

Three Battlefronts: Deception

by Scott Moreau

Scott Moreau's sermon explores the complexities of relational and truth deception within cultural contexts and their impact on human relationships.

Duration: 54:40

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:20-40, Matthew 5:44, John 8:32, Acts 7:60, Romans 12:21, Ephesians 6:12, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Deception"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of discipleship and the potential pitfalls of turning it into a business. They emphasize the need for discipleship to be a living, loving relationship rather than a transactional arrangement. The speaker also addresses the issue of relational deception and how it can distort our understanding of truth and our relationship with God. They encourage listeners to study and understand the cultural context in which people relate to God and to approach their relationship with God based on biblical teachings rather than cultural influences.

Transcript

As I had said, we will spend the rest of the time now looking at these two areas, relational deception and truth deception, Satan as a murderer and Satan as a liar. These will be found in every culture in the world because in every culture people engage in relationships. They have a strategy for engaging in relationships.

We spend a couple of weeks in the intercultural communication course talking about discipleship in light of friendship patterns in other cultures and in light of the idea of what it means to be engaged in a relationship with somebody. As I had mentioned in the first session this morning on worldview, the idea of scheduling discipleship turns it into a business that turns off people from collective third world cultural contexts because then it is just a business and they learn it as a business and discipleship becomes a business rather than a living, loving relationship. Now I'm dealing with relational deception here simply because I think it's what people feel the most.

I am not trying to say that truth deception is not as important. We are deceived in regard to truth and that leads to a foundation of broken relationships. At the same time when relationships are broken it distorts our image of the truth.

You just think of the person who says, well I'll give you an example. One young woman I was talking with says the person I trust the least is the one who raises his hands the highest and says amen the loudest because those are the Satanists. That was part of her worldview and in one sense because she had a broken context of relationships and a relational path of pain in regard to people like that, it led her to put all those people in the same basket and say those are probably the Satanists, I will stay away from those, in effect buying into the truth deception.

So you see we've got these two intertwined, we can't really pull them apart. For the purpose of analysis and discussion we have to pull them apart because I can't speak out of two sides of my mouth at the same time and still speak the truth. But in terms of understanding the intertwining we have to keep them together.

But in every culture people have ways of relating and I want to go more than that. I want to say they have successful ways of relating. How do I know? Because the cultures are still around.

If they didn't relate successfully they would have destroyed themselves by now. So when we look at the pattern of relationships and you're tempted to say why don't these people discipline their children? Don't they know the right way to raise their children? Recognize that within that culture there is a way to raise children to make them responsible adult members of that culture. But at the same time Satan will have as best as he is able embedded strategies for relational breakdowns.

Many of them follow the biblical pattern. You hurt somebody and they have to deal with it. Well how many ways can we hurt somebody? Well each of us can probably list a couple hundred and not just theoretical but out of our own life history and experience of ways we have been hurt and ways maybe we have hurt others as well too.

Now I will look on one side at the relational deception on the personal level. This is not in your notes and it would be a point right above relationships with people. This is the personal level and then we also have to deal, we're not going to deal with it, I want to touch on it, the structural level.

Because structures are composed of people relating. Now they might have written rules and regulations by which they are to conduct themselves in structures and when I'm talking structures I'm talking the systemic side, the fourth level of spiritual warfare. Just to make sure I'm clear on that, by systemic I'm talking society wide.

I'm not talking something limited to an individual locality but society wide, a systemic framework which is typically a domineering framework, a way of gaining control of people, a way of depersonalizing them, a way of dehumanizing them, a way of denying the fact that we as creatures are made in the image of God. And one of the most exciting things to me about heaven is it will be a structural, systemic place where my humanity as being made in the image of God will most beautifully be able to be fruitful, as yours will. And my being fruitful will not interfere with your being fruitful, it will melt together with your being fruitful.

And together the fruitfulness in terms of praise of God is something that will go on through all eternity. We won't have to deal with the systemic world that we face now that dehumanizes us and depersonalizes who we are. Alright, now on the personal level, relationships with people.

First of all let me say don't give Satan too much credit. He takes advantage of our sin to bring breaches or build inappropriate dependencies but he's not responsible for every bad relationship everywhere on the

planet. Why? Because that gives us the idea the devil made me do it.

I guess the framework I have for understanding that is Satan can only make us do what we let him make us do. When we give ground to him he gains power in our lives. And that's why we talk about steps to bondage not just steps to freedom.

Bondage is typically not a snap issue, it's more like going down a set of stairs. And steps to freedom is walking back up those set of stairs. But that's one of the reasons people in bondage to habitual sin don't find release just from confession.

Confession helps them, it deals with the individual sin but it doesn't break the bondage, it doesn't break the practice that's there. That needs a different level of help. Alright, now again relationships with people.

