

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 3, August, 1998

“Capturing Every Thought For Christ”

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II Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV) - For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

In Paul’s day most ancient cities such as Corinth had a fortress [stronghold] built on top of a hill for refuge against their enemies. Even though physical weapons were needed to pull down such strongholds, Paul taught the Corinthians that these were merely weapons of the world.

A different type of weapon, called SPIRITUAL WEAPONS would be needed to pull down and demolish the SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS of evil that exists in a Christian’s life. If you don’t know what evil strongholds exist in your life at present, here is a general guideline to follow; any thought, argument, motive, or action that does not line up with the WORD OF GOD, is a stronghold that needs to be removed. If YOU don’t remove that stronghold of opposition to God’s Word, then Satan will move into your life to tighten his grip, holding you captive at his will. (*II Timothy 2:26*)

To meet the forces of darkness as a conqueror, the spiritual weapon we must use is the “Sword of the Spirit” or the “Word of God.”

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Brothers and sisters, it doesn’t matter how tired you may be physically, if you have God’s Word alive and active in your heart, the “Sword of the Spirit” will be there for you in your time of need to expose the schemes of Satan’s attacks.

In April of 1991 I was in Knoxville, Tennessee with my husband, who was on a business trip. We

had just arrived at our hotel and we were both exhausted from a long trip (we had flown to Atlanta and drove to Knoxville). Within minutes of settling in for the evening, the phone rang. It was my sister, calling from the hospital where my mom had just been admitted with a medical emergency (heart failure).

Now, not only was I tired, but I felt the stress of my mother’s emergency. I felt tension building. To head off my “worry thoughts,” I decided to return home as soon as possible. Alan made arrangements with the airline and agreed to drive me to Atlanta first thing in the morning. Keyed up, sleep did not come easily. Finally, realizing that my energy was being used up with worry, I made the decision to roll my cares over to the Lord. Trusting God with my watch care, I fell asleep in peace and I woke up in peace. I was so thankful for his love and devotion.

During breakfast Alan and I discussed the trip, and once again my thoughts drifted onto the concerns of the day. Will my mom survive this latest ordeal? How long will she need to be in the hospital? Who will care for her when she is discharged from the hospital? All these questions were ones that had no concrete answers. I knew in my heart, God would help me with the answers when the time came, so I once again directed my thoughts towards Him for comfort.

After the long drive to Atlanta, I said good-bye to Alan and promised to call as soon as I heard anything. Hours later, after connecting flights and delays, my brother met me at the Denver airport. As we drove along, my thoughts were again becoming occupied with all the physical things I needed to do. My car had been left at the garage for repairs while I was away. Since my mother’s condition was somewhat stabilized, my brother and I decided it would be best if he took me straight to the garage, so I could get my car for driving back and forth to the hospital.

It was dark by then and as I was driving down the road, my thoughts were on God. I was aware of

His presence, because I knew He was providing me with the spiritual strength I needed, even though I was physically exhausted. Everything was going smoothly, so I thought it would be a good idea to go home, freshen up and get some needed rest before going to the hospital. Knowing that it would be late when I left the hospital, I decided to stop by the grocery store and buy some milk for breakfast the next morning.

As I pulled into the grocery store parking lot, suddenly, out of nowhere, Satan seized his opportunity to attack. Before I had a chance to get out of my car, another car came screeching into the space next to mine. A figure jumped out of the car, slammed the door, and was standing there banging on my window. Dumbfounded, I looked up to see an angry woman standing there yelling at the top of her lungs. I made my way out of the car so I would at least be standing face to face with her. Without me saying a word, she hurled accusations at me, one after another. She said I cut her off in traffic and she was going to call the cops! Every time I tried to speak she blasted another insult at me, "I know what I'm going to do, young lady, I'm going to take down your license number and I'll!!!"

Blocking out her angry words, my thoughts turned to those horror stories of people who get so mad, they pull out a gun and shoot someone. I wondered if this woman was that angry at me! I stood there speechless, as she turned and darted into the store, raging with anger.

My thoughts were frozen for a few seconds, as I got back into my car. Taking a deep breath, I said, "Lord, how in the world did I stumble into this Lion's Den?" The Lord remained silent. I said, "Well, Lord, here is what I'm going to do. I'm going to forget the milk, because I'm not about to go into the store with that "roaring lion." I'm tired and I just want to go home." That's when the Lord broke His silence by instructing me to be his child and do what a child of God must do. No matter how tired I was, I knew that I must pick up the "Sword of the Spirit" and go into spiritual battle. As I listened to the Lord, His Word (the double edged sword) revealed to me that I couldn't leave with that woman angry at me. He said, "Sharon, I want you to go in there and apologize to her." Reluctantly I said, "But, Lord, I don't know if I

actually did cut her off in traffic." He answered, "It doesn't matter if you did, or if you didn't. She "thinks" you did!

God knew the inner-most thoughts of this woman. All I needed to know was that I should apologize and bring peace to her. As I got out of the car, I took a deep breath and said, "Okay Lord, I'm going in there, and I know you're going in there with me." It didn't take long for me to find her. She had her shopping cart parked at the far corner of the store next to the dairy products. I walked up to her and boldly stood in front of her shopping cart. She was startled to see me standing there! I told her I was sorry if I cut her off in traffic. No sooner had I apologized, she started in again on me. Only this time she lowered her voice because there were people around. I tried to explain that I had been called home on a medical emergency. It didn't phase her.

As she stood there, I noticed she had one hand gripped on the handle of the shopping cart. The next thing I knew I reached out and put my hand on top of her hand. She looked down at my hand resting on her hand, and she got very quiet. I looked her straight in the eyes and I said, "Lady, I'm terribly sorry if I upset you with my driving. I didn't mean to cause you any trouble." The look on her face was priceless. The angered expression slowly left her face. Her voice softened as she cautioned me to be more careful next time. As I turned to leave the store, the Lord reminded me, "Don't forget your milk." Smiling, I thought, "Oh - the milk! Thank you, Lord."

II Corinthians 10:5 (NIV) - We demolish arguments and every pretension...and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Note: My mom recovered from that incident and at the writing of this lesson, is alive and an active part of my life.