



Not Today: How To Fight The Fight

Effective ministry happens when people are real. So allow me to be completely honest: I don't know very much about boxing. What I do know is based on *Rocky* (one of my favorite movies ever, believe it or not), *Million Dollar Baby* (ugly, ugly, ugly cried when I saw that in the theater), and of course Billy Blanks. Tae Bo, anyone? But a few days ago, as I sat on an airplane and asked the Holy Spirit to show me what to write for our next HIS small group curriculum, I remembered something I heard the wonderful, amazing, anointed Priscilla Shirer say a few years ago that has since been repeated somewhere close to a billion times by pastors and teachers everywhere.

She said, "We are not fighting FOR a victory, we are fighting FROM a victory!" Everyone cheered and amen'd and tweeted. Rightly so. It's a powerful statement. A true statement. A gospel statement. But right after I remembered that phrase, I heard the Holy Spirit whisper, "**Fighting FROM a victory only works IF you are fighting, and many of my girls aren't fighting!**"

Ephesians 6:12 tells us that we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but **WE ARE FIGHTING** against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Satan would love for us to go through our days unaware of the spiritual warfare taking place in our lives. He would love for us to ignore, excuse, or comply with the battles he sends our way, and sadly, that's often what we do.

I am slightly obsessed with Hillsong United's *Wonder* album, especially the track, "Not Today." It's a perfect mixture of wake-up call and battle cry. Look at this beautifully-written bridge with me:

*Your love stood down death
Crushed the devil's head
Fear is just a liar running out of breath
The fight beneath Your feet
I'm standing on Jesus' Name
So let the devil know not today
Let the devil know not today
Not now not ever again
Jesus, let the devil know not today*

The wake-up call comes from the reminder that Jesus stood down death and crushed the devil's head and that fear is just a liar running out of breath! (Insert all the praise-hands emojis here!) The battle cry is found in the words, NOT TODAY.

When Satan calls you into the boxing ring, do you throw in the towel, and say, have your way? **Or do you put on your gloves, boldly step into the ring, and declare NOT TODAY.**

Friends, we have got to stop letting the devil walk all over us. Jesus came too far and paid too great a price for us to be getting our clocks cleaned!

James 4:7 says, *So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

The word **resist** comes from two Greek words: *stand* and *against*.

Now, like I said earlier I'm not a boxing expert, but I do know that a boxer's stance is very important, and I studied several articles which backed this up. We see boxers throwing punches and assume that all of their power comes from their arm, but really the arm is only the final stage of the punch. **A boxer's power comes for the soles of their feet and is transmitted through their body and out of their fists.** Footwork is also crucial to defense. Titleboxing.com said this about *The Greatest*, "To watch Ali's feet carry him in and out of trouble was a thing of beauty. Even as a heavyweight, his grace of movement and lightness on his feet was an enormous part of his success. A small shuffle, a slight shift in weight, can mean the difference in an opponent's landing a punch or missing it. Good footwork can dictate the pace of the fight and the distance that war is waged at" (Ward).

If we are going to be skilled, successful fighters, we have to pay attention to our feet. James says we are to STAND against or resist the devil.

How's your footwork? Are you standing firm like **James 4:7** talks about?

If you ARE NOT standing against the enemy then you ARE NOT resisting and if you ARE NOT resisting then you ARE consenting. When the enemy wars against you with fear, depression, anxiety, lies, discouragement, or any number of his strategies, and you don't war back, it's as if you are offering him mutual consent. **Mutual consent is when all relevant parties agree to a proposal, contract, or transaction.** It is often referred to as a "meeting of the minds."

That sent shivers down my spine. This is serious, serious business. When we don't resist the devil, we are engaged in a meeting of the minds with someone who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy our lives.

