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All words spoken by Jesus Christ are in **red text**.

This lesson is intended for Christians—because living day-by-day in faith is sometimes not easy. As we grow in faith, we experience “events” in life that may be categorized as temptations, trials and tribulations. How we respond to each event involves engaging in varying degrees of spiritual warfare.

Temptations

From a biblical perspective, a temptation occurs when we willingly allow the lies associated with a sin to permeate our spiritual defenses, and our flesh is enticed by the sin. Spiritual warfare ensues between our spirit and our flesh because we know (1) the sin is wrong, and (2) there are undesirable consequences if we are overcome by the lies.

- “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.” James 1:14
- Jesus said, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matthew 26:41

Trials

Christians desire for others to see the transformation God has made within their heart. However, at times this may be difficult because of trials. A trial tests our faith, patience and stamina as we experience negative situations in life. A trial may occur when someone speaks caustic words towards us. Trials may involve struggles with family and business relationships, a temporary sickness, constraining circumstances or “walls” that hinder our progress, financial hardship, a job loss, an accident, and so forth. In addition, the time of a trial can range from short to long, may have an effect upon our emotions, may cause undesired physical responses such as stress, and often involves spiritual warfare. However, there are heart-transforming benefits of trials. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2-4

Note: One may accurately perceive a temptation is also a trial (because both test our faith). However, temptations are primarily “internally focused.” Whereas, trials are more “externally focused.”

Tribulations

Tribulations are much worse than temptations and trials. Tribulation comprises severe hardship, adversity, distress, and even death—due to oppression and persecution—because of a faith in Jesus Christ—and represents the highest degree of spiritual warfare. Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

During the last days tribulations will increase. Jesus said, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Matthew 24:21

For more information read “Temptations, Trials and Tribulations” on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare occurs as we respond to temptations, trials and tribulations. The objective of spiritual warfare is to overcome adversarial lies, and to please God. However, although there are negative characteristics associated with each type of event, we can benefit and grow from these experiences.

- We learn more about ourselves.
- Our self-centered sinful nature is revealed.
- We realize how the desires of our flesh conflicts with God.
- We recognize our need to completely depend upon Him for cleansing us of all unrighteousness.

Unfortunately, at times when in spiritual warfare it seems like we are inside a boxing ring—with a bloody nose, unable to clearly see because of swollen eyes, and find it difficult to defend ourselves as we are pummeled by our adversary. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12

But praise God in that we have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb; we are God's property; and there is no need to engage in spiritual warfare alone. The objective of this lesson is for Christians to recognize and use what God has provided us to become victorious:

- The Holy Spirit
- Spiritual armor
- Attributes He has designed within us
- Fellow believers in Christ



Here is an important truth to consider: God uses life's "events" as a means to prepare us for His purpose and glory. To gain additional insight, consider the similarities between how a nation will prepare their soldiers for battle, and how Christians are prepared for spiritual warfare. For example, a nation's military training begins with "basic training" where each soldier is stripped of "self" as they learn the importance of obeying orders for the benefit of themselves and others. Thereafter, each soldier receives additional training to enhance their skill sets and use of weapons—with the intent of making them more effective when called upon to go into battle. This scenario is spiritually analogous to the "training" Christians experience. Each time we encounter a temptation, trial or tribulation and engage in spiritual warfare we learn from our mistakes and successes, the importance of self is reduced, we depend more upon God, and we become spiritually stronger (battle-hardened).

The Holy Spirit

God gave us the Holy Spirit to assist us with all aspects of living for Him while on this planet. Jesus declared: "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." John 14:15-18

"When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." John 16:13

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:5-6

The Holy Spirit:

- Is the Spirit of Truth. John 14:17, 26
- Testifies of Jesus. John 15:26
- Helps us. John 14:16, 26; Romans 8:26
- Dwells with us and in us. John 14:16-17
- Teaches us all things. John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:12-13
- Gives us gifts (skills, abilities) that spiritually benefit others. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
- Speaks through us. John 15:27; Matthew 10:20
- Makes intercession for us. Romans 8:27
- Regenerates and renews us. Titus 3:5
- Fills us with joy, peace, and hope. Romans 15:13
- Convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. John 16:8
- Restraints Satan. 2 Thessalonians 2:6-10
- Is evidentiary proof of God's promises and guarantee of our inheritance. Ephesians 1:13-14
- Abides with us forever. John 14:16

Humans are incapable of defending themselves within the spiritual realm. However, those who have been born again by the Spirit have witnessed spiritual power that has transformed us from death unto life—and spiritual power that enables us to become victorious in spiritual warfare.

