

Am I Fighting For or Against God?

2 Timothy 2:22: (NASB) *Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*



As a Christian, we never want to be in a situation where we end up fighting against God, and yet we may end up in this position more often than we would expect. To fight FOR God is to stand for His principles, His plan and His purposes as outlined in Scripture. This sounds simple - but it really is not. We find ourselves fighting against Him when we are misinformed or misguided, and we take a stand for something that is less than godly. Sometimes we mistakenly or purposefully misrepresent God's word or focus on motivation that is less than spiritually pure. It is easy to look at our thoughts and preferences and interpret them as "God's will" for us and then pursue them with confidence. How do we know if we are really on God's side or someone else's side in these circumstances?

As we look at what it means to "fight against God" we will only focus on those who, by all accounts, should be fighting FOR God.

We will begin with the obvious case of Jonah, a prophet of God who absolutely knew better! How did he stand for God? How did he fight against God?

The bottom line is about living a life of godly principles. That is what our fight is for. It comes down to what we say and how we live.

WE WANT TO LEARN WHAT WENT WRONG, HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE SYMPTOMS AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO AVOID THESE SENSELESS BATTLES.



Fighting against God is sometimes painfully obvious. We all have within us painful prejudices that can trigger our fighting against God.

As we shall see through a brief recap of the experiences of Jonah, we only need to have the right buttons pushed and we are suddenly fighting God:

Jonah 1:1-3: (NASB) ¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah... saying, ²Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me. ³But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.



Jonah was a prophet of God. How could this happen?



Jonah was given a specific command by God: *Go to Nineveh and tell them their destruction is looming unless they repent.* Jonah had a deep-seated prejudice against the people of Nineveh and did not want them to survive. He decided to follow his own feelings instead of the clear-cut commitment to be the prophet of God he was expected to be. But God did not give up on Jonah because he went the wrong way. As the story unfolds, we will see that God is patient and merciful!

Jonah clearly drew his line in the sand and then got on a ship to run away.



A storm arose, the ship was in danger and Jonah was revealed as the cause of their life-threatening voyage:

Jonah 1:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, how could you do this? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. ¹¹So they said to him, what should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us? For the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. ¹²He said to them, Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.

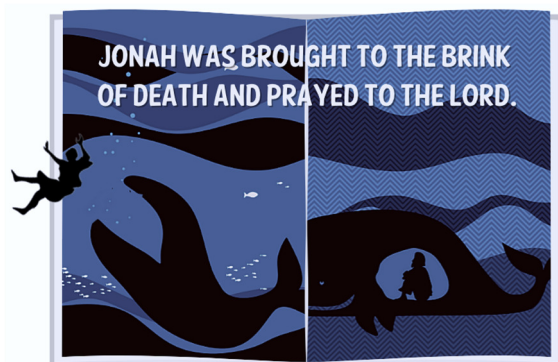
Jonah admitted he ran from God and was willing to sacrifice himself to save the others. At this point, it looked like it was going to cost him his life. While this was a noble gesture, it also showed the depth of his disobedience. He cared about the people on the boat but not the people of Nineveh.

Jonah 1:17: (NASB) And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah's fighting against God brought him to the brink of death, and it is here in the belly of the fish that he begins to understand:

Jonah 2:7-9: (NASB) ⁷While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple. ⁸Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, ⁹but I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD.

Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness - those who follow their own desires are fighting against God and forsake their faithfulness to the God that they said that they would serve.



God heard Jonah and delivered him. He said to Jonah: *I told you once, I'm telling you again, go do what I asked you to do.*

This time Jonah complied:

Jonah 3:4-5: (NASB) ⁴Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown. ⁵Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

It is amazing what Jonah did in one day to turn the people from sin. The whole city - well over 100,000 people repented. Why Jonah? Because he had an incredible ability to proclaim the word of God.



This was why he was a prophet of God. The problem is that within himself he had a propensity to FIGHT God if things were not going the way he thought they should go. He had a great ability to stand for God while internally he was fighting against Him. This was a huge contradiction.



Jonah had success! He was working to fulfill God's will and not fighting against God. All was balanced, right?

Jonah 4:1-3: (NASB) ¹But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. ²He prayed to the LORD and said, please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. ³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.

LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country - in other words: God, I knew you were merciful. I knew that if they heard the word and repented, they would be released. This is that internal fight against God. Jonah had this prejudice that would not let go, and he was literally arguing with God. He thought: I have converted all these people away from sin (for now at least) - I should die. While he did accomplish God's will in relation to the city of Nineveh, his struggles were not over. He was still fighting internally against God on a very personal level.

In Episode 1202, we covered many principles on wisdom that we will touch on today.



Uncovering how true wisdom works and why it is so rare

Wisdom is a big part in understanding the fight for or against God. We need that spiritual wisdom to help us discern those things that may look like they are good but end up not being so. We will discuss more on this soon.



Check out our CQ Kids videos:
WHAT IS WISDOM?

christianquestions.com/youtube

We need to learn from the good Jonah accomplished, as well as his continuing struggle:

Hebrews 13:20-21: (NASB) ²⁰Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, ²¹equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.



These texts teach us about the *God of peace* and how He equips us from the inside to be able to fight for Him, instead of following our own thoughts and emotions. We need to be equipped through Christ. The blood of Jesus gives us the ability to be transformed from the inside out. It is through his sacrifice we can be truly equipped to fight God's battles in God's way.



We can outwardly do God's will, but what is our battle on the inside? Jonah's battle raged on even after he did the good work, and the book of Jonah ends abruptly with Jonah being faced with a question about his own life. So, "Could I be a Jonah?" is a relevant question. On the outside my Christianity may look great, but what is happening on the inside?

We do not want to be like the Pharisees - clean on the outside but on the inside *full of dead men's bones* and full of uncleanness like it says in Matthew 23:27.

The bottom line is that we need to learn to fight the right fight.



There are many battles we will fight in our lives, both internally and externally. Just because we come around to fight for God externally does not mean we are fighting for Him internally.

Let us not be satisfied with the external victories, but instead, seek to be genuinely equipped as God's soldier from the inside out.

It is great to have those external victories, but what is the *internal* battle showing us? Let's focus on being genuinely equipped from the inside out.

Seeing the experience of Jonah can be unsettling and make you wonder how much you fight against God on the inside!

**Jonah is a sobering example of personal battles with God.
Can we have community-based battles with God as well?**

Fighting against God is not limited to what goes on between our own ears. The whole aspect of agreeing with others who should know better - but end up fighting against God - is another eye opener. This is another example of how carefully we have to handle the input we receive from those around us.

Jonah's example was a personal battle from a predetermined emotional perspective. Jonah really did not like the Ninevites, and he told himself that if he convinced the Ninevites to repent, God would back down on punishing them. He did not want God to back down. By following his own emotional perspective, he ended up fighting against God. This can be painfully obvious to us when we look at it in the mirror.

In this next section, fighting against God might not be so obvious.

Fighting against God sometimes creeps up on us. This creeping approach takes hold when we are internally only partially committed to God's will and way.

Fighting against God can imperceptibly take hold when an issue arises that is a legitimate concern:

1 Samuel 8:1,3: (NASB) *¹And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. ³His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.*

Israel did not just stumble into wanting a king. They were set on having one and they saw the corruption of Samuel's sons (who were judges in Israel - those who applied God's Law during disputes and led the people as needed) as their opportunity.

Samuel's sons were not walking in just and godly ways, so the Israelites had a legitimate concern arising. The principle of "fighting against God" begins to reveal itself when we take the legitimate concern as an excuse to follow a comfortable path that suits us and ultimately gets us what we want.



1 Samuel 8:4-5: (NASB) *⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; ⁵and they said to him, Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways...*

This truly is a clear matter of principle. In other words: *Your sons, Samuel, are not following God's ways. We are taking issue with this.*

...Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.

Because Samuel's sons were corrupt representatives of a God-sanctioned system, the people used that as an excuse to replace the SYSTEM and not the PEOPLE. A legitimate problem but the wrong solution!

What does this mean? Can we reframe a legitimate problem for our own purposes?

Israel shows us how to do this. We can take that legitimate concern and then build on something and come up with a different answer that was not made with a godly intention. We latch onto a principle, and we want to get what we want. That is human nature but is not spiritual godliness.

That was the Israel's problem - and that is the problem God would discuss with Samuel. This was a huge problem, and this "fighting against God" came from taking a legitimate concern but creating a solution that was NOT legitimate.





Fighting against God results in displeasing God because it is a rejection of His sovereignty:

1 Samuel 8:6-7,9: (NASB) *“But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷The LORD said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. ⁹Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them.*



God knew the people were fighting against Him, and He let them fight! He did not interfere with their free will.

