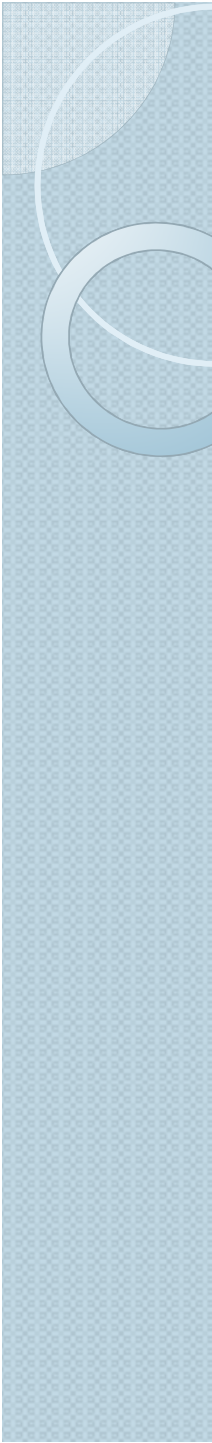




Spiritual Warfare in the Life of the Servant

Servants' Meeting

July 20, 2014



Introduction

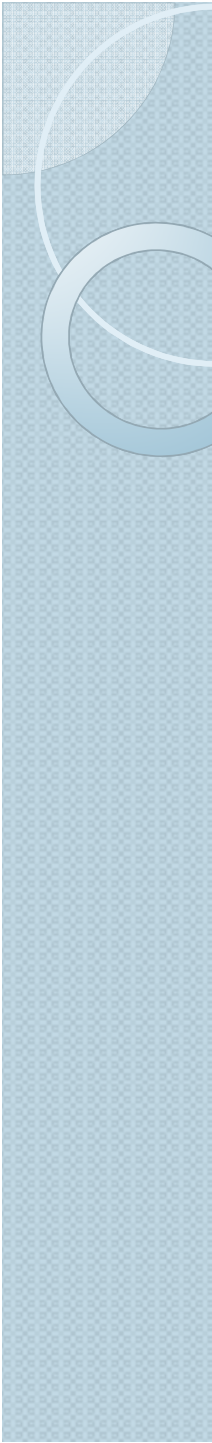
- Service is not an end, but a beginning
- A blessing that I can lose if not careful
- Actually a war, with its own battles and temptations
- Knowing the enemy and the inevitable battles, helps us to be prepared and react accordingly
- Battles intensify; I should expect them

Unwillingness to Accept Criticism

- Spiritual war: Pride

*“Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness.
And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil;
Let my head not refuse it.”* (Psalm 141:5)

- Criticism is a means by which I can grow
- Criticism might reveal a problem which needs fixing
- Criticism keeps me humble
- “So and so does not like me”
- “I will simply leave the service”



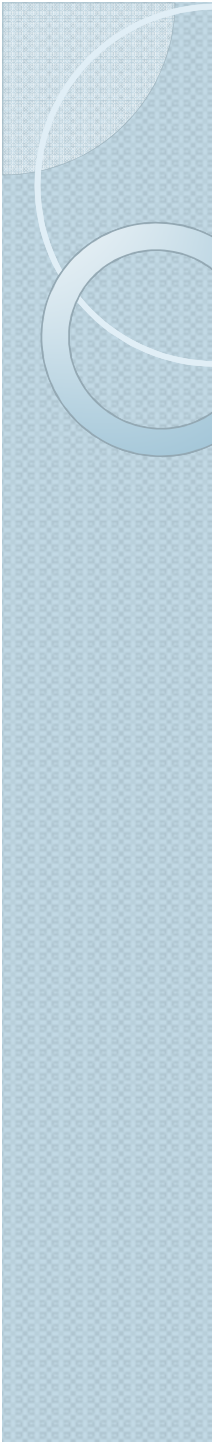
Unwillingness to Follow or be Led: Rejection of Discipleship

- Spiritual war: Pride

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.”