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” Ephesians 3:20

Spiritual Armor

In addition to the Holy Spirit, God has provided us with protective spiritual means to stand against evil. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, correlated the armor and weapons commonly used by warriors at that time, to seven components of the armor of God Christians may use in spiritual warfare.



“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having **girded your waist with truth**, having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, and having **shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**; above all, taking the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God; **praying always** with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” Ephesians 6:10-18

(1) Gird your waist with truth.

We live in a darkened world that suffers the consequences of lies. The masses delusionally seek fulfillment in life by various means such as sex, drugs, pride, wealth, power, possessions, and so forth; and they do not realize they have a spiritual emptiness within their heart and soul. Those who realized the uselessness of lies; those who realized the emptiness within; those who sought spiritual truth; those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; those who are influenced by the Holy Spirit; and those who are being transformed from within are those who are internalizing truths that overcome lies—truths the world seeks but cannot find because of darkness and sin.

(2) Wear the breastplate of righteousness.

Righteousness may be defined as living moral truths in what we say and what we do. In addition, righteousness may be defined as a reflection of our Savior and Lord—in the same way Jesus Christ was a reflection (or mirror) of God. If you want to gain insight into the persona of God, look at what Jesus said and what Jesus did. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.” John 5:19

As we are transformed from within (sanctification) we become less like ourselves and more like Jesus. Because of God’s grace and love, our thoughts and behaviors change from being focused upon fulfilling the desires of our flesh, to doing those things that please God—and we mirror the righteousness of Christ for all to see. If our persona is dominated by our sinful nature, we will be viewed as being hypocritical and will encounter difficulty in reaching the hearts of those who are lost—for this was the essence of the ministry of Jesus when He walked on earth. Jesus said, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:10

We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) when we renounce our sinful flesh, are reconciled to God, and put on the protective breastplate of His righteousness for all to see—including our spiritual adversaries.

(3) Shod your feet with the gospel of peace.

Paul summarized the benefits of righteous behavior and the gospel of peace—because only God’s grace can change the hearts of those who are lost.

“Be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Titus 3:1-8

Those who are living in darkness and influenced by lies will often put up mental and emotional “barriers” against God’s truth. These barriers may be exemplified by responses that are defensive, argumentative, or deflective—because they (1) are blinded and manipulated by darkness and lies, and (2) often view any attempt to discuss the truth as a personal attack. They may also speak caustic words (demeaning, divisive, condescending, harsh and cynical) as a means of defense. If these types of behaviors occur, they likely have anger and hatred in their heart as well. As such, any attempt to make any degree of an “in-your-face” declaration of the Gospel of Christ will be thwarted by protective measures. Besides, no Christian should ever take an aggressive position in any situation. The only means to get past the barriers of darkness, lies and defensive responses is to shod your feet with the gospel of peace by expressing humility, grace, forgiveness, and the love of God—for this is how God overcame the barriers we created against Him before we knew the truth.

Spiritual truth: We do not fully comprehend the spiritual and transformational power of God’s grace, His forgiveness, and His love. For when we first realized we are forgiven by what Jesus did for us on the cross—past, present and future—is when we began to grasp the love God has towards us. It is His love that changes the motivations of our heart as we seek ways to please Him and not our flesh. It is His grace, His forgiveness, and His love—radiating from our hearts and soul and enveloped by the gospel of peace—that is most effective in reaching those who are lost.

Spiritual truth: Never consider it a burden or obligation to share Jesus with someone. Communicating what God has done for us should come from an overflowing desire within the heart as we experience empathy, forgiveness, and love for those who are lost.

