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with  
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## SPIRITUAL WARFARE COMBAT TIPS

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### **Holy Spirit’s Leadership: Situations in Which We May Not Hear God’s Voice**

God’s Spirit seeks to lead and train us in many things through His written Word. He seeks to show us how we may draw closer to and hear God by providing examples of others in our past. He seeks to open our spiritual eyes to important relationships between our own spiritual battles and the things we experience in our hearts and minds. When we act during a given trial, we do so in ways that may draw upon those relationships as God intended. But, we might act in ways that, while God permits them, draw upon those relationships according to Satan’s temptation and deception.

Depending how we function in relationship to God and Satan, we are led in one direction or another: toward God or away from God; toward Satan or away from Satan. The more we understand what God expects of us as far as our part goes, the more we can understand how to live for God. This is an important understanding. It requires introspection to gain it. It leads to experiencing the wonders of God’s promises to us as believers, as well as the possibilities we have in Christ! This understanding is not just about mental knowledge, but heartfelt knowledge. This knowledge of the heart can help us to understand the various experiences we have in life, to understand how to walk closer to the Lord, and to understand why it is sometimes that we have the struggles we do.

Jesus said, “HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR?...” (Mark 8:18 – CAPS are part of translation). Jesus often talked about this kind of spiritual seeing and hearing. These concepts are about spiritual hearing, spiritual vision, and discernment. When it is our own personal spiritual hearing or vision that the Lord is seeking to grow, it can be tough to recognize how the Lord is trying to discipline and disciple us personally!

One of the things that sometimes happens to us during trials is we feel we need more of God’s guidance and counsel. Sometimes we may feel we don’t have the clear answer that we need. Many “Hearts Up” articles talk about this. The goal is to motivate us to become more active, but not just in terms of praying for God’s guidance and answers. The goal is also to motivate us to do the spiritual work we must do to grow, to respond, and to “hear” His answers in situations where we seem to have to struggle more in order to get them. In this article we are going to look at situations in which we may not actually be able to hear or listen to what God is telling us in a particular trial. It happens because...

*The goal is to motivate  
us, not just to pray more,  
but to do the spiritual  
work we must do to grow  
...and to “hear” His  
answers more clearly!*

**We are in a trial, but we are not consulting the Lord  
before doing something, or we are not doing what  
He already made clear that we should do or not do.**

When we are doing these kinds of things, even without thinking about it, we will likely not “hear” God.

Many times the reason we don’t consult the Lord before doing something is because we don’t recognize that God is permitting a given trial as part of being grown and disciplined by Him. Similarly, there are times when we forget or question what the Lord told us to do in the past because we’d have to remember our responsibility. In thinking about fulfilling that responsibility, our current situation would likely become more challenging to face! Again, these inner struggles are often linked to times we can’t “hear” God because we aren’t seeing or accepting how He is trying to grow us.

Sometimes we can’t “hear” God because the trial at hand is requiring us to broaden or grow our “spiritual skill sets,” and we aren’t doing our part to accept God’s disciplining of us (Hebrews 12:4-11). This issue is often easiest to see when it happens with unbelievers in Scripture, but it also happens to believers. We don’t “hear” God or “listen to Him” because we want one thing, and God is challenging us to give up or change that desire in favor of another desire. We may fail to do our part in being disciplined by God when God is challenging us to have a desire that, from a worldly perspective, is not desirable. Let’s start our look with Pharaoh, a person we’d consider equivalent to an unbeliever. Then we’ll look at examples of persons we’d consider believers, or followers of our Lord God.

## **Pharaoh**

One example of being disciplined by God as He seeks to grow us and bring us to Him is that of Pharaoh. I would not be surprised to discover that when we read the story of Moses, Pharaoh and the Exodus, we don’t usually examine the story from the perspective of seeing how God was actually trying to build His relationship with Pharaoh too. When we look at things from this perspective, we can learn a lot about the dynamics of how God tries to discipline, correct and reach out to us too. We can learn much about the dynamics of discipline, correction and God’s love, even though we may usually see Pharaoh as symbolic of those who are staunch in fighting God. He is a staunch unbeliever!

