

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to accept:

1. that a Christian has spiritual enemies and must be involved in spiritual warfare
2. that spiritual warfare consists of prayer, resistance to his attacks and persistent promotion of the kingdom of God

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is to thank God

Theme: Thanking God for his answers to your prayers, his unfailing love and wonderful deeds

Psalm 107:8

⁸ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

Ephesians 5:20

²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Let the group members take turns to relate shortly an answer to one of their prayers or an event in which God showed his love and work in their life.

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to thank God.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: **Spiritual warfare**

Read or explain in your own words.

Every Christian should be involved in spiritual warfare. Christians have three major enemies:

1. The old, sinful nature of man

Our own unchanged nature, called 'the flesh', which tends to be selfish, draws us away from God or causes us to do what displeases God.

2. The evil world

1 John 2:15-17

¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father^[a] is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

John 15:18-27

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

²⁰ Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfil what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

²⁶ "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

The word 'world' has several different meanings in the Bible, depending on the context. (cf. lesson 4, John 3:16). Here the word means: the people alienated from God and the life of God, loaded with sin, subject to God's wrath and judgment and who are in need of salvation (John 3:19*); with the additional thought that they are openly hostile against God, Jesus Christ, the Bible and Christians (John 7:7).

This hostile world continuously tries to tempt Christians with the glitter of material possessions, power, glory and pleasure. It consists of the political and religious teachers and leaders that oppose and persecute Christians.

3. Satan and his evil spirits

Satan and his demons constantly fire their arrows of lies, immorality, doubts and discouragements at Christians.

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: Spiritual warfare against the enemy

Day 1	Matthew 4:1-11 Satan tests and tempts you. Resist him with the Bible
Day 2	Matthew 12:22-29 Satan is bound by Christ. Rob his people
Day 3 ^{BS}	Ephesians 6:10-18 Satan fights against you. Put on the full armour of God so you can remain standing
Day 4	John 8:37-44 Satan is behind every lie. Reject his lies
Day 5	1 Corinthians 7:1-9 Satan seduces. It is better to marry than to burn with passion
Day 6	2 Corinthians 11:13-15 Satan disguises himself. Expose him and his servants (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
Day 7	2 Timothy 2:23-26 Satan sets traps (cf. 1 Timothy 3:7). Avoid quarrelling
Day 8	1 Peter 5:6-11 Satan seeks a gap in your defences. Resist him
Day 9	1 John 3:4-11 Satan sins from the beginning. Live righteously ¹
Day 10	Revelation 12:7-12 Satan is an accuser. Conquer his false insinuations

¹ Some Bible translations neglect to translate the present continuous time in 1 John 3:6,8 and 9. This leads to misunderstanding of the text. The NIV translation is correct.

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.

If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: Evil and spiritual warfare

- What are the most important goals of Satan and his evil spirits?
- How was the power of Satan and his demons curbed?
- How can Christians continue to conquer Satan and his evil spirits?
- How can a Christian effectively resist the devil?
- When do people give the devil a foothold?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following questions and record their answers:

- "What should you do when Satan or his demons shoot fiery arrows at you?"
- "How do *you* resist the devil?"

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review of previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God.

Resist the devil,

and he will flee from you.

James 4:7(NIV)

3. Review of the Bible books

All 39 books of the Old Testament

The 5 books of the Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The 12 historical books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth
1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings,
1&2 Chronicles, Ezra,
Nehemiah, Esther

The 5 poetical books: Job, Psalms, proverbs,
Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs=

The 5 major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations,
Ezekiel, Daniel

The 12 minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,
Jonah, Micah, Nahum,
Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai,
Zechariah, Malachi

All 27 books of the New Testament

The 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

The 1 historical book: Acts

The 13 Letters of Paul: Romans, 1&2 Corinthians,
Galatians, Ephesians,
Philippians, Colossians,
1&2 Thessalonians,
1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

The 8 General Letters: Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter,
1&2&3 John, Jude,

The 1 Apocalypse: Revelation

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: The spiritual armour

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step Bible Study method and study:

Ephesians 6:10-18

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² 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. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour 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.