When we look at this example, the people really did have a reasonable agenda at first. But then they took that legitimate principle and saw how it could be an opportunity to do it their own way and yet still appear to stand on righteousness. That is what they were doing, but it was all wrong and they ended up fighting AGAINST God - their deliverer.

God can use our “fighting against Him” as a harsh object lesson for us. Samuel gave the people the grave warnings of what having a king would bring.

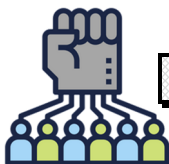
As we highlight a few of those warnings, notice the underlying theme of how this fight against God is actually replacing Him with a human king:

1 Samuel 8:12: (NASB) *He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.*

This reminds us of the verse in **Isaiah 14:12-15** where Satan's heart is revealed: *I will ascend to heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will do this and that.* There were five times “I” is stated here. In the 1 Samuel verses above, we read at least five times the word “his” or “himself” was used to describe what a king would do to the Israelites.

It is a very strong comparison because it is taking God out of the picture and putting something else in. This is classic fighting against God.

God tells Samuel what would happen and how he was to warn the people. *Commanders of thousands and of fifties* - God used multiples of ten in His warning. Think about this. God's system of judges over Israel broke the oversight of the people down by multiples of ten. Now God says a king will use those multiples for his own benefit. The numerical value God uses to manage His people will now become an advantage to the king.



Fighting together against God supports the wrong sources of authority.

This is fighting against God as a group fight. When there is a group fighting together to support the wrong authority, we are fighting God.

Here is another warning:

1 Samuel 8:14: (NASB) *¹⁴He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants.*



The king will take the best of all things away from the people of Israel. All their hard-earned harvest will go to the king's servants. *What about you, Israel? Weren't you the one who worked to bring in this harvest?*

The fields were originally divided among the tribes. God's original system of equity would now become the king's self-sustaining system. There is a massive disconnect when a human being is put in charge instead of God Almighty.



Fighting together against God feeds the best results to those who are in support of human-appointed rulers and leaves God completely out of the picture.

It is a matter of who we are choosing to serve and who we are choosing to follow. Israel was choosing to put a human in authority over them. They were choosing to follow a king - with all the human ego, propensity and greed - instead of God who had carefully set up a system of equity between all of those in the nation.

Remember the tithing that supported the priesthood?

1 Samuel 8:15,17: (NASB) ¹⁵*He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants...* ¹⁷*He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants.*



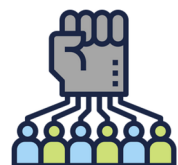
Along with the best of the harvest, God's system of tithing became corrupted. It used to support the priesthood because they did not have an inheritance in the land. Now suddenly it will be used to support the king and his servants. What happened to the priesthood? Where are they? They just did not matter so much anymore. Why? Because Israel has a king, and the king is everything! The king is glorious, the king has splendor, the king has power, making other countries look and say, *Wow, look at your king!*

But Israel had forsaken God Almighty.

They had a wonderful equity in the tithing of the people. It was a random tithing where they counted their cattle, and one out of every 10 would go to the priesthood. When the priesthood received the cattle and the goods of the land, it was not random. They had to take the best tenth of the cattle and harvest which they offered up to God.

The honoring of God was now completely turned upside down in order to honor the king. On top of the best of the fields and vineyards going to the king, God's system of tithing to support the priesthood would now become the king's system of tithing to support himself and his servants.

What is wrong with this picture? Everything!



Fighting together against God and supporting human authority undermines all of what God put in place to support us as His people.



Remember, Israel said they wanted to be like the other nations and have a king. They did not want to be that different from other nations.



But what about me? What about where I am and what about the group that I am a part of? Am I going down this same road?

If we do not want to be *that* different, we are fighting against God. Christians, by definition, **MUST** be different!

Did Israel listen to God's warnings?

1 Samuel 8:18-20: (NASB) ¹⁸Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day. ¹⁹Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, No, but there shall be a king over us, ²⁰that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

That our king may...go out before us and fight our battles - but God was already fighting their battles! As if God had not done that already! We need to be careful. We can look at this and think how "off" they were, but what about me? What about the groups I am a part of? Am I going down a similar road?

God's promise to hear and help His chosen people would be silenced as they put their true heavenly King aside in favor of a sinful man.



