

VERSUS

DON'T GO ALONE

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.

EPHESIANS 6:12

SESSION 1 **WEAPONS OF** **WAR**

GROUP DISCUSSION

TEACHING VIDEO

SESSION 2 **WEAPON OF** **THE WORD**

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SESSION 4 **WEAPON OF** **WORSHIP**

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SESSION 1

WEAPONS OF WAR

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Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* is one of the most famous military books ever written. Penned in the 5th century BC, it still has a heavy influence on warfare strategy and tactics worldwide. Every war or battlefield contains different terrains, weapons, power players, and a vast array of other details. So how can a book written in such a specific time and type of warfare still be relevant to all types of battles? One reason is that there is one constant theme in all warfare: humans. Humans have weaknesses. You fool the man, you can win the war. That is why Sun Tzu champions the strategy of deception:

All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.

-SUN TZU ¹

So what does this have to do with us? We are in a spiritual fight. One of the grand strategies the enemy uses against us is deception. This deception manifests in many different types of lies.

¹ Tzu, Sun. 2010. *The Art Of War*. PDF. Capstone Classics. Chichester, England: Capstone Publishing.

DECEPTION LEVEL 1

WE ARE NOT IN A WAR.

The first lie of the enemy is to deceive us into believing that there is no war at all. If we can be kept comfortable enough, we will never even know we are under attack.

TRUTH: The enemy is at war with our families and us.



WHY IS IT AN ADVANTAGE OF THE ENEMY FOR US TO BELIEVE WE ARE NOT AT WAR?

DECEPTION LEVEL 2

WE ARE UNARMED IN THE WAR.

Even if we come to terms with the truth of the war, the enemy would have us believe that we have no means of fighting back.

TRUTH: God has not sent men into this battle alone or empty-handed. He gave us powerful weapons of war to fight for our souls and the souls of our families.



WHY WOULD THE ENEMY WANT US TO THINK WE ARE UNARMED AND CAN'T FIGHT BACK?

DECEPTION LEVEL 3

WE ARE ALONE.

The enemy knows the greatest way to victory is to pick us off one at a time. If we feel abandoned, we will lose hope. We think we have to go alone.

TRUTH: We are never alone. God promised He would never leave us nor forsake us. Not only that, He created us for community.



WHY IS ISOLATION, OR EVEN BELIEVING WE ARE ISOLATED, A TACTIC OF THE ENEMY?

We are at war.

We are not unarmed.

WE DON'T HAVE TO GO ALONE.

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SESSION 2

WEAPON OF THE WORD

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What do we mean when we call the Bible “the Word of God” or “God’s Word”? What is it about this collection of seemingly random books put together half a world away that takes the mantle of being “God-breathed” and fit for “training in righteousness”?

Before we can begin effectively using a weapon in our life to fight whatever battle the enemy will throw at us, we have to understand how this weapon works. For many people outside the church (and a few within), the Bible is a collection of motivational quotes, a crystal ball to consult when making big decisions, or a mythical story of a particular people in ancient history. But, as we’ll see, the Bible is so much more than this.



WHAT ARE SOME OTHER THINGS PEOPLE CONSIDER THE BIBLE TO BE?

HOW DO YOU USE YOUR BIBLE (FOR MOTIVATIONAL PURPOSES, FOR WISDOM AND GUIDANCE, ETC.)?

While some of these definitions for the Bible aren’t necessarily bad or wrong, God’s Word is so much more. **Read Hebrews 4:12** together as a group.



WHAT DOES THE AUTHOR OF HEBREWS MEAN WHEN HE CALLS THE BIBLE A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD?

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE WAY WE READ OUR BIBLES?

DO YOU PERSONALLY READ YOUR BIBLE TO BETTER YOURSELF OR TO JUDGE OTHERS?

The Bible is the primary way God has revealed Himself to us today. It's the recorded history of His redeeming of a chosen people through Jesus Christ, and we can know exactly who He is through the written Word. But, unlike most wars, this is living history. Jesus and His people are alive today, at war against a real enemy (Satan, demons, the world) that wants to distract us. By disciplining ourselves in the practice of engaging God's Word, we can trust that God is who He says He is, and the enemy can't deceive us.



WHAT ARE SOME DISTRACTIONS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF YOUR BIBLE READING?

ARE THEY INHERENTLY EVIL THINGS?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE PRIORITIZE GOOD THINGS OVER GOD?

Satan wants nothing more than to wage war against God's people through deception, distraction, and temptation. By identifying the enemy's way to pull us away from God, we can resist him.

Read Matthew 4:1-11 as a group.



WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THE DEVIL TRIED TO TEMPT JESUS?

