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Presentation Transcript
Waging Spiritual War – Part 4 – Rules of Engagement
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We're now beginning the fourth presentation in this series, *Waging Spiritual War*. So far, we've covered, number one, *Enlisting in God's Army*, number two, *Enemy Tactics and Objectives*, and number three, *Weapons the Enemy Uses and the Weapons We Have*. These last two are somewhat like boot camp – enemy tactics and weaponry. So today, we're moving ahead and we're going to learn our rules for engagement – how and when we can use our weapons, and how and when to engage the enemy.

Do you know these rules? Here we go, then. So, how and when to engage the enemy. Notice this biblical strategy in James 4:6-7:

James 4:6-7 – *Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

So, submit to God and resist the devil. Keep your enlistment agreement, like we talked about earlier, with God, and at the same time, resist the enemy. When we are actually face-to-face with the enemy, our game is one of resistance, rather than attack. Why is that? Well, because while he can be defeated, he cannot be killed. And we have no power over him whatsoever, but we can resist his efforts to attack us. Remember the last presentation on *Weapons Training*? All our weapons are defensive, or protective – the belt of truth, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith – so all armor to protect us, rather than offensive weapons. All but one, that is. That is the sword of the Spirit. That's the only one. What *is* the sword of the Spirit? Well, it's the Word of God, we're told – the truth of God in written form – our life-saver, so to speak.

Remember how Jesus wielded that weapon against the devil when he came to tempt him? He didn't try to kill him, but to defeat his lies with the word of Truth – God's sword. And, in that way, this weapon can also be used as defensive, instead of offensive. It's sort of a "get off me" weapon.

Rule number one is *to resist the devil*. Resist, resist, resist. So, in our daily lives, we're to go about doing God's work and His will. And that's where our offensive energy is focused. It's not that we don't have any. It's that we focus that on doing what God wants us to do. And in the process of doing God's work, sometimes we are attacked, tempted, discouraged, angered, surrounded, thwarted, etcetera, and that's when we go on the defense. We resist. That's rule number one.

What are we resisting? Well, do you remember the first part of this series – enlistment? It's was about a covenant we make with God – that He will become our spiritual Father. And we do that how? Well, by trusting and believing what He says – by following and obeying Him, by carrying out His will in our lives. Remember that? We covered that in detail.

Okay, so now let's go back to scripture where Jesus shines a light of awareness on what the devil is trying to do when he attacks us – John 8:43:

John 8:43 – *Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my words. And why couldn't they bear to hear His words? Well, you are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. He invented it.*

So the devil is trying to get us to follow him – to worship him, to be *his* child and make him *our* father, whom we believe, follow and obey instead of God. That's his effort. What does this all mean? Well, by the choice we make on this issue, we're being asked, "Who's your daddy?" Who are you going to follow? When we believe the devil's lies on any topic, we become his child and he becomes our father. We will be inclined to do his will. What does *that* mean? Well that means we are no longer under God's protection – the protection of grace. We're out in the open – sitting ducks – no helmet, no shield, no belt, no breastplate, no sword. At this point, we have thrown down our defensive armor and have offered our adversary unrestricted access to our hearts. And does he ever take advantage of that! Because at this point, if we don't believe the truth of God on any given front, we are enslaved to that idea and the sin that it causes.

Have you ever felt like a habit is in control of you? I talk to many people who are enslaved by heroin or meth or pornography or gambling – many of them. It starts out as fun, and then later, it's hell. And they feel like they are enslaved to their habit – the slaves of sin. And they're not going to find any freedom from their father, because he revels in their misery.

This unrestricted access that we give the devil by believing his lies allows him to do whatever he wants with us. We are the slaves of sin if we go this route, and it's not a good life. When we start listening to the devil, we're breaking our agreement with God. And God backs off because we have free will. We get to choose who we're going to follow. He, then, reacts according to that.

And, if He didn't react that way, He'd be violating His own rules of salvation. It has to be *our* choice.

But we might ask, "Doesn't God allow the devil access to us sometimes? Well, yes, sometimes He does. In every case, when this happens, the end result – if we use rule one: Resist, resist, resist – is a way of escape. In 1 Corinthians 10:13:

1 Corinthians 10:13 – *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. Who's the tempter? Well, it's us. It's common to man because there are certain things he does to tempt us that he knows works. Then it continues: God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

So when God grants the devil access to tempt us, He limits it. And He says that we *won't* be tempted beyond our ability. When we grant him access, that all goes away. He has unlimited access to us.

Jesus and Job were both examples. In both cases, we can see that the devil was restricted in his access. He was not allowed to kill either one of them. He could have killed Jesus – He was a human being – but he wasn't allowed to.

So that's the first rule of engagement – Resist, resist, resist. Let's look at rule two now. We already read rule two inadvertently – not inadvertently, but without comment. And that is *to draw close to God*. "Draw close to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you." So, if we want the devil to flee from us, we have to draw close to God.

There's no use fighting with the devil. You can't win. He's too strong an enemy for us. Remember what Jesus said to Simon? He said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." You know, that phrase, "Sift you like wheat...." Imagine a large sheet of expanded metal. Now imagine being pressed through it. What's left? Goo. The devil is too strong for us. He *can* do that. He can sift us like wheat if God lets him. He asked for Peter, but he was denied access by the prayer of Jesus Christ, who is our *only* hope. He's the only hope we have to resist the devil. And then draw close to the One who can defeat, and has already defeated, our adversary, and the One with whom we have a covenant, if we'll stick to it.

So this is all through the Bible. Come back to God and He'll heal our land, we learn in the Old Testament. That's a really popular scripture now. Let's look again at our key scripture here.

James 4:7-8 – *Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you doubled-minded.*

Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Stop waffling back and forth between the devil's lies and God's truth. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Learn what God's way is – not out of your own opinions or imagination or the words of some other human, but out of the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Then follow that way, not sometimes, but *all* the time. That's what he's saying we need to do.

So you may have figured out by now that the second rule of engagement is *to let God fight for us*. And we do that by believing God, making Him our Father again, and following His directives and His orders as our Commander-in-Chief.

Okay, that's how we engage the devil. We resist him and we draw close to God. Next time, as promised, we're going to learn how to fight with the weapons we have. We're going to get right down in the trenches of everyday life, look at some common lies the devil floats out to us and how to resist them. And this pulls us back into relationship with God, and He, then, honors our contract.

Then, in the final part of this series, we're going to see what God does when we resist the devil and draw close to Him. And I really like the title of this one. It's called *Broken Arrow*. You may have seen the movie, *We Were Soldiers*. It's pretty old now, but it was about the US troops in combat for the first time against the North Vietnamese Army. And, at one point in that very first battle, the enemy had breached US lines, and they were in danger of being completely overwhelmed. So the battle commander called Broken Arrow. And that was a radio message to command about the dire risk to send in bombers so close that even his own troops might be in danger – a desperate emergency request for help from on high to wage war in close over a powerful enemy. And we're going to see, in this last part of the series, that that is exactly what God will do unerringly on our behalf when we do our tiny part.

So don't forget to check out our Website, liferesource.org. There's a lot more there. And, if you're getting anything out of our efforts at LifeResource, you might want to consider contributing, so that others can here what we are sharing – just as someone else has contributed with you. Since our message is going out to many beyond the boundary of our own church, that would make you an evangelist, wouldn't it? Or maybe just a sharing person would be good enough.

But at any rate, until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.