Fighting together against God takes us out of His grace and favor.

If we are in a congregation and want to be like the rest of the world, we might draw people in with worldly kinds of things to make it seem acceptable. In doing so, we are taking ourselves out of earshot with God. This is sad. Be careful of what is done "in the name of Christ" as though they are God's chosen people. It is hypocritical.

Our "together" actions always need to be under the highest principles of godly righteousness:

Hebrews 13:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. ¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

What about the leader from the worldly church? Submit to him? Is that what this is saying?

Remember what leaders we are talking about. In our theme scripture, it tells us to *flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. With whom? With those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Those are the leaders that this is talking about obeying and submitting to, because they are godly. They are not helping us to FIGHT Him; they are helping us to STAND FOR HIM instead.*



What about the elders of Israel? They were not the appropriate leaders. Samuel was appropriate as the judge appointed by God, but the people chose to override him and appoint their own leadership - a king - throwing the prophet of God away. There is never a good ending when the representative of God gets shunned! As a result, Israel fell into all kinds of difficulty and sin.

This is a lesson for us. It was group decision that brought them away from God. How is our “group thinking” working? How do we learn to fight the right fight?



It has been said that there is safety in numbers and that can be true. However, there can also be the temptation to compromise in numbers. This can easily be fed by those numbers being willing to meet and settle at the lowest common denominator.

To fight FOR God is to find the highest and most biblically-sound common point and together strive towards it.

We are either settling for the lowest common denominator as a group, or we are collectively striving for the highest biblically-sound principle. Which way we choose depends on whether we are fighting for or against our Heavenly Father.

The nation of Israel can be a powerful reminder of how easy it is to fall into the complacency of being just like everyone else.

**Does fighting against God ever happen when we do not want it to?
Can we fight God by accident?**

Because we are imperfect human beings, a lot of unintended things happen to us. We can inadvertently fight against God, and it can happen right when we think we are standing *for* Him! We can either be depressed by this or take it as a spiritual call to action. Let's be responsible for what we are given to know.

The bottom line here is our hearts. They are generally in the right place. But because we live in sinful bodies with sinful desires, we have a lot of checking up to do to make sure that heart, which may be in the right place, is actually going in the right direction.

Fighting against God can be subtle and very unintentional.



We started this episode saying, “Fighting against God may be painfully obvious.” We continued by saying, “Fighting against God can creep up on us,” and now we add, “Fighting against God can be subtle and very unintentional.”

Fighting against God will always manifest at some point in an inflated view of someone or something that challenges the sanctity of God, His word or His son Jesus. We will look at an example of the Apostle Peter. Peter here had an inflated view of his own courage and fidelity and needed to learn the hard way.



Peter did not intentionally fight against God, but he had to grow in his maturity and fidelity towards God:

Luke 22:28-34: (NASB) ²⁸You are those who have stood by me in my trials; ²⁹and just as my Father has granted me a kingdom, I grant you ³⁰that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ³¹Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; ³²but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. ³³But he said to him, Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death! ³⁴And he said, I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me.



Here is the Matthew account:

Matthew 26:35: (NASB) Peter said to him, Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you. All the disciples said the same thing too.

Jesus is being very specific about Peter's defection under stress, but Peter says: *Oh no, not me. Even if I have to die with you, I will not leave you.* Jesus tells him again that Peter would deny him not once, but three times. Peter is still determined he will stand by the Lord.

Was Peter's heartfelt conviction that he would never leave him wrong? No, but his problem was that he spoke impetuously from his gut or with his emotion. He did not have the courage (yet) in his life to stand when he needed to, even though he thought he did. Jesus recognized Peter's faithful heart and tells him he will *turn again* and take up the mantle of leadership, but was not yet strong enough. We must be careful not to get stuck in what we *think* we can do. If we say it, we do need to stick to what we say because we are either reflecting godliness or not.



Whenever we fight for our ego to be verified, we are inevitably fighting against God.

Our challenge is to continually reduce our ego and fill its space with the instruction of God's word.

Once again: **Fighting against God can be subtle and very unintentional.**

The challenge we have is that we often want our ego verified. Peter was in such a place. He passionately said something and was not going to back down. He needed to learn the humility to admit that we are all broken human beings. He was inadvertently fighting against God. God knew he did not mean to do so, and we see him grow through this experience later on.

Let's go on to another example. Fighting against God can be manifest in an attempt to express fidelity to God's truth but results in an attitude that divides.



