthew gives us. The man who came to Jesus unable to see and unable to speak leaves the encounter doing both.

That is what Jesus does. He does not merely confront what has bound us. He restores what bondage tried to steal.

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Perhaps, then, the final question should not simply be, “What do I need God to remove?” We should also ask, “What needs to live again?” What needs to live again in our prayer life? What needs to live again in our marriage? What needs to live again between us and our children? What needs to live again in our worship? What needs to live again in our faith? What vision did disappointment silence? What voice did fear take away? What dream did discouragement bury? What spiritual discipline disappeared during the battle? What relationship needs to be rebuilt? What part of our walk with God have we allowed merely to survive when Jesus desires to restore it?

We should bring those things to Jesus because the same Jesus who caused the blind man to see and the silent man to speak is still able to restore what spiritual battles have affected. The enemy may have attacked our vision, but we can see again. The enemy may have attacked our voice, but we can speak again. The enemy may have attacked our agreement, but our house can come into agreement again. The

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

enemy may have attacked our prayer life, but we can pray again. The enemy may have attacked our worship, but we can worship again. The enemy may have attacked our family, but we can still stand together and declare, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Spiritual warfare, therefore, is not merely about what we refuse to allow into our homes. It is also about what we intentionally establish within them. It is not enough to say, “Not in this house.” We must also establish what does belong in this house. Prayer belongs in this house. Worship belongs in this house. Truth belongs in this house. Forgiveness belongs in this house. Purity belongs in this house. Faith belongs in this house. The Word belongs in this house. The presence of God belongs in this house. We are not merely trying to keep darkness outside; we are intentionally filling our homes with the things of God.

Ultimately, that is what our resistance is protecting. We are protecting a house that belongs to Jesus. We are protecting marriages that belong to Jesus. We are discipling children who belong to Jesus. We are guarding minds, hearts, voices, relationships, and futures that belong to Jesus. The enemy does not determine the atmosphere of our homes. Our wounds do not determine it. Our fears do not determine it. Culture does not determine it. We have made our agreement, and our agreement is with the Lord.

This house belongs to Jesus.

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

What needs to live again in our house? Instead of focusing only on what must leave, ask what Jesus wants to restore. Does prayer need to live again? Worship? Family devotion? Communication? Trust? Forgiveness? Spiritual conversations with our children? Faith for their future?

CONCLUSION

RESIST THROUGH SUBMISSION

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

> *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*
> **JAMES 4:7 (KJV)**

We began this study with a man who could not see and could not speak, and we have followed the battle all the way back to its root. Spiritual warfare is not simply about dramatic manifestations or unusual experiences. It is about the pressure that attempts to move our lives in a direction God never called us to go. It is about the battle over our vision, our voice, our thoughts, our homes, our marriages, our children, our convictions, and ultimately our agreement. The enemy wants us to agree with fear, bitterness, division, temptation, shame, hopelessness, and accusation, while God continually calls us back into agreement with His Word.

This is why James 4:7 remains the foundation of everything we have studied. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Spiritual authority begins with surrender. Before we confront what is attempting to influence us, we bring ourselves underneath the authority of God. Before we say no to darkness, we first say yes to Jesus. Before we rebuke what is around us, we allow God to search what is within us. Our resistance becomes effective when our surrender becomes genuine.

The battle is not won merely because we know how to speak spiritual language. It is won when our lives begin agreeing with the things we pray. We cannot ask God to establish peace in our homes while continually feeding anger. We cannot pray for purity while protecting the doorway through which temptation continually enters. We cannot ask God to restore our families while allowing offense, pride, and unforgiveness to remain comfortable within them. We cannot ask God to strengthen our children spiritually while giving every competing voice unrestricted access to their hearts. At some point our prayers, boundaries, words, habits, and decisions must begin moving in the same direction.

That is what submission produces. Submission brings the divided areas of our lives back into agreement with God.

There may be areas in our lives where God is asking us to close a door. There may be conversations we need to leave, relationships we need to reevaluate, habits we need to surrender, patterns of thought we need to pull down, or wounds we need to stop allowing to define our worldview. There may be things we have called personality that God is calling pride. There may be things we have called discernment that are actually suspicion. There may be things we have called caution that are actually fear. There may be things we have called “the way I am” that God is attempting to transform.

