

STEP OF EPHRAIM

WEEK 13

EPHRAIM - אפרים

“Doubly Fruitful”

THE WEAKNESS WE ARE STRENGTHENING

Many Christians are vulnerable to spiritual attack due to ongoing unrepentant sin. Yet, spiritual warfare has grown so strong that even faithful believers can find themselves under serious assault unless others are praying for them too.

FOCUS

Establishing a Personal Prayer Team

KEY VERSE

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”
(Matthew 18:20)

KEY POINTS

- Spiritual warfare is REAL and on the increase.
- Disobedience to God empowers the enemy’s forces.
- A righteous person’s prayers add fuel to the armies of God.
- Obedience, faith, persistence, and fasting can make a believer’s prayer more powerful, but we can be even more effective if we pray in numbers.
- Develop a prayer team – Invite other Christians to join you and pray for each other on a daily basis.

The Step of Ephraim is about establishing a personal prayer team.

ICE BREAKER

How did it go this last week with the homework? Did anyone have a breakthrough regarding forgiveness after doing the exercise?

GROUP DISCUSSION

This step on the Path2Strength is about understanding spiritual warfare and beginning to understand how to fight against it and be protected from it.

1.) *Have you ever had a time when many things in your life were going wrong at the same time? Did you then consider you might be under spiritual attack? Why did you feel that way?*

First, we need to understand what exactly spiritual warfare is. It's obviously a mystery in many ways to all of us as none of us can see into the spiritual realm and understand what is happening.

Yet, the Bible gives us some hints, some insight into what is going on. Let's read together a few of those passages:

2.) READ *the following passages:*

Job 1:6-7 – *“Now there was a day when the sons of God [angels] came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.”*

Revelation 12:7-9 – *“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So, the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him..”*

[NOTE: The war in Heaven is ongoing right now. Revelation 12 is describing a future moment when the enemy and his angels will be defeated and thrown down to earth. None of them are cast into hell until after the 2nd Coming of Jesus.]

Daniel 10:2-14 – *“In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.*

Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz!

His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet, I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands. And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

[NOTE: Many scholars believe that the "glorious man" in this vision speaking with Daniel was Jesus Himself. The Prince of Persia is a fallen angel who rules the country of Iran/Persia. Michael, the Archangel, is the governing angel over God's people. This passage indicates that Jesus Himself was held up for three weeks while Michael fought back the Prince of Persia.]

Ephesians 6:12 – *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers** of the darkness of this age, against **spiritual hosts** of wickedness in the heavenly places."*

[NOTE: The terms "principalities," "powers," and "rulers" are technical terms for different ranks of angels.]

Exodus 17:8-13 – *"Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."*

So, from these passages we understand that there is a war in Heaven that has been going on since the time of Adam & Eve. The devil in his pride convinced 1/3 of all the angels to rebel against God with him.

Hell was originally prepared for the devil and his angels as their punishment for this rebellion. The reason for the war in heaven is because the devil and his fallen angels want to take as many people with them there as they can. They want to do this for their own sick pleasure, because they know God loves people, and this is the only way they can hurt Him, by hurting God's heart.

This war is not happening right outside God's throne room. It is happening in another part of Heaven, some place in the spiritual realm that impacts events on earth.

Why did God allow this? *Why* does He allow this to go on when He could end it with a simple thought or Word? No man or woman can answer that question. Only God knows His own mind and *why* He feels it has to be this way. We just know it *is* this way.

Nevertheless, Ephesians and Exodus teach us that everything that happens on earth, good or bad, is simply a reflection of that war in Heaven.

Therefore, it is imperative that we learn to fight like Moses did. We must understand this spiritual reality and learn how to fight so we don't become victims of it.

The THIRTEENTH Step in the Path 2 Strength is the **STEP OF EPHRAIM.**

The name Ephraim means "Doubly Fruitful," and this step is about learning how be protected from spiritual attack and make our prayers "doubly" effective.

3.) *What are the most common ways the enemy attacks us?*

The most common ways the enemy attacks us are:

- Temptations: Lust, greed, gluttony, addictions, etc....
- Fear & Worry
- Inspiration to Anger
- Inspiration to Self-Righteousness
- Marriage problems
- Parenting problems
- Money problems

Typically, the enemy's forces will cycle through these problems with you trying to beat you down and separate you from God. They may inspire some problems between you and your spouse, but as soon as you work through those, some problems will arise with your children. Or maybe you are experiencing some problems with relationships at work, but as soon as those are resolved, we suddenly have money problems.

In general, we don't attribute these daily kinds of problems to spiritual warfare when they're happening one at a time, but they are. Yet, when the enemy gets strong and we are struggling in 2-3 of these areas all at the same time, we realize we are under spiritual attack.

The goal of Path2Hope is to help you move into a place of such spiritual strength that you are largely protected from most of these attacks and can experience a new peace.

We have some things to learn first.

4.) *What are some ways you think of to make your prayers more effective? Why?*

James 5:16-17 says:

*“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. **The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”*

What James is teaching us is that a Christian’s level of obedience determines how effective their prayers are. The more obedient one of God’s children is, the more He listens to them and gives them what they are asking.