The Israelites had been in captivity for 400 years. Having the Israelites as slaves was pretty much a given. It was a way of life for the Egyptians. It must have been pretty tough for Pharaoh to imagine that God would want him to give up his desire to have them as slaves. *God* had permitted the Israelites to be in captivity. The way Pharaoh was raised was to believe that slaves were a blessing of the gods, a sign of favor. However, even though this was how Pharaoh was raised, God still sought to give Pharaoh the opportunity to come to Him, to serve Him and to follow Him during a time of change.

**Exodus 9:34** But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

**1 Samuel 6:6** “Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed?”

The two verses above (along with Exodus 8:15, 8:32), stand out in contrast to others that indicate the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart (found in Exodus 4:21, 7:3, 7:13, 7:22, 8:19, 9:7, 9:12, 9:35, etc.). These show that Pharaoh did have a choice in the matter of what to do in response to God’s demonstrations of power. They show that Pharaoh had free will. God allowed Pharaoh to resist His new direction. God permitted Pharaoh to wield his free will in an ungodly way. It is in this sense that “the Lord” hardened Pharaoh’s heart. God knew what Pharaoh would do with his God-given free will, even before Pharaoh did!

Pharaoh did not do his part in cooperating (submitting) to the discipline the Lord was giving him. Pharaoh refused to discern God’s will with a godly heart. Pharaoh saw only what he was losing. He saw only with worldly eyes and not spiritual eyes of a godly heart. While God was trying to change Pharaoh’s mind by using Moses and several trials involving plagues, Pharaoh sought any other explanation for his trials other than discerning how he, personally, was being challenged to accept something new, and to grow. Pharaoh did not do his part to embrace the opportunity to draw near to and grow in the Lord. As a result, Pharaoh could not “hear” God’s call to him.

## **Adam & Eve**

Adam and Eve’s example is a perfect one when it comes to seeing how God can tell us to do or not do something, but then Satan gets us to question it. Satan can get us to question what we once knew God wanted of us. Satan gets us to fear what might or might not happen in a situation, not with a godly fear, but with an ungodly fear.

During trials, Satan is trying to build up the part of us that would resist what God wants of us in the trials. That isn’t sin, it is deception and temptation. It becomes sin when we tip the balance of the inner fight with an action that goes against what God has directed. Our resistance to God comes from not getting what the old part of us wants! This dynamic can be so powerful that Satan is able to lure us like a fish is baited by a worm on a hook. When this happens, we aren’t actually trying to hear God’s corrective voice. We may think we are listening to God, but we are actually listening for an answer God isn’t giving. So, we don’t hear *Him*. We may think we care about what God wants, but we don’t actually consult Him in our heart of hearts. So, we end up listening to a voice other than His.

**Genesis 3:17** Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.”



## Abram and Sarai

**Genesis 12:2** And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;...

God told Abram He would make him a great nation. Apparently that was enough information for Abram ... at first. Many years later though, Abram began to wonder if maybe he was missing something. Questions arose in Abram's mind. The Bible doesn't specifically mention that Satan was trying to deceive Abram and lead him into sin, but we know this is true because Satan is the father of that which would lead us away from God's direction.

**Genesis 15:2-4** Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”

So, Abram was thinking that maybe God's promise of a great nation was supposed to be fulfilled through the heir of his house... a person that was not Abram's blood but the heir in lieu of there being no blood descendant available. In the verse above, we see that Abram had a question, but in his heart he consulted God. Abram, in his heart, was willing for God to correct him. Abram was willing to “hear.” So, he did. However, later, as the verse below shows, Abram did not consult God. He was not willing to be corrected. Satan used Abram's wife to tempt him and to lure him into sin.

**Genesis 16:2** So Sarai said to Abram, “Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing *children*. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. (*Italics* are part of translation)

Abram didn't “hear” God in this last situation because he wasn't truly consulting God with his heart!

