

Women & More

Issues That Do Us In

Lesson 2: **September 11, 2014**—*spiritual warfare*

We have an enemy—the devil, Satan, the prince of darkness, the father of lies, the spirit of antichrist—and he is ruthless and relentless. His existence is fact and he and his army of demons are a destructive force. He is strong, sinister and very strategic; and, oh, be sure, he is ***spiritual***—1 John 4:1-3—“*Dear friends, **do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is come and even now is already in the world.***”

We must not be ignorant of Satan and his perilous ploys: we cannot be neutral about his devious work. Right here we want to talk about antichrist and the Antichrist and who’s who: We know from Scripture that in the end times, the Antichrist will rise up and reign on this whole earth, literally. But because Satan does not know when the end is coming and when Christ is returning for His Church—Scripture says no one knows except God Himself—he has had many, many antichrists at work in the world down through the centuries since Jesus ascended to the Father and the Holy Spirit came down to dwell in believers.

Be sure, the devil has men who are anti-God antichrists—*who do not acknowledge Jesus is from God*—pruned and primed to step into that awful role of Antichrist at any moment in time. So Scripture refers to antichrists and false prophets who have gone out into the world, because there are many in every generation. The key to who an antichrist is can be understood by Scripture’s statement “**every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.**” And we must remember that if a spirit is not from God, then it is from the devil! 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 “*The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, ¹⁰and in every sort of evil that **deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.***”

Some encouragement is needed here: **Satan is a defeated foe!** His demon army, antichrists and false prophets are defeated as well. God has allowed them a time and then they’re done! 1 John 4:4-6 “*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. **This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.***” The best way to identify the lie is to know the *Truth* very well! Jesus Christ is that *Truth* and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. To know Christ as Savior of soul and Lord of life should be the goal of every person in the world!

Webster defines **issue** *n* 1 : the action of going, coming or flowing out, and *vb* issued, issuing 1 : to go, come or flow out. Issues pour out from us: *David issued an order; an edict was issued in Susa; Jonah issued a proclamation; Caesar Augustus issued a decree*, and then the woman with the *issue* of blood.

Well, there are many issues the evil one will use to do us in, like false doctrine, false teachers, false religions, false hunches, and false or carnal—still practicing sin—Christians. The whole chapter 28 of Jeremiah is about the (false) prophet Hananiah. How believable are false prophets? Very! They often tell us what we want to hear rather than what God has said! Woe: And we often seek them out—these days, too. Jeremiah 29:8-9 warn: “*Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. **Do not listen** to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them, declares the LORD.*” And God delivers His promise just 3 verses later in Jeremiah 29:11—“*For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’*”

In reference to Psalm 104:16, Charles Spurgeon said, “Lebanon’s cedars are emblematic of the Christian, in that *they owe their planting entirely to the Lord*. This is quite true of every child of God. He is not man-planted, nor self-planted, but God planted. . . . In the believer there is nothing that can magnify man; he is planted, nourished, and protected by the Lord’s own hand, and to Him let all the glory be ascribed.” Psalm 34:19 says that many are the afflictions of the righteous. “The Spirit leads within the limits which the Word sets, not beyond them. ‘He guideth me in the paths of righteousness’—but not anywhere else,” said J. I. Packer in his book, *Knowing God*. “We can never distrust ourselves too much!” Here are six ‘issues’ that war against our spiritual **welfare**:

► **ISSUES** with leaders that lead us away include sin that is legislated, like abortion and homosexual marriage. Salem Kirban wrote: “It is odd that the Supreme Court will not ban pornography because it cannot define obscenity, and yet it will ban God from public schools because, apparently, everyone knows who God is.” Matthew 23:13 and 27—“*Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean.*”

When leaders give ungodly commands, then we must choose to do what God said rather than man, and there is a ‘way’ we are to demonstrate our allegiance to God in this. Scripture gives at least three lessons for us to look at of **godly people who disobeyed ungodly leaders**:

- 1) The Jewish midwives when ordered to kill the baby boys on the birthing stools, because they feared God, let them live (Exodus 1:17);
- 2) Daniel, when ordered not to pray, kept praying (Daniel 6:10), and
- 3) when told to quit preaching, the apostles preached on (Acts 5:29—“*Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’*”)

In his book, *Our Sufficiency In Christ*, John MacArthur, Jr. says that there are three deadly influences that undermine our spiritual life. They are 1) **Gnosticism**—seeking knowledge beyond God; 2) **Pragmatism**—amusement—having a ‘justifying the means’ attitude, and 3) **Psychotherapy**—in the Christian world—which is taking over the Word’s job and the Holy Spirit’s job.

► ISSUES with false religion: The number of mosques in the United States has doubled since 2000 according to Erik Stakelbeck. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928 and actually worked with the Nazis. Hamas is the Muslim Brotherhood today! *The Project*—was founded by Swiss authorities to dominate Europe and the U.S. Islam’s goal is to destroy Israel and Christianity. Psalm 122:6 tells us to pray for the peace of Israel! We must stand in the ‘gap’ for the nation that belongs to God. If Christians won’t do the *spiritual warfare* who will? Many don’t because they prefer peace at any cost! “Never for the sake of peace and quiet deny your convictions,” said Dag Hammarskjold.

