

For The Believer In This Age

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS JOB ONE!

Job One

Ford Motor Company originated the slogan, “Quality Is Job One.” Ford claims that putting *quality* into their vehicles is the top priority job in their company. On that analogy, what is *Job One* for the Christian community? If we lived in peace time, and God were a CPA, perhaps *Job One* for the Christian would be keeping the church finances in order. However, we live in an age of war (Mat. 10.34), and our God is the Lord of Hosts, a warrior God. As the people of a warrior God (see Josh. 5.13-14; Rev. 19.11-14), our first job is to join Him in His battle (cf. 1Sam. 17.45-47). As our Commander In Chief, His first order is that we love Him with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. Indeed, all of spiritual warfare can be summed up as the battle to demolish strongholds and defeat powers that hinder people from knowing and loving God (2 Cor. 10.3-5). **This battle for intimacy with God is *Job One* for the believer, and it is a battle in a *real* war.**



We're all familiar with the spiritual warfare passage in Ephesians 6.10-18. We must understand, however, that Ephesians 6 is *not* analogical. In other words, Paul does not use *the analogy* of warfare; he calls the spiritual battle what it *actually is*. Paul's spiritual war is a real war requiring us to wear real armor, wield real weapons and inflict real casualties. This war daily becomes more fierce since its first skirmish in the Garden of Eden. It is a battle to the death. Satan, the enemy, seeks to discredit God and will stop at nothing to keep people from knowing God. Satan is a murderer who delights to physically kill people before they ever have a chance to know God—he is the mind behind the wholesale, cowardly murder of children throughout history. When it comes to people who already know God, Satan will endeavor to neutralize their influence in any way possible, even by killing them if God permits (Job 2.6). Satan gives no quarter in spiritual battle, and neither should we. Furthermore, we must understand from Ephesians 6, that there are no non-combatants in the spiritual

war. Paul did not address this passage to an elite few who engage in casting out demons or the like. We all have different roles and responsibilities in the battle, but we must all take up the full armor and wield the sword.

Why Does God Call Us To The Battle?

Still, many of us who hate conflict wonder why an omnipotent God allows the spiritual war to continue. Why doesn't God take out the enemy and be done with it? Judges 3.1,2 gives this amazing explanation for why God left some enemy nations living in the land of Israel:

Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to test Israel by them (that is, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly). (NASB 1995)

How strange for us to read that God *intended* that the Israelites learn war! Thankfully, He no longer calls us to battle with worldly weapons against flesh and blood, but He does intend that we learn how to wage war. God calls us to spiritual warfare for three reasons: (1) To teach us to *value* the truly good; (2) To test us as to whether we will *obey* Him or take the easier way of compromise with the world; (3) To train us to *depend* upon Him (Job 40.14).

The Battle Has Come To Us!

Since God intends the battle to continue in this age, our temptation then is to disobey the Lord and refuse to join the fray. If we do that, however, the spiritual battle will inevitably overtake us and catch us unprepared. The battle continues to escalate today and the American church can no longer think of overt Satanic attacks as something that happens in undeveloped countries far from our shores. In his insightful chapter on “Rising Stakes,” George Otis offers the following analysis of why we experience increasing demonic activity today:

In most escalating ventures (business negotiations, political campaigns, athletic tournaments), the stakes tend to rise in proportion to our position. The closer we are to the end of the process, the higher the stakes. And since no stakes are higher than those associated with completing the Great Commission—an accomplishment Jesus prophesied would usher in the end of the age—today’s Christian warriors can expect to face challenges on the spiritual battlefield that are unique in both type and magnitude. It is the challenge of the latter rounds, and desperate times, as they say, call for desperate measures.

Accordingly, while the remaining task of world evangelization is getting smaller, insofar as the number of unreached people groups is concerned, it is also becoming more difficult. In strategic areas like the 10/40 Window, intercessors and evangelists are finding themselves locked in the fight of their lives. Standing eyeball to eyeball with some of the most formidable spiritual forces on earth, these heroic ministers are reporting two substantial challenges to the continued expansion of God’s Kingdom: demonic entrenchment, an obstacle resulting from an excess of time, and demonic desperation, an obstacle linked to a lack of time.

