

# WAR FOR ONE

## **1. Without peeking below, can you name every series we've done since New Year 2021 AND summarize what they were about?**

Hey everyone, as you've probably noticed, we've gone to another level of intentionality when it comes to our sermon series here at New Hope Central Oahu. If you were with us from the New Year, then you know that we've got one overarching, dominant theme for the whole year that summarizes in one word the TRANSFORMATION we are contending for in our Church. What is that word again? ONE. We started New Year 2021 by learning what Jesus wanted MOST from us, His Church, and it's not our church attendance, money, or even our service. What He prayed for in His final moments on Earth in the Garden of Gethsemane was that we would be ONE. Because when we live as ONE, that is the ultimate expression of the image of God and will draw all people to Himself. To be ONE means my greatest desire and highest hope in life is to be ONE with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And secondly, I love you and there's nothing you can do about it. For old time's sake, remind the person next to you, "I love you and there's nothing you can do about it." Because God will never leave me or forsake me, therefore, I am empowered to take a risk and love others, knowing I will probably hurt others and be hurt in the process. We may not ever achieve perfection, but we learn to forgive because Jesus has so beautifully forgiven us. We are gracious because we have been so amazingly graced. So if you're still with us after 6 months, congratulations! We have reached half-time in 2021! Half the year has gone and passed, and Christmas is coming! Woohoo!

Today, we start a brand new series. But before I get to that, let me quickly review everything we've covered so far. All our series "at a glance." After our opening series called ONE, we then set out to become ONE CHURCH in a series called ONE TEAM. How do we know we've WON? [Listen] We're ONE! How we know we loss? All buss. Then in our largest Easter ever, about 2,000 people joined us to celebrate that Jesus is the ONE and ONLY way to the Father, followed by a series called THE WAY. And just last week, we concluded a powerful series called God's 5G Family Plan, where we learned how your family can live as one. If you missed any of those series, I urge you, for your own Spiritual Transformation, to go to our website and listen to them on your way to work or at home. Because these teachings build on each other and today we start a brand new original series.

## **2. What do you think of when we say "spiritual warfare?" How have you seen the Devil cause division in the Church?**

What are we talking about for the next 7 weeks? It is, of course, another critical issue to ONE-NESS. If we don't understand this very important issue, we will attack each other, divide the fellowship, maybe even leave the Church. For the next 7 weeks we are talking about Spiritual Warfare. Now slowly turn to the person next to you and say, "Spiritual Warfare." And you need that look in your eye as you say it. Try it again, "Spiritual Warfare." I'm not sure what comes to your mind when you hear that, but I think of watching the Exorcist back in 10th grade with my

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friends. I couldn't sleep by myself for 3 months, I was so freaked out! But since then, I've learned that the Devil is far more subtle and crafty than that. Movies like that make you want to GO to Church and pray, "God, don't let the Devil get me!" The Devil doesn't want that! Instead you see, while God wants to UNITE us, the Devil wants to DIVIDE us. And over the centuries, the Devil has divided the Church over every conceivable thing--how to do communion, how to ordain leadership, how to do worship, finances, property, politics, race. Name it! The Church has fallen for the Devil's tricks for thousands of years. And so have some of us. There's a church in America called the "Free Methodist." Do you know how they got their name? Well, in the Methodist Church they had a building project (like we're doing right now), and to fund-raise for the new building, the Methodist Church asked the congregation to sponsor a pew. So each family donated, say \$100, to purchase a pew. Well, after the church was built, that pew became that family's pew. And no one else could sit in it! So if a new person came to church and accidentally sat in a pew, the family would show up and say, "Sorry, this pew is reserved for our family only." Every pew in that church was bought and paid for by someone, so new people had nowhere to sit! Well, some other Methodists wanted to go back to reaching out to the community, so they created the "Free" Methodist Church--where the seating was free. True story! The Devil will use everything and anything to divide us. So we need to talk about Spiritual Warfare in order to stay UNITED. We're going on the warpath for UNITY! We're calling our new series War For One. What are we going to cover?