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with **the belt** of truth buckled around your waist, with **the breastplate** of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with **(shoes of)** the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up **the shield** of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take **the helmet** of salvation and **the sword** of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ 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 Lord's people.

2. Emphasis

- Spiritual warfare is a reality. How do you experience this spiritual warfare?
- Discuss practical examples of spiritual warfare.

3. Explanation for the group leader

6:10-12. The opponents.

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, that is, not merely against people. It is against carnal people (even disobedient nominal Christians) and against the rulers (antichristian political, military and religious rulers), the authorities (people with authority like antichristian or corrupt police and judges), the powers of this dark world (people with position and money like in antichristian mass media, in antichristian philosophies, ideologies, religions and ethics) and against Satan and his spiritual forces of evil who execute their evil schemes through the above mentioned people.

The spiritual forces of evil are fallen angels (Revelation 12:3-4a). That is why they oppose God, try to keep the non-Christians and unbelievers away from Jesus Christ and attack Christians in order to destroy them. That is also why they are usually allies of the other religions in the world and even co-operate with them to destroy Christians. They confiscate Bibles, burn churches, drive all Christians out of their towns, imprison Christian workers, refuse education and employment to Christians and even kill Christians.

'Spiritual warfare' means to actively oppose the deceptive methods, plans, strategies and evil actions of Satan and the people who co-operate with Satan.

A Christian can only effectively be involved in spiritual warfare when he has put on the full armour of God, when he fights with spiritual weapons and when he depends on the power and victory of Christ.

The purpose of spiritual warfare is:

- to remain standing after the attacks of Satan and his evil allies
- and to gain more territory and people from the power of Satan and his evil allies

6:13. Spiritual weapons and armour.

Christians ought to fight spiritual warfare against Satan and his evil allies with the spiritual armour they put on and with spiritual weapons.

Fight with spiritual weapons (2 Corinthians 10:-5). The spiritual weapons are not weapons of the world (which are 'carnal'), but have the divine ability to demolish strongholds. Christians must break down the strongholds consisting of lies and false arguments, take every thought

(belief or conviction) captive and make them obedient to Jesus Christ and the Word.

Fight with the spiritual armour on (Ephesians 6:10-18).
What is the significance of every part of the spiritual armour?

6:14. The belt represents the truth.

A Roman soldier used the belt to bind his tunic high above his knees so that he would be able to move and run.

The belt represents truth and uprightness (sincerity).

A Christian soldier uses God's truth (John 8:31-32; 14:6; 17:18) to fight against all lies and deceit and he fights the spiritual fight with a sincere and determined heart.

Just as Gideon and his group of 300 soldiers (Judges chapter 7), a determined Christian will have much more influence than a hypocrite.

The breastplate represents righteousness.

A Roman soldier used the breastplate to protect his heart and lungs.

The breastplate first represents the righteousness which Jesus Christ earned and gained in the Christian's place so that the Christian may stand in a right relationship with God (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus Christ paid the ransom to redeem man and set the captive free and thereafter reconciled man to God. The righteous man has clothed himself with the Lord Jesus Christ (and Christ's righteousness) (Romans 13:14).

The breastplate also represents the righteousness which the Christian lives in the world (living according to the directives of God's Word), so that he may silence the ignorant talk of foolish people (1 Peter 2:15). The righteous man continually lives as God wants him to live amidst the godless and wicked people of the world (Genesis 6:9).

A Christian soldier can only fight the spiritual fight effectively from a position of righteousness in Christ and by doing what is right in God's eyes. And he actually fights the spiritual fight.

Just as the wise man says "A man cannot be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted." "The house of the righteous stands firm" (Proverbs 12:3,7; cf. verse ,12,13,26).

6:15. The feet (fitted with sandals) represents readiness.

A Roman soldier had leather sandals on so that he could walk long distances on rough terrain.

The sandals represent readiness to engage in spiritual warfare and to persevere in it for a long time.

Just as the faithful and wise steward (Luke 12:42-43), a ready Christian will be occupied with giving the master's servants their food allowance at the proper time and will be found doing this when the master unexpectedly returns. A Christian is made ready by the gospel of peace, that is, the good news that reconciles God to man and man to God. A ready Christian knows this message of peace, is equipped to pass this message on to others and is prepared to preach the Word in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2-3; cf. Matthew 10:32).