2 Chronicles 20:22 (a passage of Scripture I pray for my youngest son) “*As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.*” The LORD sets ambushes against those who would deceive and defeat the believer when we praise Him with a sincere loving heart!

► ISSUES with body parts: our heart, tongue, mind, hands, feet and more need to be yielded to God. Charles Spurgeon said, “If your life is unholy than your heart is unchanged, and if your heart is unchanged you are an unsaved person.” At the very top of the issue list, next to the heart, has to be the ‘tongue’—our own that is! Listen to Jean Blowett’s *The Killing Tongue*:

“The man who with the breath lent him by heaven
Speaks words that soil the whiteness of a life
Is but a murderer, for death is given
As surely by the tongue as by the knife.”

Proverbs 18:21 says that life and death are in the tongue. And Proverbs 18:8 warns, “*The words of a gossip are like choice morsels, they go down to a man’s inmost parts.*” In a word, those who gossip to you will gossip about you. John Hagee quips, “Saving face is often accomplished by keeping the lower half of it shut.”

► ISSUES with ‘self’—“It is the life of self which causes us pain; that which is dead does not suffer,” said Francois Fenelon. “We can add to our God-given cross by agitated resistance and an unwillingness to suffer which is simply evidence of the remaining life of self.” Colossians 3:3 says, “*For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*”

Satan always seeks out a person to use, because he is a spirit he cannot work without the help of a man or woman. The battleground in which Satan attacks, and notice that he engages the help of our ‘self’, is outlined in 1 John 2:15-17 “*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For everything in the world—*

•*the cravings of sinful man,*

•*the lust of his eyes and*

•*the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*” Be sure, left to ‘it’self, ‘self’ will crave, lust and boast! “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it,” said Packer. 2 Corinthians 6:17 warns, “*Therefore come out from them and be separate,*’ says the Lord.”

► ISSUES with sickness—Satan meant for the woman with the 12-year issue of blood to spend all that she had, waste away, and die before she received Christ. The devil’s goal was her soul’s destruction! But she sought out Jesus and was healed physically and spiritually. A time of sickness will either prompt us to turn to God, or to turn away in resentment and bitterness. Sickness can teach us what book ‘schooling’ cannot! Samuel Rutherford, in Old English, said, “Why should I start at the plough of my Lord, that maketh the deep furrows on my soul? I know He is no idle husbandman, He purposeth a crop.” Isaiah 28:24-26 “*When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? 25When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin? 26His **God instructs him and teaches him the right way.***”

► ISSUES with sin—the biggest and bad(est) issue. The disease is sin and the cure is the gospel. Psalm 19:7 “*The Law of the Lord is perfect converting the lost.*” We know unsaved people are ‘lost’ in the sin of unbelief, but how can believers still be in it? As regards to our soul’s salvation and its eternal destiny we have believed, but in the areas of living life, of daily difficulty and troubling trial we engage our sin nature and fail to believe! Galatians 3:22 “*But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*”

Webster further defines issue as 5 : a **point of debate or controversy**; also : the **point at which an unsettled matter is ready for a decision**. Again, the dictionary gives spiritual truth, because every issue has its cure in Christ!

The word of God addresses every single issue that attacks us. The issue for us is to decide to go for the cure! Jeremiah 6:16 says we are to “*Stand at the crossroads and look: Ask for the old paths, ask where the good way is, and **walk in it**, then you will find rest for your souls.*” Isaiah 30:21 promised: “*Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; **walk in it.**’*”

If we do not know what our specific issues are, it’s not because we have no way of finding out. Jesus will reveal our issues to us, and then we will need to decide if we will heed His revelation. The Pharisees had not even asked to know what their issues were, but Jesus had six woes to deliver (**issue**) to them in Luke 11:42-54—each of the quoted verses prominently states, “**Woe to you**”:

1. You neglect justice and the love of God (v 42);
2. You love self exaltation and self-promotion (v 43);
3. You are like “*unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it*” (v 44), and, time out:

In verse 45, one of the experts in the law said to Jesus: “*Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.*” Jesus went right on:

4. You load people down with burdens—legalism (v 46);
5. You build tombs for the prophets your forefathers killed (v 47);
6. You have taken away the key to knowledge (v 52), and that verse ends with: “***You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.***”

Then verses 53-54 answered the question of whether they heeded Jesus’ order, edict, proclamation and decree: “*When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law **began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.***”

What was their end? Proverbs 29:1 *issues* this statement: “*A man who remains stiff-necked after man rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.*” In 1 Timothy 1:18-20 Paul issued warning instruction to believers: “*Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, ¹⁹holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have **shipwrecked their faith.** ²⁰Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have **handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.***”

“God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in a personal deity,” said Hammarskjold, “but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illuminated by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason.” Though he cannot touch our salvation, Satan wants the *issues* in our life to do us in; to cause us to be useless to Christ and His kingdom, to cause us to despair of life and fail to be a witness to His ability to deliver us. *Spiritual warfare* will only intensify as our Lord’s return draws near!