

War Zone

Part 9 – Offensive Weapons (Part 2)

ILLUS – A suggested daily prayer: Lord, so far today, I am doing all right. I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or self-indulgent. I have not whined, cursed or eaten any chocolate. However, I am going to need a lot of help soon, because in a few minutes, I'm getting out of bed.

We're continuing to look at the whole subject of spiritual warfare, and in this message we're looking at two more offensive weapons.

More Offensive Weapons

1. Prayer

Let's just have a look at a few basic things about prayer.

1. Prayer is relationship

It's all about relationship.

ILLUS – When I was a little boy, just before I went to sleep, I used to pray the Lord's Prayer as fast as I could. When my wife was a little girl, one of the lines she used to pray in the Lord's Prayer was, "King Kong will come."

Yes, we were so cute.

But why did we pray like that?

Because for us, it was about getting an obligation over and done with, not about relationship.

That's where a lot of people are up to in their praying.

But prayer is all about relationship, and the thing is that if it's all about relationship, that should affect the way we pray.

God is a real person, not a concept, or a vending machine.

If God is a real person, this means that your prayer doesn't have to be a certain length; just say what you mean and then shut up.

God isn't impressed because you talk more than the next guy.

ILLUS – Can you imagine God with a stop-watch? "That's two minutes; not good enough. Okay, seven minutes; that's better. Give him what he wants."

That's not how it works.

Nor do you have to speak in a particular way.

God doesn't lose track because you don't pray in 400 year old English.

Be natural; you can't impress God.

So relax; it's a relationship, so relate to Him as a person.

Do you know, there's nothing in the Bible that says you have to close your eyes?

It can be very helpful, but Jesus didn't necessarily close His eyes.

John 11:41 ... And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me."

2. Prayer is being honest

And I'm talking about being honest with God.

King David was honest with God – that's why he's been dubbed "The Anointed Whinger."

But sometimes we lose the effect when we read the psalms, because we put on our most holy voice when we read it out.

But think about this portion of Psalm 69:

Ps 69:1-3 Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. (2) I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. (3) I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

David was just having a good old whinge.

Are you hurt, depressed, angry, even angry with God?

You can tell Him, as long as you're respectful.

Some people are scared of coming to God and confessing something bad, but God is **never** surprised.

He's heard it all before; He even knew all about it before you did.

ILLUS – That God is omniscient is not only taught in the Scriptures, it must be inferred also from all else.... God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being all creaturehood and all creatures, all law and every law all relations, all causes all thoughts all mysteries all enigmas, all feelings all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good evil, heaven and hell. Because God knows all things perfectly. He knows...all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything...¹

We need to understand this, because if we don't, we're going to have a distorted image of God.

Heb 4:15-16 For we do not have a High Priest [Jesus] who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

He not only is interested in our struggles, He sympathises.

So be honest with God.

ILLUS – Mk 9:14-27 – Do you know what I like about the guy in this passage of Scripture? He was honest. He didn't try to bluff his way through. He knew how much faith he had and was prepared to admit it. And the interesting thing is that Jesus never condemned him. He never said, "Go away you pathetic creature. Come back when you have a decent amount of faith." Jesus understood where the man was up to.

Be honest in your praying.

3. Ask

So simple, isn't it?

God encourages us to ask Him to fulfil our needs.

James 4:2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

Isn't it amazing how long we often let things continue on before we ask God for help?

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God is giving by nature; He's a first class provider.

¹ Tozer, A.W. *The Knowledge of the Holy*

But there's a condition:

1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

We won't get just anything we ask for; it has to be according to God's will.

ILLUS – Your six-year-old son asks for the keys to the car. You say, “No son, you're too young.” So he stamps his feet and yells, “Aw, Daddy, you never let me drive the car. I wanna drive the car, I wanna drive the car.”

Is it in that child's best interests that the father hand over the car keys?

Of course not, and he won't even understand that till he gets older.

It's the same with God.

There are reasons that God sometimes says no.

But if we ask according to His will, we'll get a yes every time.

2. Fasting

Our next weapon is fasting.

Matt 17:14-21

ILLUS – After Jesus had cast out the evil spirit from the boy, I guess His disciples were feeling a bit dumb or useless. So they waited until He had gone into the house and asked Him privately, “How come we couldn't cast out that spirit?” Jesus said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

This statement was made in the context of a direct clash with the kingdom of darkness.

Obviously, Jesus didn't have time to go away and fast before He cast out the spirit.

For Jesus, fasting was a lifestyle.

Fasting ought to be a way of life for us too.

It's like charging your car battery; don't wait till it's flat, keep it charged.

So let's look at a couple of things about fasting.

- 1.** Fasting is going without food for spiritual purposes, so if you have any reason whatsoever to believe that it might be a problem for your health, it might be a good idea for you to get medical advice before you do it.
- 2.** Ps 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart.

Fasting is a way of humbling ourselves.

It's an acknowledgement that we need God more than we need food.

Fasting uncovers both our spiritual and physical problems².

3. Fast with faith

Mat 6:17-18 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, (18) so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Heb 11:6 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.

Don't just go without food; use your faith that God is going to reward you for seeking Him.

² Prince, D. *How To Fast Successfully* p 45

4. Fasting gives extra power to prayer.

ILLUS – A long time ago, an Aborigine who probably should have been a physicist was sitting around thinking when he realised something. “If I move my arm in an arc, the tips of my fingers will have travelled a greater distance than my elbow. Yet they will have done it in the same amount of time. Therefore, if velocity = distance divided by time, the tips of my fingers must have moved more quickly than my elbow.” Then he got an idea. “If I can somehow extend the length of my arm, I will be able to throw my spear much more quickly and for a greater distance.” And that was how he invented the woomera, a device to extend the length of the arm for the purpose of throwing spears.

Now stick with me here; this has a point.

The relationship between prayer and fasting is like the relationship between the woomera and the spear.

The spear is a very effective weapon, all by itself.

But when you combine it with the woomera, it’s much more powerful.

Prayer by itself is a very effective weapon.

But when you combine it with fasting, it’s much more powerful.