I've engaged in a meeting of the minds with the enemy many times. He's come at me with thoughts about my husband that I didn't stand against. Those thoughts did exactly what he designed for them to do: drive a wedge between me and my other half! He's come at me with

thoughts about friends that I didn't stand against. He's come at me with thoughts about me not being an adequate mom. He's come at me with thoughts of fear, doubt, and lies to keep me from moving forward in faith. He's come at me with thoughts of self-pity, and **I've cuddled up to those thoughts like they were a warm blanket from Restoration Hardware.**

We are not called to cuddle with the schemes of Satan. We are not called to identify with the lies he fires our way. We are not called to take a seat and get comfortable and allow his plans for us to unfold; we are called to stand firm and resist.

Hopefully, by now you get that we are to stand, but how? How do we stand? **Ephesians 6:14-15**, has us covered:

Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The Armor of God: every Sunday School teacher's favorite six-week lesson plan, but it's more than just a fun lesson for kids. "Each aspect of this symbolic armor answers to a specific dynamic within the Christian life that enables us to stand against spiritual attack" (Guzik).

Allow me to skip over the symbolism and get straight to the specific dynamics that enable us to stand:

1. The truth of God's Word must hold our world together.
2. We must view ourselves through the lens of the completed work of the cross and see ourselves how God sees us.
3. We must have steady minds, free from fear and full of peace which comes from believing that God loves us and cares for us.
4. We must be hearers and doers of God's Word so that we are full of the kind of faith that not only blocks the attacks of Satan, but sends them back where they came from.
5. We must have hope, convinced that even in the darkest of situations, our God saves.
6. We must know how to wield the active, powerful and effective Word of God.**

The Big Six: Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Faith, Salvation, and God's Word.

Did you know that there are only six types of punches in boxing? That doesn't seem like very many punches to step into a ring with, but with those six punches a fighter can deliver more than a thousand combinations. Similar to the way a telephone has only ten digits available, but with different combinations of those digits we can create eight billion different phone numbers.

We have six pieces of armor, which may not seem like enough to stand against the schemes and strategies of the enemy, **but with those six pieces of armor you can deliver thousands of combinations that will keep you standing and send the devil running.**

Think about the endless possibilities you have as you combine those six pieces of armor!

Jab-Jab-Cross. Faith-Faith-Peace.

Jab-Cross-Left hook. Faith-Peace-God's Word.

Jab-Right uppercut-Left hook-Right hand. Faith-Righteousness-God's Word-Truth.

Just like a boxer spends time training and learning all six punches, from the jab to the right hook, we need to spend time training and learning about the six pieces of armor, so we can confidently stand our ground and start putting together some total-knockout combinations.

*Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. **Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life.** God's Word is an indispensable weapon. (Ephesians 6:13-18, MSG)*

Fighting FROM a victory, only works if you are FIGHTING. God's given you all you need to stand, to resist, and to fight, so stop letting the devil have his way and start declaring, NOT TODAY!



1. How often are you aware of the unseen spiritual warfare that Ephesians 6 talks about? Why do you feel it is important for you to be aware?
2. As we read about the “meeting of the minds,” did you think of situations in your life when you have entered into mutual consent with Satan? Tell us about different strategies of the enemy that you have found yourself cuddled up with.
3. Share about a recent time when you stood your ground and sent the enemy fleeing. Walk us through the punches you had to throw and how you kept your feet planted.
4. Read back over the specific dynamics of the Armor of God.** Which one of these dynamics do you feel like you are strongest in? Which dynamic do you feel like you're weakest in?



HIS HEART WORK

Study: Read Ephesians 6 in its entirety and in several different translations. Spend time learning more about the armor God has given to us to help us stand our ground.

Act: When Satan comes at you with one of his schemes, don't sit down and participate in a meeting of the minds. Stand. Get up and fight. Fight FROM the victory God has won for you. Sing your heart out to "Not Today" and start throwing punches. Share your victories with your small group!



PRAYER NEEDS

Write down the prayer requests of your group members, and pray fervently for them! Let your group members know when you are praying for them, if you have any scriptures or encouraging words for them, etc.