### **3. Briefly summarize the upcoming "War for One" series on spiritual warfare.**

Next week we will clearly identify who the Devil is and how he works against us. There's a lot of church folklore when it comes to the evil one--horns and pitchforks type stuff--so we need to turn to the Bible to discover the truth. We don't want to focus too much on him, but we also can not afford to ignore him--Jesus certainly did not. And, like Jesus, we need to know the Devil's strategies. Then in week 3, once we know his tactics, we will teach you a way of engaging in Spiritual warfare that will make you victorious every time. Then in week 4 we will learn that the Devil is not just a liar, he's also a lawyer (No offense to all our wonderful attorneys out there!) He knows God's law better than anyone and will keep you imprisoned if you give him the legal right. We will show you how to break these legal strongholds so you can experience freedom from the enemy. Then in week 5 we will show you how to take up "sword and shield," God's weapons of warfare, and teach you to armor up for the battles to come. Week 6 we will learn that we not only outgun the enemy, we outnumber him. But it's not only about numbers. We will show you how to watch each other's back and fight as a team. Then in our finale in week 7, we will discover that the Spiritual Warfare we are engaged in, is not just a local skirmish but a world war. You may have heard of the Antichrist? In week 7 we will talk about the Antichrist. And that will segue us into another new original series called "One World."

### **4. What are we covering in our first message in War for One? (What is our thesis?)**

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Now we're all caught up and ready to begin week 1 of "War for One."

Jesus had to correct His disciple's assumptions about the battle He came to fight. Paul, on the other hand, understood the true nature of the Messiah's mission. Yet many believers today are either disinterested or disengaged in the spiritual battle. And if they are engaged, they are unsure how to fight. God's heart is that all humanity would be one with each other and with Him but there is a very real war going on for the souls of mankind. In our first message of our WAR FOR ONE series, we will (1) define the spiritual battleground, (2) describe what true victory looks like, and (3) demarcate our rules of engagement.

## ***5. So what is the primary SPIRITUAL BATTLEGROUND in spiritual warfare? What do Christians mistakenly think it might be?***

Let's begin with defining the spiritual battleground. There's a climactic turning point in the gospels when the disciples finally discover the true mission of Jesus. At first, like every Jewish person of that time, they assumed the Messiah came to conquer the Romans and save the Jewish people, just like David and Moses before. But when Jesus' ministry continued into year two, and then year three, it became very obvious He was no military or political leader. Let's read about that climactic moment when Jesus made His mission very clear. And for fun read um in yo bestest Pidgin! Ready go:

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus wen start fo show da guys he teaching, how he gotta go Jerusalem an suffa plenny ova dea. All da older leada guys, da main priest guys, an da teacha guys dat teach God's Rules, dey da ones dat goin make Jesus suffa, an dey da ones dat goin kill him. But he say he goin come back alive day numba three afta dey kill um. <sup>22</sup> Peter take him on da side an tell him, "Eh! No way, Boss! No way dass goin happen to you!" <sup>23</sup> But Jesus wen turn aroun an tell Peter, "Eh, move outa my way, Devil! You ony trying fo jam me up. Cuz you tink jalike da peopo tink, not jalike God tink" (Matthew 16:21-23 Hawaii Pidgin Bible).*

Everybody say "expectation." The Jews were expecting their Messiah to sweep in like a conquering hero to overthrow the Romans. The disciples were no different-- rooted in their theology, shaped by the dominant voices of their day that blended Biblical prophecy with ambitious nationalism, they were expecting another David or Moses. So when Jesus said the Father's plan was for Him to suffer and die, well, this made no sense to them. Is it possible to believe Jesus is the Messiah and still not understand His mission? Even to this day there are many Christians who are confused about what Messiah came to do. Like the early disciples, we believe Jesus came to win a war of OUR choosing – to fight the battles WE think need to be fought. To be perfectly blunt, we think He's supposed to make sure we win elections, defeat socialists, fix our marriages, heal all our aches and pains, and make sure nobody we love ever dies. Everybody say "expectation." So when Jesus does NOT do those things for us, we question Him.

