

Five Essentials for Effective Spiritual Warfare

By C. Peter Wagner---From Loving Your City Into the Kingdom

I believe that one of the major reasons for the lack of real change in our cities is a low level of understanding in our churches about the nature of the spiritual warfare in which Christians are inevitably engaged. Paul says, “Lest Satan should take advantage of us...we are not ignorant of his devices.” (2nd Cor. 2:11) This implies that ignorance of Satan’s devices to keep our cities in darkness, will allow him to take advantage of us and fulfill his desire to steal, to kill, and to destroy. (See John 10:10)

The Bible says this. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” The decade of the 1990’s has become known as the “decade of spiritual warfare” within the Church. The Spirit has been speaking strongly about this issue and has taught us many things. I have identified at least five elements of spiritual warfare that are needed to make a lasting impact on our cities.

1. Recognizing Our Authority in Christ. The Bible tells us we are ambassadors (See 2nd Cor. 5:20) What differentiates an ambassador from the average citizen? Authority! Our ambassador to Japan, for example, has more authority there than most Americans because he comes “in the name of the President of the United States.” Likewise, we go into enemy territory “in the name of Jesus Christ, the King of kings.”

Jesus has given us authority to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven to open the gates of Hades so His Church will grow. (See Matt. 12:29 NKJV) What are these keys? “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.” (Matt 16:19 NKJV) Jesus had already used the same verb when He taught His disciples that no one can enter a “strong man’s house” unless he “binds the strong man.” (Matt 12:29 NKJV) All of this gives us a basis for understanding what Paul later wrote, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.” (Eph. 6:12)

How much authority has Jesus given us? More than many of us might think. He said to his disciples, “Behold, I give you authority...over all the power of the enemy...” (Luke 10:19) There is little use considering spiritual warfare unless we understand all that’s involved in being a true ambassador of God.

2. Developing the Unity of Christian Leaders. In the arena of a city the pastors of local churches are the most important ambassadors of Christ. They are the highest spiritual authorities in the city. Jesus is the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, and the pastors are His undershepherds. One of Satan’s chief and most effective devices for keeping entire cities in darkness is to keep pastors apart from one another.

But Satan is extremely worried when the pastors of a city begin praying together regularly. The entire spiritual atmosphere starts to change. Why is praying together essential? Because Jesus prayed to the Father, “that they may be one...that the world may believe...” (John 17:21 NASB) Experience shows that without the agreement of the pastors in the city’s life-giving churches, the chances of engaging in effective spiritual warfare are slim.

3. Awareness of Strategic Timing. Many attempts at city-level spiritual warfare have come to naught because those attempting it have missed God’s strategic timing. Authentic ambassadors do not make policies. They implement the policies made by the president. As God’s servants we must first discern what God wants us to do and when. Jesus himself did only what He saw the Father doing. (John 5:19) We must do likewise.

4. Precision Targeting. Why is it that in our churches we see frequent answers to our prayers for individuals and for families, but not to our prayers for our city? It is largely because when we pray for people we first ask them what they want us to pray for, and we pray specifically for these things. Experience tells us that many times the more specific our prayers are the more powerful they seem to be. The relatively new science of “spiritual mapping” is helping us ask the right questions of our cities and get the answers that we need to target our prayers more accurately.

5. Praying In the Community. Traditionally, most of our praying is done in our homes or in our churches or at times in Concerts of Prayer, bringing together people from many churches. We need to continue to do this. However, I believe we can multiply the effectiveness of our prayers if we move out of our churches and into the streets to actually pray for our communities “onsite with insight.” God has given us four remarkable ways to implement this goal: Prayerwalking, praise marches, prayer journeys and prayer expeditions. This is the kind of prayer that has an extremely high potential to bring permanent change to our cities.