The Holy Ghost must be allowed to search those places.

We do not need to be afraid of that process because conviction is not God trying to destroy us. Conviction is God refusing to allow something destructive to remain hidden. If God reveals a doorway, He is showing us where to close it. If He exposes a lie, He is giving us an opportunity to replace it with truth. If He reveals bitterness, He is inviting us toward forgiveness. If He reveals fear, He is calling us toward faith. If He reveals contradiction between our public worship and our private life, He is calling us toward integrity.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Spiritual warfare therefore becomes deeply practical. Sometimes warfare is worship, fasting, intercession, and fervent prayer. But sometimes warfare is also apologizing to our spouse. Sometimes it is forgiving someone who does not deserve it. Sometimes it is placing our phone on the table and deleting something. Sometimes it is telling our children, “We are changing what we allow in this house.” Sometimes it is turning off the television. Sometimes it is opening the Bible. Sometimes it is calling someone and admitting that we need help. Sometimes it is getting on our knees when everything inside us wants to remain angry.

Sometimes the most powerful warfare happens without anybody shouting.

It happens when a surrendered person says, “No more.”

No more agreement with this lie. No more protecting this appetite. No more rehearsing this offense. No more speaking hopelessness over my family. No more allowing yesterday’s wound to define tomorrow’s relationships. No more allowing fear to preach louder than the Word of God. No more allowing temptation to tell me who I am. No more allowing an accusation to become my identity.

We have learned that the answer to the lie is truth. When Jesus stood in the wilderness, He did not allow hunger, pressure, affirmation, or the promise of a shortcut to determine His obedience. He answered, “It is written.” We need that same settled authority in our lives. We must know what God has said before pressure tries to reinterpret it. We need Scripture hidden in our hearts before the night season. We need truth before temptation. We need conviction before culture pressures us to compromise. We need our children to know God’s Word before another voice tries to give them a different identity.

The Word must become stronger than the pressure.

The Word must become stronger than the pressure.

When fear says our family will not survive, we need an “It is written.” When shame tells us our past has disqualified us, we need an “It is written.” When discouragement says prayer is useless, we need an “It is written.” When culture tells our children that obedience is outdated, they need an “It is written.” When temptation says compromise will make life easier, we need an “It is written.” We cannot swing a sword we never pick up. We cannot answer lies with truth we have never learned.

We must also remember that some battles may not disappear immediately. Judges 3 teaches us that God allowed a generation to face enemies so that they could learn war. Psalm 144 says that God teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight. Paul asked God to remove his thorn, and instead God told him, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” There will be battles where God delivers us quickly, and there may be others through which God develops endurance, discernment, prayer, humility, and dependence.

We must not waste those battles.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

If we are going to fight, let us come out stronger. Let us come out praying more deeply. Let us come out knowing Scripture better. Let us come out with clearer boundaries. Let us come out with greater compassion. Let us come out able to recognize the enemy's direction more quickly. Let us come out knowing how to help our children fight battles we once did not know how to fight ourselves.

One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is not a life without battles. It is an example of what faithful people do when battles come. Let them see us pray when we are afraid. Let them see us forgive when we are wounded. Let them see us repent when we are wrong. Let them see us worship when circumstances are difficult. Let them see us stand on Scripture when our emotions are unstable. Let them see us establish boundaries even when those boundaries are unpopular.

They need to know that serving God is not merely something we do when life is easy.

They need to watch us stand.

Ephesians 6:13 (KJV) says, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

There may be moments when standing is the victory. We prayed, and we are still standing. We cried, and we are still standing. We were disappointed, and we are still standing. The temptation returned, and we are still standing. Our family went through pressure, and we are still standing. We did not understand everything God allowed, but we remained submitted.

The enemy expected pressure to change our agreement.

Instead, the pressure strengthened it.

That is victory.