The immaturity of this kind of division displays an air of superiority that does not belong within the body of Christ:

1 Corinthians 1:10-13: (NASB) ¹⁰Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. ¹²Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. ¹³Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

We should be using Scripture as our basis, not the prejudice that comes with pride in whatever denomination we are. In the early church, before there were denominations, they already had such quarrels amongst themselves. They were examining Scripture and the gospel message, trying to take a stand for truth. Standing for truth is a good thing, but taking a stand at the expense of another and locking them out of fellowship is not.

When we are talking about the body of Christ, those individuals are begotten of the holy spirit like we are. If we have the same spirit, we must not lock each other out! This is why Paul says, *Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* NO! No faction was superior to another. All were under Christ.

We need to learn to work together as the body of Christ, even if we have disagreements. This can be hard, and the slighting of one another may very well be unintentional and inadvertent in our zeal to seek the truth.



Fighting against God is easily fed when our desire to do right and be right before God is applied with a backdrop of COMPARISON AND COMPETITION.

Fighting FOR God requires the humility to recognize we all have liberty in Christ and are striving together because of that liberty.

We strive together, and because of the liberty we have, you can see things through your eyes, and I can see things through mine. Perhaps we can build each other up while we deal with those differences. We need to work together regardless. It might be hard, but it is what the body of Christ is supposed to do.

Fighting against God can be subtle and very unintentional.

Fighting against God can be an unplanned outcome of not standing up against peer pressure.



The result of this lax action can be a catastrophic example and excuse for others to join the wrong fight:

Galatians 2:11-14: (NASB) ¹¹But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. ¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas (Peter) in the presence of all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

In other words: *Peter, what are you doing? You are saying one thing and showing another. You are fighting against not only the principles of righteousness, but what the gospel stands for - leaving the rituals of Judaism behind.*

This was a huge example of succumbing to peer pressure that resulted in fighting against God. Peter gave into the presumed authority these specific Jewish Christians had. He was intimidated and wanted to be respectful of them, but he inadvertently put others at great risk. The Apostle Paul thankfully called him out on that. Peter momentarily gave into negative peer pressure. When we do the same, we might be fighting against God.



Satan is an expert at subtly-applied pressure. Even the strongest of us can fall prey to the mind-directing power of the influential people around us.

To fight FOR God is to measure the peer pressure we experience against the power and principles of God's will. The result is standing for godliness and being an example of following His will.

Compromise is not appropriate in some cases, but peer pressure does not have to be bad IF we have the proper influence to follow. If we are having a hard time resisting certain temptations and other brothers or sisters of our fellowship know that, they can encourage us to stand for that which is right. Because they have their standing in godliness and truth, that can be an awesome POSITIVE peer pressure.

We have to make sure that whatever pressure we are giving into is *only looking upward* and is *only scripturally-based*, not what WE think the Scriptures tell us. We have to be so careful. Sometimes peer pressure is not bad, but if it takes us away from God, it is fighting against God.

Fighting against God can be subtle and very unintentional.

Pay attention, as this can happen when we are not even aware!



When we are deeply sincere in our dedication to God, we can sometimes be overcome by our own emotional weaknesses:

1 Peter 5:5-7: (NASB) ⁵You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

We are fighting God if we do not cast our anxieties on Him - and it happens to all of us. We know we have anxiety, so we pray and say, *LORD, I am handing You this anxiety*. Sometimes we are actually able to do this! Then something else happens and we find ourselves holding onto the anxiety again.

What just happened? Again, we pray, *LORD, okay, I know that I am supposed to give this to you and you will take care of me*. We go through this very difficult, very human process, repeatedly. We need to understand that by taking the anxiety back, we are actually fighting against God. We are not giving it to Him so He can do what He is supposed to do with it; we are not giving Him time, or space or His providence the ability to unfold. We need to learn to fight the RIGHT fight.



Fighting against God can be as simple as an inconsistent humility that causes us to take back the cares we gave to our Father.

In this case, fighting FOR God is fighting to deliver, redeliver and deliver once more our cares, knowing that they belong with our Father.

Our cares do belong with our Father, and often we have to deliver them again and again because we are so anxiety-ridden. This is okay. We need to just keep focusing on giving our anxious musings to the Father. Otherwise, if we take them back to mull on them and brood over them, we are once again fighting against the Father and His provisions for our care.