Demonic entrenchment is hardly unique; the Hebrews encountered it in Egypt and Babylon, and the apostle Paul found it in Ephesus. But now we are centuries deeper into history. There are places on earth, notably in Asia, where demonic pacts have been serviced continually since the great Dispersion. In these ancient strongholds, spiritual light is extinguished routinely by powers wielding the four candle-snuffers we examined in the previous chapter.

Consider, too, the proposition that darkness now has a wider human base. As Time essayist Lance Morrow noted in June 1991, “If evil is a constant presence in the human soul, it is also true that there are more souls now than ever.” Using this logic, Morrow reasoned that evil is rising on a Malthusian curve—or at least at the same rate as the population, 1.7 percent per annum.

Demonic desperation, as we noted, is a problem associated with the lateness of the hour. In the book of Revelation, God warns the inhabitants of the earth that “the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Revelation 12:12, NKJV). As much as these days distress us, they are even more disturbing for the powers of darkness. Confronted with

growing incursions into their prayer-eroded strongholds, Satan's hordes are beginning to taste the same salty panic they have long induced in human beings.

Facing the prospect of eternal ruin, the prince of this world has infected his domain with what Michael Green calls "an increasing tempo of chaos." Under the shadow of Satan's presence, earthly kingdoms have begun to shake like a terminal patient casting off the final vestiges of life, thereby validating Jesus' two-thousand-year-old prophecy that "the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). The enemy, determined to fill every seat in his hell-bound bus, has ordered a dramatic escalation of counterfeit signs and wonders. To protect against those who would probe or escape his lair, he has initiated a series of violent counterattacks.

These counterattacks are generally aimed at two kinds of targets: territories that have recently experienced a unique move of God, and individuals instrumental in conveying the Gospel to unreached peoples. Territorial counterattacks are usually accompanied by political persecution, while assaults on individuals include everything from relational breakdowns to physical illness and injury.¹

We May Already Be Casualties

The fact is that we may already be neutralized by sin or innocently suffer under some form of demonic oppression without realizing it. Many Christians, like the Laodiceans of the first century, have become spiritually pitiful while remaining oblivious to their plight (Rev. 3.17,18). Job's story (29.1-30.1) illustrates how a godly man can have his influence in the community undermined and yet be unaware of the Satanic forces arrayed against him. It is time to invite the Holy Spirit to turn the spotlight of God's word upon the battlefields of our souls and examine us to see if there be any "offensive way" in us (Psalm 139.23,24). It is time for many of us to repent of little "white collar" sins that we have long cradled in our hearts. Furthermore, *and very importantly*, it is time to examine our chronic physical and material problems for a possible spiritual dimension.

I'm Sorry, But I'm Frightened!

These things cannot help but make us uncomfortable. I empathize with anyone who would rather avoid the topic of spiritual warfare altogether. When I first made the decision to teach on spiritual warfare I knew with an inner certainty that the spiritual battle would escalate in my own life, and I knew it would not be pleasant for my household. Sure enough, the battle in our home intensified with physical afflictions, inner temptations and disturbing manifestations of evil spirits. I understand why this topic frightens people—it has frightened me! However, I remind my brothers and sisters that the outcome of the spiritual battle, unlike the outcome of worldly wars, is guaranteed.

In World War II, my father, Joseph Medina Graciano, shipped out with his Army Signal Company to the South Pacific in December 1943. He participated in a number beach landings during General MacArthur's campaign to reclaim New Guinea and the Philippines from Japan. Dad says that before a beach landing, the American soldiers would be told the odds against them. Sometimes their officers said, "Men, we expect 9 out of 10 casualties on this landing; volunteers, step forward!" Dad says everyone would step forward. When he first told me about this, I responded, "Dad, I can't begin to relate to that; why would any of you volunteer when

¹ George Otis, *The Twilight Labyrinth*, pp. 234-236.