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But Jesus came to give us victory in the greatest battle of all – the war against sin--He doesn't want us to focus on all the evil "out there," He wants each person to deal with the evil "in here." That means He came to set us free from our greatest enemy--ourselves, our flesh. And by doing so, set us free from the clutches of the Devil. Jesus' battleground is NOT first and foremost political, emotional, or social. His battleground is spiritual. He's fighting for our souls. So OUR warfare has to be first and foremost Spiritual. SPIRITUAL warfare takes place within you and within me. Jesus pointed this out clearly when He said to Peter, "Eh, move outa my way, Devil! You ony trying fo jam me up. Cuz you tink jalike da peopo tink, not jalike God tink." See that? Peter was thinking like the Jews of his day. That's what we call "self-speak:" What matters is MY thoughts, MY conclusions. MY will. My wants. And Jesus be like, "My my my!" Do you see how when we do that we fall into the Devil's trap? But Jesus was operating from God-speak. He knew that His Father's will was for Him to suffer and die. And Jesus embraced the Father's will as His own. Did you notice where the spiritual battleground was? Right there in Peter's soul! In the way Peter was thinking and speaking! Jesus points out for everyone to hear that Peter was speaking on behalf of the Devil in that moment! So now in this series, we just learned a new thing to be careful of: DEVIL-SPEAK! When we take our minds off GOD-SPEAK, we start doing SELF-SPEAK, and that leads to DEVIL-SPEAK. Who told Eve to eat the fruit? DEVIL-SPEAK. But who told ADAM to eat? His WIFE speaking on behalf of the DEVIL! DEVIL-SPEAK. Who told Jesus not to die on the cross? Peter speaking on behalf of the Devil. Devil-Speak. Here's the thing: Jesus KNEW that. So He rebuked the Devil speaking through Peter. See that? Jesus loves Peter and wants him to be free of Self-Speak and Devil-Speak. So Jesus doesn't end His relationship with Peter. On the contrary, He sets Peter free. More on this later, but for now we need to ask:

## **6. Describe what VICTORY would look like in your life in Spiritual warfare?**

What does VICTORY look like in Spiritual Warfare? Does it mean eradicating homelessness? Does it mean you have no diseases? Does it mean nobody you love ever dies? Does it mean you never suffer persecution? Remember I told you where the fastest growing church in the world is? Iran! And I also told you that the average lifespan of a Christian in Iran is 3 weeks. The Iranian ayatollahs have ordered the execution of anyone who comes to Christ. But when asked if we should pray for the persecution to stop, Iranian Christians say, "No! Keep praying for people to come to Christ! In fact, the more intense the persecution, the more people come to Jesus. So don't pray for the persecution to stop. Pray for more to come to Christ." That gives us an idea of what victory looks like in the War for One. This is a WAR to become ONE with the Father and each other. Jesus came to make us ONE with the Father and one with each other. And once we are ONE with the Father, nothing can stop you from doing the Father's will--nothing will be impossible for you. And you will fear nothing, not Covid, not even death. There was no way Moses could set his people free from slavery in Egypt, but once GOD called him to do it, nothing could stop Moses. There was no way Peter could walk on water, but once Jesus called him out of the boat, Peter walked on water. Later, that same Peter who denied Jesus three times out of cowardice, would become the fearless leader of the

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Church. In one sermon, Peter led 3,000 people to Christ! Heaven wins every time Hell loses a soul. Let me say that again: Heaven wins every time Hell loses a soul. So when you decide to follow Jesus, no turning back, God wins and the Devil loses. When you help another person come to Church and follow Jesus, Heaven wins and Hell loses. This is what victory looks like in Spiritual warfare!