## Jonah

Jonah's situation brings out a slightly different dynamic. Like Abram, Jonah had heard God. God told Jonah to give a message of the possibility of being delivered from sin. This may sound good, but Jonah's trial arose because the message was to be delivered to Nineveh, an enemy of Israel! Similar to the situation with Pharaoh, God was seeking to grow His relationship with those currently in rebellion against Him, in this case, those in Assyria. Look at how Jonah responds:

**Jonah 1:3-4** But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.

Jonah had heard God in the past. Jonah knew what God wanted, and God knew it. He could see into Jonah’s heart. So long as Jonah ran from the responsibility God already gave him, Jonah could no longer “hear” God. Not because God couldn’t talk to Jonah, but because Jonah’s heart and actions demonstrated he didn’t want to listen. Jonah didn’t like what God wanted of him. Jonah did not like the idea that the enemies of Israel could be given the opportunity to change and to be right with God!

Only when Jonah submitted to what the Lord wanted of him (see Jonah’s prayer in Chapter 2) was Jonah able to hear God again (Jonah 3:1). Jonah’s ability to hear God changed in relationship to recognizing that the Lord was disciplining him. Jonah’s ability to feel the peace of God again grew in relationship to being willing to embrace the “undesirable” thing God wanted of him. Remember, “undesirable” meaning it was undesirable from Jonah’s worldly perspective. Like Jonah, we each have a worldly perspective that will come to the fore in a trial, even if it is for the briefest of moments. To ensure we do not miss the mark during the trial, we must identify and resist that worldly perspective with our hearts, and in our actions.

## **Peter**

In this last example, we will look at Peter and how Satan lured him into sin the night before and morning of Jesus’ arrest.

**Mark 14:37-42** And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. And He came the third time, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

In the verse above we see that Jesus knows what is going to happen soon (His arrest), but He doesn’t go into detail about what temptation Peter must be prepared to avoid. Jesus is warning Peter to get prepared, and Peter hears Him; however, Peter isn’t listening.

As a result, Peter, thinking he is doing the right thing by defending Jesus from those who would arrest Him, actually acts inappropriately at the time of the arrest. Peter fails to discern his own trial during the arrest!

**John 18:10-11** Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”



Peter had not consulted the Lord before acting with the sword at Jesus’ arrest. Peter had not spent the time praying, introspecting or listening to what God would say concerning his own fear for Jesus! Peter didn’t follow the guidance Jesus gave him, and because he hadn’t done his part, Peter hadn’t postured himself spiritually to hear anything else God may have been trying to communicate to him about how to act during the arrest.

Further, Peter wasn’t prepared for the next trials that would come his way personally. In other words, Peter wasn’t prepared for being put on the spot about his association with Jesus. And the rest of the story involves Peter denying Jesus three times.

**Conclusions.** There are times when God may be trying to communicate to us, but we don’t realize it because *we* aren’t wanting to hear what He’s actually saying to our hearts. As a result, we don’t “hear” Him. There are also times that we may doubt what He told us, in the past, to do. And, in the moment of trial we don’t “listen” to that. In such a situation it could be said, “We can’t hear Him.”

There are also times when a particular trial involves a situation where doing what God told us in the past will likely come with a cost we really don’t want to pay today! So, Satan influences our fearful thoughts. Satan reinforces all our reasons for wanting what we want, when we want it, and it feels reasonable to us. We experience this when fundamentally we feel hesitant to do something that is likely to be costly in today’s trial. These kinds of things are inner dynamics that we may experience, and which lead to not “hearing” God’s voice in some trials.

The Spirit of God authored the written Word, and He dwells within us seeking to guide each of us in our trials. I find that a great way to overcome these challenges of hearing God’s guidance and counsel is to remember that His Son purchased us and our salvation with His own blood. The guidance of the Spirit of God points to living for the Son, in Whom we are forgiven and have the opportunity, no, the responsibility to follow! In remembering this, I also try to remember that this world is not all there is. When a situation seems to be bringing up a cost that my old self is hesitant to pay, I try to remember that we all are in the spiritual war of this world. The real world is the one that comes later with the Lord alone! It can be hard to avoid coveting the very hopes and dreams we have for our own lives, even when it is that we first dreamed them out of zeal for serving God. I try to remember to bring glory to my Lord by laying all things, even my life, before Him... one trial at a time.