Joseph Graciano in the South Pacific

there was only a one in ten chance that you'd survive?" Dad replied, "Well, we all knew we'd be that *one* that made it." What an answer! Dad and his fellow soldiers were undoubtedly courageous patriots, but they apparently exercised a lot of blind faith to believe they'd be the "lucky" survivor of a murderous beach landing. Thankfully, as we enter the spiritual warfare, we do not have to exercise blind faith. We know for a certainty that *in Christ* we will survive *and win* the war. We know that in Christ we have superior weapons. We know that the decisive blow has already been inflicted upon our enemy, and that much of our job is just to mop up. Franklin Roosevelt's words are more true for us than for any other people: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." For the love of God, and for the love of those in our circle of influence, let us "be men [and women] of courage" (1Cor. 16.13,14) and become skilled and discerning warriors in the spiritual battle. Let us do it now. Spiritual warfare is our *Job One!*



We at Timothy Ministries recognize that some of the ideas in this syllabus are controversial. We wish our readers and students to know that we consider ourselves learners, and we welcome your comments, questions and corrections.

Hermeneutical Principles For Interpreting Scripture

1. THE RULE OF THE LITERAL SENSE

Interpret a scripture according to its literal sense unless it is obviously figurative or idiomatic. Archaeology as well as the literal fulfillment of numerous Bible prophecies establish this rule (e.g. Isaiah 53).

2. THE RULE OF LITERARY TYPES

Take into account the literary type of the biblical passage you are reading, along with any figures of speech or didactic devices it may employ. Remember that poetic books are rich in metaphor (e.g. Psalm 91.4), and apocalyptic books abound with symbols (e.g. Rev. 1.20).

3. THE RULE OF INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

Never interpret one biblical text in a way that contradicts another. Like the Bereans, check unfamiliar propositions for consistency with the well established truths of Scripture (Acts 17.11).

4. THE RULE OF CONTEXT

Interpret the details of a passage in the light of its overall thrust. The most extreme violation of this rule is when people close their eyes and stick their finger on a random verse, hoping to get a personal “word from the Lord.” What if their finger landed on a verse like Galatians 5.12? Along with the textual context, also take into account the historical and cultural context of a passage’s original audience: *a text cannot mean something contrary to how its original audience would have understood it.*

5. THE RULE OF PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

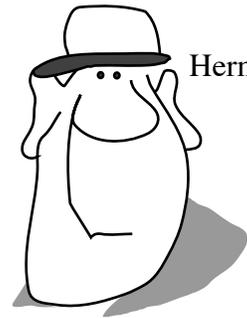
An early passage may not be the whole truth presented by Scripture on a given topic. God’s progressive revelation, developing through all 66 books of the Bible, requires that we consider any teaching given by the apostles on a topic before finalizing a doctrine rooted in the earlier revelations (see Acts 18.24-26).

6. THE RULE OF EMBARKING FROM THE EXPLICIT

Let explicit statements interpret implicit ones, and clear statements explain the obscure ones—not vice versa! Revelation 3.10 has often been quoted in support of the “pre-tribulational rapture” doctrine. However, this verse says nothing *explicitly* about either the rapture or the final, great tribulation: our doctrine on such points must first stand on unequivocal passages, before implicit ones are brought in as props.

7. THE RULE OF HUMILITY

Christ’s statement in John 7.17 teaches us that we cannot expect to understand the scriptures until we are committed to obey them. It is as we approach the Bible in humble dependence upon Christ, and in full submission to His lordship that the Holy Spirit Himself will instruct us (1 John 2.27).



Herman what?