Spiritual truth: It is the Holy Spirit who saves persons, and not us. Those who are transformed by the Holy Spirit will emanate the light of Jesus—which is seen by those who are in darkness. It is the Holy Spirit who prepares the hearts of those who are in darkness to be responsive to those who are emanating the light. It is the Holy Spirit who knows what to speak to reach the hearts of those who are lost. This all occurs when a Christian simply makes themselves available to be used by the Holy Spirit whenever needed. What’s more, when someone accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord—GIVE GOD THE GLORY—because it is the working of the Holy Spirit that resulted in their salvation.

“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.” Romans 11:36

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6

(4) Use the Shield of faith by placing your faith in God for all aspects of life, and for victory in spiritual battles.

“God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Romans 12:3

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6

When we exercise our faith in God, it is analogous to us plugging our spiritual “electrical cord” into God’s power outlet. Jesus used an allegory to explain how our faith can overcome mountainous temptations, trials, tribulations, and spiritual warfare in our lives. Jesus said, **“I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”** Matthew 17:20

Spiritual truth: There is an additional attribute God designed within us that is the next progressive step beyond hope, belief, and faith: trust. Trust is a free will choice that involves vulnerability as we “give” an indescribable “internal part” of us to whom we extend our trust. From a spiritual perspective, extending trust towards God is similar to letting go of the steering wheel of the car, climbing into the back seat, and letting God drive.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

(5) Wear the helmet of salvation as an assurance we are eternally redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

I find it interesting Paul correlated the helmet to our salvation. When in spiritual warfare, the amount of activity within our mind can be overwhelming as we attempt to analytically identify and segment the lies—lies which speak to the desires of our sinful flesh; lies that are intended to weaken our faith in our Savior and Lord; and lies that misdirect us from God’s truth. In the midst of this type of attack, it is important to wear the helmet of salvation—which encompasses and covers what’s going on “between our ears.”

Spiritual truth: Regardless of what is going on...we are eternally saved. God loves us and “has our back” (protects, defends, watches over, supports, and shields us).

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31-29

(6) Use the sword of the Spirit: God’s word is the best strategic and tactical weapon we can use to speak to those who are lost, and to overcome attacks by spiritual enemies.

Never attempt to fight a spiritual battle with human reasoning or opinions. Spoken words that are based upon human logic lack spiritual power and will receive a defensive response that is based upon a lie. The only way to overcome darkness and lies is by quoting the absolute truth of God’s word.

For example, after fasting forty days and forty nights, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan three times (Matthew 4:1-11). Each time Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus responded by quoting scripture, **“It is written…”** When we use God’s word to respond to those who are living in darkness and controlled by delusional lies, it transitions their attack from us to God. Truth is not based upon our flawed logical reasoning or pseudo intellectual opinion. Truth is based upon what God has said. When the sword of the Spirit is used, those who attack are now required to argue against God’s word—which will defeat their intent because there is no lying argument that can overcome the absolute truth of God’s word. This is why it is important for Christians to read the entire Bible and memorize key scriptures—so that we are equipped to use the sword of the Spirit when we encounter lies. Here are examples.

Lie	Truth
There multiple religions and ways to get to Heaven.	Jesus declared, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6
I’m a good person.	The Bible states “There is none righteous, not one. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:10, 23
Christians are homophobic.	The Bible states in Proverbs 9:10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” In addition, Jesus said in Matthew 10:28: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” As such I fear God and not humans.
The Bible was written by ancient people and has no relevance to today.	God revealed part of His nature in Malachi 3:6 when He said: “I am the Lord, I do not change.” The Bible states in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Psalms 33:11: “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.” Isaiah 40:8: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”

(7) Pray always because we are completely dependent upon God for everything.

God designed humans with an ability to communicate with other humans. However, the most important reason is so that we are able to communicate with Him in prayer.

Because our belief in our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for us on the cross as a propitiation (paid the price) for our sins, we are justified (“just-as-if-I’d” never-sinned), and viewed by God as being righteous.

“Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:22-26

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16

Think about it...we have the opportunity to communicate with the One who created the universe (Colossians 1:16); and the One who knows the number of hairs on our head (Luke 12:7); and can pray about:

- All aspects of our life.
- Our thankfulness.
- Acknowledgement, remorse and repentance for sin. Note: Unconfessed sin can become a barrier to communication with God. Psalms 66:18; Isaiah 59:2; Matthew 6:14-15; James 4:1-6; John 17:7
- Overcoming the scars from trauma: receiving things we should have never experienced and/or not receiving things we should have experienced.
- Growing in grace, peace and spiritual wisdom.
- Seeking spiritual help, guidance and power to overcome temptations, trials and tribulations.

When we pray, we should speak about the spiritual desires of our heart. In addition, prayer should consist of the type of personal interaction that occurs when we share what's going on in our lives with a trusted and close friend. But most important, our requests should be based upon His will for our lives, and not the desires of our flesh.

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." 1 John 5:14-15

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

"Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday." Psalm 37:4-6

Here are examples of prayers I have made.

Heavenly Father...in the name of my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ...I lift up John to you in prayer. Lord, it is the desire of my heart that you enlighten his heart and soul. I ask Lord, you give him the strength and power to overcome the sin in his life; to walk in your light; to grow spiritually; and to reflect your grace, understanding, and love. Lord, I ask these things because your word says in 2 Peter 3:9 that you are "not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance." Lord, I ask that you change him from within by the power of your Holy Spirit, and I thank you for John's salvation. In the name of Jesus I pray.

Lord, I come before you in the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord. I am experiencing deep anxiety and overwhelming fear because of my present medical condition. I do not understand why I am going through all of this, nor do I understand what will happen in the future. Everything seems out of control and it does not make any sense to me. But your word says to trust in You. Therefore, I trust in you...I trust in you...I TRUST IN YOU! Holy Spirit I ask that you fill me with Your peace that passes all understanding; help me to persevere; and cause me to grow spiritually during this experience.

Holy, Holy, Holy are you, Lord; and worthy to be praised. Thank you, God, for your love and grace. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for my sins so that I may become your righteousness. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for guiding me through this spiritual warfare, and for victory by your power. In the name of Jesus—and through the power of the blood of Jesus that was shed for me—I take authority and dominion—I bind the spirit that is speaking lies and causing torment, and I command you to leave and never return. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Good morning, Lord. Help me through this day to live according to your will and purpose, and to glorify you.

Spiritual Attributes

In addition to the Holy Spirit and the seven components of spiritual armor, God also designed us with multiple attributes (innate qualities, characteristics, traits, etc.) that we may be use to avoid (and while engaged in) spiritual warfare. These attributes may be segmented into two groups: internal and external. Internal attributes are primarily focused upon how we function internally. External attributes are primarily focused upon facilitating interaction with others.

It is important to understand our God-given attributes are:

1. Spiritual because they are components within our heart and soul.
2. Used by the Holy Spirit to influence who we are and what we do.
3. Unique from all animal species.
4. Interdependent in that each attribute is dependent upon other attributes. For example, when making a decision, consider the effectiveness of analytical thinking without an ability to use imagination to identify different options. (To accomplish this task you will use analytical thinking, imagination and possibly memories.)
5. Synergistic in that the output (or benefits gained) from using two or more attributes at the same time is greater than using each attribute independently.

In addition, most are unaware we utilize these attributes minute-by-minute as we function throughout our day. Our attributes may also be considered as learned “skills” or “tools” that facilitate our defensive and offensive responses when engaged in spiritual warfare.

Each of these attributes (plus additional attributes) are described more fully in “Spiritual Attributes God Designed Within Us” on UniqueBibleStudies.com. This lesson only provides a short overview of each attribute.

Internal Attributes	External Attributes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free Will• Imagination• God Awareness• Analytical Thinking• Memories• Self-Awareness• Hope, Belief, Faith and Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to Communicate• Skepticism• Discernment• Empathy• Forgiveness

Internal Attributes

Free Will

God designed us with the mental capability to make personal autonomous decisions as to what we do, what we say, what we believe, and whom we will serve. God desires heart-driven choices from those who love Him; and this is why He did not design preprogrammed robots.