For more about introspection, spiritual hearing and how to understand various challenges of trials, check out [\*Feelings 101: Pain to Peace\*](#).

## KEY IN-SIGHTS

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### From Whence Comes My Sense of Approval?

For every ounce of change I manage to demonstrate in my own life, the biggest challenge in living that change is to be satisfied that God sees it. Sometimes people will not see it. There are reasons why people may not see it. Often I try to verbalize those reasons in my own mind in order to better understand them. I know I've gone too far in that exercise when I see that I'm trying to lean on my reasons as a mechanism to find the peace of God, instead of on God. Peace through reasoning pales in comparison to peace of the heart.

It is wise to consider what others think and to hear their often unsolicited feedback about one's self. All in all, the greatest feedback I do not want to miss is the feedback the Lord seeks to provide me through my life's trials.

## KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS

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(picture courtesy of  
Freedom Outreach)

Update from Jesus Jam Fest 2012. This was a super event and it certainly glorified God. Over 60 persons came to know the Lord for the first time! There were more ministries from the local community present than have ever been there before! We were so pleased to be working in such great partnership with churches and ministries in our area. We want to extend a warm thank you all for coming together to serve God and share with those who attended Jesus Jam Fest!



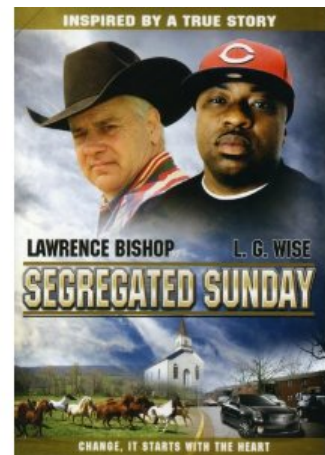
Updates on *Religious Origins of the Middle East Crisis*. We had the wonderful opportunity to present this material at Jesus Jam Fest to a crowd of 50 people! Bill Sr. received lots of favorable comments about the interaction and the message. Job well done! Just so you know, we've updated the web page for *Religious Origins* to share some of the feedback that we received at this latest presentation, and also with feedback from past presentations too! Be sure to take a

moment and stop by to check them out ([www.ReligiousOriginsMiddleEastCrisis.com](http://www.ReligiousOriginsMiddleEastCrisis.com)). We also added some additional information about the presentation. Remember, if you’d like to know more about this latest material from the *Keys Series*, or if you’d like us to bring the presentation to your area, then contact us through the website.

**12-Week Discipleship Training.** Just wanted to remind you that we’ve added a new page talking to the opportunity, via SKYPE, to walk through *Feelings 101* with the author. You can find this page in a couple ways. There is a link to it under the first couple paragraphs of the Home page. The page is also listed under the *Keys To Understanding Life Series* navigation menu (see the pic at left). This course is very powerful for those who seek it *and* who are ready. To find out if this course may be for you, check out the information available on the *Keys* website.



**Segregated Sunday Video.** While we were at Jesus Jam Fest 2012 we had the privilege of meeting L.G. Wise, a wonderful Christian singer and minister. I got to speak with him for a few minutes and it was truly a blessing for me. Brother Wise introduced me to a video that is available from Amazon, and it is really good, so I thought I’d share it with all of you. Definitely one we profited from. A great message about change, and the sacrifice we must often risk when changing as God would have us believers to change.



(picture from  
Amazon.com)

Dear Reader,

If you find this e-publication beneficial to your walk with Christ and would like to give a financial gift to the *Keys To Understanding Life* ministry, you may do so by mailing your gift to our Snail Mail Address (our current Snail Mail Address can be found on the Contact Us page on our website).

Just so you know, our ministry is not yet a non-profit ministry. We are currently engaged in becoming a 501 C3 non-profit organization, with a goal of attaining that distinction toward the end of this year. As it is, any gift that is given is a “true gift” in the sense that it is not tax deductible right now. At this time, donations or gifts to *Keys To Understanding Life* may be made out to: William J. Clark.

God bless you.

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