

*Your  
Battles  
belong to  
the  
Lord*

KNOW YOUR ENEMY AND  
BE MORE THAN A CONQUEROR

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# Chapter 1 : Know Your Enemy

*Be sober [well balanced and self-disciplined], be alert and cautious at all times. That enemy of yours, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion [fiercely hungry], seeking someone to devour.*

1 Peter 5:8

Satan prowls around looking for someone to devour, but that person doesn't have to be you! If you get to know him and his tactics, and if you remain watchful and alert, you can avoid being deceived and trapped by him.

This humorous story is one way to look at how powerful the devil truly is:

Carl Armerding recounted his experience of watching a wildcat in a zoo.

“As I stood there,” he said, “an attendant entered the cage through a door on the opposite side. He had nothing in his hands but a broom. Carefully closing the door, he proceeded to sweep the floor of the cage.” He observed that the worker had no weapon to ward off an attack by the beast. In fact, when he got to the corner of the cage where the wildcat was lying, he poked the animal with the broom. The wildcat hissed at him and then lay down in another corner of the enclosure. Armerding remarked to the attendant, “You certainly are a brave man.”

“No, I ain't brave,” he replied as he continued to sweep.

“Well, then, that cat must be tame.”

“No,” came the reply, “he ain't tame.”

“If you aren't brave and the wildcat isn't tame, then I can't understand why he doesn't attack you.”

Armerding said the man chuckled, then replied with an air of confidence, “Mister, he's old—and he ain't got no teeth.”

*Moody Monthly*, as quoted in  
sermonillustrations.com

I am not implying that Satan doesn't have power. He does, and we should take that fact seriously. But let's remember that he is not actually a roaring lion, he comes *like* a roaring lion! Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and Satan can only portray an imitation of what is real and true. The devil is a liar, and he can only harm people who believe him and are deceived by him.

Before we even begin to think about spiritual warfare and how to defeat the enemy, we should realize that we do not have to *try* to defeat the devil, because he is already a defeated foe. Jesus defeated him on the cross, and we merely apply by faith the victory that is already ours through our faith in Christ.

*When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities [those supernatural forces of evil operating against us], He made a public example of them [exhibiting them as captives in His triumphal procession], having triumphed over them through the cross.*

Colossians 2:15

We know that Jesus has rescued us from darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of light, which is God's Kingdom (see Col. 1:13).

Scripture helps us realize that we are fighting from a vantage point of already having victory, rather than trying to win a victory. As Paul writes to the Romans, *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors and gain an overwhelming victory through Him who loved us [so much that He died for us]* (Romans 8:37).

The way we see ourselves is very important. We should see ourselves as people with authority, as conquerors and victorious believers. If we allow the devil to convince us that we are weak, incapable, unable, and losers, then we will believe and demonstrate those characteristics. We should agree with God and believe what He says about us.

One of Satan's main objectives is to prevent us from knowing who we are in Christ and knowing what our privileges are as children of God. He works tirelessly to try to make us feel bad about ourselves and believe we are not acceptable to God or anyone else. As I stated above, what we believe about ourselves is very important. It is more important than what anyone else thinks.

Believing what God says about us in His Word and seeing ourselves as He sees us is one way we let Him fight our battles for us. We know before the battles even begin that we have the victory. We may have to walk through some difficulties and stand strong in faith, but we know how the story ends. Satan is a defeated foe and he knows that. But if we don't know it, he will take advantage of that lack of knowledge and bluff his way into intimidating us.

### **The Devil Is a Liar**

The first time Satan appears in the Bible is in Genesis 3, and the first thing he does is attempt to make Eve suspicious of God's Word. The devil is a liar, but God is truth and therefore He cannot lie. When Eve listened to the devil, she began to question God's goodness, and she took Satan's bait and disobeyed God's instructions to her and Adam. God said they could eat of every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told them not to eat of that one or they would die (see Genesis 2:17). God's instructions were for Adam and Eve's good, but the devil made them sound as though God was depriving them of something they should have and enjoy.

Like the worker in the zoo who knew the wildcat had no teeth and was too old to harm him, we can know that Satan has no real power except the power we give him through believing his lies. To believe a lie is to be deceived, but when people are deceived, they are not aware that they are deceived. They believe that what they *think* is true and they act accordingly. One of the most difficult tasks I have encountered in ministry is to try to convince someone who is deeply deceived that they are wrong about what they believe.

