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## **Learning from Jesus**

### **How to Approach Spiritual Battle**

**By George Miley**

**1 – Jesus teaches us that the unseen world is composed of two spheres.** The first is that of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and those united with Him—angels, archangels, saints. The second is that of those in rebellion against God—Satan and all beings allied with him.

**2 – Each sphere is very real.** Connecting with the one leads to deliverance, healing, protection and redemption—to “life”. Connecting with the other leads to inner chaos, wounding and destructive choices and actions—to self-chosen and self-inflicted “death”.

**3 – As Christians consider the unseen world, we are to be intentional to remain rooted exclusively in the sphere of the Holy Trinity.** Jesus is the door in. We journey with Him alone as our Master Teacher.

**Note:** Unwise activities to encounter the unseen world can bring Christians into unintended contact with spiritual darkness. Some see no inconsistency in consulting psychics, following New Age spiritualities, becoming Masons, etc. Others practice confronting the demonic directly with little discernment. A trusted Asian colleague recently wrote of Christians “who were involved in occult practices—horoscope, witchcraft and even areas of human sacrifice.”

Such activities can lead to harmful physical symptoms, unexplained sicknesses, confusion in ministry, and disorder in life. The powers of darkness know the future to some degree, and can work manifestations.

*... test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. – 1 John 4:1*

**4 – Satan and his allies continue their war against God,** although their ultimate defeat has already been accomplished. Meanwhile, they seek to do as much damage as possible. Such is the nature of evil.

*And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. – Revelation 20:10*

**5 – The most vulnerable of those allied with God are the followers of Christ still on earth**—individuals, families and the Church. We are to be wise, informed and anticipate and prepare for attack.

*Be sober-minded; be watchful! Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world – 1 Peter 5:8-9*

6 – **We are not to be afraid.** The darkness has no power over those in Christ unless we choose to open ourselves to it. We are to be watchful and intentional to protect ourselves with the spiritual armor which God provides.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. – Ephesians 6:10-11*

7 – **Spiritual battle intensifies for those active in initiating kingdom advances into new areas.**

*I bind unto myself today  
The strong name of the Trinity,  
By invocation of the same,  
The Three in One, and One in Three.*

Patrick of Ireland, missionary bishop,  
engaged in spiritual battle against the pagan Celts.

8 – **Jesus has already won the ultimate victory over Satan.** He is the Mighty Warrior in spiritual battle; the One who does the fighting.

*... The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. – 1 John 3:8b*

9 – **Therefore the way of true insight might be for us not to seek to engage the enemy directly,** but to stand back and allow Him to do so.

*But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." – Jude 1:9*

10 – **The most significant act of spiritual battle ever performed was when Jesus went to the cross.** We are informed in how to engage in spiritual battle by studying His process in doing this.

*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in the cross. – Colossians 2:15*

11 – **The first 30 years of Jesus' life were spent primarily growing in the knowledge of His Father and His ways.** This process of maturing laid the foundations in Him for engaging in spiritual battle.

*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. – Hebrews 5:8-9*

**12 – The transformation of the inner life toward Christlikeness is the most foundational miracle of the Holy Spirit.** This is what we are to seek. When this is absent we are ill-equipped for spiritual battle.

**13 – Some primary areas of spiritual attack** on the Church and individual Christians:

Pride	Lack of love	Disunity	Self-reliance
Love of money	Lust for power	Sexual immorality	Contempt
Evil speaking	Physical harm	Illness (in <u>some</u> cases)	

**14 – As He moved toward the cross,** the kind of person Jesus had become was increasingly manifest.

### **How Did Jesus Approach the Cross?**

**1 – Jesus centered Himself in God.** Foundational to spiritual battle, and to the Christian life generally, is learning to practice the Presence of God.

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God ....” – John 13:3*

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

Patrick of Ireland

**2 – Jesus carried spiritual authority in humility, restraint and servanthood.** Spiritual authority is exercised relationally.

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. – John 13:3-5*

**3 – Jesus refused to rely upon the world’s methods.** In spiritual battle we only employ the weapons of the Spirit.

*Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being*

*handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” – John 18:36*

**4 – Jesus was in full submission to His Father’s will, even when it was extremely costly.** Crucial in spiritual warfare—we learn to allow the death of Christ to work in us that the life of Christ might flow through us.

*“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” – Luke 22:42*

*For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. – 2 Corinthians 4:11-12*

**5 – Jesus’ inner life was rooted in and formed by the ancient worship traditions of God’s people.** Liturgy plays a significant role in forming Christlikeness in the inner life and in spiritual battle.

*Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. – Luke 23:46 (quoting from Psalm 31:5)*

**6 – Jesus was prepared to wait for and discern God’s timing.**

*When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” – John 2:3-4*

*Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father... – John 13:1*

**7 – Jesus was not deceived by human praise.** There is cause for concern when, in the name of spiritual battle, personalities are spotlighted, reports are triumphal and crowds increase.

*How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?  
– John 5:44*

*No man appears in safety before the public eye unless he first relishes obscurity. No man is safe in speaking unless he loves to be silent. No man rules safely unless he is willing to be ruled. No man commands safely unless he has learned well how to obey. No man rejoices safely unless he has within him the testimony of a good conscience.*

Thomas a Kempis (ca. 1421), *Imitation of Christ*

**8 – Jesus cautioned against inappropriately focusing on the miraculous.** The miraculous can originate from sources other than God.

*"On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'" – Matthew 7:22-23*

*Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded.... he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the river, and all the water in the river was turned into blood,....But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts.... – Exodus 7:20, 22*

**9 – Jesus did not emphasize the role of angels.** But He did welcome their ministry in appropriate ways. An inappropriate search for contact with angels can unintentionally expose us to spiritual darkness.

*"Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?" – Matthew 26:53-54*

*"Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength." – Luke 22:43*

*Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking... - Colossians 2:18*

**10 – Jesus did not focus on, or seek out, demonic forces.** His focus was always on God. He dealt with demons directly as and when they manifested themselves.

*"I have given you authority...to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." – Luke 10:19-20*

**11 – Jesus refused to be trapped by dialog, arguments and accusations rooted, not in truth, but in spiritual darkness.** The Kingdom of God is not advanced by arguing.

*When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge – to the great amazement of the governor. – Matthew 27:12-14*

**12 – Jesus walked in surrendered weakness and apparent failure.** His greatest spiritual victory was won in the hour of His greatest personal vulnerability. There is nothing here of arrogance, boasting, calling attention to Himself or triumphalism.

*Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him." – Matthew 27:27-31*

**13 – Jesus was prepared for suffering.**

*He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.... and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. – Mark 8:31-32*

**14 – Jesus was prepared to be misunderstood.**

*The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." – Luke 23:35-37*

**15 – Jesus was prepared to stand alone.**

*....Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. – Matthew 26:56*

**16 – Jesus gave Himself to prayer.**

*And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood .... – Luke 22:40-44*

**17 – Jesus forgave His enemies.** He was not trying to "win" or show that He was right.

*Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing...." – Luke 23:34a*

**18 – Everything Jesus did was motivated by love.**

*....Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. – John 13:1*