Lesson 4: Kingdoms in Conflict
Healing Streams Ministry, Savannah, GA. All scriptures are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

Introduction
In Lesson 3 we saw that Jesus has given us keys that give access to the peace and joy of His Kingdom on earth. Because these are divinely powerful keys they are guaranteed to work—but it is not so easy to get them to work. **Someone is resisting us** practically every step of the way! Satan’s name actually means the Adversary—the one who “opposes” and “plots against” God and us. In this lesson we will look into the working of this dark kingdom so that we can more effectively resist it.

Kingdoms in Conflict
In a strange way it is comforting to learn this truth that we didn’t mess up our own lives or the planet as a whole just by our own foolishness alone. We evidently had lots of help! However, there are even Christians who don’t believe the devil is real or that knowing this could have any relevance for their lives—a way of the world wryly noted in his day by C. S. Lewis:

> There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors...

We certainly don’t want to fall into the ditch of error on either side of this Truth. The great thing in the Christian life is our relationship with Christ—not the enemy! Even so this very deceptive enemy must be exposed. We would be wise to learn from the early church.

> To keep Satan from getting the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his wiles and intentions. 2 Corinthians 2:11 AMP

**An introduction to the battlefield.** Did you know that you have a personal enemy, even legions of enemies? Did you know that they know your weaknesses and will stop at nothing to bring you down? How can you survive on a battlefield if you don’t know that a war is going on? How can you fight back if you don’t know who your enemy is or how to recognize him or how to use your weapons? We have been given free will in a real world that is besieged by an invisible enemy (Eph 6:12). None of us volunteered to be involved in this war—we were born into it! We can learn to fight in the great battle of our age, or be rendered ineffective, taken captive, or destroyed. We can have a great love for God and still be defeated by a lack of knowledge (Ro 10:2).

> “Therefore my people go into captivity for lack of knowledge.” Isaiah 5:13 WEB

> “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6

This invisible kingdom of the enemy was in the Garden, but it was kept separate from Adam and, before the Fall, could not interfere with his fellowship with God. Tragically, after Adam and Eve sinned the nature of Satan—his way of feeling, thinking and believing—began to operate in them and seemed like their own reasoning process (Ge 3:11).

**Instances of oppression from evil spirits in the scriptures.** In the New Testament there is a linking of sickness and deliverance, just as there is a linking of sickness and sin. There is not an identity of the two, but a relationship—not every sickness required deliverance and not every deliverance from evil spirits involved a physical illness. Nevertheless, disease and death
come from the Fall, not the blessing of God. Hence, it is the enemy’s kingdom that is at work behind sickness and disease to enforce the curse of the Law.

They brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. Matthew 4:24 (See also Mark 9:23-29, Luke 4:40-41, Luke 8:1-2)

Behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and she was bent over, and could in no way straighten herself up. When Jesus saw her, he called her, and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.” Luke 13:11-12 WEB

**The spiritual realm of darkness** is not inhabited by ethereal forces, but by intelligent beings with malignant natures. Evil spirits have personality, will and desire, but lack bodies through which to carry out their assignments. Jesus says evil spirits prefer to occupy our bodies.

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. Matthew 12:43-45

The evil spirits that have been cast out and sent into “dry places” are in torment because they need a means of expressing their nature. Being in terror of their dark lord, they urgently desire to fulfill their mission by expressing themselves through us. At the same time they take an unholy pleasure in feeling inside of us the very feelings we don’t enjoy. Hence their primary goal is to return to the person they were cast out of. We need to clean house and keep it guarded. Evil spirits gain dominion over us by tempting us to agree with the sin they represent (i.e. a “spirit of fear” promotes fear). Christians are not possessed, but they can be and often are oppressed from the inside and/or the outside.

Discernment is a key to freedom (see Lesson 3). The enemy seeks to throw a veil of deception and darkness over the working of his kingdom. If we can recognize the evil spirits, we can overcome them for Light drives out darkness (Jn 1:5). If we do not recognize them, they remain in control. When we agree with the evil spirit and let it express itself through us, then it is no longer its sin alone—it’s sin has become our sin. **Sin is an agreement with the enemy**—with his ways, his perspective and his desires. As Be In Health teaches: we are still in secret (unrecognized) agreement with any sin we have not yet fully forsaken:

*We have to learn to fall out of agreement with the compelling force of the spirit’s own belief system and believe instead what God’s Word declares to be true in situations that trouble us.*

Consider this in relation to the negative emotions. Every negative emotion has had its source in this kingdom all your life: these evil ones have been sinning against you from birth. The kingdom of darkness is the true source behind all of your pain and suffering as well as your own sinful ways. But you **didn’t know this in the beginning**. You looked around and all you could see was other people and the injustice coming through their sins against you. You were blinded from seeing these three things with enough understanding to stay free:

- The real enemy who had attacked them first and was using them against you.
- Your own sinful reactions and ungodly beliefs that bound the pain to you.
- The loving and faithful God who was always there with you, preserving your life.