Not only is the devil a liar, he is the father of lies. Jesus said to a group of people listening to Him teach, *“You are of your father the devil, and it is your will to practice the desires [which are characteristic] of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar and the father of lies and half-truths”* (John 8:44).

Let’s think for a moment about how the fact that the devil is a liar affects our lives. If we are unaware of Satan as a real threat and if we do not know his character, he can easily deceive us and we can end up believing many things that are not true. These beliefs will keep us from enjoying the life that Jesus died for us to have.

What if you lived all your life in poverty, barely getting by, and when you were ready to die, someone told you that your grandparents had left you an inheritance and you had been a millionaire for the past forty years? You could have enjoyed a totally different life than you had, but you didn’t know anything about the inheritance, so you missed out on it even though it was yours all along. This is what our lives are like when we believe Satan’s lies and do not know the truth of God’s Word. The spiritual and material riches of Christ’s inheritance are amazing, but we miss out on them because we lack knowledge of them. The truth is God wants to bless us with good things, and the devil wants to steal them from us.

Stop and ask yourself what lies you might be believing right now that are preventing you from entering into the fullness of the life Jesus wants you to have.

I can share my own experience as an example, and I am confident that many people have had similar experiences. I was a born-again Christian and attended church regularly. I even became involved in activities and various ministry outreaches at the church. I attended two different churches within a particular denomination over a period of nine years, and although I did hear the devil mentioned, I had no real concept of him as my personal

enemy. I had no idea he was actively working against God, His work on the earth, and His children.

My life was like the lives of most of the Christians I knew. Although I attended church and believed in Jesus, I had no true victory. I was easily angered, negative, resentful, unforgiving, jealous, and critical. I had many other ungodly traits that were being instigated by the devil, but I did not know he was behind them or recognize him as a real enemy. Rather than seeing him as the source of my problems, I usually blamed other people and thought that if they would change, I could be happy and easier to get along with.

Blaming others for our problems is another of Satan's deceptions, and it also started in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve were caught in their sin, Eve blamed the devil and Adam blamed Eve, but God assigned responsibility and punishment to all of them. Satan was guilty of lying to Adam and Eve, but they were guilty of listening and believing what he said instead of what God had said (see Genesis 3:1–19).

As long as we blame other people for our own bad behavior and problems, we are caught in a never-ending cycle of misery. The only path to freedom is letting God show us truth, facing it, and asking Him to help us change. If we have been treated unjustly, God will vindicate us in due time.

### **The Devil Is Alive and Active**

Corrie ten Boom said, “The first step on the way to victory is to recognize the enemy.” She was right!

In the 1970s I read a book that was popular at the time called *Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*, by Hal Lindsey. The book opened my eyes to many things, and God used it to start a revolutionary spiritual change in me. It introduced me to how active Satan is on the earth and to what he is attempting to do. For the first time I saw him as a real enemy that had to be dealt with. I also became aware that many of my beliefs were just plain wrong, according to Scripture. The devil had deceived me, and I

was totally unaware of it.

For example, I believed for years that because I had been abused sexually by my father, I would always have a second-rate life. I was convinced that my life could never be as good as it would have been had I not been abused. This thinking made me resentful and left me feeling hopeless. But as I learned the truth of God's Word, I discovered promises from God, such as the one that He would give me a double blessing for my former trouble and unjust treatment:

*Instead of your [former] shame you will have a double portion; and instead of humiliation your people will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore in their land they will possess double [what they had forfeited]; everlasting joy will be theirs. For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery with a burnt offering. And I will faithfully reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them.*

Isaiah 61:7–8

I believed I was a disappointment to God and that I should have done something to get out of my situation as a child, although I had no idea what that would have been. I told my mom what my father was doing to me, and she didn't believe me. A few years later, she even caught my father abusing me, but due to fear she decided to ignore it and not deal with it at all. I asked other relatives for help, and they didn't want to get involved. So I just gave up and decided that if I couldn't get away from the situation, I would survive it and leave home as soon as I was old enough to do so. When I did leave home, I thought I left my problem behind, but I carried it with me in my wounded soul, and sadly, suffered many more years of mental and emotional torment because I continued to believe the devil's lies.

