

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #10

Eph. 6:10-18; 1 John 2:15-17; Rom. 7:18-25

ACCEPTING YOUR ASSIGNMENTS IN THE LONG WAR AGAINST GOD

Our goal in this study is to help us grasp the setting of our lives in time and history as Christians. What is God doing on our earth? Where have we come from and where are we going? Why are we still here? Does history have a goal and why has it gone the way it has?

Asking and answering these questions is essential for two reasons. First, it helps us find and clarify the true meaning and purpose for our lives. Second, it reveals the conflict of the ages between God and Satan, that spiritual warfare which requires us to know our great enemy, prepare ourselves for battle, and become skilled in the use of our weapons.

Welcome to Christianity until the Lord returns to change things for the better! When He comes, He will put Satan away for 1000 years and eliminate injustice and all the bad things we now face. But until then, we live in the midst of the Long War Against God by unsaved mankind, in a world ruled by a demonic superpower who is our adversary in living for God.

When did God enlist you as a soldier, to fight in this awful war we are in until Christ returns? When were you saved and transferred from the kingdom of darkness to be a citizen of Christ's Kingdom? Perhaps you are a veteran. Thank you for your service and example to the rest of us. But perhaps you are a new citizen of Christ's kingdom and have been largely unaware of the war you are in, particularly the unseen aspects of what God has told us we face and why.

⁸ *Join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God... ³ as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.* — 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3

¹¹ *Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* — Eph. 6:11-12

³ *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.* — 2 Cor. 10:3-4

⁸ **Be on the alert.** Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith. — 1 Pet. 5:8-9

1. Our Three Enemies In This War: The World, Our Flesh, And The Devil

- **Enemy #1:** We are living in a **fallen world** filled with fallen men.

¹⁵ Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God **in the midst of a crooked and perverse race**, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of life. — Phil. 2:15

We live in a world of fallen creatures who have rejected God's rule, God's design, God's Word, and God's will. Even more, we live in a world decimated by the consequences imposed by God on His creation because our race rejected God, denied His rule and disobeyed His Word. Adam's sin brought spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death in hell.

We are living in the midst of the downward progression of mankind described below from Romans 1, that guarantees decline toward depravity and wickedness that individuals and nations face if they remain unsaved and put God out.

²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, ...
²⁴ therefore, **God gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to immorality, that their bodies might be dishonored among them... And... ²⁶ **God gave them over** to unnatural affections... ²⁷ men abandoning the natural function of the woman and burning in their desire toward one another... And... ²⁸ **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil... ³² And, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. — Rom. 1:21-32

¹⁵ Do not love **the world**, nor the things in **the world**. If anyone loves **the world**, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in **the world**, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from **the world**. ¹⁷ And **the world** is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. — 1 John 2:15-17

- **Enemy #2:** We are living “in the flesh”, our unredeemed fallen nature.

¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. ²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

²¹I find then the principle that **evil is present in me**, the one who wishes to do good. ²²For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³but I see a different law in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind**, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, **with my flesh the law of sin.**
— Rom. 7:18-25

Our salvation has created in us a new inner self that hates sin. Sin no longer rules our life but manages to survive in our “flesh”, the unredeemed part of our humanness that remains until we meet the Lord either at the Rapture or at death.

¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another.
— Gal 5:17

The only way a Christian can win this constant battle within and be victorious in the tests and temptations of life is to walk in the truths of God’s word by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
— Gal. 5:16 (see Vol 1, Principle #3)

- **Enemy #3:** We are living where **Satan** is active and is our adversary.

We are living in the midst of the Satanic rebellion against God and the evil presence of the fallen angels who live to deceive, discourage, divide, and destroy God’s people in their war against God.

⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. **Your adversary, the devil**, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹**But resist him**, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

¹⁰And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.
— 1 Pet. 5:8-10

2. What We Are Fighting For: The Salvation Of Others To The Glory Of God

Why is God tolerating this? Why not immediate judgment? Why thousands of years of human history allowing this to exist? Why are we living in the midst of this Satanic rebellion, in this fallen, immoral, depraved, wretched world of suffering and death? Why are we, God's children, God's beloved, still living here?

It is not because God is weak. It is not because God is surprised. We are living in the midst of a crooked and perverse race and world still after all these centuries because He has been waiting for you, and others – to be born and to hear what He has done to set you free from the judgment and wrath to come. Because your name was written in His Son's book of life before the foundation of the world.

²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, ²¹in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

²²For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.
— Rom. 8:20-25

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
— Eph 2:1-7

3. Our Role In This War: We Are God's Soldiers

The Apostle Paul builds upon the analogy of warfare to describe Christians as soldiers, with weapons, who need training to be useful on the battlefield. Furthermore, we are to have courage, determination, and perseverance to endure and be victorious. In addition to all of this, we must be willing to die.