NOTICE HOW HE TRIED TO TWIST SCRIPTURE AND DECEIVE JESUS. HOW DID JESUS RESPOND?

WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF READING AND STUDYING GOD'S WORD?

We might know and understand why we "should" read our Bibles, but we really struggle with "how" to read our Bibles. Where do we begin? How much do we read at a time? When can we possibly start to fit this into our already-busy schedules? Here are some tips to help you through these questions:

THREE WAYS TO READ YOUR BIBLE

There are three ways to engage God in His Word. Every person is different and isn't expected to use all three ways every time we sit down with our Bibles. However, the discipline of Bible reading must begin somewhere, and over time you'll learn how to use the Weapon of the Word as you grow as a follower of Christ.

1. READING THE BIBLE - Reading is a valuable skill that we can use to learn more about God, even if not everyone necessarily enjoys it. Using a reading plan is always the best way to discipline yourself in reading the Bible. At Rolling Hills, we use the Daily Step to read together as a church. This plan takes 5-10 minutes a day.

2. MEMORIZING THE BIBLE - With our busy schedules, the advent of smartphones, and limitless distractions, many fail to see the need to memorize portions of Scripture. However, recalling Bible verses helps us fight the enemy and gives us hope in difficult times. There are many helpful systems, including notecards and journaling, but another great tool is the Bible Memory app. This allows you to memorize any passage of Scripture, and you can set up notifications directly to your phone!

3. STUDYING AND MEDITATING ON THE BIBLE - Studying and meditating is much slower and more intentional. This includes study resources that help you understand the context and history of a passage, making Bible reading more immersive. When we meditate on the Bible, rather than empty our thoughts, we fill our minds with the things of God. We slow down, sit, and think about what is true of God, what is true through His Word. There are many different ways to meditate on the Bible, but the easiest way is to take a passage of Scripture and turn it into a prayer. Praying the Bible will not only help you memorize Scripture, but it will also bring you comfort and prepare you for the war ahead.

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SESSION 3

WEAPON OF PRAYER

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In October 1918, 500 men of the U.S. Army 77th Infantry Division were trapped behind enemy lines in the Argonne Forest. They were surrounded by German forces and taking friendly fire from Allies who were unaware of their position. With no means of communication, carrier pigeons became their only hope. After two pigeons were shot down, Major Charles Whittlesey sent his last bird with the message: **WE ARE ALONG THE ROAD PARALLEL 276.4. OUR ARTILLERY IS DROPPING A BARRAGE DIRECTLY ON US. FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, STOP IT.** Despite being shot through the breast and with an injured leg, the carrier pigeon flew 25 miles back to headquarters in 25 minutes, saving the lives of 194 survivors.

Like the 77th Infantry Division, we are in a war and, at times, surrounded by enemies. The enemies of Satan, the rebellious world, and (the most deadly enemy) our internal, sinful self seek to steal, kill, and destroy. When surrounded by and venturing into the enemy territory, we must maintain an open line of communication with our Lord. By God's grace and through the power of His Spirit, we have a line of communication that can't be cut, captured, or shot down. We can go quickly and directly to the Lord in prayer.



WHO ARE OUR ENEMIES?

IN WHAT WAYS DO ENEMIES SEEK TO DESTROY US?

ARE YOU CURRENTLY SURROUNDED AND OVERWHELMED BY THE ENEMY, OR WERE YOU IN THE PAST?

Communication is essential. A football receiver running the wrong route can lead to an interception. Battles are lost when battalions do not receive a command. Relationships sour and end due to poor communication. Prayer is essential communication.

“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.”

Ephesians 6:18

PRAY IN THE SPIRIT ON ALL OCCASIONS.

The Holy Spirit prompts us to pray, guides our prayers, and is our connection to God. Praying on all occasions is to pray without ceasing. This does not mean constantly closing our eyes in prayer. For example, we should have our eyes wide open when driving, but driving these days will cause us to pray. When driving, remember who is riding shotgun, God. God’s presence should affect everything. Praying without ceasing is to be continually aware of God’s presence, which in turn affects everything.



WHAT HELPS US BE AWARE OF GOD’S PRESENCE, AND WHAT PREVENTS US FROM EXPERIENCING HIS NEARNESS?

WITH ALL KINDS OF PRAYERS AND REQUESTS.

There are many ways to pray. We will sometimes be like Peter when sinking in the sea and immediately cry out to Jesus, “Lord, save me!” We should immediately go to the Lord in prayer when tempted, overwhelmed, anxious, or afraid.

An excellent way to structure our prayers is represented by the acronym, “ACTS.”

Adoration. This is to adore God and pay honor to Him. Start your prayer by praising God for who He is – Holy, Almighty, Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer.