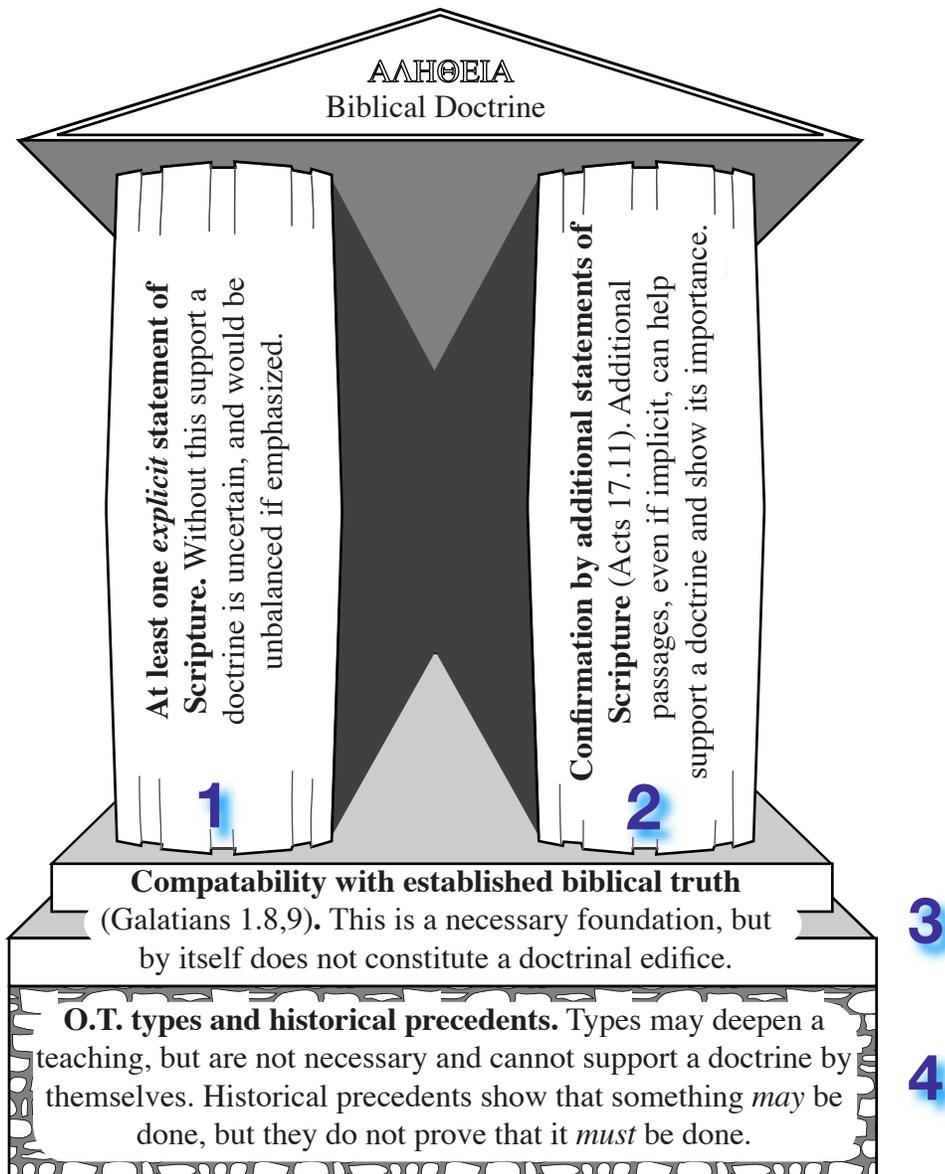
Hermeneutics

The Greek verb *hermeneuo* appears in passages like John 9.7, and means “interpret” or “translate.” From it we get our English word “hermeneutics” which is what we call the science of interpretation. The importance of understanding biblical hermeneutics cannot be overemphasized. Anyone unfamiliar with this discipline would do well to study Fee and Stuarts excellent little book *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Remember though, that whereas we tend to think of wisdom as intellectual, the Bible presents true discernment as moral, and dependent upon our character more than upon our knowledge. Understanding the technical rules of hermeneutics is not enough: *If we are committed to God’s will above our own, then we have the discerning attitude* (John 7.17).

The Bible says plainly in Ecclesiastes 10.2 that “A wise man’s heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man’s heart directs him toward the left.” It’s a biblical statement. However, if we tried to emphasize this assertion as a distinctive doctrine of our fellowship, perhaps suggesting a political application, other believers would rightly dismiss us as eccentric cranks. This example is extreme, but unfortunately, biblical beliefs, stressed out of proportion to their scriptural basis, have often resulted in debates that needlessly divide the church. Part of “handling accurately the word of truth” is discerning biblical *emphasis* as well as biblical meaning.