Fighting against God can happen in so many ways and for so many reasons. It all just means we need to stay alert.

With all the ways we can end up fighting against God, how about some ways to simply fight FOR God?

When we think about it, one of the best ways to avoid fighting against God is to be thoroughly immersed in fighting FOR God. There are many scriptures that tell us not only how to do this but also how to be prepared to do this. For now, we will focus on one specific chapter.

The Apostle Paul's final letter before he was put to death was to his beloved spiritual son Timothy. In this letter he is instructing Timothy how to stand for Christ as an example for the flock. We drop in on some verses from chapter two, as Paul is pouring out ways to stand and fight FOR God.



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Be cautious to pass on the responsibility of the gospel to those who are proven faithful to the gospel:

2 Timothy 2:1-6: (NASB) ¹You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Entrust these to faithful men - not specifically eloquent or intelligent, but faithful. In other words: I am giving you the gospel. Handle it with great solemnity and pass it on to those who will keep it sacred.

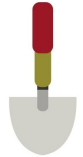
Next, we will look at three different ways of serving God using the examples Paul gives us of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer.



SOLDIER



ATHLETE



FARMER



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Be ever willing to suffer the hardships of a soldier as you stand for the highest godly principles:

³Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

Paul taught us about the Christian soldier's armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-17. In Acts 10, we learn about the first Gentile convert to Christianity, Cornelius the soldier.

The soldier is not an individual; he or she is part of an army, fighting with others around them. We want to be a part of fighting the battle for truth and righteousness. Paul here is explaining to Timothy how important it is to be willing to suffer the hardships of a soldier for Jesus.



SOLDIER



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Be accountable to the rules of godliness. "Success" outside of scriptural guidelines is not success at all:

⁵Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

The athlete trains with focus and dedication. He or she is disciplined. They practice and compete but must do so lawfully. We have to compete lawfully for faithfulness. The Apostle Paul is telling Timothy: *Make sure your efforts are lawful according to Scripture just like an athlete, so you can win that prize.* It is an amazing prize.



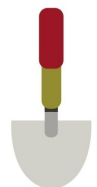
ATHLETE



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Work the works of faith with patience and perseverance. Living a life driven by God needs to be cultivated and patiently developed over time:

⁶The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

The hard-working farmer sows the seed and harvests the crops in what is sometimes thankless work, day after day, working from sunup to sundown. The work brings amazing accomplishment.



FARMER



Are YOU a soldier, an athlete or a famer?

(Rick) I see you, Jonathan, more fitting into the athlete-type perspective. For as long as I've known you, you have always wanted to make sure that you do it exactly God's way. You have that fierceness of just putting your all into it. I see that athletic approach to your Christianity.

We do not want to lessen those who are farmer-like. The work of cultivating little bit by little bit, time after time, such patience and perseverance over that long season cannot be underestimated. I think probably most of us fit into that category. The Apostle Paul tells Timothy to be like a famer with patience and perseverance. Be driven to grow the necessary spiritual fruit.



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Hold the word of truth as sacred while simultaneously avoiding worldly words and chatter:

2 Timothy 2:15-26: (NASB) ¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. ¹⁶But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, ¹⁷and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman rightly dividing the word of truth - this comes after the analogy of the farmer, as it takes patience, diligence and perseverance to rightly divide the word of truth.

Avoid worldly and empty chatter - the word of truth is sacred. It is not a lot of noise. Ungodly words spread like gangrene, a sign of dying and death. We should learn to fight the right fight by holding the word of truth as a sacred thing in our hands. Study to know it and better follow it.



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Stand for God in purity and the Lord God will recognize you as one of His:

¹⁹Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His, and, Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.

The Lord knows those who are His



- Be cautious to pass on the responsibility of the gospel
- Be ever-willing to suffer the hardships of a soldier
- Be accountable to the rules of godliness
- Work the works of faith with patience
- Hold the word of truth as sacred
- Stand for God in purity

These are ways we stand for God and do not fight against Him. The beautiful thing is, He knows who we are if this is how we are working our lives. It does not mean we have to be perfect; it means we have to be putting in the effort on an everyday basis.



What a powerful promise this is - *the Lord knows those who are His*. If He knows us, He protects us, loves us, guides us and gives us what we need.



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Be a sanctified vessel of honor by deliberately cleansing yourself from the works of dishonor:

²⁰Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor.

²¹Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

These verses use a physical picture with an interesting twist.

