



NHCO Vision 2021

THE WAR FOR ONE

Feb 13-14

WEEK SEVEN

Study Notes and Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection.

Before you begin, by faith ask the Lord to remind you of what He's been teaching you so far. Summarize here.

Well, gang, here we are: WEEK 7, the final week of ONE, our original series to start the new year. Tell the person next to you what you've been saying to them every week of our series: And "I love YOU GUYS, and there's nothing you can do about it." Ok, now everybody connect to your wireless network. (No, not THAT network). Connect with the GOD NETWORK (password "Jesus"), get that Holy Spirit 5G, and listen for God's voice today.

What has been your experience so far connecting with God's wireless network--the Holy Spirit? Any interesting revelations? Explain.

Church, I encourage you to bookmark these messages. Watch anyone you may have missed. Re-watch the ones you don't remember, because this series is a "table of contents" for what we will be learning our entire year together. So each of these messages is actually an introduction to a whole series coming up later this year.

In our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we saw in WEEK ONE that Paul is casting the vision of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane for the Church to become ONE. Then in WEEK

TWO we saw that Jesus does this by first UNITING us with THE FATHER by His death and resurrection--giving Jesus the well-deserved title of THE ONE. When someone becomes a follower of Christ, we discovered that the spirit of that person is supernaturally raised to an elevated place in HEAVEN, seated with Jesus who is seated at the right hand of the Father. And we learned in WEEK 3 that when we are all submitted to the Father's VISION, we are no longer DIVIDED, instead we all become the ONE GENERATION. Then in WEEK 4 we learned God's future plan to UNITE the whole planet as ONE WORLD under His reign, and in WEEK 5 the ONE CHURCH will play a critical role in God's plan. Then last week, WEEK 6, we learned how our new vantage point in Heaven transforms how we see our relationships at home, making us ONE FAMILY. This week we will discover why it is such a challenge to become ONE. It's not just our flesh. We also have spiritual enemies coming against our unity. So in order to become ONE, we need to fight THE WAR FOR ONE.

Before we discuss today's message, do you have a question about spiritual warfare? Write it here, if any.

We might be tempted to think that all this talk of oneness leads to peace, love, joy, and living happily ever after. In a very real sense, this is absolutely true. But Paul ends Ephesians with a heavy dose of reality. To be born-again in Jesus means you are born into a warrior's life. **Born-again Christians are Spiritual warriors born.** As soon as we step out in obedience to God, we are immediately met with heavy opposition from an enemy who is literally hell-bent to stop you. In this final message, God calls us to ARMOR up, take up SWORD and SHIELD, and prepare for the fight of your life in THE WAR FOR ONE. Where my warriors at!

When we say that "Born-again Christians are Spiritual warriors born," what comes to your mind?

Let's read this passage from the final chapter of Ephesians together out loud. Ready go:
"10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil" (Ephesians 6:10-11 NLT).
Up to this point, I've been painting a pretty rosy picture of the Church at Ephesus--how they overcame racism and politics to become ONE, how much they loved each other and loved Paul, their pastor. Remember their tearful farewell when they had to say aloha to Paul on the shores of the Great Sea, knowing they would never see him again. But while this was true for SOME of the faithful, it was NOT true for all of them. Any Bible scholar will tell you that whatever the writer addresses is what the Church struggled with. So if Paul had to address oneness in this Church as strongly as he did, then it is very likely that SOME of the Ephesians struggled with what? Oneness. If he had to tell them that Jews and Gentiles need to stop being divided, then SOME of them struggled with what? Division. If he had to address marriage and parenting, then

SOME of them struggled with what? Family. So make no mistake, the Ephesian Church had its struggles too. See? Now we don't feel so bad about what WE are going through, right?

Judging from what Paul had to address with the Ephesians, what did they struggle with?

What are some of the biggest spiritual battles you face in your Christian life?

To give you an idea of the Spiritual Warfare in this Church, let's jump into the future of the Church at Ephesus. We're going to look at the Book of Revelation. By the time John wrote Revelation, the Ephesian Church had been in existence for over 30 years. Here's what he wrote:

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

"This is what the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand says, the one who walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands... I have this against you: that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do [the works you did at first]. But if you do not, I am coming to you, and I will remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (Revelation 2:1, 5 NLT).