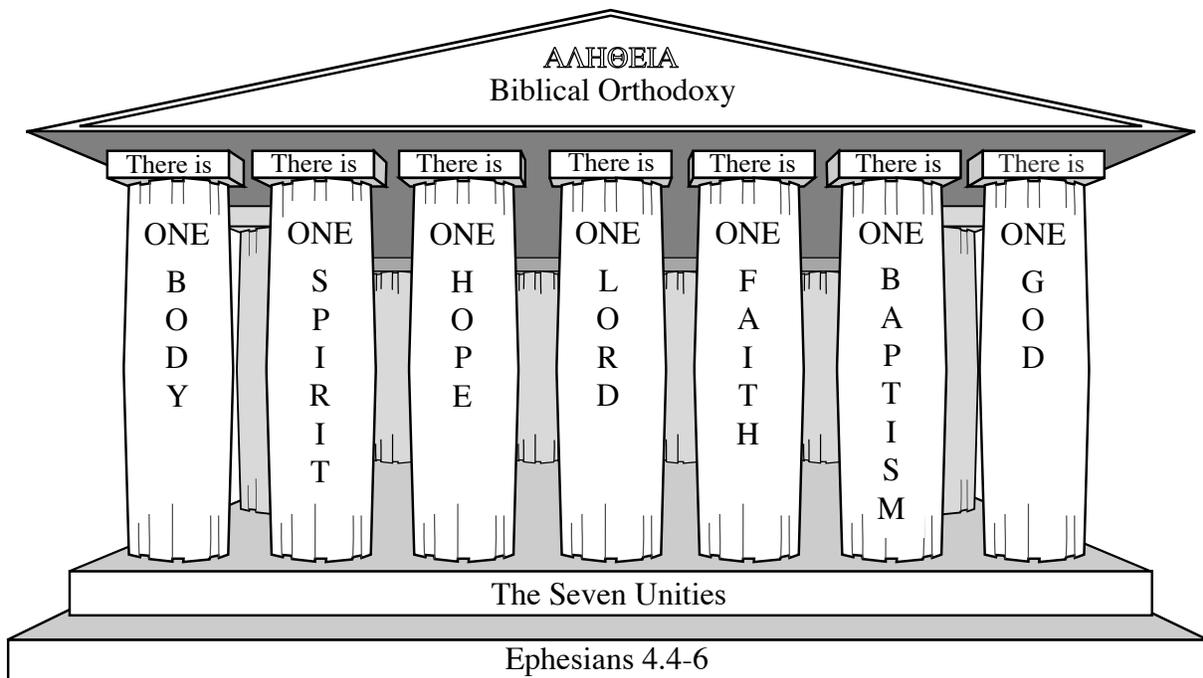
Any doctrine emphasized in Scripture will be supported by at least one **explicit** (definite and unambiguous) passage, *and* will be confirmed by additional passages, whether explicit or implicit. The absence of such support does not disprove a proposition, but it does indicate that it is unworthy of emphasis in our teaching.

When confronted by a novel or controversial teaching, see how well it stands up next to a solid *Temple of Truth*:



Biblical orthodoxy is conformity to the cardinal doctrines of Scripture. But which doctrines of the Bible are the most important ones? How do we avoid arguing over issues of doctrine too trivial to warrant a breach in fellowship? On the other hand, how do we know when a doctrinal error is important enough to denounce energetically? The Seven Unities of Ephesians 4.4-6, presented graphically below, provide a concise summary of those truths we must be prepared to fight for. They form the pillars of our faith and provide a simple test against all the major heresies that have arisen through the centuries. To help you appreciate the applicability of the Seven Unities, identify the unities violated by the following teachings:

- “*The Church* includes only believers who have lived after Pentecost and before the rapture; believers of other eras belong to other, distinct spiritual bodies.” This violates the unity of the One _____ .
- “Old Testament saints had to trust in a different atonement than do the New Testament saints.” This violates the unity of the One _____ .
- “Spirit-filled Christians will be the bride of Christ in heaven; the rest of the saints will have a different reward.” This violates the unity of the One _____ .
- “The Baptism in the Holy Spirit has *no* relationship to baptism in Christ.” This violates the unity of the One _____ .
- “Jesus, the Father and the Spirit are three different gods.” This violates the unity of the One _____ .
- “The earthly leader of our religion is the true Lord for today.” This violates the unity of the One _____ .
- “The spirit that speaks through our guru is a holy spirit just like the one that spoke through Jesus.” This violates the unity of the One _____ .



Abbreviations Used In This Syllabus

<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i> by Josephus
C.	circa, i.e. “about,” referring to approximate dates
Ed	Editor
ET	English Translation (or Translator)
Gk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
LXX	Septuagint (Gk. translation of Old Testament)
MS	Manuscript (pl. MSS)
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
<i>Wars</i>	<i>Wars of the Jews</i> by Josephus