Imagination

God gave us the ability to mentally visualize images or concepts of things that are not physically present. We use our imagination when we plan something in the future, when we view a situation from different angles, when we read a book, when we experience empathy, and when we innovate. Likewise, we use our imagination to visually coalesce and understand the spiritual realities of:

- God—based upon His influence within our lives.
- Satan—based upon the devastating human consequences we are able to see, hear and experience.

God Awareness

There are revealing moments when we take time to reflectively look at the world around us and realize everything on earth did not happen by chance. As such, there must be a higher power. This is when we begin to conceptualize (via our imagination) the existence of God who created all that is on earth and all that is in the universe.

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.” Romans 1:20

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” Psalm 19:1

Analytical Thinking

To make common sense decisions in life we need the mental ability to collect relevant information, evaluate and weigh decision options by considering the potential outcomes and risks, and make choices that provides the greatest benefit for our wellbeing. We use this attribute constantly throughout our day—from deciding what to eat in the morning, to prioritizing our daily activities.

I believe there is also a direct correlation between the spiritual maturity of a Christian, and the amount of time they will analytically evaluate an evil confrontation. A mature Christian will:

- Refrain from a “knee-jerk” response to the situation.
- Pray for wisdom and guidance.
- Collect and evaluate information.
- Identify optional responses.
- Select the best response that glorifies God.

Memories

God designed us with a memory that has the capability to store and retrieve sights, sounds, smells, tastes, music, conversations, emotions, thoughts, motivations, the good and bad times, and what we have said and done—including those things we’d like to forget, and those we want no one to know about. In addition, our memories are spiritual and will stay with us for eternity.

But what’s more, we learn from our memories. We learn from times when we make mistakes, and when we do things correctly and according to God’s will. And, if you are like me, too often my “lessons learned” was due to the consequences of multiple duplicate mistakes...until I finally listened and obeyed as directed. Each of these “learning experiences” are stored in our memory—including the negative consequences when we fail, and the positive rewards when we obey. So, the next time we encounter a similar situation we can use our imagination, analytical thinking and memories to consider our behavioral options, consequences or rewards, and make a free will decision to obey the Holy Spirit as He assists and guides us through spiritual warfare.

Self-Awareness

God gave us the ability to look “inward” and analytically evaluate our thoughts, motivations, emotions, and reasons for our behavior. By knowing what we are like on the inside—including how our “internal status” affects how we behave—we are able to gain greater insight into our own behavior and the behavior of other persons.

Here is additional insight into this attribute... If we were not designed with self-awareness, how would we realize we are sinner in need of a Savior?

Hope, Belief, Faith and Trust

We discussed using the shield of faith earlier. However, it is important to note that God designed within us more than faith. He also gave us hope, belief and trust.

- Hope may be described as a foundational and optimistic perception there is a possibility of a better future. Hope supports belief.
- Belief may be described as a progressive step beyond hope in that it is an acceptance that the object of our hope is true or that it exists—without tangible evidence. Belief supports faith.
- Faith may be described as a progressive step beyond hope and belief that emerges as a behavioral expression (what we say and what we do). Faith supports trust.
- Trust is beyond hope, belief and faith. It is a free will choice that involves vulnerability as we “give” an indescribable “internal part” of us to whom we extend our trust.

Trust

Faith

Belief

Hope

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Ephesians 1:13

God desires our whole-hearted trust. What’s more, our trust in God is required when in spiritual battle. Those who trust in themselves—while they may win a battle—they will eventually lose the war.

“**Trust** in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

For more information on hope, belief, faith and trust read “Trust” on UniqueBibleStudies.com.

External Attributes

Ability to Communicate

God gave humans an amazing ability to communicate. For example, we are able to share our feelings, beliefs, opinions, and emotions. We are able to use our imagination and analytical thinking to convert complex ideas and concepts into simplified messaging that facilitates understanding when we speak with one another. We are able to summarize key points discussed within a conversation to verify our understanding is accurate. We are able to communicate by tone of our voice, body language, sign-language, pictures, symbols, gestures, written words, and so forth. In addition, humans speak different languages, and some persons are multi-lingual.