(Luke 6:40)

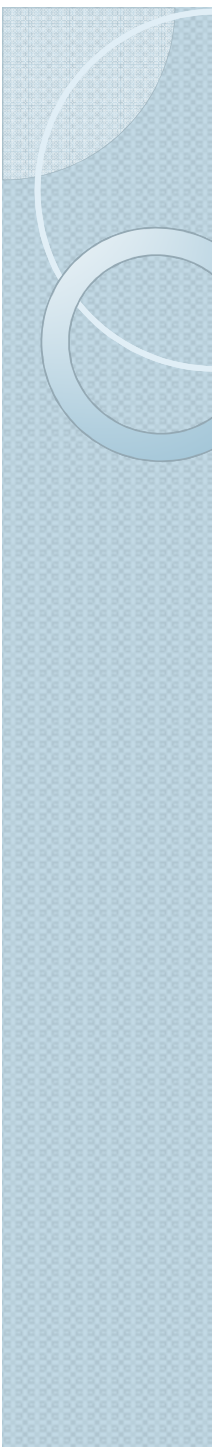
- We are all disciples of the Lord, but also of someone
- Discipleship is God’s way of teaching us
- Learning to be a good follower will train me to become a good leader
- “I know better than him/her”
- “I could do a much better job”



Desiring “Advancement” and Struggling with Contentment

- Spiritual war: Pride, complaining, discontent

“LORD, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me.” (Psalm 131:1-2)
- Confused definition of “advancement”
- True advancement is learning contentment
- “It’s taking too long!”
 - Example of Moses
- “Why is he/she chosen over me?”
- “Will I be stuck in this class forever?”



Becoming Comfortable: Losing Zeal

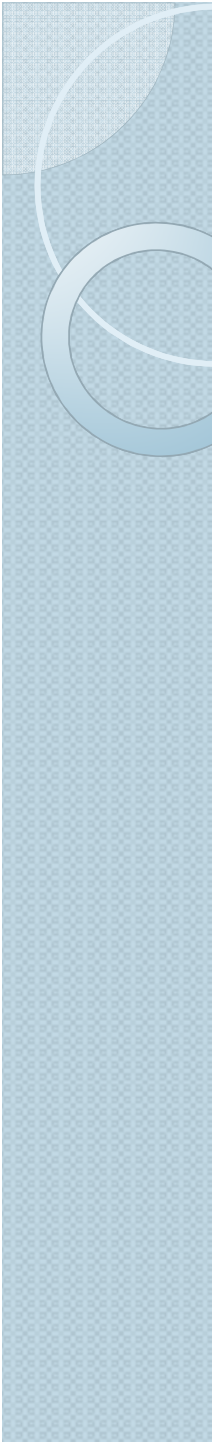
- Spiritual war: Laziness, loss of zeal

“For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, And was clad with zeal as a cloak.” (Isaiah 59:17)

- Loss of passion
- Service has become a routine
- Recycle lessons; Service = series of lessons
- Challenge changes; become rigid
- Focus on the appearance of service, neglecting the substance

Accepting Mediocrity

- Spiritual war: Laziness, loss of zeal
“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.” (1 Cor 14:12)
- No longer a focus on quality
- Doing the minimum becomes the standard
- After all, they are only kids
- Satisfied with those present, neglecting the absent



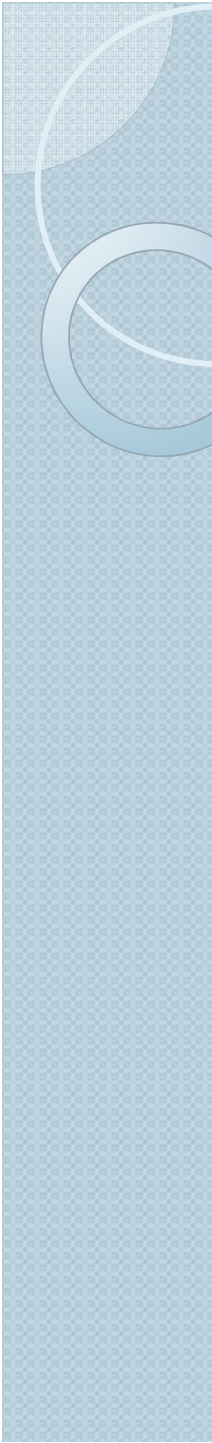
Permitting One or Two Servants to Do Most of the Work

- Spiritual war: Laziness, loss of zeal

“for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.”