Confession. Praising God leads us to recognize the presence of sin. Pray to remove the barrier of sin: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:8-9

Thanksgiving. Our immediate response after confession of sin is thanksgiving. We are thankful that God forgives and grateful for the immeasurable riches of His grace.

Supplication. Too often in prayer, we start with a spiritual shopping list instead of spending time in adoration, confession, and thanksgiving first. Yet, God does want to hear our needs and requests.

BE ALERT AND ALWAYS KEEP ON PRAYING FOR ALL THE LORD’S PEOPLE.

Pray for others, and pray for yourself, but especially pray for the church. Pray for God’s people to faithfully follow King Jesus, withstand the enemy’s attack, and continue to take enemy ground, which happens when people are saved. Pray, knowing that God is near, that He hears and answers every prayer.



WHAT ARE THE CURRENT NEEDS OF THE CHURCH, AND HOW CAN GOD AND GODLY MEN MEET THEM?

“What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use - men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.”

E.M. Bounds ²

AT THE CLOSE, SHARE PRAYER REQUESTS AND HAVE MEN VOLUNTEER TO PRAY A SECTION

1. Adoration 2. Confession 3. Thanksgiving 4. Supplication

² Bounds, Edward M. 1990. *Power Through Prayer*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.



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SESSION 4

WEAPON OF WORSHIP

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Worship is the ultimate assignment of value. It's not only the act of singing to God; it's a reflection of what we treasure with our mind, spirit, and body. What we worship consumes our attention, and we serve that thing willingly. As a fighter postures himself against his enemy, our worship is the posture of our spirits to the world. It's something that can destroy and, if pointed in the wrong direction, can even destroy us.

As we observe our world, we can see how sins like pride and the love of money have destroyed people. We hear phrases like "he worshiped power" or "worshiped success." They adored those things, and their actions reflected their love for them. Their worship was a weapon in their spirit, but one used against them.

Whatever we place in the master seat of our life is our "god." Our connection to it is worship.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 shows us that the battle we fight is not primarily in the flesh, but in the spirit: *"For the weapons of warfare are not of the flesh..."* To resist the devil, we must fully engage our spirits against his schemes. We must direct our adoration, our worship, towards God.

Jesus-centered worship is a weapon of warfare because worship places God's perfect traits, like His righteousness, glory, and lovingkindness, in our mouths, bodies, and spirits. Our worship becomes a holy response of our hearts to the reality of God. It takes our worldly perspective and changes it to a heavenly view. It's in those moments that our worship activates our faith and draws God's grace to us. It magnifies God and the righteousness we have through Jesus. Our acts of worship bring our spirits to humble submission to God's power.

We can see this in 2 Chronicles 20. Israel is facing war, and Jehoshaphat goes to God in prayer. The Lord answers that He will fight this battle for them and give them victory. Jehoshaphat's response is to immediately bow his head with his face to the ground and worship. The following day Jehoshaphat placed the singers and worshippers in front of the army. As they began worshiping, the enemies before them were struck down.

God made our souls desire worship so we could know Him in unique ways. Find moments in your life to exalt Him and bring praise to Him. He is worthy.



HOW CAN YOU USE WORSHIP TO BATTLE SIN AND STRONGHOLDS IN YOUR LIFE?

2 Corinthians 10:4 shows us that spiritual weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds. Strongholds are fortresses of the flesh that we protect in our minds. By worshiping God and praising Him, the fortresses in our lives become weaker and weaker until finally, they fall. We can have faith in the weapons of the Spirit and rely on them for victory.



DESCRIBE WHAT WORSHIP LOOKS LIKE IN YOUR OWN LIFE. WHAT DOES BRINGING WORSHIP INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE LOOK LIKE?

When the word "worship" is used in the Old Testament, it's frequently combined with the physical act of bowing or kneeling before God. Bowing is an act of submission. Look for areas in your life where you can submit more to God and introduce worship into them.



HOW MIGHT THE WAY YOU CURRENTLY SEE GOD AFFECT HOW YOU WORSHIP HIM?

Satan is constantly attempting to warp our view of God and His glory. He goes to no end to lie to us and introduce doubt of God's love towards us. Identify the lies that live in your mind and use God's Word to bring light into those areas by worshiping Him for His truth.

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SESSION 5

WEAPON OF COMMUNITY

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A 2021 study by the Survey Center on American Life found that only 22% of men in the United States under the age of 30 confide in close friends in a time of crisis. That's down from 45% in 1990. The study also found that only 27% of men have six or more close friends, down from 55% in 1990. Additionally, 15% of men have no close friends, a fivefold increase from 3% in 1990. One reason the study found why men are so isolated was "lower religious involvement." Google "men and friendship," and you'll find article after article, study after study, discussing the struggle men face in establishing meaningful relationships. This should alarm you.