I carried a burden of guilt and shame with me at all times, and not until I had studied God's Word for many years did the truth finally become stronger than the lies I had believed most of my life. Thankfully I learned that Jesus bore my sin, guilt, and shame, and that through my faith in Jesus, God considered me to be in right standing with Him. I was, in fact, according to Scripture, the

righteousness of God in Christ (see 2 Corinthians. 5:21). I was a new creature in Christ; old things had passed away and all things had become brand-new (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

I learned that I had authority over Satan, and that I was called and anointed by God to serve Him and do amazing things. I also read that there are 5,467 promises from God in His Word, and I was missing out on most of them through believing Satan's lies instead of knowing the truth. Jesus said that if we know the truth, it will make us free (see John 8:32). That is what has happened to me and to millions of others, and it will happen for you also.

These examples are only a few of the lies that God's Word uncovered in my life, lies that Satan told me and I believed. I learned firsthand that the devil is indeed alive and well and active against God's people.

### **Taking Back Your Mind**

Watchman Nee did some phenomenal writing about how Satan attacks and uses the minds of believers to do his evil work. Through his writings, I learned that the mind is the battlefield on which we either win or lose the war with evil. In his book *The Spiritual Man*, he wrote:

Why is the Christian's mental life so beset by evil spirits?  
This can be answered in one sentence: believers afford the evil spirits (or the devil) the opportunity to attack.

Why would believers give evil spirits the opportunity to attack their minds? They would do so only because they are ignorant of the devil's wiles and methods of deception, or perhaps they are ignorant of his existence entirely. The word *wily*, which is related to the word *wiles*, means "cunning, crafty, and deceitful." Wiles are often described as "clever tricks," and they are Satan's way of gaining entrance into a person's life. Satan doesn't knock on the front door of our lives announcing his arrival, telling us who he is and informing us that he has come to destroy us. He lies in wait for an opportune time and then he lies, deceives, and cunningly and craftily makes his way in, often undetected. Then he delights



in hearing us blame God or other people for the trouble the devil himself is instigating.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones observed in *The Christian Warfare*, “There is nothing, I would say, which is more significant about evangelicalism in this present century than the way in which it has largely ignored this teaching concerning the devil and the principalities and powers, and the ‘wiles’ of the devil” (p. 98). We need to learn a great deal in this area. Not only do we need to learn it, we also need to remind ourselves often that we have an enemy who is always on the prowl, looking for someone to devour.

People who do not learn to think for themselves are headed for trouble. Do you ever think about what you have been thinking about? If you would, then you would often find the source of your problems. Our words, emotions, and actions are the results of our thoughts. For example, it is impossible to spend the day entertaining and meditating on negative thoughts and remain happy and joyful. When our thoughts are negative and sour, our mood becomes the same. When they are positive and hopeful, our spirits lift and we live with an expectation that something good is headed our way.

The Bible tells us to resist the devil (see James 4:7), but we often unknowingly assist him through receiving as our own any and every thought he puts into our minds. You and I can and should do our own thinking. We should choose our thoughts carefully because they ultimately become the blueprint for our lives. Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthian church:

*The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted and proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought and purpose captive to the obedience of Christ.*

2 Corinthians 10:4–5

People who desire to win their battles must understand the importance of this passage. First, it teaches us that we have weapons. Our weapons are not physical, so they must be spiritual. They cannot be seen in the natural realm, but they certainly affect this realm. The primary weapon Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 is the Word of God. With that Word, we recognize and defeat the lies and thoughts the devil whispers to our minds. Please notice that we must take those thoughts captive. It’s not something God or anyone else can do for us. We direct our thoughts into obedience to the will of Christ. We learn to think as God wants us to think, and He wants us to think according to His Word. He wants us to be in agreement with Him and with His plan and purpose for our lives and His Kingdom.

### **Renewing Your Mind**

The renewal of the mind is the most important thing for the person who has accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord. The new believer must learn to think in an entirely new way. We might have had years of practice thinking in ways that are contrary to what God says, and learning to think in agreement with God’s Word will take time, education, and effort. Paul writes that we are not to be conformed to this world, but to *be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes]* (Romans 12:2). In other words, we are not to think or behave as worldly people do. Instead, we are to be transformed by renewing our minds according to God’s Word, so we may prove what God’s will is and experience the good plan and purpose He has for each one of us.

The word *transformed* as used in Romans 12:2 means “to be changed completely according to a new inner reality.” God does this work in us. We become a new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17), and as we learn to think and behave according to that new reality, our entire life changes. This happens gradually and depends on our gaining knowledge of God’s Word, will, and ways, and on our willingness to submit our thinking and actions to it.

If we allow ourselves to be conformed to the world, we will think as they tell us to think and do what they tell us to do. But thankfully, as children of God, we have another option—to be transformed into the image of Christ and live the wonderful life He has provided for us through His death and resurrection.

