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## Spiritual Warfare 101

“Bondage Breaker” & “Victory Over the Darkness”

Neil Anderson Book Highlights

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### NUGGETS

We need to win the battle for the mind and learn to walk by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The last thing the devil wants you to know is who you are in Christ.

We need to understand who we are as a result of who God is and what he has done.

Believe everything God says about you, it's the truth that will set you free.

Strongholds of the mind are overthrown by God's truth.

Our defense against direct attacks by the evil one is to speak aloud God's truth.

Freedom from spiritual bondage and conflicts is not a power encounter; it's a truth encounter.

Believing lies will keep us in bondage. Choosing to believe the truth is what sets us free.

Don't believe anything Satan says about you, he is a liar, the master deceiver.

Satan's power is in the lie, and when his lie is exposed by the truth, his plans are foiled.

Satan has no more right to rule your life than a Private has the right to order a General to clean the latrine.

It is not our responsibility to defeat the devil. Jesus has already done that!

**Affirming the truth** of Christ's victory and Satan's defeat is the primary step toward successfully standing against the enemies attempts to control and defeat you.

You don't have to out shout him or out muscle him to be free from his influence. You just have to out-truth him. Believe, **declare**, and act upon the truth of God's word, and you will thwart Satan's strategy.

I have found one common denominator for all struggling Christians. They **do not know who they are in Christ**, nor do they understand **what it means to be a child of God**.

Every defeated Christian I have worked with had one thing in common. None of them have known **who they were in Christ** nor understood **what it means to be a child of God**. (John 1:12) (Romans 8:16–17)

I can't speak enthusiastically enough about helping people understand **who they really are in Christ**.

I don't recall one person whom I have led through the steps to freedom in Christ who didn't have a self-image problem. None of them knew **who they were in Christ**.

We need to understand **who we are in Christ** as a result of who God is and what he has done. A fruitful Christian life is a result of living by faith according to what God said is true.

Your hope for growth, meaning and fulfillment as a Christian is based on understanding who you are – specifically, your **identity in Christ** as a child of God. Your understanding of who God is and **who you are in relationship to Him** is the critical foundation for your belief system and your behavior patterns as a Christian.

Satan didn't want her to know the truth of who she was in Christ, nor how Jesus meets her needs for life, **identity**, acceptance, security, and significance. She knew that God's truth would disarm his lie just as surely as light dispels darkness. The last thing the devil wants you to know is **who you are in Christ**.

Many Christians are not living free and productive lives because they don't understand **who they are** and why they are here. **Who they are** is rooted in their **identity and position in Christ**. If they don't see themselves the way God sees them, to that degree they suffer from a false identity and poor sense of worth. They don't fully understand the gospel and the dramatic change that occurred in them the moment they trusted in Christ.

If your relationship with God is the key to wholeness, why do so many believers struggle with their **identity**, security, significance, sense of worth and spiritual maturity? Ignorance is probably the primary reason. The prophet Hosea said, "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). For others it is carnality, the lack of repentance and lack of faith in God, and many are being deceived by the father of lies.

Understanding your **identity in Christ** is essential for living the Christian life. People cannot consistently behave in ways that are inconsistent with the way they perceive themselves. You don't change yourself by your perception. You change your perception of yourself by believing the truth. If you perceive yourself wrongly, you will live wrongly because what you are believing is not true. If you think you are a no-good bum, you will probably live like a no-good bum. If, however, you see yourself as a child of God who is spiritually alive in Christ, you will begin to live accordingly. **Next to a knowledge of God, a knowledge of who you are is by far the most important truth you can possess.**

Nothing is more foundational to your freedom from Satan's bondage than understanding and affirming what God has done for you in Christ and **who you are as His child**. Your attitudes, actions, responses, and reactions to life's circumstances are greatly affected by what you believe about yourself. If you see yourself as a hapless victim of Satan and his schemes, you will probably live like a victim and be in bondage to his lies. But if you see yourself as a dearly loved and accepted child of God you will likely start living like one. (1 John 3:1–3)

If a believer believes the devil's accusations, gives into his temptations, and believes his lies, does that mean he or she is demon possessed? No, but that person is likely defeated, stagnant in terms of spiritual growth, and enslaved to sin.