The assumption that we have is that God has set us free through Jesus to live in loving relationships with others no matter what they do to us. That's a toughie. God has set us free to live in loving relationships with others no matter what they do to us.

And the example is Jesus on the cross fulfilled in Stephen before his martyrdom in Acts chapter 7. Father forgive them for they don't know what they're doing. Three areas in American fashion they all start with S and there are three of them, a holy triangle so we know this must be biblical, right? First I will start with significance. It took me hours to come up with three S's.

And S of course is sin so you really, there's not much more you can do for alliteration on this. I wanted to get double alliteration but I thought that's going a little bit overboard. Significance.

Every human being is significant because he or she is made in the image of God. Now all of us have an inbuilt desire being made in God's image to experience that significance. It is a God-given desire.

We all want to experience significance and typically the place where we want that significance to be experienced is in the eyes of others who are significant to us. Think of the family setting. How many children are dying to be accepted by their daddies? Wishing their dad, I stand here saying this and it's reminding me when I get back I've got to make sure I spend some extra time with my kids.

Reminding them that I care for them and I don't care what they do in life. I will love them because they're a part of me. I want them to sense their significance.

Now one of the questions we need to be willing to ask and you'll note I've given a couple of examples up here. The significance side, I cannot forgive, is a lie that sometimes is tossed at the cultures and you can fill in the dot, dot, dot with because dot, dot, dot. Sometimes it's I don't even know I'm supposed to forgive.

There's an ignorance that's there. Other times it's the pain is too great. You don't know what they've done to me.

And I typically say you're right. I don't. But Jesus does.

And he went with that to the cross. And he's not asking you to do anything that he hasn't done himself. He's already done it.

Can you walk that path with him? Will you let him carry you on that path and be willing to deal with this issue of significance? Another thing that I see in the North American context on a regular basis, nobody

cares. Nobody cares. As an individualistic culture, part of the early training we give our children is that it is up to the individual to find people with whom they can relate.

Your children have to find their own friends. Collective cultures, people are born into relationships beyond just the nuclear family or even the occasional extended family. And so they already have, when they come into the world, a grid of relationships in which they exist.

It's not a significant strategy for them to learn how to find new friends. But we inculturate our children very early that it is up to them to find new friends and here's how you do it. We don't talk about it that way.

But we teach them to behave politely with each other. We teach them how to talk appropriately. We teach them how to share.

By the way, do you want to know the first word American children are known for in many African contexts? Mine. Mine. M-I-N-E.

That's mine. Because of course we train our children and again, a wonderful way to see your culture is watch how you train your children very early. They get their own individual toys on Christmas of course.

And Lauren, the oldest, if you want to play with Anna's toys, you have to get Anna's permission. Now again, this is not evil. This is not wrong.

This is our cultural approach to respecting the individual. But what that means is it's up to the individual to find his or her own circle of friends. Those who fail to do that are failures in our culture and society.

And I find a lot of people who are living the idea that no one cares about me because they've been failures socially. And they have a hard time relating with others and they feel the pain of that failure every day of their life. And they don't know how to deal with it.

I would suggest that in different cultures, and one of the reasons I left these blank on your handouts was because number one, you wouldn't have been able to read the writing if I had put it in to begin with. But number two, every culture is going to have its own darts that are thrown at this area that people are building up their ideas of themselves on and their significance on. For the African, the worst punishment, and traditionally this was handed out in the case of witchcraft or sorcery, depending on the strength, especially witchcraft, was death.

Among the Kikuyu, the way a person was killed, however, was they were put on a pile of dried banana leaves and they were burned to death. One of the relatives had to light the fire. By saying that, they were dissociating themselves from the person in the witchcraft.

Other African peoples disbanded people from the tribe. And people who could live off the land for years with no problem, lost their reason to live. Instead of saying, I think, therefore I am, many Africans have noted the proverb there should be, we relate, therefore we exist.

So the significance there certainly is seen in terms of relationships. What do you think happens when you bring that type of relational structure into an urban setting? You get a lot of lonely people. And this is why in Kenya, you often heard people talking about their house in the city and their home upcountry.

Home is where the heart is. The second area that we can touch on is the area of security. We all desire basic security in life.

In one sense, the future is uncertain. We don't know what it will bring. There is a cultural value that can be called uncertainty avoidance that shows up in cultures.

Some have a strict need to have rules and regulations. And if you want the example of that, the German culture is typically portrayed as an example of having rules and regulations to help determine life. And everything must fit according to the clock.

We talk about light clockwork, don't we? And the Swiss culture follows some of that same framework. Other cultures are more relaxed in how they approach life and not having the rules is not as significant. As a matter of fact, if you give them rules, you will stifle them.