6:16. The shield represents faith.

A Roman soldier carried a shield made of cow-hide and used it to defend himself from the fiery arrows shot at him. The shield catches the arrow and extinguishes the flames.

The shield represents faith which actively defends the soldier against the onslaught of the enemy and actively repels the attacks. The flaming arrows represent Satan's oppressions (persecutions) and Satan's seductions (temptations) designed to instigate lies, doubt, suspicion, fear, anxiety, greed, egoism, vanity, jealousy, lust, etc. in the minds and hearts of people.

For example, by believing God's statement: "You are precious in my eyes" (Isaiah 43:4) the Christian is able to repel Satan's lie which says "You are worthless". By believing God's promise to provide a way out of a temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13) the Christian is able to repel every temptation!

A Christian soldier defends himself actively in the spiritual fight by claiming through faith God's promises in the Bible and by using the truth in the Bible, which he believes, to extinguish the lies of Satan and others.

Just as the believers during the Old Testament period (Hebrews 11:33-37), a Christian who believes God's promises in his Word will be able to remain standing amidst hungry lions (Daniel 6:23a), in fire (Daniel 3:24-25), against the sword (2 Kings 6:14-18), in troubles (Job 42:10) and in martyrdom (Acts 22:25).

6:17. The helmet represents salvation

A Roman soldier had a metal helmet on his head to protect him against the blows of the sword.

The helmet represents the assurance of salvation, the safe protection of the Christian's beliefs, convictions and assurances.

For example, the Christian has the following assurances: that God himself will fight for him (Exodus 14:14; 2 Chronicles 20:15,17); that God himself will be with him when he passes through threatening water and fire (Isaiah 43:2); that God himself will save him from persecution and suffering (2 Timothy 3:11); and that God will carry the good work he began to completion until the Day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). These assurances strengthen the Christian soldier to fight till the very end (cf. Matthew 24:13)!

A Christian soldier protects his view of God, his convictions about the truths in the Bible and his assurance of salvation from the attacks that arise from the world that is sinful and hostile against God.

The Christian, who has filled his mind with God's words, will not sin against the Lord (Psalm 119:9,11). The Christian, who looks at the events in this world from God's point of view, will no longer get depressed by the apparent success and well-being of the wicked (Psalm 73:16-17). His faith causes him to look at things, not from man's point of view, but from God's point of view.

The sword of the Spirit represents words from the Bible that are quoted in specific situations

A Roman soldier carried a long sword to wage war and conquer the enemy.

The sword of the Spirit represents the words of the Bible that are used in specific circumstances. The words in the Bible are divinely inspired and have divine authority, because their Author is the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12; John 16:13-15). The Holy Spirit is God's way to have direct access to the minds and hearts of people. By using the words of the Bible the Holy Spirit exposes sin, convicts people of their guilt and shame and refutes counter-arguments (John 16:8). He convinces people of the truth of God's Word, drives doubt away and casts light onto the road ahead. By using the words of the Bible the Christian escapes the traps of the sinful world, resists the seductions of Satan and wins people for Christ.

A Christian soldier does not use his own arguments or beautiful sermons, but God's words as his weapon of attack in all his battles.

Just as Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:1-11), the Christian who uses some specific verses in the Bible as his weapon of attack will conquer temptations (seductions).

6:18. Prayer represents another weapon of the Christian.

Prayer is the way to have direct access to God (Hebrews 4:16). Prayer is the secret weapon of the Christian by which his complete dependence on God releases God's complete involvement in the spiritual battle. "Do not be afraid. The LORD, your God, who is going before you, will fight for you" (Deuteronomy 1:29-30). "For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory" (Deuteronomy 20:4). "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chronicles 20:15).

Whoever does not pray shows his independence from God and he also receives nothing from God (James 4:2-3). But whoever prays receives (Matthew 7:7-8)! Through prayer God changes the problems of the Christian into new possibilities and new opportunities! "God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20)!

The Christian soldier fights the spiritual fight always and everywhere by prayer in complete dependence of God.

Just as Elijah (James 5:16-18), the prayer of a righteous Christian is powerful and effective!

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.