Facing the truth is the first step in any recovery program, because all addicts lie. Many want out of their addiction because they are tired of living a lie. We have to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) if we want to live free in Christ and have meaningful relationships.

**There is no need for the Christian to defeat the devil.** Christ has already accomplished that. We just need to believe it. When we read through the epistles, it is obvious that Jesus has already delivered us from Satan and sin. That was the good news Paul conveyed in his prayer. God has done all he needs to do for us to live a victorious life in Christ. Now we have to assume our responsibility. (*Womack – appropriate it by faith*)

It is your individual responsibility as a believer to repent and believe and proclaim the truth that will set you free. Nobody else can do that for you. I can't put on the armor of God for you, believe for you, repent for you, forgive others for you, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ for you, but I can help you.

When we were born again, our self-centered flesh patterns came into conflict with the leading of God's Holy Spirit. They are in opposition because the flesh was programmed to live independently of God, and like Jesus, the Holy Spirit will not act independently of the Father. With every temptation comes a choice to live by the spirit or walk by the flesh, and the consequences of that choice are either the fruit of the spirit or the deeds of the flesh.

Deception is more devious than temptation and accusation, because when you are tempted, you know it. When you are accused, you know it. But when you are deceived, you don't know it. If you did know it, you wouldn't be deceived. If we don't know the truth and don't know who our enemy is, we will be like blindfolded children striking out at ourselves and each other, unaware that we are being deceived. ....The only defense against deception is to know the truth and to be spiritually discerning.

The Christian worldview has a different center. Jesus confronts our self-sufficiency and offers a different perspective – one from the cross. Only when you live from God's perspective can you escape the bondage of the one whose intent is "to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10).

You are free in Christ, but you will be defeated if the devil can deceive you into believing you are nothing more than a sin-sick product of your past. Nor can Satan do anything about your position in Christ, but if he can deceive you into believing that what Scripture says isn't true, you will live as though it isn't. People are in bondage to the lies they believe. That is why Jesus said, "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:32)

Freedom from spiritual bondage and conflicts is not a power encounter; it's a truth encounter. Satan is a deceiver, and he will work undercover at all costs. His demons are like cockroaches that scurry for the shadows when the light comes on. Satan's power is in the lie, and when his lie is exposed by the truth, his plans are foiled.

I have learned from the Scriptures that truth is the liberating agent, and that has proven to be the case in every successful counseling session. Jesus is the truth, and he is the one who sets his captives free. Power for the believer comes in knowing and choosing the truth. We are to pursue truth because we already have all the power we need in Christ (Ephesians 1:18 – 19). Furthermore, people in bondage are not liberated by what I do as a pastor, but by what they choose to **believe, confess, renounce, and forgive**.

I believe that the greatest determinant of mental and spiritual health and spiritual freedom is a true understanding of God and a right relationship with him.

The truth (Christ and his Word) should set us free and enable us to conform to the image of God.

The object of our faith is God and his Word. The more you know about them, the more faith you will have. The less you know, the smaller your shield will be, and the easier it will be for one of Satan's fiery darts to reach its target. If you want your shield of faith to grow large and protective, your knowledge of God and his Word must increase.

The Christian life is lived by faith according to what God says is true. Jesus is the truth, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth, God's word is truth, and we are to speak the truth in love. The biblical response to truth is faith regardless of whether we feel it is true or not.

Christians are to forsake all lying, deceiving, stretching the truth, and anything else associated with falsehood. Believing lies will keep us in bondage. Choosing to believe the truth is what sets us free.

You are not called to dispel the darkness, you are called to turn on the light. You don't get rid of negative thoughts by rebuking every one of them, you get rid of them by repenting and choosing the truth.