But all cultures have needs of security because cultures are made up of people who have security needs. We are to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these will be added to you. Jesus did not say security issues were unimportant.

He did say the right focus in finding how our security needs will be met was the issue. But he didn't deny the reality of security issues. Where do I see this taking us? We don't want to step down.

One of the areas I see this is in the relative paucity of examples we have of missionaries who have, instead of when they find a national who can replace them, stepping down underneath the national, typically either go to the side, go to a new field, or go above the national with a new office that has been created so that the power remains there. I had a wonderful example at my school of an American missionary who was the principal of the school when I was there. He was calling himself at that point in time the acting principal, not because he was an actor but simply because that was his framework.

I'll serve as God leads, but I'd be happy just to be a teacher and not to have this responsibility. Well, we got our African principal who was in the States doing doctoral studies. He came back, and so the current principal, who was then acting, was able to drop his title.

But our new principal didn't feel comfortable with that, so he said, well, we need an academic dean, so why don't you be the academic dean? He said, okay, if you want me to serve in that position, I will. So he served as the academic dean. Within a year, he was calling himself the acting academic dean because there was somebody else doing doctoral studies in another area in the States that would fit in there.

So he came back, and he was able to move out of that position, but our principal didn't feel comfortable with him not having a title, so he said, now we need a vice principal. So you're now the vice principal. And when I, when the Lord called us to return back to the States, he was calling himself the acting vice principal.

But this was a man who said, I just want to serve where God puts me. You know, I found a lot of missionaries say that as a pious platitude, but then they say, and here's how God wants me to serve, rather than allowing locals in the context to determine where God wants them to serve. Maybe in consultation with them, but demanding, I'm just here to serve you, and we had a speaker come around doing this.

A husband and wife team came to Kenya to speak on the university campus, and the husband was the one who was going to do the speaking, and when the wife came, she said, is there anything I can do? I just want to serve you here. And they said, we just want you at this point in time to relax, and we'll have your husband speak, and we want you to take it easy. She wasn't happy with that.

So in the meantime, while her husband was speaking, she started organizing prayer groups, started talking on issues of spiritual warfare, which was not the theme of what the husband was talking on, and raised up such a ruckus that people didn't know what was happening with this couple that had come here. She just wanted to serve. Who was she serving? Her own needs.

And when we're looking at issues of security, it's a question we have to be willing to ask ourselves. Am I holding power lightly? Am I operating under the power of love or the love of power? Is that how I'm seeking to minister in this context? We also have, especially in the North American setting, this I want, and you can fill in the blank after that. I want whatever it happens to be.

My personal passion is computer equipment, and I could give you a regular list of all the things that I want in regard to computers. You've already heard me talking about the lottery. And of course, you realize if I'd won the lottery, what kind of a computer could I have bought then? But that's one that will do even better pictures than these, right? But this is the framework out of which sometimes we operate.

I want, rather than saying, I want a relationship with the Lord that is founded on His word and my own identity in Christ, we say, I want this and this and this, thinking of them as a means of achieving security. If I could only get this. Or just, you know, and that's the problem with things like money.

How much is enough? Just a little more. It's always just a little more. We have to realize what we're dealing with in the arena of security, is an appetite.

Appetites may be satiated for a season, but they don't ever completely die off. Another metaphor to think of it is like taking a shower. Once you take a shower, you have not conquered dirt for all time.

You will have to take a shower again, or a bath, whichever you prefer. But that's the problem with appetites. We may conquer them at this point in time, but that doesn't mean they won't come back to haunt us.

Ron Dunn says the worst thing about a living sacrifice is it keeps climbing off the altar. And that's one of the things we have to recognize. I can climb off the altar.

The point here is not to think I've made a choice for all time and I'll never be bothered with security issues again. No, the point is I've made a choice at this point in time in my life that this security issue is something I'm going to give to the Lord, but it might come back to me again tomorrow that I have to remake that choice, because I might start moving in the wrong direction. And part of the disciplined Christian life is recognizing that we continually face a series of choices in all three of these areas.

But the question we have to ask is when I look at the culture, what are the arrows, the flaming darts, so to speak, that are coming into the culture that Satan is tossing there in regard to security? We do case studies on a regular basis in our program of not just failures, sometimes successes, but it seems that every time we look at a failure in regard to the missionary investment and what's happening in a different culture, one of these three things comes up. The sexual relations, the significance, or the security. And the sexual relations is the third thing we will take.

Sexual intimacy is integrally related and connected to who we are as physical creatures. This side of glory, it is a part of who we are. It's a wonderful and a glorious thing that God has given to us to be used for His glory and His honor within the confines that He has set.

And the desires that we have sexually are not evil in and of themselves, it's how we handle them that becomes the issue for us. And all too often people will move in the direction of, in this culture again, as long as I'm in love. I was talking with somebody just last week that was brought into my office by another person who said, this person needs help in spiritual warfare.