The devil fights relentlessly against the good plan God has for us, and he does it through lies, deceptions, and various strategies, attempting to keep us distracted through sending trouble and difficulties our way. New believers are trying to grow in their relationship with Jesus through studying the Word of God because this is how they learn right from wrong. The Holy Spirit, Who lives in us and is our Helper in life, as well as our Teacher, sows the Word into our hearts, but Satan comes immediately and tries to steal it in many ways.

Jesus said that there are times when the seed (God’s Word) is sown, but trouble and persecution come before it has time to take root. Immediately those who hear it are offended and displeased, and they fall away (see Mark 4:16–17). This often happens to people who have the mistaken idea that being a Christian means that God will make everything comfortable and wonderful for them. Teaching arises occasionally from different parts of the Body of Christ asserting that all the believer needs to do is look to Christ and He will give the victory. But Paul writes that we are to put on the full armor of God and to cast down thoughts that don’t agree with God’s Word (see Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 10:5).

We can see that God has given us responsibility in this process. He never fails to do His part, but He won’t do our part for us. He wants us to actively participate with Him. We are partners with God in His work.

It’s so important to understand this because standing firm in faith is especially challenging when we go through trials and tribulations. When the enemy is attacking believers in some way that is painful or uncomfortable for them, I frequently hear them say, “I don’t understand why God let this happen. If He is good and He delivers us from our problems when we pray, then why

is this happening to me?” God doesn’t become angry with us when we ask such questions, but those questions are immature and typically come from immature believers, and they usually go unanswered. God wants and expects us to grow beyond making such statements when trouble comes our way. God wants to hear us say, “I trust You, Lord, and I love You just as much in hard times as I do in good ones.”

I also find it interesting that we ask why negative things happen to us, but do not seem confused when other people are having trouble. We are quick to remind others that God is faithful and to encourage them to stay strong, yet when we are hurting, our thoughts and emotions can become unstable and cause us to say things we should not say.

The writer of Hebrews teaches that we should look away from all that will distract us from Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2). We look to Him, and He keeps us strong and focused on the victory that is on its way. Waiting patiently in faith for breakthrough while God is fighting with us and for us is part of what we must learn to do. God promises to help us, but the timing and the way in which He does it is up to Him. Paul makes our part clear in Ephesians 6:13:

*Therefore, put on the complete armor of God, so that you will be able to [successfully] resist and stand your ground in the evil day [of danger], and having done everything [that the crisis demands], to stand firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious].*

## Chapter 2 : Do All the Crisis Demands

*...and having done everything [that the crisis demands], to stand firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious].*

Ephesians 6:13

Any time we find ourselves in any kind of crisis, it's a battle in our lives. During these times we must not remain passive or neutral. We must act! We cannot do what we do not know to do, but God expects us to do what we can. I often say that if we do what we can do while leaning on God, He will do what we cannot do as we stand in faith and wait for Him to grant us full victory. As Paul instructed, let us do all the crisis demands and then stand firmly in our place (see Ephesians 6:13). As we do what we can do, we can be assured that God will fight for us and that we will always win in the end. God will fight our battles for us, but we have to show up for the fight.

It is useless to know what to do if we do not actually do it. Some people procrastinate, thinking they will do what needs to be done, but their plan is to do it later. That type of thinking is deceptive because for most of them, later is never a good time either. Procrastination is like a credit card—it is a lot of fun until you get the bill. Putting off easy things only makes them harder. Be a person of action; do what needs to be done, and never put off until tomorrow what you should do today.

I mentioned that letting God fight our battles certainly doesn't mean that we sit idly by and do nothing. First, we should be very active spiritually. We should praise and worship God and be thankful for all He has done for us and for what we expect Him to do in the future. We should also lift up our shields of faith, which quench all the fiery darts of the enemy (see Ephesians 6:16). That means we stand strong in faith, believing God's Word and promises no matter what our circumstances may be. We also need to continue to be faithful in prayer, not only praying for our own needs but interceding for others as well.

During times of crisis one thing we can do is be good to other people, helping those in trouble and meeting their needs as we are able. I often find that although I cannot solve my own problem, God will use me to help someone else if I am willing to do so.

For example, think about a person who needs a job. Of course that person should pray for God to give him one, but his part is to relentlessly look for a job. A passive person might just sit by and wait for a miracle, but a man or woman cooperating with God and doing his or her part would not only pray but also be aggressive in searching for employment. Such a person should be willing to do any job he can get, even if it is not the perfect one or the one he truly desires. Doing something fruitful while waiting for the ideal situation is always wise. Do something or you'll do nothing at all!