It should be obvious by now that God's basic goal for your life is character development: becoming the person God wants you to be. Sanctification is God's goal for your life (Thessalonians 4:3). Nobody and nothing on planet earth can keep you from being the person God called you to be. Certainly, a lot of distractions, diversions, disappointments, trials, temptations and traumas come along to disrupt the process. Every day you

will struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil, each of which are opposed to your success at being God's person.

You already have everything you need to make you happy forever. You have Christ. You have eternal life. You are loved by a heavenly father who has promised to supply all your needs. No wonder the Bible repeatedly commands us to be thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:18). If you really want to be happy, learn to be content with life and thankful for what you already have in Christ.

We can't directly control our feelings, but we can control what we think. That is why the mind is the control center of all activities. You don't do anything without first thinking it. The physical and emotional responses to our thoughts may be so fast that we could think we have no control over the process, but we do. Every believer has a no button. "For as he thinks within himself, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

If what we think does not reflect truth, then what we feel does not reflect reality.

We have very little control over our emotions, but we do have control over our thoughts, and our thoughts determine our feelings and our responses. That is why it is so important that you fill your mind with the knowledge of God and his word. You need to see life from God's perspective and respond accordingly. The order of Scripture is to **know** the truth, **believe** it, **live** accordingly by faith, and let your emotions be a product of your trust in God and your obedience to him. What kind of a life would you live if you believed what you felt instead of the truth? Your life would be as inconsistent as your feelings.

All behavior is the product of what we choose to think or believe. We can't see what people think. We can only observe what they do. Trying to change behavior without changing what we believe and therefore what we think, will never produce lasting results.

#### **UNDERSTANDING AND COMBATTING SATAN'S LIES (Eph 6)**

The first piece of armor Paul mentions for standing against the schemes of the devil is the "belt of truth" (Ephesians 6:14). Because Satan's primary weapon is the lie, your defense against him is the truth. Dealing with Satan is not a power encounter, it is a truth encounter. When you expose Satan's lie with God's truth, his power is broken.

Satan's strategy is to infiltrate your mind with his thoughts and to promote his lie in the face of God's truth. If he can control your thoughts, he can control your life. (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Satan's lie cannot withstand the truth any more than the darkness of night can withstand the light of the rising sun. We are not called to dispel the darkness, we are called to turn on the light. Deceiving spirits are like cockroaches. They come out only at night, and when you turn on the light, they head for the shadows.

More is going on in your mind than prior negative conditioning. You are not just up against the world system in which you were raised and the resultant flesh patterns you have chosen to adopt. You are also up against the devil who is scheming to fill your mind with thoughts that are opposed to God's plan for you. (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Satan's strategy is to introduce his thoughts and ideas into your mind and deceive you into believing they are yours. If Satan can place a thought in your mind – and he can – it isn't much more of a trick for him to make you think it is your idea. If you knew it was Satan, you would reject the thought, wouldn't you? When he (satan) disguises his suggestions as your thoughts and ideas, however, you are more likely to accept them. That is his primary deception.

## THE BELIEVER'S AUTHORITY

Your **identity as a child of God** and your **authority over spiritual powers** are not things you are receiving or will receive at some point in time in the future; you have them right now. You are a spiritually alive child of God right now. You are seated in the heavenly's with Christ right now. You have power and authority over the kingdom of darkness and are able to do His will right now.

Not only were you made alive in Christ, but Satan was disarmed and defeated some 2000 years ago. His defeat is not pending, nor is it future; it has already happened. It is not our responsibility to defeat the devil. Jesus has already done that.

If Satan is already disarmed, why don't we experience more victory in our lives? Because the father of lies has deceived the whole world. Satan roams around like a hungry lion, looking and surrounding ferocious. A lion roars to paralyze its prey in fear, and they are consumed. But Satan's fangs have been removed and he has been declawed, and we have to believe that or we will be consumed.

## THE BELIEVER'S AUTHORITY – PART 2

Authority is **THE** issue in spiritual warfare. Two opposing sovereigns cannot rule in the same sphere at the same time. That issue was settled by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He himself said, "all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:18–19). Therefore, Satan has no spiritual authority in heaven or on earth.

