

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS REAL

STUDY GUIDE

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STUDY GUIDE | FIVE SESSIONS

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with Kevin and Sherry Harney



HarperChristian
Resources

Spiritual Warfare Is Real Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION

A CALL TO WAKE UP

C. S. Lewis wrote his classic work, *The Screwtape Letters*, in an effort to help modern-minded Christians recognize the reality of spiritual warfare and the tactics of the enemy of our soul. These letters first appeared in a weekly religious newspaper in 1941 and then in book form in 1942. They were a wake-up call to believers who had grown numb to the reality of their spiritual enemy.

Each letter is written as if it was penned by a senior demon (Uncle Screwtape) to his demonic protégé (Wormwood). Each one reveals a specific aspect of the spiritual battle between the forces of hell and ordinary people who walk in this world. Why would such a great Christian thinker as Lewis feel the need to write these letters and publish them for the consumption of every-day Christians?

The answer is simple. We are prone to doze off, fall asleep, and forget that we are in the middle of a war! Satan loves it this way! So, people like C. S. Lewis write to wake us up and get our attention. There is a real spiritual world, an actual enemy of our soul, and we need to wake up and get in the fight. If we fail to do this, we do so at our own peril.

In 1977, a generation after Lewis wrote *The Screwtape Letters*, a passionate young Christian artist named Keith Green wrote a song

with the same goal in mind. He wanted to wake up the groggy Christians in his generation who did not recognize the serious spiritual battle raging all around them. Green wrote his song in the first person, through the voice of Satan. Reflect on these piercing words that come at the end of the chorus:

*You know, it's getting very simple now
'Cause no one believes in me anymore!*

Linger on that final line. “*No one believes in me anymore.*” Let the words sink in. Why did C. S. Lewis write *The Screwtape Letters*? Why would Keith Green pen and sing such dark words in a song called “Satan’s Boast”? Why are you reading this introduction to a five-week study on spiritual warfare?

Because the battle is real. Our enemy is still at work. We need to wake up!

Pause right now and say a prayer from the depth of your heart:

God of heaven, give me a bold spirit and courage to face the reality of spiritual warfare. Wake me up! Prepare me for the battle. I am yours. I am ready to stand, to fight, and to celebrate your victory.

Let the truth of Scripture grab you by the shoulders and shake you awake.

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.

(EPHESIANS 6:12)

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

(1 PETER 5:8–9)

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The *Spiritual Warfare Is Real* video study is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or any small-group gathering. However, if you are going through this study on your own, you can still make use of the study materials and questions after you watch the video by streaming video access on the inside front cover of this guide or by the DVD.

Each session begins with a brief opening reflection and “talk about it” questions to get you and your group thinking about the topic. You will then watch a video with pastor Jim Cymbala and jump into some directed small-group discussion, unless your group decides to watch the video ahead of time through streaming access provided on the inside front cover of this guide. You will close each session with a time of prayer as a group.

To get the most out of your group experience, keep the following points in mind. First, the real growth in this study will happen during your small-group time. This is where you will process the content of Jim Cymbala’s message, ask questions, and learn from others as you hear what God is doing in their lives. For this reason, it is important for you to be fully committed to the group and attend each session so you can build trust and rapport with the other members. If you choose to only “go through the motions,”

or if you refrain from participating, there is a lesser chance you will find what you're looking for during this study.

Second, remember that the goal of your small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, and build intimacy and friendship. For this reason, seek to make your group a "safe place." This means being honest about your thoughts and feelings and listening carefully to everyone else's opinion. (If you are a group leader, there are additional instructions and resources in the back of the book for leading a productive discussion group.)

Third, resist the temptation to "fix" a problem someone might be having or to correct his or her theology, as that's not the purpose of your small-group time. Also, keep everything your group shares confidential. This will foster a rewarding sense of community in your group and create a place where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

Following your group time, maximize the impact of the course with the additional between-session studies. For each session, you may wish to complete the personal study all in one sitting or spread it out over a few days (for example, working on it a half-hour a day on four different days that week). Note that if you are unable to finish (or even start!) your between-sessions personal study, you should still attend the group study video session. You are still wanted and welcome at the group even if you don't have your "homework" done.

Keep in mind that the videos, discussions, and activities are simply meant to kick-start your imagination, so you are not only open to what God wants you to hear but also how to apply it to your life. As you go through this study, be watching for what God is saying as it relates to approaching the throne of God's grace, receiving mercy, finding his peace, praying with faith, persevering in prayer for the answer, and praying together as a church.