Now, God is saying to you: forgive people for everything—take them out of the loop—and concentrate on the real enemy. Confess your own sins (including your unforgiveness), resist the enemy, and let God restore your life as you leave justice to Him. **Even so, our primary objective is not to crush the enemy, but to love God** with our whole being (Mt 22:37). In
terms of spiritual warfare, this translates into trusting and obeying God no matter what the enemy is doing—to surrender and stay surrendered to God! Consider this well: there is no peace without surrender. Even believers often find themselves living without the peace of Christ capturing their hearts. The truth is, whenever we begin to move away from the place of TOTAL surrender, we are, to that degree, joining the Great Rebellion that began when the Enemy used his free will to move away from the will of his Creator and go his own way. Since our on-going surrender to the Lord is the key to victory, we will surely have to learn how to face the cross of our embattled times and say with Jesus, “Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done” (Lk 22:42).

End Notes for Kingdoms in Conflict
2 Teaching and insights from Be In Health® teaching and materials, Dr. Henry W. Wright, Thomaston, Georgia, seminar notes on Ed Kelly teaching, October 2000.

Notes/Journal

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Exercise
Make a list of actual moments when you were quite sure—even at the time—that you had bumped up against real spiritual evil. Pray over those times when the enemy tipped his hand, thanking God for His power and mercy in delivering you from them. Be sure to renounce any fear of the enemy you may have taken on during those times. Corrie Ten Boom says that the fear of the demons comes from the demons—so don’t buy into it. God is way stronger and you have incredible power and authority over them in the Name of Jesus.

The event                                           How I felt; what I did; equipping I still need
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Now, make another list of all the times you have been tempted to do or to say something wrong. Be sure to include all of the times you have lost peace and joy due to being swallowed up in negative emotions. What’s the matter? Don’t have enough lines on the paper? Can you see from this that your enemy prefers working under the radar? Forewarned is forearmed!

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Discussion Questions
Ask the group if a few people would care to share their “war stories”—brief (!) descriptions of a time when their life seemed to be heavily assaulted by the powers of darkness. Ask them to
make an attempt to give it a clear beginning, middle (the time of struggle) and end. Then ask the group to look for common themes. Keep in mind that the enemy has 4 main pathways by which he operates: deception, temptation, accusation and destruction. Consider asking:

- Was there an open door that allowed the enemy to come in?
- Was that open door evident at the time, or only in hindsight?
- Did it begin as a flood, or was there a slow, steady descent into the trouble?
- What kinds of feelings were stirred up during that time of assault?
- How easy was it to “tag up” with the Lord while under the assault?
- Did other believers have to be called upon for help?
- In what ways did they help?
- Did final victory come from the Lord alone or did he use the person’s cooperation that was under the assault?

Close by praying for the Lord to take away any fears and break the power of any lies that the enemy may have planted during those “close encounters” with spiritual darkness.

**Main Points**

- Do you know that you have an enemy? These guys play for keeps!
- Evil spirits have personality, will and desire: their assignment is to defeat you.
- Evil spirits gain power and influence over us by tempting us to agree with sin.
- In your own strength you are easy pickings; united to the Lord you are powerful!
- We are still in secret agreement with any sin we have not yet fully forsaken.
- Christians are not possessed, but we can be oppressed from the inside or outside.

**Digging Deeper**

The language of spiritual warfare abounds in the New Testament, but it is in the Hebrew Scriptures especially that we see the importance of maintaining a fighting spirit. Our battle is not against flesh and blood (Ep 6:12) as theirs was for they were called to be examples to us (in the visible and natural realm) of things that we would experience in spiritual warfare.

> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 1 Corinthians 10:11

One of the things that they experienced was a great fear about going up against the giants in the land that the Lord desired to give them. They were very reluctant warriors! Joshua and Caleb, however, saw in the battles the opportunity for the people of God to become stronger—like the way bread strengthens a hungry person.

> Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them. Numbers 14:9

So too for us, lies one of the ultimate quests—to subdue the interior landscape of our hearts. What a conundrum that we have to be willing at times to fight to live in the Kingdom’s peace and joy. The writer of Hebrews calls it laboring to enter the promised place of rest.

> Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Hebrews 4:11 KJV
In the 4th and 5th centuries many noble souls “fled” the lukewarm Christianity of the converted Roman Empire to the deserts of Egypt in order to live more totally for Christ. They discovered that like Jesus they were to face some of the stiffest temptations from the enemy in their wilderness places. It was easy to get the monk (the spiritual athlete, the God chaser) out of Rome, but far harder to get Rome out of the monk! Here are a few nuggets of wisdom:

The chief task of the athlete is to enter into his heart [and do battle there]. Macarius (77)

The great work of a man...[is] to expect temptations to his last breath. Father Anthony (70)

...you should realize that as soon as you intend to live in peace, at once evil comes and weighs down your soul... Mother Theodora (70)


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**Sword and Shield**

Not only did the Lord Jesus cast out spirits, so did his disciples both before and after His death and resurrection. Notice who is doing the work in the scriptures below and what their level of training may have been. Look up what Jesus called “the children’s bread” (Mt 15:26; Mk 7:27). What do you suppose He meant by that? Study the great commission given by Jesus after His resurrection (Mk 16:17-18). Notice any “great omissions” in our actual practice?

That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. Matt 8:16-17

And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. Mark 3:14-15

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues. Mark 16:17-18

The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Acts 5:16

Some of the evil spirits mentioned specifically in scripture:

- the spirit of jealousy (Nu 5:14)
- the spirit of distressing (1Sa 16:23)
- a lying spirit (1Ki 22:22)
- the spirit of heaviness (Isa 61:3)
- the spirit of harlotry (Hos 4:12)
- a spirit of infirmity (Lk 13:10-13)
- a spirit of divination (Ac 16:16-18)
- the spirit of bondage (Ro 8:14-15)
- a spirit of stupor (Ro 11:6-8)
- the spirit of the world (1Cor 2:12)
- deceiving spirits (1Ti 4:1)
- a spirit of fear (2Ti 1: 7)
- the spirit of the Antichrist (1Jn 4:3)
- spiritual fornication (Rv 17:2)

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**Prayer Focus**

How can we effectively guard against the enemy? One way is to put on the whole armor of God. Read the following passage and then fill in the blanks below, listing the whole armor and stating how you believe it could help you withstand the enemy better. Pray over each piece as you put on the whole armor. Then each day ask the Father to cover you with this armor.

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. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, having done all, to stand firm. Stand of truth, and having put on the shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming
darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. Ephesians 6:10-19

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**Renunciations and Affirmations**
Confess/renounce previous agreements with untruth; confess/believe Truth as your new Way of life.

The following is an ancient pattern of renunciation and confession for baptismal candidates taken from the 1979 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. As you pray over it, confess any previous agreements with the kingdom of darkness (sins of thought, word or deed) and renounce them. Then confess and believe in Jesus and His Truth as your new Way of Life (Jn 14:6). If you have never been baptized, seek out a faith community and go for it. Baptism is evidently very important to the Lord (Mk 16:16; Ac 2:38; Ro 6:3; 1 Co 12:13; Gal 3:27).

**Question**
Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

**Answer**
I renounce them.

**Question**
Do you renounce evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

**Answer**
I renounce them.

**Question**
Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

**Answer**
I renounce them.

**Question**
Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?

**Answer**
I do.

**Question**
Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

**Answer**
I do.

**Question**
Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?

**Answer**
I do.

**Putting Feet to Your Prayers/Stretch Yourself!**
Try reading one of Frank Peretti’s novels to expand your vision for how these two kingdoms just might be working behind the scenes: This Present Darkness or Piercing the Darkness; or treat yourself to the all time classic: The Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis. If you feel ready to move from fiction to fact, look up He Came to Set the Captives Free or Prepare for War by Dr. Rebecca Brown. But be advised: do not try to “go after” this kingdom on your own. If you feel called to spiritual warfare, fully engage the battle to see your own heart set free as outlined in a workbook like this one. Then find those who are being used to deliver others and become trained by working in yoked submission with them.