You might say that all sounds well and good, Mike, but is that really what victory looks like? I know a LOT of people who say they are Christian but it sure doesn't look like God is winning in their lives. In fact it looks a whole lot like the Devil is winning. Ah, you weren't paying attention to what I said. I did not say Heaven wins every time someone calls himself a Christian. I said Heaven wins when someone decides to truly FOLLOW Jesus, no turning back. We're not talking about a perfect person, but a person whose heart is ONE with the Father. Listen, I'm not talking about going around trying to figure out who is really a Christian and who is not. Lots of people THINK they are saved, but when their faith is put to the test, it turns out something or someone else is more important to them than Christ. Everyone thought Judas Iscariot was a disciple of Christ, but in the end turns out he wasn't. On the other hand, nobody thought the thief on the cross was a believer, but in the end turns out he was. So how about we let Jesus make the final judgment when the time comes? In the meantime, we focus on doing God's will with everything we've got. And as we've been learning for half a year now, God's will is that we be ONE with Him and with each other. That's how you know you're victorious--you are ONE with the Father through the Son and you love every one. Tell the person next to you, "One with the Father through the Son, love every one."

## **7. What are the two primary RULES OF ENGAGEMENT in spiritual warfare and how will you live this out in your life, family, church, etc.?**

So before we go let's go over some basic "rules of engagement" in Spiritual warfare so we fight on God's terms and not fall prey to the Devil.

### **Rule #1: NO FRIENDLY FIRE.**

Let's read this verse together. Ready go:

*"<sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).*

Remember Peter was doing his devil-speak against Jesus, trying to jam Him up. But Jesus knew Peter was not His enemy. So Jesus came against the devil not Peter. If you ever get into a disagreement with someone, especially another Christian, always remember that ultimately that person is NOT your enemy. They may be super passionate and call you all kinds of things, but never forget who your true enemy is. Your real enemy is not flesh and blood, but spiritual forces of evil. This person may be under the control of darkness, or in bondage of some kind,

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in that moment, so pray for them. Jesus knew who His REAL enemy was, and it wasn't Peter. We need to do the same. Listen, gang, there's a reason this is Rule #1. It's usually the biggest mistake Christians make in Spiritual Warfare. Your real enemy is NOT your boss, not your co-workers. It's NOT your spouse. It's not your kids. Kids, your parents are NOT your enemy. And when we attack each other, we fall right into the enemy's trap. So what is rule #1? Say it with me: NO FRIENDLY FIRE.

## **Rule #2: STAY FRIENDS**

Let's read this together. Ready go:

*"<sup>18</sup> Make shua you do everyting you can fo live good wit everybody wit aloha, an no go agains each odda" (Romans 12:18 HPB).*

I've been doing church ministry now for over 40 years. Do you have any idea how many people have left church because they got mad or offended? Another common mistake that Christians make when something goes wrong--and something always goes wrong--is to leave and go to another church, or quit church altogether. The problem with that is that you never learn to work things out, forgive one another, and stay united. And because you never learned to forgive, after you jump to your next church, the exact same thing happens to you again. Why? Because you're still carrying around the same baggage you carried in your last church. And you cannot escape from yourself. Tell the person next to you, "Wherever you go, there you are." This always happens when you break rule #1. You think the problem is the pastor or church people, so you think leaving them will solve your problem. The truth is your demons will follow you no matter what church you go to. So those are two basic rules of engagement in the War for One. What's #1? NO FRIENDLY FIRE. And #2? STAY FRIENDS.

In this first message hopefully we've clearly defined the spiritual battleground, and it's your soul. Then we described what victory looks like--you become a fearless soul winner, one with the Father. Finally, now you know the Rules of Engagement in Spiritual Warfare. Next week, Pastor Mark will go into more detail on who the Devil REALLY is and how he operates as our War For One original series continues.