The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ secured forever Jesus's authority over all things (Matthew 28:18). This authority was extended to all believers in the great commission so that we may continue his mission of destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

We all were born spiritually dead and subject to the ruler of this world, whom Paul called "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). But when we received Christ, God "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son" (Colossians 1:13). We are now citizens of heaven, not earth (Philippians 3:20). Satan is the ruler of this world, but he is no longer our ruler. Rather, Christ is our Lord.

Yet as long as we remain on planet Earth, we are still on Satan's turf. He will try to rule our lives by deceiving us into believing we are still under his authority. As aliens in a hostile world, we need protection from this evil tyrant. Christ has not only provided protection, but in Christ we have authority over the kingdom of darkness. We also have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of truth, and he will guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

Even though we are secure in Christ and have all the protective armor we need, we are still vulnerable to Satan's accusations, temptations, and deceptions. The fact that we have been instructed to put on the armor of God reveals that we are vulnerable to some degree. Therefore, it is probable that Satan will have some influence over every believer if we let him. It is possible that he can gain some measure of control over our lives if we are deceived and believe his lies.

I have seen countless numbers of the believers who are almost paralyzed by what Satan tells them. The oppression is so overwhelming that some can't seem to make the right choices and live responsible lives. They actually can make choices, but they don't think they can, so they don't.

Ownership is never at stake, however. We belong to God, and Satan can't touch **who we are in Christ**. We may be demon – oppressed, but we are always Holy Spirit possessed. As long as we are living in these natural bodies in this fallen world, we are targets for Satan's fiery darts.

Satan is a created being. He is not omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent, and yet he is the ruler of this world. He can't be everywhere in the world tempting and deceiving billions of people at the same time. He rules through an army of emissaries (demons or fallen angels) who propagate his lies around the world.

Neither disbelief in demonic activity nor an inordinate fear of demons is healthy. In the Screwtape letters, C. S. Lewis wrote, "there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe and feel an unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist?? or a magician with the same delight."?

The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of demons any more than it attempts to prove the existence of God. It simply reports on their activities knowing its first readers believed in their existence.

### **THE BELIEVER'S AUTHORITY – PART 3**

Even though Satan is defeated, he still rules this world through a hierarchy of demons who tempt, accuse, and deceive those who fail to put on the armor of God, stand firm in their faith, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Our sanctuary is our **identity and position in Christ**, and we have all the protection we need to live a victorious life. But if we fail to assume our responsibility and give ground to Satan, we will suffer the consequences of our sinful attitudes and actions. The good news is that we can repent and reclaim all that we have in Christ.

As far as the devil is concerned, the next best thing to keeping you chained in spiritual darkness or having you live as an emotional wreck is confusing your belief system. He lost you in the eternal sense when you became a child of God. If he can muddy your mind and weaken your faith with partial truths, however, he can neutralize your effectiveness for God and stunt your growth as a Christian.

Authority is the right to rule; it is based on a legal position. Power is the ability to rule. (*Example of the policeman at an intersection.*)

Believers have both the authority to do God's will because of their **position in Christ**, and the power to do God's will as long as they walk in the spirit: "finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).

Spiritual authority is not a tug of war on a horizontal plane; it is a vertical chain of command. Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18); he's at the top of the chain of command. He has given his authority and power to his servants to be exercised in his name (Luke 10:17); we are under his authority, and we share it for the purpose of doing his will. And Satan and his demons? They are at the bottom, subject to the authority Christ has placed in us. They have no more right to rule your life than a Private has the right to order a General to clean the latrine.

Why, then, does the kingdom of darkness continue to exert such negative influence in the world and in the lives of Christians? Because Satan has deceived the whole world, and therefore, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). However, Satan is not an equal power with God; he is a disarmed and defeated foe (Colossians 2:15). But if he can deceive you into believing that he has more power and authority than you do, you will live as if he does! You have been given authority over the kingdom of darkness, but if you don't believe it and live accordingly, it's as if you didn't have it.