




THE COMPASS

A TOOL FOR DISCIPLERS

Spiritual Battle

Conversation On the Journey

To get things going, you might ask your disciple to describe what they know about Satan. You also might ask if they can recall a time when they sensed the presence of evil, or were specifically lured to sin by him.

Now let's move on to our lesson. Satan is the English translation of a Hebrew word that means "adversary." Quite appropriate, I should think, as he is certainly all that, and a bag of spicy, hot, barbecue chips as well. Look up some of these passages with your disciple.

2 Corinthians 2:10-11

"If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven - if there was anything to forgive - I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

2 Corinthians 11:14

"And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

2 Corinthians 12:7

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."

1 Thessalonians 2:18

"For we wanted to come to you - certainly I, Paul, did, again and again - but Satan stopped us."

In *Sympathy for the Devil*, the refrain of the song goes (Satan, presumably speaking): "Pleased to meet you, hope you guess my name, but what's puzzling you, is the nature of my game." So, that's a question you want to ask. "As you look at these verses, what is Satan's game? What is his plan or goal? And why?"

This Week's Excursion

The topic of spiritual battle is important for at least two reasons. First, it opens the door to talking about Satan, and no discipleship curriculum is complete without broaching the topic of our adversary. Second, it prepares your disciple to better understand and respond to an obstacle he or she will become very familiar with: temptation. There is indeed a cosmic struggle between good and evil and your job for this lesson is to open up that world to your disciple. Much like Paul does in Ephesians when he tells his disciples, "our struggle is not [really] against flesh and blood, but it's against the spiritual powers and authorities..." You must make them aware of the spiritual matrix.

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Well, it should become clear that Satan's goal, flowing from his hatred and rebellion toward God, is to disqualify, pollute, and discredit believers. Not wanting to leave his disciples open to attack, the apostle Paul gives the following instruction in Ephesians 6:11-18:

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

As you go through the passage, there are a number of good questions you could ask. Here are a few:

When was a time recently where you became more aware of the spiritual war that is going on behind the scenes? Who are you likely to mistake as being the enemy? In this spiritual battle, how is victory defined?

Now move your way through the armor. The following should aid understanding, and lead to asking good questions.

Ephesians 6:14-20

So how do we stand firm against Satan? Paul tells us it is through the "armor of God." It is very important to note, that while Paul uses the metaphor of putting on the armor, he is not trying to communicate that it is something you ever take off. He is communicating that you must daily "walk in these things" in order to enjoy complete protection.

Belt of Truth

What you will notice, as Paul surveys the various pieces of armor, is that he is really reviewing the various things he has already instructed the Ephesians in the letter. In 4:25, he told the Ephesians that they must "put off falsehood and speak truthfully." In 5:9, he says that the fruit of godliness "consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth." So this is not a new teaching. What is new for them is to realize that when they speak untruthfully, they give Satan an open door into their lives to create pain and turmoil. You might ask if there is any area of their lives where they move away from truth in their speech.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Here, Paul is alluding to the behavior found in 4:25-5:7. Have your disciple read the passage, and jot down both the negative and positive behavior Paul has in mind.

Next Steps

You might want to discuss with them where they see this cosmic struggle taking place (dorms, classes, relationships etc.) and encourage them to begin to pray, as the apostle Paul encourages, for God's victory in the spiritual battle.

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Feet Fitted with Readiness from the Gospel

Evangelism is in view here. You might ask how evangelism is a protection in this spiritual battle, and how not being willing to speak of Christ opens a door for Satan.

The Shield of Faith, Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Scriptures

In the first two chapters, Paul went to great lengths to describe all of the things that are true of us in Christ. These truths, and our trust in them, seem to represent the shield, helmet, and sword. Go back and review some of them, or have your disciple scan the chapters and write some things down. You also might ask why Paul calls this the “helmet.”

Prayer

Finally, Paul urges continuous praying of all kinds of prayers. Paul has already modeled this kind of prayer throughout the letter. In Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-21, we get large samples of that which Paul prayed. Among other things, he prays for wisdom, strength, unity, and maturity for the Ephesians. Have your disciple read through one of the prayers and pull out some principles of praying amidst the spiritual battle.

You might want to ask what happens if we give Satan a foothold in these areas, and, perhaps, ask if there is any area that Satan already has a foothold in their lives.

Finally, emphasize to your disciple that Scripture does not tell us to fear our enemy, only to be vigilant in not giving him a foothold in our lives.

†End

Notes to Self



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