Can you just walk them through steps to freedom? I said, well, let me talk with them first. Because whenever somebody brings somebody else in, you have to note that you might have the person's will of the one who brought them rather than the one who came. And I was especially dubious when she said, well, and I bribed her to come.

I thought, well, now this would be an interesting session. But we talked for about an hour and a half over basic issues related to commitment to Christ. And this person basically was at a phase of their life when they were interested in exploring things sexually.

And they said, well, how can I get married to somebody unless I know what they're like? And sometimes there are guys I just can't say no to. Well, she wasn't ready to walk through steps to freedom at that point in time until she was ready to focus on what stage do I say God has control of all of it. Then with that as a foundation, we would be able to walk through steps to freedom.

And that's what I left her with. I said, when you're willing to give a hundred percent to God, then come back and let's talk. And these steps will be of importance to you.

But right now, I can't lead you through dealing with the occult in your life when you've got this huge issue looming on the horizon that you're enjoying right now and that you're not willing to. And I didn't fight with her as to whether she was enjoying it. That's not the issue.

The issue is whether she was willing to come to the stage to recognize that she was walking in disobedience. Let's face it. The reality is while sin is evil and sin is wrong, sin can be fun.

Let's not play games with that. And sometimes people want to choose the fun thing and they make the wrong choice in doing that. I was going to a church one day to talk about forgiveness.

And as I was at the intersection, it was a four lane road. I had a red light and guys were coming from the other direction. Their light changed red and my light changed green.

And just as my light changed green and I started driving, some guy came and made a right turn on red, but he didn't even slow down. I mean, he just whipped around the corner. Now, of course, being a spiritual giant as I am, I instantly thought I need to pray for his salvation.

No, no, I was angry because he not only came over, he whipped into my lane and cut me off. So I, of course, knew what's the right thing to do? What's the Christian response? Well, you get into the other lane and you pass him and then you get in front of him and then you slow down. Right? Right? Amen.

Yes, I hear the amen. In doing that, God reminded me, you made a choice, Moreau. Bad choice.

But it felt good to do it. Bad choice. So sometimes people in the initial stages of sin are tapped into and trapped into the fun side of it.

It feels good to show. Well, as a matter of fact, it was a funny thing. It didn't work out that way.

I got to the side of him and my car wasn't fast enough. He saw what I was doing and there was a truck coming up in his lane and I knew if I got fast enough, I could get beside the truck and trap him. But he was faster than I was and I realized if I keep going like this, he and I are going to run into each other.

All right, let's stop being stupid. So I backed off and slowed down. Of course, it's when you're going to talk on forgiveness that things like that happen, isn't it? You know, it gave me a wonderful illustration of my own humanity in coming to the church.

But it was in that sense, I'm just saying it was fun to do. So let's acknowledge that. But sometimes we have to choose to stay away from the fun because the fun is evil.

And Satan will wrap it and package it and spray it with dye so it looks fresh and entice us. And that initial taste might be good, but it turns sour in our stomach. Sexual intimacy.

Typically, inappropriate sexual relations don't result solely because of lust. I find more often than not, there are security and significant issues that are intertwined with it. Rarely do I see someone having an affair just because they said, oh, there's a good looking woman, let me go get her.

No. It's typically insecurity coming either as a single or as a married person who's having maybe some struggles with intimacy in his or her own marriage at that point in time. Or maybe find somebody that they respond to and they've had a dead response to their husband for years.

And that starts the possibility of finding someone that they feel they can have a relationship with, not being aware of the dangers. This is a dangerous area. And one of the things that we need to watch in terms of the sexual relations is the lie that says, I will never.

Some of the best people fall with the idea that I will never. Let's be more real and say the possibility exists that I will. God, by your grace, I will choose to make the right decision not to.

But I'm not going to fall for the lie that I will never, because it can happen to me. In what areas does the culture tie into sexual relations? I had a young man that I had been discipling for close to two years. We were in a Bible study together, good friendship, really enjoyed the time.

And he got engaged. And it was an exciting time for us to walk through a little bit of issues related to marriage and so on. And then later, the wedding came.

We went to the wedding. It was a delightful time. And five months after the wedding, we got a call from the new wife saying, I'm pregnant.

And those of you who have been in Africa, if you don't get pregnant in the first year, there's something wrong. And so we were delighted with the fact that she was pregnant. We were about to go on furlough.

And she said, and I'm due in two weeks. And I said, five months from the wedding and two weeks before she's due, something doesn't add up right. Well, we didn't find out what happened until later.

They had in their cultural parameters for the people of their tribe, you don't marry somebody who's not pregnant. You want a fertile garden. And you want to know that it's fertile.

