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Women and Spiritual Warfare

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Introduction

Spiritual Warfare is an evil issue, says Ed Murphy in his *Spiritual Warfare* (1992), while writing about the Cosmic Rebellion. The origin and presence of evil in this world is a puzzling issue to many. If there is no evil, obviously there is no need for spiritual warfare.

Anyway, the subject of Spiritual Warfare seems to arouse much interest in the minds of people, and I have discovered that women in particular are much more interested in one-way or the other.

Women Are Powerful Warriors

In my experience as a Bible teacher and women's counselor, I've personally found many women with 'battle scars' and wounded. Many casualties. Some would share their troubles about their children, their husbands, problems in their work place, etc. There seems to very little help for them.

Again my experience tells me that women in general are prepared to be involved in spiritual warfare but do not know how to go about. They attend different seminars and seem to a bit confused. The subject of spiritual warfare is such that not many Bible teachers can claim to be experts on this subject. Neither do I. My thoughts are based on my readings of several writers who have had greater involvement in this area, of course my experiences.

Why Women and Spiritual Warfare?

To the question "... but why women and spiritual warfare," my response is:

1. Women everywhere face battles that threaten to overwhelm them and those they love dearly.
2. Women tend to be more sensitive to the spiritual realm, and vulnerable to the area of occult activity.
3. Women seem to possess greater potential for waging this spiritual battle, and
4. Today's women face unique difficulties that need to be addressed in the context of spiritual warfare.

Women's Significant Role in Family and Society

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Whether we realize it or not, women in many ways bear the brunt of the family - children's concerns, husband's problems, domestic matters, facing abuse, and to top it all, battling their own fears and depression. It then seems they somehow have to carry a double load, and sadly many husbands don't seem to make their load any lighter.

The Focus of This Article

In this article you will read from Deborah's life on how women can break cycles of bondages and weaknesses in the family; on how to make the home a spiritual refuge; and on how women can really 'fight' for the health of their marriages and homes.

So, whether we like it or not, there is a war going on around us. The battle lines are drawn and God has given us places on the battlefield.

In my understanding, women, more than men, are in center-stage in this warfare. Therefore this article is directed to women (of course, men too!). For our understanding I have selected an Old Testament character called Deborah.

The Deborah Factor

Let me share a few principles of spiritual from the life of Deborah in the Bible. She is the only female judge mentioned in the Bible. Actually, she was a simple homemaker and her role was that of a keeper of the tabernacle lamps. Her simple faith (not great faith!) in a great God was the strength of Israel. Later on she became the keeper of a new spiritual vision, which became a light for Israel.

As counselor in time of peace, Deborah became known far and wide, but her greatest service came in time of war with king Jabin of Canaan because of his 20-year oppression of Israel. We are familiar with her story about how she led her people into war as a woman, a not-so-common thing in those days. Most men in her nation were fearful of the enemy's 900 chariots of iron, while they had none.

Deborah's Key to Victory

1. Deborah's Indignation

Here is a tragic situation of how the very ones expected to fight Jabin's forces had become pale with fear, while Deborah burned with indignation at the oppression of her people. I strongly believe that women must also feel that same indignation about Satan's attacks. By prayer and spiritual warfare, women can take a stand against the enemy's oppression in our own world. In the face of seeming defeat Deborah felt a call within her rise. She surely carried in her heart the great hope that God would come to her people's rescue if they would only honor Him.

Often we wonder what the 'iron chariots' might be that Satan uses today to attack us. We should not be surprised that they come in the form of strife and disharmony in the family; being unjustly treated by others or being exploited; becoming angry over small situations either within the family or in our working place; envying others for their 'carefree' lives; perhaps the prayer life is inconsistent and feelings of guilt about it; the demands from the Church that overwhelm; and others.

2. Deborah's Absolute Trust in God

Deborah, as part of her spiritual warfare, had the courage to summon one of Israel's most capable military men, Barak. She made it clear to Barak that she was not afraid of the enemy and that she believed in a God who had delivered His people from the clutches of the Pharaoh, the mighty oppressor. She further made Barak believe that God was greater than weapons and fortifications, and quite possibly she would have recalled the mighty deeds of God. In Judges 4:6 we read that, Deborah 'commanded' Barak to take the Israelite army to war and that God would deliver him from the hand of General Sisera and his chariots.