I often think of the Bible story about the sick man who lay by the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years waiting for a miracle (see John 5:1–9). He had one chance to be healed each year, when an angel came and stirred the water. When the angel moved the water, the first person to step into it received a miracle.

When Jesus noticed the man lying there and knew how long he had been in his infirm condition, He asked the man, “*Do you want to get well?*” (John 5:6). The man’s response to Jesus gives us great insight into his real problem. He said he had no one to put him into the pool and that even when he tried, someone else always got ahead of him.

Both of these statements make it sound as if he was filled with self-pity. Jesus asked if the man wanted to get well, and his answer wasn’t a resounding “Yes!” It was filled with excuses. Jesus didn’t seem to feel sorry for the man, nor did He offer any words of sympathy, but He did tell him what to do. Jesus said, “*Get up; pick up your pallet and walk*” (John 5:8).

Now we might wonder what the man was supposed to do if he was so sick that all he could do was lie beside the pool for thirty-eight years. Obviously the man could walk because he told Jesus that when he tried to get in the pool, someone always beat him

to it. I think it is safe to say that this man was waiting for God to fight his battles for him, but he wasn't willing to do what the crisis demanded while he was waiting.

I think the man was sicker in his soul than he was in his body. His attitude was filled with *I can't*, and when that is the case for people, just like this man, they don't even try. I don't know how far the man could walk or even how often he managed the strength to walk at all, but surely in thirty-eight years he could have wiggled his way over to the edge of the pool to assure that he would be the first to fall into the water when the angel came.

### **Do Something**

Doing nothing is a terrible waste of the abilities that God has given us. Even if we cannot do what needs to be done in our unique situation, we can always do something. I was recently reminded of a principle that I'd forgotten: When we're faced with a project that seems insurmountable, the best way to tackle it is a little bit at a time. We can do anything if we just do what we can do no matter how tiny it might be. For example, if your closet or office needs to be cleared of excess clutter, then work ten to fifteen minutes each day on it, and soon it will be a finished project instead of one that makes you feel overwhelmed and guilty.

I once read an article about reducing stress, and it said that messy work or living spaces make us feel stressed. I know that is true for me. I feel a lot calmer and in charge of my life if my surroundings are neat and organized. But I am the only one who can keep them that way, and doing so requires constant vigilance. I must do a little something on a regular basis in order to end up with what I want.

Most of us offer excuses for our lack of effort instead of taking responsibility and simply doing what needs to be done, but that is the absolute worst choice we can make. Making excuses imprisons us in deception and keeps us stuck in places we dislike. I once heard that excuses are just reasons stuffed with a lie, and I think that's true.

We live in a society in which being irresponsible is becoming more normal and acceptable than taking responsibility. This is causing problems that may put an end to life as we know it if we ignore them much longer. God has given us a lot, but He expects us to be diligent and responsible to take care of it. If we don't, we'll end up losing it.

Here are a few examples of what I'm talking about. If you live in a free country, someone paid the price for your freedom at some time, but you must do your part to keep it or it will be lost. God may have helped you get a good job, but if you don't do your part to be a valued employee, the time will come when you will lose the job. Jesus paid for our salvation and it comes to us as a gift, but we must do what needs to be done in order to resist the devil and stay strong.

The way to bring about any change is to be active and do what you can do!

By now you may be thinking, *Wait a minute, Joyce. I thought this book was about letting God fight my battles, but it seems that you keep telling me what I need to do.*

Letting God fight our battles doesn't mean we do nothing while we wait for God to do everything. It's also not about trying to do what only God can do while we passively refuse to do what we *can* do. Someone said that between the big things we *cannot* do and the small things we *will not* do, the danger is that we will do nothing. If we don't plant seed, we don't get a harvest; and if we take no action, then nothing ever changes.

It is amazing to me how most people who do nothing expect other people to do for them what they should have done themselves. As much as God loves us, He will not do everything for us because that would just enable us to be lazy, inactive, and therefore, complacent and unhappy. The laziest person on the earth is the unhappiest person on the earth. Why? Because God did not fill us with abilities, gifts, talents, strength, and creativity so we could sit around and do nothing. We either use what we have or we end up



losing it. Ask God daily to show you what you can do and also to keep you from trying to do what only He can do.

For example:

- You cannot change your spouse or your child, but you can pray for God to make whatever changes He wants to make. And while you are waiting on God, you can stay busy working with the Holy Spirit to let Him make the changes in you that He wants to make.
- You cannot make people like you, but you can be a likable person.
- You cannot make your employer give you the promotion you want, but you can be the best worker he has. You can be on time, or even come in early, every day. You can go the extra mile on your job and do more than is expected of you. You can do all of this unto the Lord because of your love and appreciation for all He has done for you. Then if God chooses to promote you, it won't matter what your employer wants or thinks, because what God orders always happens.
- If you are seriously out of shape and tired all the time, and you know you need to exercise regularly, you can take small steps to become healthier. You cannot start a program and get in shape overnight, but you can begin by doing what you can do each day, even if it is only walking around the block.

### **When to Pray and When to Act**

Once when I was praying and asking God to help someone with a problem, God whispered to my heart, "Stop asking Me to do things that you could do yourself, but just don't want to do." What God said didn't need any interpretation. I wasn't at all confused about it, and I knew immediately that He was right. I was asking God to provide something I could easily provide, but apparently, I had not been willing to make the sacrifice necessary to do so. Inactivity is actually dangerous for the believer because when we are doing nothing, and the devil finds us passive and lazy—then he can gain access to our lives.

We should pray all the time, including times when we intend to take action. We should never take any kind of action without acknowledging God in it. For example, I might have prayed in the situation with my friend in need, “Father, \_\_\_\_\_ needs money to pay her rent this month because of an unexpected car repair. I am willing to pay it for her if that is what You would like me to do.” Then, if I sense peace about my intended action, I should go ahead with it.

There are times when we pray and then act, and there are times when all we can do is pray because no action we can take will help or change our situation. We must discern between these two times and always be ready to act if we can and should do so.

Matthew 25 offers an example of people who did not do what they should have done and then expected those who had done it to get them out of trouble. In this parable, ten virgins took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five were foolish, thoughtless, silly, and careless, but the other five were diligent, wise, far-sighted, practical, and sensible.

The bridegroom was delayed and they all fell asleep, but the extra wait was no problem for the wise because they had brought extra oil with them just in case they had to wait longer than expected. The foolish ones didn’t consider bringing extra oil because they were not the type to do anything extra. When the bridegroom did come, the foolish virgins were not ready and were left behind, but the wise went into the wedding feast. This story ends with this instruction:

*Therefore, be on the alert [be prepared and ready], for you do not know the day nor the hour [when the Son of Man will come].*

Matthew 25:13

In other words, stay active, always doing what you can do, because that is the safest course of action. Letting God fight our battles doesn’t render us passive and inactive, but it does assure us that we don’t need to be stressed trying to do things we cannot do or don’t know how to do. God will fight for us!

## **Evil Isn't God's Fault**

Many people say the reason they cannot or will not believe in God is because they see so much evil in the world. Their reasoning is that if God were good as people say He is, He would not allow all the hunger, murder, violence, drug addiction, homelessness, and other equally vile things we see around us or in the news each day. My question is: Are we waiting on God to solve all of these problems, or is He waiting on us? Think about this story:

A certain preacher and an atheistic barber were once walking through the city slums.

Said the barber to the preacher: "This is why I cannot believe in a God of love. If God was as kind as you say, He would not permit all this poverty, disease, and squalor. He would not allow these poor bums to be addicted to dope and other character-destroying habits. No, I cannot believe in a God who permits these things."

The minister was silent until they met a man who was especially unkempt and filthy. His hair was hanging down his neck, and he had a half-inch of stubble on his face.

Said the minister: "You can't be a very good barber or you wouldn't permit a man like that to continue living in this neighborhood without a haircut and a shave."

Indignantly the barber answered: "Why blame me for that man's condition? I can't help it that he is like that. He has never come to my shop. I could fix him up and make him look like a gentleman!"

Giving the barber a penetrating look, the minister said: "Then don't blame God for allowing people to continue in their evil ways, when He is constantly inviting them to come and be saved."

from "The Preacher and the Atheist Barber," sermonillustrator.org

We can easily see from this story that most of the world's problems could be solved if only the people with the problems would do what they could do, or if other people who are praying for them would do what they could do. We have many problems in our world today. Actually there are so many problems that I admit they seem overwhelming, but perhaps of all of our problems the biggest one is not doing what we can do. We cannot do it all, but we must refuse to do nothing.

*So any person who knows what is right to do but does not do it, to him it is sin.*

James 4:17