³ *Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. ⁴ **No soldier** in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a **soldier**.* — 2 Tim. 2:3-4

³ *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for **the weapons of our warfare** are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.* — 2 Cor. 10:3-4

¹¹ *Put on **the full armor** of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, **take up the full armor of God**, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**.* — Eph. 6:11-13

²⁴ *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross**, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it."* — Matt. 16:24-25

4. What We Must Do In The Battle: Be Content, Persevere, and Rejoice

Contentment, perseverance, and joy are the words that describe the mature responses of a veteran soldier for Christ in this long war.

¹¹ ***I have learned to be content** in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*** — Phil. 4:11-13

CONTENTMENT while we are suffering through the battles of this awful war only comes when we have learned who our God is and what this means for the war we are fighting for Him and those He loves. Are you content in the trials that you are facing? The back of the Book tells us that we win! The promises in our training manual tell us of the return of our Lord in total victory, with us in the celebration! The infinite power of our commanding general assures us of the truth that *“He causes all things to work together for good, for us who love Him and are the called according to His purpose”!*

Are you content with the foxhole you have been assigned to? The wounds that you have suffered? The things you have lost? Paul was. The verse above tells us why.

PERSEVERANCE in this long war, in the face of incredible trials and suffering, was illustrated by the apostle Paul’s life and his exhortation to Timothy in his final words to him.

⁵ *But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.* ⁶ *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.* ⁷ ***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;*** ⁸ *in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*
— 2 Tim. 4:5-8

In a similar exhortation to the Christians in Phillipi Paul used the word describing an athlete running the final laps of a long and arduous race, summoning all his energy, and focusing on the finish line, striving not to leave anything unspent at the finish line.

¹³ *Forgetting what lies behind, **I press on** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*
— Phil. 3:13

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Does this describe your service for Christ? When you have run out of your own strength, have you found that you can do all things through Him who strengthens and empowers you? (*Phil. 4:13, 2 Cor. 12:9-10*)

The third, and shocking, description of a disciple of Christ living a hard life of doing what the Lord has asked and allowed, is **JOY**.

² Consider it all **joy**, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
³ **knowing** that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
— James 1:2-4

Joy, in the face of trials and suffering, requires that we know and embrace what God has revealed to us that He 1) has done, 2) is doing, and 3) will do.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶ **In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**
— 1 Pet. 1:3-7

UNIT 10 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study read the summary above and then complete the following self- evaluation.

Evaluating My Service In This Long War

1. I am fully trained, equipped in the Word, and useful in the battles for my Lord.
100%___80%___60%___Less___
2. I have the character to stand and persevere where the Lord sends me, alone if necessary.
100%___80%___60%___Less___
3. I am willing to die in the service of my Lord. Yes, willingly___It depends___No___
4. I am fighting the good fight, fulfilling my ministry, finishing my course.
Yes___Somewhat___
5. I am leading others in the battle. Yes___No, I am not leading___
6. I have been wounded in battle. Yes___No___Stronger now, or weaker?_____
7. Contentment in the Lord, where I am and in what I face describes me:
Well___Somewhat___No___
8. Perseverance as a faithful Christian, despite my trials, describes me:
Well___Somewhat___No___
9. Joy, when I encounter various trials, describes me: Well___Somewhat___No___

Discussion Questions for Unit 10 Study Session #1

1. We fight in three separate theaters of this long war, the world, our flesh, and the invisible war we face with Satan and the fallen angels. Which of the instructions we have to fight in these areas have been a help to you? Which of these three is the most difficult for you?
2. What do Christians face today in China, Russia, India, and the Moslem nations? What does it mean to be an obvious soldier for Christ there?
3. The war in America between good and evil, truth and error, and Christianity and humanism has changed in the last 50 years. How does Romans 1:18-32 help us understand what is happening?

UNIT 10 STUDY SESSION #2

In preparation for session #2 choose one of the following projects to pursue and come prepared to share what you have learned.

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

1. Study Eph. 6 regarding putting on the armor and clarify what it means practically. Do it diligently for the week.
2. Study the flesh vs. spirit aspect of the war addressed in Gal. 5:16-25 and Rom. 8:3-14, then clarify 1) what the flesh is, 2) how to “put it to death”, and how to “walk in the spirit.
3. Study Psalm 101, particularly the “I wills” of the Psalm. Consider how a person could apply these practically living “in the midst” of our corrupt culture.

Discussion Questions for Unit 10 Study Session #2

If you were able to pursue one of the study projects can you share what you learned?

Prayer Together