There are vessels in the house, like pots, pans and vases. The valuable ones are made of gold and silver. The less valuable, average ones are made of wood and earthenware.



The Apostle Paul is saying: *Cleanse yourself, and even if we are an earthen vessel, we can become a vessel of gold by answering the call and letting God's spirit work within us by fighting against the flesh and standing up for God.*

These are Paul's last important instructions to Timothy, as he senses his life is coming to an end. Be a sanctified vessel of honor! Deliberately cleanse yourself.



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Grow up to adulthood and be joined to those who are pure in heart:

²²Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Timothy is a relatively young man at this time. It is interesting that the final writings of the Apostle Paul are to a young Christian man with such great potential for faithfulness.

Who call on the Lord with a pure heart - constantly pursue righteousness.

Flee from youthful lusts - run away from things inappropriate and worldly things. Idols, for example, can be many things.

WHAT MIGHT BE AN "IDOL"

Possessions - Objects - Pictures - Symbols



ENHANCE EGO - UNDULY ELEVATE PEOPLE -

DEPICT SUCCESS, COMFORT, WEALTH, POWER OR SOCIAL POSITION



**Episode 1147 :
Do I Have Other Gods and
Idols in My Life?**

An idol demands our loyalty. It does not have to be a thing; it can be a person or even ourselves. We want to flee those things that take us away from the Father.

Practically applying the first two Commandments to Christians today



Learning to Fight the Right Fight - Be an example of Christian maturity in your patient, wise and gentle approach to disagreements so as to afford those in error a pathway back to righteousness:

²³But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. ²⁴The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

Paul was encouraging Timothy to be an example: Lead the brotherhood of Christ, and even if they are going astray, show them the way. LIVE the way so they cannot only hear you but can also watch you. Do it with gentleness, correcting those who are in opposition to bring them up and help them. This is fighting for God.

The Apostle Paul is leaving Timothy with an incredible group of admonitions to help him (and us) to always stand for that which is right.

God is working in us, and we therefore need to work His will:

Philippians 2:12-13: (NASB) *¹²...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

We have choices. We are broken and sinful, but we still have choices. We are naturally wired to fight against God. However, the good news is that if we apply ourselves using God's spirit, the Scriptures and the examples of those around us who are truly spiritual, we can learn to change. We can change our destiny by standing for that which is higher - not lower. When we are in a group, let's make sure that group is reaching up toward God through scriptural principle, not down to the lowest common denominator.

Look closely at ourselves. Look at our flaws and who we associate with. We must determine to have everything in our lives stand FOR God and not AGAINST God.

*So, am I fighting for or against God?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on November 22, 2021
Ep. 1205: How Can I Rejoice in Trials?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1204: Am I Fighting For or Against God?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1204-fighting-against-god/>

See:



1. Why did Jonah disobey God's command? What was his personal reason for this disobedience? What were the consequences? How can we relate this to ourselves and our Christian walk? (See Jonah 1:10-12,17)
2. Why did God rescue Jonah? How did he respond? What can we learn about *personal* battles with God from his example? (See Jonah 1:17, 2:7-9, 3:4-5, 4:1-3, Hebrews 13:20-21)
3. Why did the Israelites ask Samuel to anoint a king for them? What was their excuse for wanting a king? How was this request a rejection of God? (See 1 Samuel 8:1-9)
4. What warnings were given to Israel about receiving a king? Did they listen? How did the warnings about what the king would take from the Israelites parallel the arrangements God had made for the care of Israel? Can we apply their example to our lives today? (See 1 Samuel 8:12-20, Hebrews 13:15-17)
5. How can we unintentionally fight against God? What did Peter tell Jesus he would do? What was he lacking? (See Matthew 26:35, Luke 22:28-34, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, Galatians 2:11-14, 1 Peter 5:5-7)
6. What can we do to keep ourselves from fighting against our Heavenly Father without realizing it? What are the many different ways we can fight against God?
7. How can acting like a soldier, an athlete and a farmer help us understand how to fight for God? (See 2 Timothy 2:1-6)
8. What are some other practical things we can do to fight for God? Why is it important to fight for Him? (See Philippians 2:12-13, 2 Timothy 2:15-26)
9. Do you ever fight against God intentionally or unintentionally? If so, what will you do to correct your behavior?
10. What are some things you currently do to fight for God in your life? Have you been inspired to consider what else can you do to fight for Him?