

This Is War, Part 3: Sermon Study Guide

The Story Houston - March 24, 2019

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Intro to 'This Is War'

This is Part 3 of a 4-part sermon series about the spiritual battles of everyday life. We're learning what the Bible says about the spiritual realm while paying especially close attention to what Jesus believed about Satan, angels, demons, and the epic struggle of light against the darkness. This subject might be uncomfortable for some; you might not believe in creatures like demons at all. If that's the case, all I ask is that you approach these teachings with an open mind.

Reflection Question: Most of us, when facing interpersonal conflict, tend to respond in one or two ways: either we go on the offensive, or we retreat. *Fight* or *flight*. When it comes to our spiritual battles, however, most of us remain neutral. We don't attack *or* defend; we usually just ignore or accept the evil around us and the temptations within us. ***Why do you think that is the case?***

Today we're going to focus on offensive strategies in this spiritual struggle. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells the story of a farmer who is casting seeds onto four different kinds of soil - a hard path, shallow dirt, land overrun by weeds, and fertile soil. Who or what do the farmer, the seed, and the different kinds of soil represent?

For the purposes of today's message, let's focus on the first kind of soil - the hard path. This is what Jesus says:

Matthew 13:3-4

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up."

After he finished telling the whole story, it was clear that Jesus' disciples weren't getting it, so he went back and explained every detail. This is his explanation of the "hard path" analogy:

Matthew 13:18-19

"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: **When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart.** This is the seed sown along the path."

According to Jesus, what happens when people do not receive or understand the gospel? Why do you think so many people do not receive or understand it?

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Receiving and understanding the gospel of Jesus is your greatest spiritual weapon when fighting the evil one. How is receiving and understanding the gospel a choice we all make?

In addition to growing in your faith and trusting God more, the Bible offers some very practical ideas for attacking your spiritual enemies. Take Paul's words from his letter to the Christians living in Ephesus around 50 AD:

Ephesians 4:25-29

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

What offensive strategies do you see in this passage?

What are some everyday, practical strategies for attacking the darkness inside and around you?

Your notes: