

**Exploring Life – part six**  
**“Exploring the Power of the Sword”**  
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**Intro:**

**Matt 28:19** “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

**ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve**

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration. To grow...which is expressed in our Connection Groups. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

**Sermon Series Title: Exploring Life:**  
**“To Boldly Go Where No Man Has Gone Before!”**

**Series Synopsis:** We’ve reset our assumptions of Jesus Christ; climbed the mountain learning about the teaching of Jesus Christ; learned how to live life in the valley – now.... Let’s begin to explore life!

Life happens one season at a time; filled with individual events - positive and negative, known and unknown. In this six week series we shall boldly go where no man has gone before; to explore the good, the bad and the ugly as it pertains to each of our lives – in our quest to make an IMPACT for the Kingdom of God.

**Part 6: “Exploring the Power of the Sword”**

Question: “How can the Bible help me from day to day?”

We are in a spiritual battle. Not with man but with Satan. We’ve heard about heaven, hell, angels, demons, our purpose and how to live a life of misery through it all. Now.... The battle that we are in... how do we fight this battle?

**2 Cor. 10:4**

*“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”*

**Strongholds =**

The word translated "strongholds" in this passage could also have been rendered "fortresses." In its verbal form, the word means "to make firm." [Vines 1985: 605] Just as military forts are established in firm places such as on a hilltop or at the mouth of a bay, so Satan attempts to establish strong forts in our minds to hold our thought life captive.

In the passage cited above, Paul defines strongholds as arguments, pretensions, or thoughts that set themselves against the knowledge of God. Any beliefs entrenched in our thinking that are contrary to truth as revealed in Scripture are strongholds of the Enemy that stand in the way of our knowing God and making Him known. Thus they hinder us in our walk with the Lord and in our prayer lives.

The best working definition of spiritual strongholds that I have found is Edgardo Silvos's. He states: "A spiritual stronghold is a mind-set impregnated with hopelessness that causes us to accept as unchangeable, situations that we know are contrary to the will of God." [Silvos 1994: 155] With this definition in view, here's a few examples of strongholds and Scripture references that demonstrate how these assertions are contrary to the will of God:

- My husband is hopeless. He'll never be saved. (See 2 Peter 3:9.)
- I'm just a carnal person. I'll never be free from lust. (See Galatians 5:16.)
- No upward mobility for me! I'll always struggle to make ends meet. (See 3 John 2.)
- I'm getting older. Feebleness and disease is inevitable. (See Psalm 103:2-5.)

Each of these assertions reflect beliefs entrenched in the mind that are contrary to the revelation of God's will as revealed in Scripture. Since God's Word is truth (see John 17:17), these beliefs reflect minds clouded by Satan's smoke screen from seeing things the way God desires us to see them. They are spiritual strongholds.

### ***How Are Spiritual Strongholds Formed?***

The Apostle Paul gives us a key to understanding how spiritual strongholds are formed by listing three descriptive terms for strongholds. He says that strongholds are arguments, pretensions, and thoughts contrary to the knowledge of God. (See 2 Corinthians 10:5.) Let's look at each of these terms to gain insight into how strongholds are erected.

First, Paul states that strongholds are ***arguments*** contrary to the knowledge of God. The word Paul uses is ***logismos***, which would be more correctly translated as "reasonings." [Vines 1985: 319] The word does not imply arguments with other people but the battle that goes on in one's mind when the conclusions drawn by human reason and those given through divine revelation in Scripture contradict each other. In such cases, to believe our own human reasonings is to reject the revealed will of God.

Second, Paul refers to strongholds as ***pretensions*** contrary to the knowledge of God. Paul's word here is ***hupsoma***, which literally means "high thing" and can also be translated "height." [Vines 1985: 304] It speaks of pride by which we exalt our own human reasonings over divine revelation. It puts the intellect in the place of God so that one is more comfortable trusting his reasonings than believing God's Word. This is mind idolatry.

Third, Paul calls strongholds ***thoughts*** that are contrary to the knowledge of God. The word used here is ***noema***, which refers to a "purpose" or "devising of the mind." [Vines 1985: 630]. This word is particularly helpful in that it is also used in 2 Corinthians 2:11 where it refers to Satan's schemes. Paul writes: "We are not unaware of [Satan's] schemes." The relevant point here is that when human reasonings are allowed to become schemes that set themselves against God's Word, the mind has essentially become captive to Satan's schemes. In such situations, Satan has effectively planted thoughts into our minds and deceived us into thinking that those thoughts were our own reasonings.

How are strongholds formed? They are formed when we:

- Reason through situations in life without looking to God for guidance.
- Draw our own conclusions without consulting God's Word for validation.
- Set our rationalizations above God's revealed will in Scripture.
- Devise schemes for handling life situations contrary to God's directives for living.

It is important to note here that when a person first comes to Christ for salvation, he quite likely has strongholds in his life already. His directions for living have come through parents, teachers, authority figures, his own human reasonings. Any number of things from genetics, to environment, to parental discipline, to traumatic experiences in life have played a role in shaping his values and conditioning his responses to real life situations.

Now, as a new Christian, it is his responsibility to feed his mind and heart upon God's Word so that he can learn to live by the Holy Spirit's directives rather than by his previous conditioning. This reorientation process involves developing a lifestyle of demolishing strongholds and building godly foundations for living.

## Demolish =

Demolished is the past-participle of the verb "to demolish." The word "demolish" means to destroy or to gut down. A building or an institution which is destroyed or burnt down is said to be demolished. The synonyms of the word "demolished" in past participle form are razed, pulled down, destroyed, dismantled, wrecked, blown up etc. The word can also mean to terminate or to put an end to. The present tense of the word demolished or demolish has a French origin "démolir" which means "to destroy."

Most of us have at least seen on tv where a demolition crew comes in and takes down a building. Sometimes they use explosives and implode the building in upon itself to preserve the surrounding buildings. Other times they use a wrecking ball and literally beat the building to death. Then they send in a cleanup crew to come take away all the debris of the old building to make way for the new. It's interesting to watch the process, especially the actual demolition. What power is required to destroy something! That's the part that fascinates us the most--the power. Maybe that is because so few, if any, truly believe they have power--power to change their lives, their thoughts, their emotions. The Word of God says otherwise.

- Watch this video.... (*buildings being demolished*)

### Illus: Pearl Harbor

When the sun rose over Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, it seemed like the most unlikely place to start a war. The weather was perfect. Light winds. Cool temperatures. Blue skies dotted with puffy clouds. The birds had begun to fill the morning air with the songs given them by their Creator. Families had begun to get ready for morning church services. Sailors had prepared for what they believed would be another day of routine tasks. But abruptly at 7:55, 190 attacking Japanese warplanes shattered the picturesque morning calm. Using the art of surprise to perfection, six aircraft carriers had moved within striking distance of America's South Pacific fleet. In a superbly coordinated attack, wave after wave of Japanese planes strafed and bombed the harbor and airfield. Supporting them were a number of two-man subs that had silently entered the harbor. When the attack was completed, 2,330 American servicemen lay dead or dying. Another 1,145 had been wounded. Five battleships lay on the bottom of the harbor. Two destroyers had been reduced to gutted hulks. A third was badly crippled. Many other warships were severely damaged and the airfield was virtually destroyed. The Japanese had found a people unprepared for battle. By the time the American forces realized that they were under attack, their defenses had been crippled. As the last Japanese plane disappeared over the horizon, they left behind a fleet that had been effectively destroyed.

As Christians, we have an enemy that is no less ruthless or cunning. Every day, he executes carefully crafted plans aimed at our destruction. Throughout the centuries, he has launched countless Pearl Harbor style attacks aimed at crippling the churches of Christ.

### **2 Corinthians 2:11**

*"We are not ignorant of his devices."*

I believe there are at least four strategies that Satan employs in his attack against Christianity.

#### He will try to:

Disarm us – to strip us of our power.

Distract us – to lead us from our purpose.

Disable us – to impair our productivity.

Destroy us – to completely neutralize our potential.

## Four Strategies of Satan against Christianity

### Strategy #1: To Disarm us – to strip us of our power.

The first is illustrated by our text. **1 Samuel 13:17-23**

As we pick up the story, Saul is in his second year as king over Israel. Things could not be going much worse. The Philistines were camped just four miles from Saul's capital in Gibeah. According to verse 5, their army included 30,000 chariots, 6000 mounted cavalry, and a large host of infantry. Saul had only been able to gather together 3000 men, and when they began counting tents in the Philistine camp, over two-thirds of Saul's force deserted. Saul was vastly outnumbered. To make matters worse, Saul's army was also absurdly outgunned. In the entire Israeli Army there were only two swords – one each for Saul and Jonathon. The remainder of the army was armed with clubs and farming tools. The reason for this, we are told, is that the Philistines had disarmed the people of God. They had stripped the land of Israel of her weapons and denied her an effective fighting force.

#### Verse 22

*“So it came about, on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan. But they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son.”*

I am convinced that Satan has used the same strategy against the church. In 2 Corinthians 10:4, Paul mentions the weapons of our warfare. When Jesus Christ organized His church, he equipped her for battle. He did not leave us powerless. He armed us for conflict. But many today have allowed the devil to strip them of their weapons, leaving them to fight their spiritual battles with inferior arms.

He has nullified the message of the Gospel. Ro 1:16, Believing has always been the one requirement of salvation. See Romans 4:3 & Galatians 3:6-9. Paul's aim in each text is to show that in both the Old and New Testament the requirement for salvation is the same – simple faith. When we replace the element of believing with any other condition or combination, our witness becomes powerless.

### Strategy #2: To Distract us – to lead us from our purpose.

He has neutralized the church. Ephesians 4:11-16 The purpose of church ministry is: (Verse 12)

- a. To mature the saints    b. Mobilize them in service    c. So that the we can multiply our outreach

Through the teaching of the Word of God, we can:

- a. Help people solve their problems  
b. Help families build stronger homes  
c. Confront the problems of society

Through our fellowship we can build relationships and enjoy our worship of God.

These things (#2 & #3) aid us in achieving our purpose, but they are not the primary purpose of the church.

Today there is widespread confusion over the purpose of ministry. I want to ask a second question, "Why does this church exist in our community?" Why do we meet together as a local body of believers? Why does Eastgate Community Church even exist? It is not so that we can be entertained. It is not so that we can establish friendships. These things are by-products. The reason God established the local church is so that we can come together to be matured in our faith and equipped to serve God for the building up this body through evangelism. Maturity must lead to service and service to evangelism; making an IMPACT. We have been distracted from our purpose if all we achieve is helping people solve their problems and lead happier, more prosperous lives.

#### 1 Corinthians 7:35

*“All I want is for you to be able to develop a way of life in which you can spend plenty of time together with the Master without a lot of distractions.”*

### **Strategy #3: To Disable us – to impair our productivity.**

He tries to nullify our outreach. To disable our vision to love, grow and serve.

Today, we are very familiar with the subject of disabilities. We understand that different things, such as blindness and crippling diseases, may cause a person to be disabled. Often we have no control over these things. They may be inherited or the result of an accident. But our enemy Satan deliberately puts things into our paths that are meant to cripple us in our Christian walk.

Sins of neglect – a failure to pray or study the Bible.

Sinful habits – produce guilt, bring discipline, and discredit our witness

Sinful attitudes – a love of money, bitterness towards other people, prejudices, etc.

Today there is widespread confusion over what it means to behave as a Christian.

God never intended for the Church to be isolated from society. But He does intend the church to be separated from secular values and practices. God designed the church to be distinctly different from the world in which it exists.

One of the most serious disabilities afflicted upon the church today is that the lost can look at our churches and our homes and see little difference between their lifestyle and the Christian lifestyle. In other words, our beliefs make very little difference in our behavior.

The Christian watches R rated movies and the non-Christian watches R rated movies. No difference. Mainstream Christian music can be targeted at "spiritual" or "secular" audiences. No difference. Christian homes break up just about as often as non-Christian homes. No difference. Conflict between Christians occurs just as often as conflict between non-Christians. No difference. Instead of converting the world, the church has been crippled by the values, philosophies, and practices of the world.

#### **Rev. 3:15-16**

*“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”*

### **Strategy #4: To Destroy us – to neutralize our potential.**

This is the ultimate desire of Satan for every church and Christian. Like the Philistines in our text, he amasses his forces for the purpose of complete destruction. He is not content to disarm, distract or disable us. He wants only to destroy us. We can prevent that by maintaining our defenses – Not letting him strip us of our power, especially in terms of our message.

Not allowing him to lead us from our purpose.

Being careful that we are not disabled as individuals or as a church.

We are able to stand against the schemes of the Devil, but only by being always prepared for the battle – mentally, spiritually, continually. We must be sober and vigilant because our adversary walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Let us not be a people unprepared.

#### **1 Peter 5:8**

*“Be well balanced (temperate, sober of mind), be vigilant and cautious at all times; for that enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring in fierce hunger, seeking someone to seize upon and devour.”*

Today, we're going to compare the Characteristics of the Natural Sword and the Supernatural Sword.

## 4 Natural/Super Natural Sword Comparisons

### Comparison #1: The Origin of the Sword

- **In the Natural Realm**

#### **Made by the Romans: Gladius**

Every Roman soldier had a sword called, "the gladius". *Gladius* is a Latin word for sword. Early ancient Roman swords were similar to those used by the Greeks. From the 3rd century BC, the Romans adopted swords similar to those used by the Celtiberians and others during the early part of the conquest of Hispania. This kind of sword was known as the *Gladius Hispaniense*, or "Hispanic Sword." The gladius sword was used by the gladiators for killing. The Gladius was crafted from soft iron and then the blade was coated with coal dust and hammered again on the anvil while still hot. This hardened the blade and allowed it to take a razor sharp edge.

The common Gladius was straight and double-edged, with a sharp V-shaped pointed tip and a rhomboid cross section. The weapon was about 60 cm (22 inches) long and generally weighed 3 pounds (1.4 kg) making it ideal for one handed stability and power projection. In battle the Gladius was used in a thrusting action together with a large rectangular shield, the scutum. This stabbing technique was most effective on the battlefield as deep stabbing wounds to the midsection of an opponent. Unlike other swords that were used in strike to inflict glancing lacerations the thrust of a Gladius was almost always fatal. A Roman legionary would always mount the scabbard for his Gladius on the right side, allowing a formation of soldiers to easily draw their swords in formation without accidentally injuring soldiers to either side. Centurions and Praetorian Guard units typically wore their swords on the left as a sign distinction from the regular legionnaires. These weapons were also often seen in the hands of the Gladiator entertainers throughout the empire.

- **In the Supernatural Realm**

#### **Made by God Almighty**

The word is Divinely inspired (All scripture is given by inspiration of God )-**2Tim 3:16**

#### **Bible Facts**

- Took over 1500 years to write.
- Written in 3 different languages – Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic
- 40 different authors.
- Written on three different continents.
- Translated into over 2,000 different languages.
- 66 Books, 1189 Chapters, 31,173 Verses, 773,692 Words.
- Has over 1200 separate prophecies.
- Has over 7,000 promises available.
- Has not one single contradiction to it.
- The bestselling book of all times.
- Inspired by God!

You must keep in mind that's it's not the physical Bible that you hold that the scripture is referring to, but the Spirit of the Words written within the pages of the Bible. I want us to note this morning that the SWORD is NOT the SPIRIT but rather it is the WORD which has been SPOKEN by the SPIRIT which is found within the BIBLE. Now I don't want us to leave here this morning THINKING that the BIBLE is the SWORD of the SPIRIT for it is not. It is what is FOUND inside the BIBLE that is the SWORD of the SPIRIT.

I want us to look at **TWO GREEK WORDS** which are **TRANSLATED** as “**WORD**” in the Bible. The 1st **WORD** is the most common word. It is “**LOGOS**.” That’s the word we find in **John 1:1** ‘In the beginning was the **WORD** [LOGOS] & the **WORD** [LOGOS] was with **GOD** & the **WORD** was **GOD**.’ The word **LOGOS** was a reference to **JESUS CHRIST**.

The word **LOGOS** is also used to refer to the **BIBLE** the **BOOK** that contains the **WORD** of **GOD**. The **BIBLE** from the beginning of **GENESIS** in the **O T** to the ending of **REVELATION** in the **N T** is the **VOICE** of **GOD** & without it we would not know anything about **GOD**. The **PURPOSE** of the **WORD** is to **REVEAL** **GOD** to man. However that is **NOT** the **WORD** which **PAUL** used here in **Ephesians 6:17**. Not the word **LOGOS**. The word used in **Ephesians 6:17** is the word “**RHEMA**.”

The word **RHEMA** means the **SAYINGS** of **GOD**. We could read it this read: ‘Take the **SWORD** of the **SPIRIT** which are the **SAYINGS** of **GOD**.’ Look at this way: **The BIBLE is the ARSENAL of GOD & INSIDE the ARESNAL are the SWORDS of the SPIRIT. The RHEMA is found within the LOGOS.**

From the **BIBLE** we find the precious **PROMISES** of **GOD** & they become our **SWORDS** in **SPIRITUAL** **BATTLE**. When we’re in a **BATTLE** with the **DEVIL** the **HOLY SPIRIT** brings back certain **SCRIPTURES** which we have **STUDIED** before time & they become this **MIGHTY & POWERFUL SWORD** we need to **DEFEAT SATAN**. They become the **RHEMA WORD** of **GOD** to us.

## Comparison #2: The Size of the Sword

- **In the Natural Realm**

### **Gladius = 12 to 20 inches long**

Every Roman soldier had a sword called, “the gladius”. It was a double-edged blade of a length between 12 and 20 inches long. Used in a chopping or swinging motion against the enemy. There are only a handful of Gladius Swords still in existence; mostly found in museum.

- **In the Supernatural Realm**

### **UNLIMITED... Numerous Sizes Available...however...**

The Sword referred to in the Word is the Bible... and our Bible’s come in all different kinds of shapes and sizes. There is a size and shape for every occasion. We have coffee table Bibles, wedding Bibles, small and big Bibles, etc. But here is the beautiful thing.... The **RHEMA** Word that comes out of the **LOGOS** Word is big enough, strong enough and more than powerful enough to kill any of the supernatural enemies that we may face! Remember...

### **2 Cor. 10:4**

*“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”*

The Bible is the number one best seller of all books of all time. We have more Bibles than we know what to do with often times. How many Bibles do you think you have in your home? We have so many, yet we don’t read them. And then there are thousands in foreign countries that have none and want to read them.

A house church in a city of the Soviet Union had received just one copy of the gospel of Luke. It was the only Scripture they had in their hands & so they decided to tear it into small sections & then distribute it among the church. They would memorize the section they had received & then meet on the **LORD’S DAY** & redistribute the Scriptures & receive another section of Scripture to put to their memory.

## Comparison #3: The Use of the Sword

- **In the Natural Realm**

### **It is a primarily an offensive weapon.**

That is was not a long sword tells us that it was designed for close combat. The gladius was not the only Roman soldier's weapon, but it was the weapon of choice. Using it effectively was a matter of life or death. For hundreds of years the Roman Coliseum echoed with the sounds of clashing swords and the screams of the dying and the triumphant. Prisoners from conquered lands, criminals, persecuted Christians, and professional warriors...all competed in savage battles to satisfy the bloodlust of the Roman mob and provide for its daily amusement. This sword would have been right at home in such a violent place! The example of the gladius that I'm showing you this morning is patterned after the gladius used by Roman soldiers, this piece measures 30 3/4" overall and offers a 22 1/8" stainless steel blade with two massive blood grooves.

This is the same sword that Peter used to chop off the ear of the soldier in the garden before Jesus was crucified.

- **In the Supernatural Realm**

### **It is both a Defensive and Offensive Weapon**

With that clarification in our minds, we can see how a word of the Lord compares wonderfully with a sword. For, whether used defensively or offensively, a single verse or passage, well understood and rightly applied is an extremely powerful weapon in our spiritual warfare. It was sharpened on both sides. Both edges of the blade were useful for slashing and cutting and stabbing.

And this information is only useful insofar as it reminds us that the writer to the **Hebrews said in chapter 4 verse 12**, "...the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

For now though, I want to be careful to stay in context with the passage we're studying as we near the end of this great epistle, and keep in mind that Paul is telling the believer, in the donning of his armor, that along with the helmet of salvation he is to 'take up' or 'take' the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, in preparation for spiritual battle. It's not enough to know how to hold the sword, but how to use it. You can always hold it, but if you don't use it, you'll die.

### **A. Defensive Weapon**

A relevant Scripture can challenge and deflect a sharp temptation or block the thrust of a false teaching. We have several examples in the Bible of the inspired Word doing both.

The best example that we have of the use of Scripture to beat back temptation is the occasion of Satan's attack on Jesus, recorded in **Matthew 4:1-11**, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you'; and 'on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, 'On the other hand, it is written, 'you shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go, Satan! For it is written, 'you shall worship the Lord your God, and

serve Him only.' Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him."

Note that every time Satan tempted Jesus to satisfy his fleshly desires, fleshly pride, and fleshly ego, Jesus countered the enticement with a **"It is written..."** Jesus brought to the battle a specific passage of Scripture that dealt with the specific nature of the temptation. With the chosen Scripture occupying His mind, Satan and the temptation no longer could gain a foothold within.

