



DETOURS

OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL
ROADBLOCKS IN
MINISTRY

Devotion #6 - Resistance

Read: Acts 17:1-9

June 2021

Often when we start a new ministry project, we find that we run into resistance. Sometimes, resistance happens as minor irritations, like communication challenges with people missing emails or text messages. Misunderstandings can occur within the organizing team. Sometimes it seems that there is challenge after challenge which has to be overcome, and while they may not be huge, they can slow down the progress of the ministry project and sometimes even shut the project down completely.

It is easy to dismiss such challenges as being just a part of life. We can say: "This is just the way things are." But it could also be that this resistance is an indication of spiritual warfare. A Biblical worldview shows that we are in the midst of a spiritual war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. 🌲🌲🌲

We see a pattern within the gospels and the book of Acts. Whenever Jesus appears in a situation or the Holy Spirit moves, there is a response from the kingdom of darkness. There is some manifestation of evil.

In Mark chapter 1 we see Jesus teaching at the Synagogue in Capernaum. The people were astonished at his teaching because he taught with authority. Jesus was manifesting the kingdom of God in that place. We see the reaction in verse 23:

"Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!'" (Mark 1:23-24)




Rest Stop

- Have you experienced a time when it felt like there was resistance to a project that you were working on? How did you experience that resistance?
- Did you consider that the challenges were the result of spiritual warfare?

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The presence of Jesus and the kingdom of God caused the manifestation of the kingdom of darkness. This manifestation happened through the demonized man.

We see a similar situation in the book of Acts. When Paul first arrived in Thessalonica (Acts 17), he headed into the synagogue on the Sabbath. For three weeks Paul preaches about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. As a result, some of the Jews and the Gentiles were saved and became followers of Jesus. It looked like things were going very well, but then there was resistance.

Those jealous of Paul gathered a group together and started a riot! That seems to be quite a strong reaction to Paul, who was simply preaching and teaching in the synagogue. But the chaos that erupted resulted in Paul being sent on his way to Berea, where the same thing happens again. 



Rest Stop

The principle of the enemy getting stirred up by the presence of Jesus, or resistance taking place when the Holy Spirit has been working, is seen in both the gospels and the book of Acts. Take some time to read the following accounts and notice how this pattern takes place.

- Luke 9:37-43
- Acts 19:23-41

On the surface, it looks like jealousy and pride leading to some unhealthy responses and ultimately conflict. Still, we need to dig a little deeper to look at what is happening physically and spiritually.

Through the ministry of Jesus and then Paul and the other apostles, the kingdom of God was both preached and demonstrated. As Paul would remind the Ephesians, we are in the midst of a spiritual battle where we see what is happening in the physical is impacted by what is happening in the spiritual.

As we engage in projects today that seek to advance the kingdom of God, which demonstrates the love and mercy of Jesus, or aims to promote Biblical justice and reconciliation within our world, there will be resistance that gets stirred up within the kingdom of darkness. That may manifest itself in the challenges and struggles that we face.

Recognizing the spiritual challenges and the resistance is the first step in dealing with it. The apostle Paul reminds us that we do have spiritual weapons to deal with these issues (2

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Corinthians 10:4). The primary weapon we have is prayer. In Ephesians 6, Paul describes “spiritual armour” with which we can stand against the devil's schemes. As we pray, led by the Holy Spirit, we can combat and deal with the resistance the enemy may bring. Through prayer and intercession, we can overcome the obstacles and we can see God's kingdom advanced.



The Scenic Route (optional)

This prayer exercise is great to do as a group, especially if you suspect that you are dealing with spiritual warfare.

If we suspect that spiritual warfare is involved in a situation, it is essential to discern what is going on and ask the Lord to give direction about dealing with the issue.

1. Take time to first pray on the armour of God (Ephesians 6:13-18), pausing to reflect upon each piece. As you pray, recognize that you are essentially clothing yourself with Christ (Romans 13:14).
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if what you are experiencing is spiritual warfare. Spend some time in quiet listening. Journal or share together any images, Scriptures or words which you receive during this time.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to pray for the situation. Again, spend some time listening for the Holy Spirit's strategy. Journal or share what you receive.
4. Pray as the Holy Spirit leads you.

As you do that work of listening to the Holy Spirit, it is important that you also discern it. You can use these four questions as a guide to help you in that process:

1. Does it give glory to Jesus Christ?
2. Is it consistent with God's Word?
3. Do others affirm what you hear from the Spirit?
4. Is there fruit as a result of following the guidance received? (Note: this may only come after you have prayed.)