Now, they did not want to give into that. But as a couple, they went up to visit his mother at her upcountry home. She's a Christian, by the way.

And she said to them, here is your bed for tonight. Here's where the two of you will sleep. And I want to see her pregnant the day of the wedding.

He didn't know how to talk to me about that. He kept it hidden from me because he was afraid of what my reaction would be. He was scared.

It was a hidden thing. But when she was due five months later, you can't hide it anymore. And that's one of the issues that we see in the arena of sexual relations.

Often, cultures will have dynamics that will be important. One of the areas I see in Kenya at times is people have a fascination with having to have a church wedding. Now, church weddings in Kenya are expensive.

You really have to put out the spread. And typically, it's only an older couple that can even afford a church wedding. So you find a lot of people who get married traditionally, but somehow think they're not really married.

And one of the things we had to work with our students on is, is a traditional wedding still a marriage in the eyes of God? And to get them to see that it was still a marriage in the eyes of God. And that our image of what a church wedding had to be was built on a Western cultural dynamic. Bridesmaids.

You know where we got our bridesmaids from? It comes out of our pre-German ancestors. And the idea used to be that there was a problem with the evil eye. And virgin brides on their wedding night were particularly susceptible to the evil eye.

And so how do you dissipate the power? You send a bunch of virgins before the bride, and if there's any evil eye in the congregation, the power will be dissipated on the virgin bridesmaids as they walk forward. And that's why the bridesmaids go forward one of the time when the groomsmen are already up. Nobody cares about the groom.

But see, that's something that came out of our animistic heritage that we have borrowed as a culture without realizing the implications of it. I'm not advocating, by the way, get rid of bridesmaids at wedding. But be aware that when we choose to use bridesmaids, obviously that's not part of the process.

But we want to honor and glorify God through it. But cultures take forms for wrong reasons and can turn them into things that can be appropriate. Is it evil to have bridesmaids at weddings? No.

Is it giving in to Satanism? No. It's a cultural form that we've lost the meaning of. And again, that's also why the bridesmaids have to walk slowly up the aisle so more of the power can be dissipated on them.

I do, I can confess yesterday, I was married in Kenya. And just so you know, I got married knowing this was the framework. And my wife and I still had bridesmaids because people would have thought it wasn't a wedding without them.

But we, and she had friends that she wanted to be involved in the wedding. And that was really the dynamics of what it is in the North American culture today. But what are these areas that are being attacked within the culture? And our task, as I see it, is to accept God's loving healing of our own hurts caused by other people.

We are to seek to live as Christ's ambassadors by being relational healers. Now I've talked about forgiveness. To deal with it, we really need a good hour and a half to two hours to walk through the theology, the dynamics.

If you want a good book written out of the psychological perspective, Stoops and Mastellers, *Forgiving Our Parents, Forgiving Ourselves* is a good book. But it's not one you're going to sit down and read at one time. It's a book for people who are hurting because of their relationships.

Stoops, S-T-O-O-P-E-S and Mastellers, M-A-S-T-E-L-L-E-R, *Forgiving Our Parents, Forgiving Ourselves*. It's out of Minnerth Mayor Clinic. It talks not just about forgiving our parents, but the relationships within a family and how they often are formed and where the pain comes in, how we can deal with it, what it means to be reconciled, what some of the issues might be of reconciliation and things you have to think through for it.

But buy this book as a book that becomes a project for you, not as a book that is just a one-week read, because you'll need time to process the issues that are there and that are involved with that. Alright, now, secondly, in terms of the personal relationships, our relationships with God, I don't have a diagram for this one. How many ways is this distorted? As many ways as there are people, let alone cultures.

We seek God because He has created us to do so, but many twist that around, and that's perverted not just outside of the North American context, but inside the North American context as well, too. We'll find as many lies here as we do overseas. So, let's be aware that when we look at our relationship with God, typically we're coming at it with a cultural foundation, and the idea that we need to follow is what does the scriptures teach? How can I come to understand Him better? How can I build and develop a relationship built on scriptural dynamics, but that take into account the fact that I'm a cultural creature? Does God know you're a cultural creature? Absolutely.

Does it demand of you to become super-cultural before you can worship Him? Absolutely not. God can be worshipped in any culture in the world, and we can facilitate that. We don't have to demand conformity to our image of what it must be like to worship Him.

We can allow a culture to express that worship pattern in its own sense. It's been one of the interesting things to see as one of the dynamics that have come in the evangelical church as a result of the charismatic movement is more emotions in the worship service, more use of choruses in combination with hymns, and it's been a delightful thing to see people have the freedom, even in evangelical churches, at times to start raising their hands a little bit. Just not too much, right? The assumption, we must accept Christ's sacrifice on our behalf as the uniquely necessary and sufficient way to restore people's relationships with God.