However, humans can speak words that are spiritually uplifting, or caustically harmful. What we say—in all of the various means we communicate—is a free will choice based upon the condition and desires of our heart.

Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” Matthew 12:34-25

Skepticism

Skepticism is defined as doubting the truth of something or someone and is a beneficial protective mechanism. Without skepticism we would have an increased propensity to believe everything we see and hear. We have all experienced a situation where skepticism has caused us to question a declared truth. This occurs when there is either a “disconnect” between what is said (a potential lie) and what we know to be true, and/or there is a “disconnect” between what someone says and does. When we encounter “disconnects,” skepticism will cause an internal “uneasy feeling” that something is not right (i.e. a “red flag,” a perceived warning, or we should proceed with caution). In addition, these “disconnects” will cause us to analytically discern what we see and hear.

Discernment

God also gave us an attribute of discernment, or behavioral insight. Behavioral insight is an innate ability to see and evaluate persons based upon their words and actions. Discernment will leverage attributes such as self-awareness, analytical thinking, and memories.

However, a true and accurate understanding of what’s going on inside a person’s heart and soul can only occur spiritually by the Holy Spirit. When this revelation occurs, the experience is accompanied by a compassion and empathy for the heart and soul of the person who is revealed. This is when you can feel their pain. This is when you no longer have control over your emotions as tears begin to rise from deep within your soul as you cry for their condition. This is when you are spiritually influenced by the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit.

Empathy

Jesus declared, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

To facilitate loving our neighbor as ourself, humans need an ability to mentally and emotionally relate to other persons. Empathy is commonly defined as imagining oneself in another person’s situation—including experiencing their feelings, thoughts, and emotions.

Supported by our imagination, analytical ability, memories, self-awareness, and discernment, we are able to vicariously experience the feelings of happiness when someone is expressing joy, or compassion for the heart and soul of someone who is going through a traumatic event in their life.

“We love Him because He first loved us.” 1 John 4:19.

Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

Forgiveness

God’s grace, combined with empathy, facilitates forgiveness. Empathy mentally puts ourselves in their shoes and enables us to look at the world through their perspective. When we consider God’s grace, and are able to correlate our experiences to their experience, it makes it easier to forgive someone who has done something wrong—especially if we also committed a similar mistake.

How our God designed attributes facilitate spiritual warfare avoidance and engagement.

The best defense for spiritual warfare is active avoidance—or a deliberate decision to look for, recognize, and not engage in spiritual battles. For example, when tempted, an active self-awareness will determine if our flesh is responding to inappropriate stimuli (or inducements) to sin.

- The prudent Christian will avoid the lies in the first place. Via analytical thinking, memories of how we failed in the past, and memories of what we should have done—we can make free will decisions (and plans) to stay away from these potential pitfalls.
- If we allow the lies to break through our defenses, our self-awareness will recognize our fleshly response and increased desire to sin. When this occurs, we are entering into a spiritual battle. Whether we are victorious or defeated depends upon the desires of our heart. When we experience victory, our analytical abilities and imagination engage as our memories remind us of the consequences that occurred in the past, and the potential pain and shame of allowing the sinful influences to continue. Meanwhile, God awareness causes us to think of His desires for us, and our desire to please Him. This is when our free will makes a decision to escape the temptation by obeying the directions of the Holy Spirit. **“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13**

Another aspect of our attributes is they help protect us from the potential consequences of what I call “disconnects.” From a spiritual sense, a disconnect occurs when we encounter:

- A proclaimed truth that does not align with what we know is truth.
- A difference between what one says and what one does (hypocritical behavior).

Whenever we see or hear a disconnect, our skepticism kicks in and we begin to doubt the declared truth or experience internal “warnings” because of hypocritical behavior. Thereafter, analytical thought, discernment, and memories enables us to segment, evaluate and compare the individual components of what we see and hear—and discern (compare/contrast) if it aligns with God’s word, His will, and if it glorifies God or man.