Disobedience, then, opens us up to spiritual attack. Every time you fall back into habitual sin, you are empowering the enemy’s forces in the war in Heaven.

Also, even if we are personally obedient, the more people around us in society are disobeying God, the more power the enemy’s forces have against everyone corporately.

Nevertheless, pursuing righteousness, seeking to obey God as much as possible will increase the power of your prayers.

Along those same lines, Jesus said:

*And whatever you ask **in My name**, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*
(John 14:13)

That phrase “in my name” does not mean just to end a prayer “in the name of Jesus” as if it were some magical phrase. In the ancient world, to come to someone in someone else’s name meant to be speaking as their messenger, or their ambassador.

Even today, we understand this. If a man in a suit came to your door and said, “I come to you in the name of the President of the United States,” you would understand the president had sent him with a message for you.

Therefore, Jesus is teaching us to pray to the Father as an ambassador of Himself, which means we are to pray in alignment with Jesus’ will. If we do so, then we are also **in alignment with God’s will, because there is no daylight between the will of the Son and the will of the Father.** Therefore, God will always answer those prayers. If we pray in faith for something Jesus wants, the Father will do it.

Also, Jesus made it clear that **FAITH** has a huge role in the effectiveness of our prayers:

So, Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”
(Matthew 21:21-22)

5.) READ the following parable of Jesus:

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’”

Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”
(Luke 18:1-8)

What Jesus is teaching us in that parable is that **persistence** increases the effectiveness of our prayers.

6.) READ the following story about Jesus:

And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?"

Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?"

And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"

*So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."
(Mark 9:14-29)*

What Jesus is teaching us here is that **fasting** increases the effectiveness of our prayers.

Lastly, Jesus teaches us that the number of believers praying in unity for something has a greater impact as well:

7.) READ the following words of Jesus:

*Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."
(Matthew 18:19-20)*

In summary, these are the things that make our prayers more effective:

- Increased personal obedience
- Being in alignment with God's will ("in the name of Jesus")
- FAITH
- Persistence
- Fasting
- Being united in prayer with other Christians

A Christian who pursues righteousness, is in tune with God's will, is persistent in their prayers, and BELIEVES God is listening to them and loves them and will look upon their request with favor will see a HUGE increase in answered prayer.

Such prayers are like fuel to the armies of God in the war in Heaven.

Fasting of course can strengthen our prayers as well.

However, in this age of severe degradation, in this time in history where society at large is turning its collective back on God, Path2Hope strongly recommends a specific prayer practice to protect yourself against the stronger levels of spiritual warfare that are being felt.

Path2Hope recommends working to establish a seven-person prayer team for yourself, one for every day of the week. Many pastors have done this for generations.

What does that mean? How does one go about it?

Think about other Christians you know who you think might be open to it and invite them to join you on a specific day each week.

In other words, ask a believer you trust to be your Monday prayer partner and someone else to be your Tuesday prayer partner, etc. This means you and that believer are agreeing to pray for each other that day.

It is not good practice to just message your entire group once per week with your current requests and ask them to send theirs. That is not effective.

On Monday, you and your Monday prayer partner should communicate, even if it's just briefly through text about each other's current prayer needs, and you've both agreed to pray for each other that day over those things. You do the same for each day of the week.

When inviting people to join you in this, you can ask if they would be willing to do it for one year, and every year you can check with each other if they are wanting to continue. This keeps people from feeling like they are obligating themselves to be your partner for the rest of their lives.

If you don't have seven people in mind you can approach, start with one or two. Get a personal prayer team started with just those and then you can pray for God to lead you to more prayer partners.

You should also encourage all of your prayer partners to get 7 prayer partners themselves!

Any believer who does this will not only experience a significant and noticeable increase in their spiritual protection and the effectiveness of their prayers, but they will feel a wonderfully deepened sense of community and closeness with these friends you're praying with.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU NEED A PERSONAL PRAYER TEAM?

Do you ever struggle with any of the following?

- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Fear**
- **Anger**
- **Pride**
- **Envy /Covetousness**
- **Apathy**
- **Lust**
- **Greed**

Those are standard thoughts/emotions that the enemy's forces throw at us. Once we grab onto any of these thoughts, they are empowered to provoke a cycle of negative thoughts in our minds and hearts. They do this to get strength against us and others, fueled by our sin.

When we are stuck in a cyclical attack like this, it can be difficult to escape without help.

A personal prayer team lifting you up regularly will almost always make a huge difference.

8.) *What do you think about this idea of establishing a personal prayer team? Do you have people in mind you think you could approach this week?*

One more very practical tip. If you need immediate relief from an assault of continual negative thoughts and emotions, begin praising God out loud for who He is and what He has done around your home/space. You normally will feel a distinct lightening of the atmosphere.

Why does this work? The enemy's forces cannot stand to be in the presence of God being praised, so when you begin praising Him out loud, they have to leave for a time.

Still, this is no substitute for a personal prayer team which will have a much larger and longer impact!

The Step of Ephraim is about establishing a personal prayer team.

ACTION STEPS & HOMEWORK

COMMIT to inviting 2 – 3 people to be prayer partners with you, each for a different day of the week. Begin praying with them.

GROUP PRAYER NEEDS
