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**More Than Meets the Eye**

Beneath the Surface

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There was once a time when medical science believed in the spontaneous generation theory of disease. This was the idea that whatever made people sick would just pop into existence within a person with no apparent cause. This was before microscopes that could see tiny objects that our human eyes could not discern. They did not know about microorganisms. Once we had the tools to see things like bacteria and viruses, it became obvious that the spontaneous generation theory was wrong and that things we cannot see with our human eyes are what cause disease. This led to the germ theory of disease, which we now know is the truth. In many ways, the spiritual world is like the physical world. Our human eyes cannot see the spiritual causes of what happens to us. There is a spiritual war going on between good and evil, God and Satan. In this series we want to give you the spiritual microscope you need to see this spiritual warfare and how you are in the middle of it and most important of all, what to do about it. There truly is more going on spiritually than meets the eye.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE –  
SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NIV)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NIV)

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

2 Corinthians 2:11 (NIV)

...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

**1.** The Ephesians passage above tells us that the devil has schemes – what do you think this is talking about? What must we do if we are going to have success in thwarting Satan's schemes? Does it seem at times that it is a struggle to live the way God wants you to? What is the source of this struggle? How does the 2 Corinthians passage describe this struggle? What comes to your mind when you hear the word "war" used to describe the spiritual struggles we have? What have we been given to enable us to win this war?

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**2.** Pastor Rick said that Satan is most likely to attack us when we are at our weakest or after our greatest victories. Do you think this is true? We can understand why he would attack when we are weak, why do you think he would attack after we have experienced a spiritual victory? Have you ever experienced a spiritual attack after a victory? Share the circumstances with the group.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NIV)

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

**3.** In the spiritual battle that is going on between Satan and God, both sides use people to carry out their purposes. As Christians, we easily recognize those who directly worship Satan as being against God, but this passage indicates another group of people being used by Satan. What are the characteristics of these people? In what way do you think Satan can appear as an “angel of light?” How does this fit in with the idea that Satan has “schemes?” If this is true, what can we do to make sure we are not fooled by one of these false servants of righteousness?

Answer: The best defense any Christian can have against being fooled by the devil and his servants is to know the Word of God extremely well and always compare what we are hearing and seeing with what God says in his word.

1 John 2:16-17 (NIV)

For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

**4.** The battlefield that the spiritual war is being fought on is the world we live in. What are the three areas mentioned in the above verse that temptations come from? Give an example of each type. Read the account of Jesus’ temptation in Matthew 4:2-9. Did Jesus face temptation in all three areas? Do you think part of Satan’s schemes is to use the things in this world to distract us from the battle? What did Pastor Rick say is his chief way of doing this?

Answer – The three areas are: 1. the cravings of sinful man, which are the sinful desires that come from our physical bodies and sinful mind. 2. The lust of our eyes, which is the sinful desire to obtain what we see, covetousness. 3. The boasting of what he has and does is the desire to be something or someone important in this world, to be famous or powerful in our corner of the world. Jesus was tempted in these three areas, as was Eve in the Garden of Eden. Pastor Rick said the chief way that Satan entangles us in the world is to keep us busy trying to be comfortable in our lives.

**5.** What three things did Pastor Rick say we must to do to withstand our enemy? List the parts of the armor of God and what each part stands for.

Answer – The three things Pastor Rick said we must to do are to put on the armor of God, pray in the Spirit, and praise God for the victory he gives us. The parts of the armor and what they stand for are:

1. The belt of truth is your knowledge and understanding of the teachings of scripture.
2. The breastplate of righteousness is living according to God’s word.
3. Our shoes are a readiness to share the Gospel with the lost.
4. The shield of faith is your reliance upon God for everything in your life.

5. The helmet of salvation is your reliance upon Christ and the guarantee that you have eternal life.
6. The sword of the Spirit is whenever you use the word of God to do battle, praying for God's strength to defeat Satan's schemes.

### **MAKING IT PRACTICAL (OPTIONAL)**

Below are some practical things you can do to recognize the spiritual war you are in and to get victory over Satan.

**Level 1 Challenge:** If you have been unaware that you are in a spiritual battle, ask God to help you begin to evaluate everything in your life from a spiritual perspective. This will help you detect any schemes Satan is using in your life. Begin to evaluate everything you do in light of how it affects you spiritually. Recognition is the first step to victory.

**Level 2 Challenge:** Putting on the armor of God is essential if we are going to live a victorious Christian life. Look at the parts of the armor, determine which ones you have not put on, and begin to pray that God will help you to do so each day.

**Level 3 Challenge:** As a group talk about ways that we can help each other in our spiritual warfare. No one person on their own can successfully live victoriously without the help of other Christians.

### **Preparing to Lead Your Group**

**PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

**PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what did not. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment.

### **Using This Sermon Discussion Guide**

- Going Further is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We have designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is more important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as, "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spend 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.

- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately, as part of your accountability to the group, you want to commit to personal life change.
- Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessing of success.