OF NOTE

The quotations in this guide were taken from the video series and Jim Cymbala's teaching on spiritual warfare. The other resources in this guide—including the session introductions, small-group questions, and between-sessions materials—were written by Kevin and Sherry Harney in collaboration with Jim Cymbala. If you are a group leader, additional instructions and resources have been provided in the back of this guide to help you lead your group members through the study.

SESSION ONE

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

In the early 2020s, people in San Francisco started putting signs in the windows of their cars saying things like “I have nothing of value in my car, please don’t break my windows.” Or, “My car doors are unlocked and there is nothing to take.” Why would they do this? Because a growing number of cars parked on the streets (even in populated and well-lit areas) were being robbed. Thieves were smashing windows to go through the car and take things. Many of these cars had nothing to steal, but their owners ended up paying more for car insurance and deductibles because of smashed windows. As they understood their enemy (local car burglars), they simply explained that their car had nothing to take and tried politely asking them to refrain from breaking the windows.

When we know a threat is imminent, when we understand the enemy, we can be prepared to fight back. Imagine you found out that termites or carpenter ants were ravaging the very structure of your home. You would learn about these tiny and subtle enemies and do what was necessary to fight them off.

Every Christian needs to recognize and understand the enemy of their soul. If we are going to fight back, we must be prepared to enter the battle. We are wise to study the tactics and ways of Satan and learn how to stand strong against him and his demonic

workers. If we bury our head in the sand, like the proverbial ostrich, we don't become safe because we can't see the incoming attack. We just become a big target. Ignoring the enemy never makes him go away. Being afraid is natural but turning to run away just exposes our back. What we need to do is stand in the supernatural name of the resurrected Jesus Christ and fight back in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Step one: know your enemy. Let's get started!

Satan is a spiritual being who tempts everyone, all the time, toward evil. He is the cause of all the evil in the world and rules over a horde of demonic beings.

TALK ABOUT IT

- When you think of the devil, what images, pictures, and ideas come to your mind? If you were to talk openly about the reality and presence of Satan and demons with the average person on the street, how do you think they would respond?

Unless Jesus was a total liar and fraud, Satan is just as real as God.

WATCH VIDEO SESSION ONE

(Either use the DVD or your streaming video access on the inside front cover.)

Video Teaching Notes

Use the space provided below to write down notes, ideas, observations, or questions that hit you as you listen to Jim's teaching:

The power, glory, and victory of God

Who is Satan and what is he doing?

Satan can't compare to God

God is omnipresent, the devil is not.

God is omniscient, the devil is not.

God is omnipotent, the devil is not.

The devil's approach . . . subtle and stealthy

God's kingdom vs. Satan's kingdom

**The darkness of Satan's kingdom
was overcome by the light of Jesus Christ.**

Satan has no feelings, no compassion, and shows no mercy

Never drop your guard

Darkness vs. light

A Story . . . God's power can overcome the greatest of evil

VIDEO DISCUSSION

After watching this week's video teaching on spiritual warfare, go deeper into this topic by talking with your group members using these questions and conversation prompters:

1. What are ways we can stand strong against the devil's efforts to tempt and harm our lives and the lives of the people we love?
2. **Read Ephesians 6:10–18.** It is clear that the devil has tactics and schemes to tempt and attack God's people (even Jesus). How does this make you feel and how does it wake you up to the need to be aware of his tactics and efforts?
3. **Read 1 Peter 5:8–9.** The devil prowls like a roaring lion and disguises himself as an angel of light. He is deceptive and stealthy. What are ways we can identify the presence and work of the enemy when he is lurking and sneaking around our world and life?

4. The devil does not care what it takes to draw you away from God and distract you from standing strong in faith. What are some of the distractions, enticements, and lures Satan uses to draw you away from the God who protects and loves us?

**A Christian cannot be inhabited by the Holy Spirit
and at the same time by an evil spirit.**

5. Jim mentions that we drop our guard when we “are not in the Word, not walking in Christian community, and not thinking about Jesus.” How have you seen spiritual attack increase in your life when you are drifting away from the patterns and behaviors that keep you closely connected to Jesus?

**Satan looks for any weakness, any sign of a limp, any open door,
and then he attacks without mercy.**

6. What are decisions we can make each day that will move us into God's kingdom of light and actually help his kingdom come where we live, eat, work, play, and go to church.

Satan is called the god of this world because he has influence over so much that happens around us.