Now, this is the traditional areas that missionaries deal with. They look at how the culture understands maybe what sacrifice means, their image of God. These are the areas that I'm not going to spend a lot of time on because these are the ones that missionaries have been very well trained to deal with.

I don't think missionaries have been as well trained to deal with the sexual relations, the significance, and the security issues. And I don't think missionaries have been as well trained to deal with some of the knowledge deception issues that we will bring up. But simply to note Christ's significance, what is the cultural concept of sacrifice? Does the culture have traditions of God's coming in human form? That's why Jesus fits as an avatar so well within Hinduism.

He's just one of the ten appearances of Vishnu. We've got plenty of room for Jesus. You've got a pantheon of 330 million gods.

What difference does it make if we add one more? Well, that's a dynamic, of course, we have to understand when a Hindu says, yes, I accept Jesus. What do they mean by that? The same thing some Americans mean when they say, yes, I'm born again, and they're talking about a reincarnation experience as opposed to coming to Christ. That's why some of the early polls were so skewed in terms of the numbers because they didn't distinguish what it meant to be born again.

God's desire, does the culture understand God as personal? Is the idea of a relationship with God frightening? The higher or larger the power distance of the culture, the more the idea of a personal relationship with God will be frightening to the adherent of the culture. This is an area where we need to facilitate indigenous transformation of the cultural ideas because God does call us to a relationship, though He is high and mighty. At the same time, we as Americans sometimes need to regain our sense of awe and fear at the holiness of God because He's become too much of a buddy-buddy.

We are so much into the small power distance that we neglect the fact that He is high, and He is awesome. He is in heaven. He does whatever pleases Him.

Is God conceived as distant, far away, and approachable only through mediators? Does He care about the daily needs of life? When I first became a Christian, my basic attitude, and this is how I patterned my prayer life, was this, I can take care of the small things, and God will deal with the big things. What does that say about my worldview? That God doesn't want to be bothered with the little things of my life. If it's important, then I can bring it to Him.

Satan's eventual goal would be to get me to see that nothing is important to God. Or the other extreme, that everything is important, and I dare not put my socks on in the morning without asking God which one should I put on first. I mean, both are extremes that are inappropriate.

Our task is to cultivate our own relationship with God on the basis of His word, fellowship, and worship with like-minded believers. We are to seek to live, not to life, but seek to live as Christ's ambassadors by lovingly and gently imploring others to move into a relationship with God. This is why Paul said, we are to gently oppose.

Are we gentle with our apologetic method, or do we just enjoy bashing people? You know what happens when we bash people? We become that which we hate. How dare we do that? Sometimes we bash people because we are insecure. We're afraid of being thought of as wrong.

We are afraid maybe that we just might be wrong, and the louder I yell, the more right I am. Though that's not a conscious modus operandi, it becomes the way in which we really live. Are you real aggressive in confronting non-Christians? What kind of impression does that leave? There are times when aggression is needed.

Elijah was not gentle with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, but there are also times when love is needed. Gentle, firm, insistent love that says, this is what I perceive to be truth without demanding submission on the part of the other person to me rather than to the God who created that person. We should study the culture's understanding of God and how people relate with Him.

Don't just study it on the doctrinal level. Don't miss the doctrinal level, but study it at the level of the toothpaste tube, as I mentioned earlier. When their tube is squeezed, what view of God comes out? When they're in the pain of life or when they're trying to achieve success in life, what view of God do you see? How can we address that view? What can we learn about ourselves as well when our tubes are squeezed? As I mentioned, point number two before we reach knowledge deception is just the structural level.

How are we to participate in human structures? There is a symbiotic relationship between structures, in effect, and the demonic. This is where people like Walter Wink go wrong in saying that the demonic in structure is just the interiority of those structures. I'm not sure if you're familiar with him.

A very celebrated trilogy, Naming the Powers, Facing the Powers, and Engaging the Powers. He has done more work on dealing with systemic side of spiritual warfare than anyone else, coming out of a liberal framework, so you understand that's where he's coming from. But he has denied the reality of the demonic, and he's missing the joker in the deck.

That means that his view is always going to be truncated. At the same time, however, we need to note that there is an inherent framework when human beings get together. We move in the direction, unfortunately, of sin, especially human beings apart from Christ.

If you want the illustration of that, the Tower of Babel fits. Why did God split them apart? In effect, there was nothing they couldn't accomplish. Most theologians note that the nothing involves sin as well, too.

Imagine a unified world government. It's frightening, isn't it? I'll leave the eschatological discussion out of that, but that's one of the instances we see in Babylon. Okay, now we'll move into knowledge deception with the time that we have left.