The Church at Ephesus still existed 30 years later, and they were doing great in so many areas. But they had one important strike against them: they had lost their first love. And Jesus was calling them back to the Father, to love God as they did when they first followed Christ. Come back up the mountain and take their seats in Heaven.

What did the Ephesian Church struggle with 30 years into their future? How would you describe the spiritual battle they were going through?

The Church at Ephesus was GROUND ZERO for a GREAT AWAKENING that took place in their city, but that means it was also GROUND ZERO of a cataclysmic SPIRITUAL BATTLE. The two always go hand in hand. Because the enemy never leaves quietly. He always goes kicking and screaming.

Here's what we need to catch today in our final message. We are in the fight of our lives, but our enemy is like Covid-19. You can't see it with the naked eye. It's an invisible enemy from the shadow lands of the spiritual dimension. But make no mistake, he is far deadlier than the virus. Remember, this passage from last week?

"¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12 NLT).

Underline “we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world.”

Who is our TRUE ENEMY in spiritual warfare? Describe a time when you mistakenly thought that PEOPLE were your enemy. Explain.

Why is it important to identify the TRUE ENEMY in our lives?

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. Did you catch that? Our TRUE enemy is NOT flesh and blood. We need to tattoo that on our brains. I just know there’s a kid out there right now saying, “See, mom? Pastor Mike said I should get a tattoo.” No, that’s not what I said. I said that your TRUE enemy is NOT your mom! You need to stop thinking that your mom is against you because she won’t let you do whatever you want. Your TRUE enemy is the DEVIL, who wants you to THINK that your mom is the enemy. What you need to do is surrender your life to Christ, then you will see the Truth, and love and obey your mom. I saw a guy who put a tattoo of an eagle on his six-pack abs when he was young. But when he got older he lost his abs. Now the eagle looks like a turkey! So listen to your mom! Notice that when Peter said something to Jesus that was going to derail God’s plan for Jesus’ life, instead of rebuking Peter, Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan.” Jesus knew who His real enemy was, and it wasn’t Peter! Jesus loves Peter and there’s nothing Peter can do about it. The enemy is Satan! Husbands and wives, your TRUE enemy is NOT your spouse. We must pray for our spouses to surrender their lives to Christ, so they will see the Truth. Republicans, your TRUE enemy is not Nancy Pelosi. Pray for her to follow Jesus! Democrats, your TRUE enemy is not Donald Trump. Pray for him to surrender to Jesus. Our TRUE enemies are spiritual forces of wickedness in the spiritual dimension. Listen, Church, if we don’t recognize who our TRUE enemies are, we will fight hopeless battles, here it is, AGAINST EACH ANOTHER, and we will never become ONE. We need to stop fighting each other and focus on our TRUE enemy!

How do we fight evil spirits in heavenly places? Explain.

So right now, you’re probably thinking, “Mike, if our fight is against demonic forces, how do we fight an enemy like that? How do we fight an invisible enemy from the land of shadows? The short answer is NOT in our own power. Let’s read our main passage once again: ¹⁰ A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10-11 NLT). Tony Stark would never think of going up against Thanos without his armor, right? Can you imagine that? Tony walking up to Thanos? No armor. Why is that? Because Tony doesn’t have any power. The power is in the suit! So in the same way God has given US armor. The power is

in the suit, not us! And the suit is actually God Himself. Our power comes from HIS mighty power, not our own.

Why does Tony Stark need his armor to fight Thanos? Why do you need God's armor to fight demonic forces?

Is Paul talking about an actual spiritual suit of armor? What does Paul mean by the "Armor of God?"

And listen, God's armor is not really armor, ok? The reason I say that is because I've heard Christians say religiously, "Don't leave your house until you put on the full armor of God." So they go through the motions of putting on the helmet, breastplate, and so on, but then get their okole handed to them in spiritual warfare. "But God," they say, "I put on the full armor of God! How did this happen?" This is NOT a religious, superstitious thing to put on the full armor of God. The full armor of God is the Presence of God in your life! It is our RELATIONSHIP with Him. Tell the person next to you, "The full armor of God is the Presence of God in your life."