Jesus warned us about those who profess to know God, but attempt to hide their lies and clandestine evil intent behind a façade of “appropriate Christian behavior.” However, when you look closely, you will see “disconnects” (or bad behavioral “fruits”) that will cause our protective attributes to arise. Jesus warned, **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” Matthew 7:15-20**

Jesus also warned us about last day deception. Many will be anxiously awaiting His return; and there will be many who will declare they are Him. Jesus said, **“Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many.” Mark 15:5-6**

Remember...Satan creates lies to misdirect humans into darkness...and hold them there. Therefore, it is critically important for Christians to read, study, and internalize the truth of God’s word!

Government agents responsible for the eradication of counterfeit money do not learn their trade by studying the various types of fake currencies that have been created. They learn by studying genuine bills. Once they master the look of the real thing (truth), they can more easily identify fake currency (lies). The same is true for Christians!

How to respond when you encounter disconnects.

- Do not accept what they do and what they say at face value.
- Pray for spiritual guidance and revelation of truth.
- Evaluate their persona, behavior and words (which reflects the spiritual condition of their heart and soul).
- Seek to determine if a stated fact or opinion is comprised of one or more of Satan's lying techniques:
 - A mixture of truth and falsehoods.
 - A twisting of the truth into a different meaning.
 - Declaring lies as absolute truth.
- Does the messaging magnify fear, anger, hatred, or division? Plus, is the messaging caustic?
- Evaluate the validity of a stated fact or opinion by seeking trusted sources of information.
- Test everything against scripture.
- If this person claims to be a Christian:
 - Does this person's words and behavior reflect and elevate Jesus Christ?
 - Does this person humbly give praise, honor and glory to God?

However, **NEVER** attack, condemn, judge, or express caustic words towards anyone—even if they are manipulated by lies and attack, condemn, judge, or express caustic words towards you. Caustic words emanate from a hardened heart, and can create varying degrees of pain by the recipient. Caustic words do not build up or edify, but tear down and weaken. As such, it is imperative for Christians to use empathy and analysis in choosing their words.

- [The tongue of the wise promotes health. Proverbs 12:18](#)
- [A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. Proverbs 15:4](#)
- [Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones. Proverbs 16:24](#)
- [A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1](#)
- [Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for the necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Ephesians 4:29](#)

Remember...you were once manipulated by same lies and likely behaved the same way. To be victorious:

1. Wear the armor of God.
2. Use your God-given attributes to analytically discern the situation.
3. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in how you should respond.
4. Humbly demonstrate the peace, grace and love of God as you share His word.
5. Forgive...because they are influenced by Satan's darkened lies and are unaware of their spiritual condition.

Remember...Christians will experience an increase in temptations, trials, tribulations and spiritual warfare as we get closer to (and enter into) the last days. As such, it is important to prepare our hearts for the difficult times ahead.

["But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." 1 Peter 3:14-17](#)

["For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3-5](#)

["For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:4-5](#)

The Church

Fellow believers in Christ are a powerful source of support. When in battle, soldiers work together to defeat their enemy. As such, it is not prudent to fight spiritual battles alone. But rather, seek the assistance from trusted brothers and sisters in Christ who can stand beside and fight with you (by listening to what's going on, seeking God's word, sharing personal experiences, praying together for victory, and so forth).

Never allow pride or lies of trying to project an "I'm ok," or "I've got everything under control" image. None of us has it "all together." What's more, do not consider church members as holier than you. But rather, view the church as being full persons who have realized they are sinners, who have been forgiven by the grace of God, and are in the process of being transformed from who they were to the likeness of Jesus. As such, we need one another for exhortation and support at various times—especially when engaged in spiritual warfare. But what's more, the spiritual need for each other will greatly magnify during the last days when life will become unimaginably difficult.

"Exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
Hebrews 3:13

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25



I pray this lesson reveals the fact that we continually engage in varying degrees of spiritual warfare; God has equipped us with the means to be victorious; and now is the time to prepare for the battles ahead.

Please share this lesson with others.

All for His Glory!
Harold D. Thomas