Satan attacks our understanding of truth. This is one of the reasons I had mentioned earlier that I am extremely cautious with testimonies of those who come out of satanic abuse, not because I don't think they're telling the truth as they see it, but because I don't think they've been given the truth. And when I hear people say, all rock music is satanic and it's all evil, I say, time out.

Who told you that? Did that come from the Word of God? Or did that come from someone who was involved in Satanism and starts naming names of Christian rock artists who they know are involved in satanic rituals and so on? I say, let's be careful with this evidence and how we use that evidence, especially in the public arena. Secondly, Satan does not always give direct contradictions immediately. He morphs the truth as we noted through our earlier diagram.

And thirdly, the distortion of truth or manifold things don't always start out as an overt lie, but become so over time and with continued distortion. Okay, what is the assumption? God's Word is normally the truth for all people of all cultures at all times, because God created us. And He revealed what we need to know in His Word about Himself and about us.

So, it will apply universally. The first thing that I see, and certainly this has been dealt with very well by Neil Anderson, who is God? What does Satan ask Eve? Has God really said that? Did He really say, you're going to die? What's the implication? What kind of a jerk would say that? So, the implication is, is God really like that? Man, let me tell you the truth. He just doesn't want you to become like Him.

Who is God? It's one of the dynamics that we'll find in cultures. One of the things I see in the lives, and I'm sorry if you can't see this, but I'll read it for you. God is a cosmic sadist.

Any of you men, when you were little boys, play a game I used to play, and that's stomping ants on the sidewalk? Now, I don't know if that was nervous laughter or if that was laughter of fond memories brought to mind. Right. You know, you would be waiting, and if ants came out on the sidewalk, you'd stomp on them.

Any ant that got out of line, in other words, that got out of the grass and onto the sidewalk, became a victim. Sometimes people have that image of God. He's just waiting with the stick raised, and as soon as I step out of line, whap, He loves nothing more than to nail me with it.

Truth, in our culture, we see two extremes. There is no truth or everything is truth. And people, in our culture, it ranges from I am a God to I am a product of chance.

Or to I am worthless. God could never use me. There's no way He wants to use me.

I have this in my background. I'm dirty. I'm tainted.

I'm unclean. You find all these pictures that people carry around with them. That's who am I. To be like God, all people sharing the image of God, those without Christ, those sharing the image of God are dead in their sins and essentially powerless against Satan's overall control of their lives, though they can choose to say no to individual sins.

They have no control over the overall power. But that's the reason we have non-believers who can do acts of civil righteousness. You notice I use the word civil there.

They can do great humanitarian deeds, because being made in the image of God, they retain the capacity to choose to do right things, though the overall direction of their lives they do not have control over, until the time comes when they are faced with the possibility of choosing Christ. And that might be over a long haul. That might be when they first come to know the gospel.

And then for years thereafter, they'll be held responsible for that before the Lord. Okay, now, the last, well, what is truth? Again, our culture says there's no absolute truth except in scientific areas. The Bible, however, is God's revealed truth to us, not just relational truth, but truth for all we need in all areas of life, though the Bible is not to be used as a scientific textbook.

Our task is to know the truth. We are to exegete the culture to see where truth resides in the form of general revelation. I want to celebrate truth that I find in other religions without saying other religions are paths to truth.

And I want to use those as bridges. It's an interesting thing. When translators came into Africa, they had a hard time sometimes deciding which word to use for God.

And sometimes they made a bad choice. But there were typically plenty of words that would be available for God. And BT reports that there's, well, I have yet to see solid evidence of an African people that did not have the idea of a creator God.

Now, there was baggage associated with that. But interestingly enough, when you look at the translations of African languages for Satan, you don't see indigenous terms there. E-Satan, Shetani, other terms like

this.

It's an imported term. Satan didn't allow himself to be revealed, though God did allow himself to be seen in a dim sense. Now, I don't want to get into the issues of whether Allah is to be seen as the same as God and so on.

If you want to do that, come take some courses at the college I teach at and we can wrestle through some of those issues together. But the idea here is that we are to know the truth, to see where general revelation is there, and to use that as a bridge to bringing full revelation, specific revelation from God, special revelation in the form of scriptural truth. All right, now, engaging the enemy.

Aspects for spiritual warfare. On the positive side, we focus our attention on the unchallenged sovereignty of God in all of earthly and heavenly affairs and we recognize our human responsibility to live the Christian life as God intends it to be lived. On the negative side, we avoid becoming that which we oppose.

Using bitter anger to fight Satan somehow seems to be a self-defeating purpose. And sometimes the people who are most anxious to get in and duke it out with Satan are those that I'm the most worried about, because they're going within agenda. Without wanting to carry this too far, and please understand how I'm using the terminology here, do you think God hates Satan? He hates all that Satan does, but Satan is a creature.