Why does Pastor Mike say that the Devil has armor too?

So then if you look at it SPIRITUALLY, listen to this, the DEVIL has armor too! Did you ever stop to think of that? There's the ARMOR OF GOD, but there's also THE ARMOR OF DARKNESS. So let's open up our armory and check our inventory for the kind of weaponry WE have VERSUS the weapons of darkness.

ARMOR OF GOD VS. ARMOR OF DARKNESS

Compare the "Helmet of Salvation" with the "Helmet of Doom."

Here we go: Armor of God: Helmet of SALVATION. The helmet protects our minds. Our salvation is in Christ, meaning we fight from the mountaintop. We have the high ground. We don't go by our own thoughts. Instead, we turn to Jesus, who is sitting right next to us in Heaven, and we ask HIM, "What do YOU think?" You live by God Speak, not self-speak. But from the Armor of Darkness we see the opposite: Not the helmet of salvation, but the helmet of DOOM. God is not with you. You have no relationship with Him. You're not seated by Him in Heaven. You're on your own. So you're going strictly by your own thoughts--your own ideas. No God speak, ONLY self-speak.

Compare the “Breastplate of Righteousness” with the “Breastplate of Deviousness.”

What’s the next piece of the armor of God? The Breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is body armor that protects your heart. God’s presence with you means you are a new creation, your spirit is brand new, and you have a PURE HEART. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. But the armor of darkness has the BREASTPLATE OF DEVIOUSNESS: God didn’t give you a new life, you’re not pure at heart, and you’re always scheming to get your way.

Compare the “Belt of Truth” with the “Belt of Deception.”

From the armor of God: The Belt of TRUTH! Your belt holds your pants up. Without it, your pants will fall down in the middle of battle, and you’ll be tripping over yourself. So in the same way the Presence of God speaks TRUTH over your life that holds your life together with... INTEGRITY. That’s the opposite of what comes from the Armor of Darkness: The Belt of DECEPTION. Without God’s Presence you are easily deceived by the lies of the enemy, and your life DIS-INTEGRATES. Your life comes apart. And there goes your pants too!

Compare the “Boots of the Good News” with the “Boots of Deviance.”

From the armor of God: The Boots of the GOOD NEWS. Your feet take you where you need to go. And if you’re wearing the Boots of the GOOD NEWS, then you have clear direction in life--spreading the Good News of God’s Kingdom everywhere you go. But from the armor of darkness, it’s the opposite: The Boots of DEVIANCE. If you put these on then you DEVIATE from your purpose in life.

Compare the “Shield of Faith” with the “Shield of Disbelief.”

Next from the Armor of God? The Shield of Faith. Because God leads you, you live with confidence and hope in the future, fending off the attacks of the enemy, never losing heart. You walk by faith not by what you see--which often doesn’t look promising. But from the Armor of Darkness: The Shield of Disbelief: Instead of faith you are filled with fear and control. So you panic and you quit.

Compare the "Sword of the Spirit" with the "Dark Saber."