The tagline for Versus is "Don't Go Alone." This not only refers to the conference but to life. According to the above statistics, one in four men in the U.S. is going through life alone, or at least with few friends. The Harvard Study of Adult Development—an ongoing study started in 1938—has discovered that relationships are the greatest determiner of a person's overall health.

Versus is geared to be a catalyst for relationships, where men rekindle old friendships and establish new ones. It's a place to exchange phone numbers, plan to get coffee or dinner, schedule play dates for kids, plan to work out together, have a jam session

in the garage, or go on a camping trip. Versus is a place for men to tear down their walls and use the rubble to build foundations.

If you search the Scriptures, our enemy Satan tempts people in their most vulnerable moment: when they're alone. Men, we are fighting a spiritual battle and must guard against isolation. There is no army of one. Thankfully, the Lord equips us with brotherhood to battle against our adversary, but what does Scripture say specifically about the importance of waging war against evil with brotherhood? King Solomon, the wise and wealthy ruler of Israel, says this in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12



BASED ON THE STATISTICS ABOVE, WHAT COULD BE THE CORE REASON WHY MEN TODAY ARE MORE DISCONNECTED THAN MEN IN THE PAST?

IS YOUR HEART RESISTANT TO CONNECTING WITH OTHER MEN IN THE CHURCH, AND IF SO, WHY?

IS IT PRIDE, FEAR, TIME, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

This is a time to let your guard down and connect without fear of judgment.



WHEN WOULD YOU HAVE BENEFITED FROM HAVING A BROTHER TO REACH OUT TO IN A TIME OF NEED?

HOW CAN A BROTHER ENCOURAGE YOU THROUGH SOMETHING YOU'RE FACING TODAY?

Reflect on a time when the Lord faithfully provided you with a brother in Christ.



HOW DID THAT RELATIONSHIP CHANGE YOUR LIFE FOR THE BETTER?

The Greek word for fellowship in Scripture is *koinonia*. Among other meanings, it denotes participation in a community.



ARE YOU ACTIVE IN A BROTHERHOOD OF BELIEVERS?

DO YOU HAVE A CORE GROUP OF MEN WHO WILL CELEBRATE YOUR VICTORIES AND MOURN YOUR LOSSES WITH YOU?

While there are many aspects of brotherhood to focus on, confrontation reigns as one of the most uncomfortable aspects of brotherhood. And now more than ever—with so little interpersonal connection—constructive confrontation is falling by the wayside. So many people resort to social media to “confront” others, but that’s neither genuine nor healthy. In my own experience, there were times I was let off the hook for things I did or said when I should have been confronted by a brother and rebuked. King David, for instance, was confronted by the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12 for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. In Acts 10, Paul confronts Peter about his hypocrisy against the Jews. Both confrontations had to happen, but they were not carried out in hate. Nathan and Paul both approached their brothers in love, which should be at the heart of every necessary confrontation between two brothers in Christ. Proverbs 28:23 says, “*Whoever rebukes a person will, in the end, gain favor rather than one who has a flattering tongue.*”



ARE WE SLOW TO SPEAK, QUICK TO LISTEN, AND SLOW TO ANGER?

Men, in a day when it’s so easy to launch assaults digitally or to ignore wrongdoing altogether, we must understand that Christ intended for brotherhood to always be open and honest (Matthew 18:15-19), especially in times of confrontation. There’s a saying that honest conflict has more social value than dishonest harmony, and I couldn’t agree more. Confrontation, when carried out in love, has far more value than simply giving your brother a pass on sin or even encouraging him in it. Hold each other to the standard of Christ.



THE WORLD IS NOT HOLDING BACK ON ITS BELIEFS, SO WHY SHOULD WE HOLD BACK ON OURS?

WHAT MAKES CONFRONTATION UNCOMFORTABLE?

WHAT MAKES CONFRONTATION NECESSARY?



WHAT DO YOU LOSE WHEN YOU FAIL TO CONFRONT YOUR BROTHER AND HOLD HIM ACCOUNTABLE FOR HIS WORDS OR ACTIONS?

THINK ABOUT DAVID AND PETER. WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT IF THEY HAD NOT BEEN CONFRONTED BY NATHAN AND PAUL?

WHO IS A NATHAN OR PAUL IN YOUR LIFE?

In his book *Those Who Remain*, G. Michael Hopf writes, “Hard times create strong men. Strong men create good times. Good times create weak men. Weak men create hard times.”



HOW DOES CHRIST-CENTERED CONFRONTATION PLAY INTO CREATING A STANDARD OF STRONG, FAITHFUL MEN WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

HOW DOES LOVE TRANSFORM CONFRONTATION?

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