7. What can you do to stay closer to Jesus and his people so that you are less of a target for the attacks and enticements of Satan? How can your group members support and help fortify you as you stand against the attacks of the enemy?

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time as a group to step into the battle as you . . .

- Lift up passionate and joy-filled prayers celebrating the victory of Jesus and the ever-present power of the Holy Spirit.
- Ask God to open your mind to understand the reality and tactics of the enemy against your life, family, church, and community.
- Ask the Spirit of the Living God to grant daily power to resist the enemy and fight any and every attack he brings against you.
- Thank God for past victories he has won on your behalf and for ways he has protected and provided for you in the midst of the battles.

**When the light of Jesus enters our life,
his very presence dispels darkness.**

BETWEEN SESSIONS

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take time in personal reflection to think about the following questions . . .

- How has the power and presence of Jesus delivered and protected me from the attacks of the enemy throughout my life?
- What are repeated and specific strategies that Satan uses against me? What can I do to prepare for these attacks and stand against them in the victorious power of Jesus?
- What are ways I can partner with God to help his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven (in my life, home, church, and community)?

Journal, Reflections, and Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

The darkness of Satan's kingdom has been overcome by the light of Jesus Christ.

PERSONAL ACTIONS

Daily Check-In and Review

Since the devil is always prowling around seeking someone to devour and never ceases his efforts to distract, discourage, and tempt us, we need to make time every day to check in with God and ensure we are not under the attack of our enemy.

Consider taking these steps at the start of each day:

1. Reflect on the previous day and ask, “Are there ways I fell into the enticements of the enemy?” If you identify any, confess them and pray for eyes to see these enticements in the future. Also ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to help you say no the next time you face this same temptation.
2. Pray through the day ahead and ask for the Spirit of God to show you any places the enemy might be getting ready to attack.
3. Ask for the power of Jesus to protect you from the work of the enemy in your life.
4. Pray for the victory of Jesus and the glory of his resurrection power to guide you through the day ahead.

Keep notes of specific areas you have faced temptation and how you were able to stand strong in the power of Jesus:

Fortifying Places of Weakness

Satan is like a lion looking for the zebra or antelope with any injury that slows it down and makes it easy to catch. With merciless attention he watches the mass of people moving through life and he pounces on those who are weak, injured, and vulnerable. Followers of Jesus must identify the areas in their life where there is a crack in their integrity, a recurring bad habit, a lull in their personal time with Jesus, opening their heart and mind to media that compromises their purity, anything that the enemy will use against us.

Take time to walk through a process of self-inspection so you can identify and fortify specific places of weakness in your life.

1. **Pray.** *“Lord of truth and wisdom, show me any attitude or behavior in my life that weakens me and makes me an easy target for the enemy.”*
2. **Identify an area** (or areas). Write down at least one area of struggle or disobedience in your life that weakens your faith and invites the attacks of Satan.
 - _____
 - _____
3. **Read Scripture.** Do an internet Bible search on the topic of struggle in your life. For example, if your area of struggle is living in fear, do a search on Bible passages about overcoming fear. If your struggle is with pornography, do a search on Bible passages about holiness and purity of mind. If your area of weakness is dishonesty, do a search on Bible passages about honesty and telling the truth.

- Write down the reference for 8–10 passages and one insight from that passage:

Passage:

Insight:

Passage:

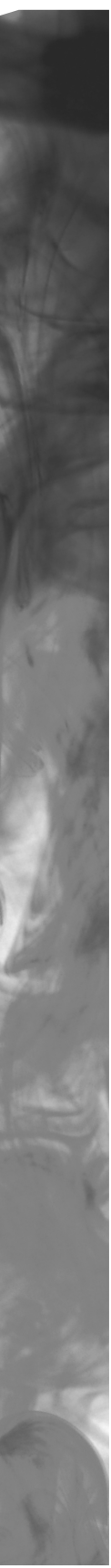
Insight:

Passage:

Insight:

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4. **Memorize a verse.** Pick one of the verses you listed above and commit it to memory over the next week.
5. **Make a commitment.** Prayerfully commit to one action or habit that will help fortify and protect you against the attack of Satan in this area of your life.

My Commitment: _____

6. **Seek accountability.** Share your commitment with one strong Christian you trust and ask for their prayer and for them to ask you how you are doing in this area of growth each week for the next month.
7. **Pray more.** Over the coming weeks, as you seek to grow in this area of your life, pray daily for power, growth, and the victory of Jesus over the enemy.

**In the name and power of Jesus we have victory
over the one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy.**