When temptation comes our way, whether it be a temptation to lose one's temper, a temptation to be greedy, a temptation to become discouraged, a temptation to indulge in sexual immorality, a temptation to be selfish, a temptation to wallow in self-pity, a temptation to choose entertainment over worship, a temptation to gossip, a temptation to cheat, a temptation to drive over the speed limit, a temptation to complain, a temptation to worry about matters, a temptation to get high or to get drunk, a temptation to be envious or jealous, a temptation to speak a lie, or whatever else the temptation may be, we need to be able to blunt the temptation with a Scripture that speaks to the issue and meditate on it. If we are thinking on and speaking forth the Scripture, Satan and the temptation no longer can gain a foothold within us. We are on our way to enduring and triumphing over it.

Now, I would have you to note another point from this passage in Matthew. Take notice that Satan Himself quoted Scripture in one of his attacks on Jesus. The old Devil used a portion of the Bible to encourage and provide a justification for Jesus to do what the Devil wanted Him to do. Satan also pulled a "it is written".

Brethren, the Devil knows the Scriptures very well. He has and will use the Scriptures to entice you to sin against God. He loves to twist Scripture or take it out of context to get you to believe an idea or teaching that is contrary to the true will of God.

Let us remind ourselves that 2 Corinthians 11:13-14 warns us that Satan's workers "disguise themselves as servants of righteousness." There are manifold pastors, reverends, preachers, evangelists and priests out there who seem to be servants of Christ Jesus, preaching and teaching the Word of God. Sadly, they are actually servants of Satan who preach and teach lies and heresies because they twist and distort the Scriptures. The only way you are going to be able to defend yourself from lies is with the truth. The only way you are going to protect yourself from false doctrine is with sound doctrine. When they pull a 'It is written...', we need to counter as Jesus did with a 'on the other hand, it is written...'. Psalm 119:98, 104, "Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,...From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way."

## B. An Offensive Weapon

The Word of God, also like a sword, is an offensive weapon. This is the weapon that you can use to inflict real damage on the works and kingdom of Satan. There are three ways we can use the word of God to assault Satan's kingdom.

### 1. Expose Deeds of Darkness

In **Ephesians 5:11**, we are told not to "participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them." There are people all around us who do or condone evil things because they do not know that they are evil, they do not know that God speaks against it in His Scriptures. We are commanded to bring understanding to them; that is, "expose" evil for what it is. **Ephesians 5:13** states that the dark or evil deeds must be "exposed by the light." Okay, what is the light?

David confesses, in Psalm 119:105, 130, that "Thy (God's) word is a lamp...and a light....The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. Using the "sword of the Spirit, the word of God", it is our obligation to inform people of the difference between darkness and light. If someone around us talks about something wrong as if it is okay, we must inform them otherwise. If evil is being conducted before us, we must not be silent. We must stand-up and say - God is opposed to that. We must proclaim, "Thus says the Lord" or "It is written".

## 2. Refute Worldly Philosophies and False Religions

Many people participate in wrong because they believe in wrong ideas and teachings. **Ephesians 3:18** tells us "they are darkened in their understanding...because of the ignorance that is in them." We need to educate people.

Paul challenged the false beliefs of the culture around him. In Acts 17, we have an account of his going to Athens in Greece. First, in verse 17, he goes and teaches the Jews about how their Messiah or Christ had come. Then, in Verse 18, he goes to the philosophers - the Epicureans and Stoics - and challenges their beliefs by preaching Jesus and the resurrection. Then, in Verses 22-31, he talks to the heathen idol worshippers and philosophers about the true nature of the one God, about Creation, about the origin of Mankind, about Jesus, about the resurrection and the coming Judgment Day. He educated them and even persuaded some of them people to believe the truth.

We need to be able to refute the demonic-inspired beliefs that prevail in our culture today. We need to contest the worldly philosophies that shape our society - Evolution, Materialism, Narcissism, Moral Relativism, etc. We need to prove the fallacies of the false religions that entrap the souls of mankind - Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Bahaism, Islam, and Neo-Paganism. This can be done with the "sword of the Spirit, the word of God."