This is why the promise of Isaiah 54:17 (KJV) becomes so powerful: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper…" Notice that Scripture does not say that no weapon will ever be formed. It says the weapon will not prosper. There may still be attacks. There may still be pressure. There may still be moments when our faith is tested. The promise is not that nothing will ever come against us. The promise is that what comes against us does not have the authority to determine the final outcome.

Weapons may form, but they do not get the final word.

Fear may form, but fear does not get the final word.

Division may attempt to enter, but division does not get the final word.

Temptation may return, but temptation does not get the final word.

Our wounds may speak, but our wounds do not get the final word.

Our circumstances may be difficult, but our circumstances do not get the final word.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

God’s Word gets the final word.

So when the pressure comes, we do not have to become obsessed with what the enemy is doing. Our first question becomes, “God, am I submitted to You?” Then we resist. We guard the territory God has entrusted to us. We close doors that should never have remained open. We cast down imaginations. We bring our thoughts captive. We refuse agreement with lies. We fill our minds with truth. We teach our children. We protect our homes. We pray with one another. We stand.

And perhaps there are some things we need to settle in our hearts today.

We must decide that fear will not pastor our families. We must decide that bitterness will not become the atmosphere of our marriages. We must decide that culture will not have greater authority over our children than the Word of God. We must decide that our private lives will agree with our public worship. We must decide that our wounds will not become our worldview. We must decide that temptation can speak without receiving our agreement. We must decide that when the enemy questions what God has said, our answer will remain, “It is written.”

Most importantly, we must decide whom our house belongs to.

Joshua made that decision clearly: “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

That does not mean our house will never experience a battle. It means we have already decided who will have authority when the battle comes. It means we have decided what voice receives our agreement. It means prayer belongs here, worship belongs here, forgiveness belongs here, Scripture belongs here, purity belongs here, repentance belongs here, grace belongs here, and the presence of God belongs here.

If fear knocks, it does not own the house.

If temptation knocks, it does not own the house.

If offense knocks, it does not own the house.

If discouragement knocks, it does not own the house.

Jesus owns the house.

This is our agreement.

This is our surrender.

This is our resistance.

And this is how we stand.

Submit to God. Resist the devil. Stand on the truth. Give darkness no place. Refuse agreement with the lie. And when you have done all, stand.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

Because the battle may be real, but so is our God.

The weapon may be formed, but it will not prosper.

And as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. Spiritual warfare begins when _____ attempts to move us in a direction God has not called us to go.
2. What we do not _____, we will not resist, and what we do not resist, we will eventually tolerate.
3. According to James 4:7, before we resist the devil, we must first _____ ourselves to God.
4. Our resistance is only as effective as our _____.
5. Ephesians 4:27 tells us, “Neither give _____ to the devil.”
6. Spiritual warfare is ultimately a battle for _____.
7. We must be careful that our wound does not become our _____.
8. Jesus answered temptation in the wilderness with the words, “It is _____.”
9. According to 2 Corinthians 10:5, we must bring every thought into _____ to the obedience of Christ.
10. The presence of a battle does not necessarily mean the absence of God’s _____.

Answer Key — For Group Leaders: 1. pressure | 2. recognize | 3. submit | 4. surrender | 5. place | 6. agreement | 7. worldview | 8. written | 9. captivity | 10. power

FINAL FAMILY CHALLENGE

Before ending the study, take a few minutes as a family or group and identify two things together: one thing that no longer receives our agreement and one thing we intentionally want to establish.

Perhaps we say, “Fear will no longer receive our agreement, and prayer will become stronger in this house.” Perhaps it is, “Disrespect will not become our family culture, and forgiveness will become normal here.” Perhaps it is, “We will not allow the world unrestricted access to disciple our children, and we will intentionally bring Scripture into our home.”

Then pray together and make the declaration of Joshua 24:15 personal:

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

The battle may continue, but our agreement has already been decided.

THE BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT

✦ REFLECT & WRITE

Does my private life agree with my public worship? If our spouse and children only knew Christianity through watching us at home, what would they believe Christianity looks like? Is there agreement between the person we are in church and the person our family experiences every day?

What would change if our family truly decided, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"? What practical decisions would that statement affect this week? Consider our schedule, entertainment, conversations, relationships, finances, prayer life, and the spiritual formation of our children.