Barak, fainthearted that he had become, sensed the spiritual insight that Deborah possessed and feeling the urgent need for her presence and spiritual counsel, asked her to go to war with him. Through her words in Judges 4:9, we understand that she arose believing firmly that she was indeed armed with strength from God.

3. Deborah Acted On the Promise of God

In their book, *Spiritual Warfare*, Quinn Sherrer and Ruthanne Garlock (1991) suggest that Deborah acted on God's promise of deliverance. We can learn from Deborah on how to deal with spiritual enemies. It seems after suffering from Jabin for twenty long years the children of Israel began to pray to God for deliverance. God's deliverance came in the form of Deborah, who told the most capable military man, "the Lord, the God of Israel commands you..." Israel's victory did not depend on Barak's military acumen, but from Deborah's willingness to stake the nation's future only on the promise of God. It is ironical that a capable general was willing to go to war only if Deborah (a woman!) was willing to go with him. This is one of the most unusual passages in the Bible where a military general demonstrates his confidence in a woman, but it is understandable because it was Deborah who had heard from the Lord.

4. Deborah Received God's Strategy

Spiritual Warfare calls for a spiritual strategy. In Deborah's case we see that she received specific instructions from God even about the movement and placement of troops (Judges 4:6-7)). Often Satan displays his power to intimidate and manipulate us in much the same way Sisera displayed his power: his soldiers, weapons, and iron chariots to annihilate Israel. Deborah was not going to

be shaken by this display. She knew in her spirit that this was going to be Sisera's last show, which was to end soon.

God's strategy worked. As Sisera's army moved toward Kishon River, the Lord caused a freak rainstorm, which flooded the river and blinded his soldiers. As Sisera's army was fighting for life Deborah commanded Barak to "Go". (Obey!) All that Barak had to do was to go and take the enemy. Sisera's troops fell by the sword and not a man was left. So simple! Yes, it was God's strategy.

To make the defeat more humiliating, God used yet another woman, Jael, to put a complete end to Sisera by driving a tent peg into his temple. Jael, who aligned herself with the people of God, was not content to be a bystander in this war. It's amazing how two women were used of God to put an end to the iron chariots.

5. Deborah's Simple Obedience

As mentioned earlier, the key to victory lay in simple obedience. Sherrer and Garlock mention that Deborah and Barak were assured of victory because they battled according to God's instructions. I call this a one-step-at-a-time obedience. Only one step at a time. No more. They were not to know any further details nor question either.

Many times we want to know all the details. Often the plans that God puts in our spirit may not make sense to our minds. But we simply need to obey. This I believe is the key. Obedience!

Warfare Principles

Let me share some key principles that Sherrer and Garlock also make a mention of from the life of Deborah that we can use in overcoming the enemy's 'iron chariots' and gain victory.

Firstly, we must understand that Deborah, through her spiritual insight, recognized tht it was a spiritual battle and that God was in-charge; and that He was going ahead of her army and she had nothing to fear.

Secondly, implicit obedience was required on her part. She simply had to trust God for His directions.

Thirdly, her strength lay in the promises of God (not in horses and chariots!), therefore, her focus was on God and not on the enemy's iron chariots.

Fourthly, she held on to God's instructions and did not waver in her confidence.

Fifthly, Deborah refused to be intimidated or suffer setbacks because of a lack of vision on the part of her military general.

Sixthly, she did not compromise with the enemy; instead she gave orders to Barak saying, "Go."

Seventhly, she gave all praise and glory to God as we see in the Ode she composed. She did not take any glory for herself.

Eighthly, Deborah was extremely devoted to God and the well being of her nation.

Conclusion

Deborah is a good example for us as one who was willing to be involved not only in a physical war, but in a spiritual war. Perhaps Deborah's times may have been different, but the principles have not changed. May I recommend these eternal principles for all those, and especially the women who for the very reasons of their difficult situations they face today need to be even more involved in the spiritual warfare. I prayerfully commend this to overcome the assaults of the enemy.

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