Beyond the worldly philosophies and false religions, we need to correct those within Christianity who have been entrapped by false doctrine. As we read the epistles of Apostles, they are frequently refuting false teachings that had crept into the Church. Paul warned that, in 2 Timothy 3:13, "evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." Today, we see the fulfillment of Paul's words. There are so many churches that claim to be the Lord's Church but are not. There are so many who believe themselves to be Christians but are not. They have been confused and blinded by false teachings. We need to unsheathe the "sword of the Spirit, the word of God" and help them to know the truth. 2 Timothy 2:24-26, "the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, ...with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil." **James 5:19-20**, "Brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death."

## 3. Preach the Gospel of Salvation.

The greatest way that we can damage the kingdom of Satan is to turn people away from Satan to Christ Jesus through the Gospel. We will consider this, in some depth, in our next study. Therefore, we will only mention it here.

Let us return to the heart of the matter. The only way that we can defend ourselves from temptation and heresies. The only way that we can go on the offensive and expose evil, refute worldly philosophies and phony religions and rescue believers in Jesus from false doctrine and proclaim the wonderful words of life...is if we know the Scriptures... if we know how to use the sword.

A couple of generations ago, the members of the Lord's Church possessed a much greater knowledge of the Scriptures than members do today. Today, members of the Church seem to think that it is okay if there are a few learned teachers and preachers within the Brotherhood rather than understanding that God wants every Christian to become knowledgeable enough to share His truth.

Paul had to rebuke the Hebrew Christians for a similar mentality. **Hebrews 5:12-6:1**, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching of Christ, let us press on to maturity."

## Comparison #4: The Affects of the Sword

- **Natural**

### **Brings Forth Death**

Remember, let's be clear as to what a sword is for. It is for killing. That's it. It is too big and clumsy for whittling a stick. Even a short sword is too long for use on the kitchen cutting board. If someone saw you using one in the preparation of their meal they might just decide they're not very hungry after all.

They are not even primarily for protection. They do that in part, but unless you employ them aggressively against an attacker, they will only protect you until your arm grows weary, and then you will at some point lower your guard and be taken.

The sword is a weapon in the purest sense of the word. Unlike a firearm that may at least be used for hunting game if nothing else is available, the sword is not even useful for that. It is designed for warfare, more specifically for close up, face to face, hand to hand combat, and it has no other practical function.

- **Supernatural**

**Brings Forth Life**; defeats the enemy so life can come forth.

The word is a lamp and a light (Ps 119:105)

The word is health to our flesh (**Pro 4:22**)

The word is food for the spirit - **Jer 15:16** Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

The word is milk to the baby (1Pet 2:24) As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word.

The word is meat for the men:

(Heb 5:14) Strong meat belongeth to those who have their senses exercised by reason of use to discern both good and evil.

The word is a devouring fire (Jer 5:14)

The word is a crushing hammer (Jer 23:29)

The word is Divinely inspired (All scripture is given by inspiration of God )-2Tim 3:16

The word is a saving power power (Ro 1:16) – the power of God unto salvation)

Now.... Let me give you a few sword handling tips. If we truly want to make an IMPACT in life, as we explore our lives... we've got to know how to handle the Word; our swords.

## 5 Supernatural Sword Handling Tips

If you want to become expert in the use of the "sword" as the Lord Jesus wants, there are five things you must do.

### **1. Read It** (*watch this video "Do You Read the Bible?"*)

It's not enough to just hold it; we need to read it. We are commanded in **Colossians 3:16**, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

Friends, you can listen to sermons, you can read religious pamphlets, tracts, books and devotionals every day and all day long. These may, indeed, bless you. But, let me say that such will not bless you half as much as your picking-up your Bible and reading it and studying it yourself. Why? There are a few reasons:

Only by reading the Scriptures ourselves do we learn what fully is in the Word. Sermons, pamphlets, tracts and books deal only with narrow subjects. Many times we are enticed to listen to sermons or read material that primarily deal with subjects that particularly interest us. Thus, our knowledge becomes very narrow. We are not getting the whole counsel of God.

Only by reading and studying the Scriptures themselves do we get the 'big picture'. Many get led astray because they fail to grasp the overall plan of God. Only by reading and studying the Bible ourselves do we learn how to use our Bible or sword. We need to know what is in the Bible, where it is in the Bible, and how to access it. This skill comes only by personally reading and studying.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, when you personally read and study the Scriptures, you are giving the Spirit of God the opportunity to speak directly to you. He may speak to you and give you insights on matters that you never realized you desperately needed. When we read and study the Bible for ourselves, we are giving the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work within us. We are giving Him the opportunity to help us grow and become transformed.