He's part of God's created order. Does God love? Yes. Now, I said I want to be careful with the terminology here, not love in the American sense of the word.

This is a tough love that gives no quarter, a love that is sovereignly in control. But in one sense, we are called to battle Satan out of God's framework, not out of Satan's framework. When we use hate to fight hatred, we're becoming that which we oppose.

It's one of the reasons violent revolution breeds violent revolution and is rarely successful in the long run. So some kingdom weapons and or ethics. I'm going to give you two frameworks.

First is truth, then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. What are some of the lies we see about God and about self? God is a cosmic killjoy, as I've noted. God is just like my father.

God could never use me. How many times have I heard people say that when they hear I'm a missionary? Oh, I wish I could be that. That must take a lot of courage and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

But all implying God could never use me in that way. A false view of God. The prime example of God could never use me in that way is Moses in his own demand that Aaron come and be a spokesperson.

God does not really want me. This is one Satan really wants to give to us. Children who are the products of broken marriages, who feel like they're either ping pong balls or pieces of luggage traveling back and forth, never really feeling wanted, always struggle with this issue.

The truth is God loves them more than they even know. And sometimes just for me to look them straight in the eye and say that God loves you and I love you too, they break down and weep because they have never seen that and never sensed that. God is distant and unconcerned or God enjoys punishing people.

That's one of the views I find in our American cultural context, not always as much in the church. In the more legalistic sides of churches, yes, that can be there, but I find it in the general culture. I don't want to

serve a God that just wants to beat people with a stick.

How can I serve a God who sends people to hell? It's the idea that he can't wait to send people to hell, rather than the agony he has over people choosing hell. Self, I am a worm, good old worm theology, or I am what I do. And if I do well, then I am well.

If I do poorly, then I am poorly. I am the center of the universe. I could never dot, dot, dot.

I hate myself. I found this to be one of the most insidious lies because people who hate themselves, most often they hate characteristics about themselves. I hate the way I look.

Well, wait a second, you don't hate yourself. Let's get this straight because if you hated yourself, you would be happy that you don't like the way you look. You catch the logic in that? When you hate someone, don't you enjoy seeing them suffer, if you really hate them? When you love somebody, do you enjoy seeing them suffer? Most people who express self-hatred are expressing a genuine hatred over things about themselves, but it's because they love themselves so much that they hate those things that they see.

And I cannot stop. There are times when we are in bondage so deep that we don't know how to stop, and we need some help in that. But the truth is not I cannot stop.

Okay, next, don't be overcome by evil. Take the offensive and overcome evil with good. This needs to be our theme verse for spiritual warfare.

Don't be overcome by evil. This is the Phillips translation. Take the offensive and overcome evil with good.

Towards death, Satan wants to move us towards bitterness, anger, and hatred. I put all those three together, not because anger in and of itself is sin, but anger that is founded and builds and leads to bitterness and hatred is anger that is turned into sin. From the Ephesians 4 passage, forgiveness is how we move towards life.

Lies is how we move towards death, and truth is how we move towards life. Truth to hurt is a way we move towards death. I had a young lady, when I was in seminary, who was interested in me in a relationship, and I was interested in a friendship.

And it just wouldn't work out, and that was painful for her. And the last night before I left, she and I were having dinner together, talking through some things, and she said, do you know what other people think about you? And I said, no, I don't. She said, they think you're conceited.

And she said, but I know you're not. And I said, no, I am. I mean, I recognize the reality that's there.

I talk about myself a lot. I focus on myself inappropriately and so on. But see, what she was doing there was using truth to hurt.

She was reacting out of her pain to try and get me to be hurting, because she wanted me to hurt with her. She wasn't thinking that would tie together. And she apologized to me about it later, and became a supporter of me when I was overseas.

I mean, we maintained the relationship, but that was truth to hurt. And sometimes we use truth that way. Sometimes when we've been hurt by others, and we want to tell them what we've had to forgive them for,

we're doing it as a means of gaining revenge.

Isolation is towards death and fellowship. Isolation, especially in the North American context of the individuals in that we talked about. Rebellion, you know what? Submission has become almost a dirty word in our culture.

But mutual submission is what God calls us to. Pride, the American way, versus humility. I'm going to leave it there and say we need to be able to begin focusing on how is Satan moving in a culture towards death, and how can we, by the grace of God, creatively in tune with the Scriptures, begin moving that culture towards life.

What are ways we can take the strategies of Satan, turn them upside down through kingdom living, and not just kingdom talking? Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the opportunity to discuss these issues. And I realize we have been short on application.

And I pray that you would enable those here to begin to see how this could be used in their context to achieve your greater glory. And that as a result, people would come to know you, would be able to love you freely, both in light of who you are, and in light of who they are. And that as a result, captives would be set free in a wonderful and marvelous way.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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