Finally from the Armor of God: The Sword of the Spirit: When God is with you, you hear His voice, you live according to His Word. But from the arsenal of Darkness, beware of the DARK SABER! Throughout your Christian life you will need the Sword of the Spirit to defend yourself from the Dark Saber. This is going to be an epic Sword Fight! The Devil will lash out with the Dark Saber and say, "You don't stand a chance against me! I have used the pandemic to take everything from you!" But then you parry with the Sword of the Spirit and say, "Philippians 4:19-- 'My God shall supply all that we need according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.'" But the Devil swings again with the Dark Saber and says, "Your God? Ha! Take a look around you. You are alone! God has abandoned you!" But then you deflect again with the Sword of the Spirit and say, "Deuteronomy 31:8: 'The Lord goes before me and will always be with me. He will never leave me or forsake me. So I'm not afraid of you or anything that comes my way.'" Then the Devil swings again, "Pledge your allegiance to me and I'll give you anything you want." But you deflect again, "Matthew 4:4 Jesus says, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Back and forth you go in the greatest sword fight ever! The Devil is stunned by your mastery of God's Word. It's like that sword fight from "Princess Bride," remember that? "I see that you are using Bonetti's Defense against me, eh? "I thought it fitting considering the rocky terrain." "Naturally, you expect me to attack with Capo Ferro." "Of course, but I find that Thibault cancels Capo Ferro. Don't you?" Back and forth, back and forth you go, until the Devil is so frustrated he gets angry and says, "I will unleash everything I have against you and destroy you!" But you counterstrike, "Isaiah 54:17: 'No weapon forged against me will prevail, and the Lord refutes every tongue that accuses me. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,' declares the LORD. James 4:7 I submit myself fully to my Father in Heaven, and I resist you, so you must flee. Be gone in Jesus' Name!" [Pause] Frustrated, the Devil retreats, defeated by the Presence of God in you. You have prevailed--not by your own strength--but by the strength of God's mighty power within you!

Perhaps you did not realize that when you decided to follow Christ, you stepped into a battle with the spirits of darkness for your soul and the souls of your family and friends. Where will you find the will and the courage to fight the good fight? Share your thoughts with God on this.

You might say, "Mike, this is NOT what I signed up for when I became a Christian. Do we really have to fight a death match against the Prince of Darkness?" Well, you know me, to answer your question, we need another movie reference! One of my favorite movies is "Kingdom of Heaven" with Orlando Bloom (you know, Legolas). He plays a character named Balin, who was a blacksmith all his life, until a man shows up at his shop one day. Turns out the stranger is the Baron of Ibelin, a powerful knight (played by none other than Liam Neeson), and he is Balin's father. So spoiler alert, Balin becomes a knight like his father, and the new Baron of Ibelin.

There's this super powerful cool scene when Balin takes his oath of knighthood (I'm going to try NOT to cry because this oath is so cool.):

"Be without fear in the face of your enemies.
Be brave and upright for God is with thee.
Speak the truth always even if it leads to your death.
Safeguard the helpless and do no wrong.
Defend the king. If the king is no more, protect the people.
Arise a knight and Baron of Ibelin."

Balin winds up becoming the defender of Jerusalem, a warrior of the Kingdom of Heaven. So in the same way, the Lord is calling US to rise as warriors of the Kingdom of Heaven, to fight the good fight.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Who knows how much time we have left? It feels like we are getting closer and closer to the end of the age. We have lost some very dear friends to the pandemic. The nation remains divided. The world has grown dark. Some of us are growing weak in our faith because we're not gathering like we did before. This is why I am so grateful the Lord gave us this series. It came from my own personal time of fasting and prayer. So I believe with all my heart He is speaking to us. He has definitely been speaking to me. This word comes to us in the "nick of time." So lately we've been calling God "Jehovah Nickatime." In conclusion, let me say: I know some of you had no idea becoming a Christian meant being thrust into a fight to the death against the forces of darkness. But now you do. To be a follower of Christ means you are a warrior. When you were born again, you became a warrior born. And this war was NOT one of our choosing. Open war is upon us whether we choose to fight or not. So armor up. Take up your sword and shield. Be ruthless against the Devil. Show no mercy for you will receive none. And I'll see you on the frontline.

Take a moment right now to write your own prayer in response to God on everything you learned this week about the "WAR FOR ONE." How will you step out in obedience to what He is asking of you?

Let's pray to conclude our series: Father in Heaven. Thank you for Jesus. Jesus, thank you for dying for me and making me ONE with the Father. I will follow You in the battle for others to become ONE with You--the WAR FOR ONE. Thank you for the full armor of God which is Your empowering Presence in my life. I resist the armor of darkness so I can fight the good fight by Your side. In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well I hope you were blessed by our ONE series as much as we were blessed to share it with you! Check out our new series starting next week! Can't wait!
One last time, tell the person next to you, "I love you and there's nothing you can do about it."