Meditate On The Word. Connected to memorizing God's word is meditating on it. What does it mean to meditate? It means to think deeply about something. It is to reflect on something It is to roll something over in your mind.

It is one thing to know what a passage says, its another thing to know what it means in a practical way. It is extremely important for us to think about what we have read and studied. What would God want me to understand about this passage?

What does it and what should it mean to me? We need to answer the question, 'how can I apply the truth found in this passage to my life?' Based on this passage, how should my thinking, or my speech, or my actions change? What can I do today or tomorrow to practice this...to make it real?

David meditated on God's word much. Psalm 119:97, 15, 24, "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day....I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways....Your testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors."

## 2. Pray For Divine Enlightenment and Understanding

May your prayer be, "Lord, let this Word come alive in me as I read it. Let it become Rhema to me now. Before you begin reading and studying the Bible, ask its Author to help you understand what you are about to read and study. David did this often. **Psalm 119:12, 27**, "Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes...Make me understand the way of Your precepts, So I will meditate on Your wonders."

Before you read your Bible, ask the Lord to help explain the Scriptures to you. He will do it. He will not give you a complete understanding at one time; however, He will help you understand what He wants you to understand at that particular time. Over time, as you continue to read and study, He will give you an ever greater understanding

## 3. Memorize Individual Portions of Text

In the natural, you need to have the sword in your hand. In the supernatural, you need to have it in your heart. I love the text, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." When you read the Scriptures, do so with the purpose of retaining what you read. James 1:25 tells us that the "forgetful hearer" or reader will not be blessed. This is true for a few reasons. What you do not retain, you cannot apply to your life.

When you remember Scriptures you will have a better chance of re-calling them to mind during an occasion of need.

Remembering what you read one day will provide a stepping-stone to understanding a another passage tomorrow.

I recommend that, as you read and study, pick-out verses that really speak to you and write them on 3 x 5 note cards. I did this when I first started seriously reading and studying the Bible. I would review the card as often as possible. After I have mastered ten to twelve cards, I started a new group. This trained my mind to remember the Scriptures. By doing this, you are basically programming your mind with God's word. Romans 12:2, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." **Psalm 119:16**, "I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word."

#### 4. Share the Truth with Others

Lastly, we must not keep the sword in its sheath. We must, says Philippians 2:15-16, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

Psalm 119:13, "With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Thy mouth." **Psalm 71:15**, "My mouth shall tell of Thy righteousness, and of Thy salvation all day long."

We need to share the blessing of God's word with others. If God has shown you a new truth, share it. Has God revealed to you a wonderful promise, share it. Has God convicted you of things amiss in your life, confess it. Share God's wisdom with others. You will be surprised how blessed you will be by God by sharing what you know with others.

Psalm 19:7-8, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

#### 5. Do What it Says! (*watch this video "The Redempticille Bible?"*)

It's easy to read, but doing it is another story. We've got to do what God's Word tells us to do. Obedience is the key to blessings. With over 7,000 promises available, we receive them all when we walk in obedience!

#### **Conclusion:**

Christians, this morning we have seen that it is vitally important for us to learn the Word of God in order to defend ourselves against the attacks of Satan. For those who don't know Jesus as Lord and Savior, Satan has already defeated you, for he has kept you from hearing and responding to the Words of life found within the Scripture. I want to urge you this morning to take a chance and taste God's Word. Psalm 119:103 says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" God's Word is surely sweet, for in the Bible are Words of life. Respond to God's Words of life, and believe when the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the only way by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). Believe when Jesus says he is, "The way, the truth, and the life."

I love the lyrics of this old hymn...

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;  
His truth is marching on."

- Julia Ward Howe

In Jeremiah 23:29 we read, "Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, " and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces" So we have a weapon which is a sword, a fire and a hammer. What more can we ask for? During evil spiritual attacks powerpacked verses from the Word destroys the enemy forces. A few such verses are Luke 10:19, Mathew 18:18, I John 2:9, Psalm 2,3,91, 121, 124, Job 20: 5.6. Deuteronomy 28:7.

The word of God will never be the sword of the spirit in your behalf until it becomes God speaking to you personally, It must become your life source. Mt 4:4 Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

You watch... you wait... you'll See!