



A GATHERING PLACE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Spiritual Warfare: fighting the battle in the context of STM trips

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Our theme this month is spiritual warfare. The goal is not to produce a general theology of spiritual warfare but to focus on how to equip short-term missionaries to recognize and to know how to fight the spiritual battle within the context of STM trips, however, some basic foundational truths will be necessary. As those preparing and leading STM teams, we're responsible for equipping our teams for the battle.

The following paragraphs will address what our teams need to know about spiritual warfare. We hope this will help you integrate this subject into your pre-trip preparation. Be sure to [register for this month's webinar](#) as we will be addressing what spiritual warfare looks like in the context of STM trips, and how to prepare teams for the battle that is to come.

What is Spiritual Warfare?

Spiritual warfare is the battle between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. The devil and his demons seek to keep unbelievers in the darkness, render believers powerless in sin and doubt, and destroy Christian community that is to be the light in the darkness. Be careful not to put the manifestation of spiritual warfare into a box or compartmentalize spiritual warfare to only certain times and situations. It is always going on around us.

Spiritual warfare is real and should be kept in proper perspective.

C.S. Lewis, in *The Screwtape Letters*, writes, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." We ought to be aware of the influence of the devil but not acquiesce our responsibility for sin. We ought to see the devil at work without seeing him under every rock.

The Bible is the final authority on the demonic.

As Christians, we do not seek out information about evil spirits or from evil spirits. We do not talk with them except to send them away. We do not build systems of belief or practices around our experience or the experiences of others. The Bible is our information book and our pattern for practice.

The Victory is already won in Christ but not yet completely realized.

D-day versus V-day in World War II explains this concept well. I could not write anything better than Shirley Guthrie's explanation in *Christian Doctrine*:

When the Allied forces landed in Normandy, the decisive battle of the whole war was fought. After that it was certain that Nazi Germany was going to lose. Between D-Day (the day of the invasion) and V-Day (the day the Allies' victory was finally declared) the Germans fought a number of desperate fall-back battles across Europe. Many lives were lost and much damage done before they finally surrendered. But after the decisive battle in Normandy, it was clear how the war was going to turn out. The war was already won even if it was not yet over.

The decisive battle of all human history was fought when in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God "invaded" a world ruled and tormented by the dark powers of evil. But the final victory of God over them will come only with the final triumph of the risen Christ at the end of history. "Between the times" (between Easter and the end), the deadly battle between God and the powers of darkness still goes on, but the victory of Christ that has been won is the guarantee of the final victory that is surely on the way"

As Christians, the devil and his demons have no authority over us.

We may give over authority, but we don't have to give it. Imagine a soldier who has been in the military for 30 years. It's everything he's ever known and is a model soldier. The day comes for his release from service and he completes his exit interview and is officially released. As he walks out the door for the last time, he is no longer a soldier. However, as he starts to walk towards the door, his commanding officer passes by and says, "Soldier, get down and give me 20 push-ups." The soldier might just get down and do the push-ups, not because he has to, but because he is used to obeying the voice of his former commanding officer. As Christians, the devil has no authority over us unless we give it to him.

Protection and freedom from evil forces comes from the power of Jesus Christ.

We do not depend on symbols such as crosses, items like holy water, mantras like "by the blood of Christ," or our own power. A simple prayer in Jesus' Name is more effective than any dramatic exorcism movie scene you can imagine.

***What spiritual warfare might look like for their team and on their trip?**

The devil may try to detour you from your mission through subtle diversions such as flight delays, lost bags, or changed plans. He may seek to destroy team unity through bad attitudes and conflict. Finally, he may even use outrageous displays of power that use fear to capture hearts of unbelievers or frighten believers away.

***How we can be victorious in Christ in the spiritual battle?**

First Peter 5:8-9a instructs us, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith..."

Peter doesn't put together an eight-point strategy specific to spiritual warfare but simply tells us to stand firm in faith. Our best strategy is not to exclusively focus on the battle, but to cultivate an active and growing faith (Eph 6:10-18).

***What policies and guidelines regarding spiritual warfare need to be established?**

As a leader, how will you shepherd your team members during the battle? Are there places that you will not enter? Conditions under which you will or will not confront the demonic? How and what will you report back to people at home about the spiritual battles?

The last three paragraphs are really where the rubber meets the road. We encourage you to join us for our upcoming webinar "[Spiritual Warfare: fighting the battle in the context of STM trips](#)" on Tuesday, April 10th at 11am Pacific time (click on the title to register). We will take what our team members need to know to be victorious and see how we can build it into our existing training structures.

**These topics are addressed more fully in the SOE webinar "Spiritual Warfare: fighting the battle in the context of STM trips"*