(2 Cor 9:2)

- Multiple servants for multiple tasks
- When asked, I am the last to volunteer
- “I am so busy, but so and so has more time”
- “I don’t need the added headache”
- “I am doing what I can”
- “If no one else can do it, I will come”



Neglecting the Spiritual Basics: Stunted Growth

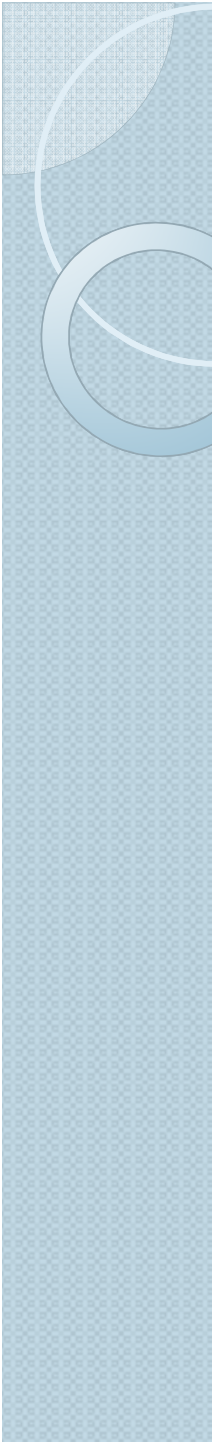
- Spiritual war: Pride, carelessness, lukewarmness

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” (Rev 2:4)

- Neglecting spiritual exercises
- Decline in prayer life and spiritual readings
- Loss of spiritual fervor: Loss of appetite
- Indicates a fixation on worldly cares and attachments

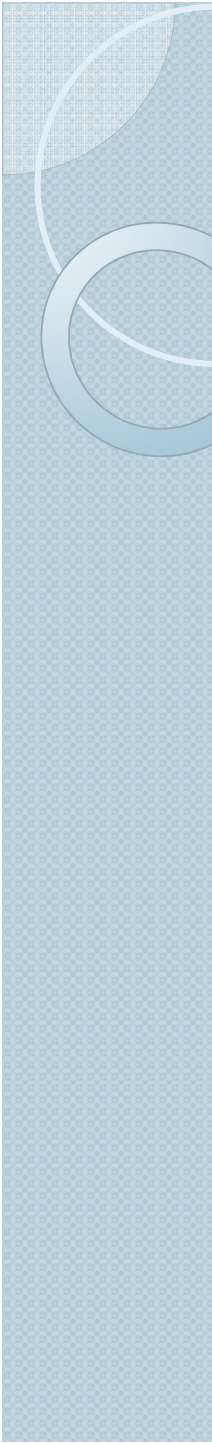
Justifying Ourselves: Making Excuses

- Spiritual war: Refusing responsibility, being unaccountable
And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering." (1 Sam 13:11-12)
- Obstacles and challenges become excuses
- It is the kids or the servants or the grade level or the church system
- Accepting responsibility is the first step in problem solving
- Converting difficulties into matters of prayer



Feeling Threatened by Those More Talented than Ourselves

- Spiritual war: Pride, vainglory, conceit, envy
“Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (Gal 5:26)
- Instead of rejoicing, we may develop envy
- Instead of utilizing a new tool in the service, we seek to bury it
- My focus is on being the center of attention rather than seeking God’s glory
- The service exists to serve me (my ego, my need for attention and praise)

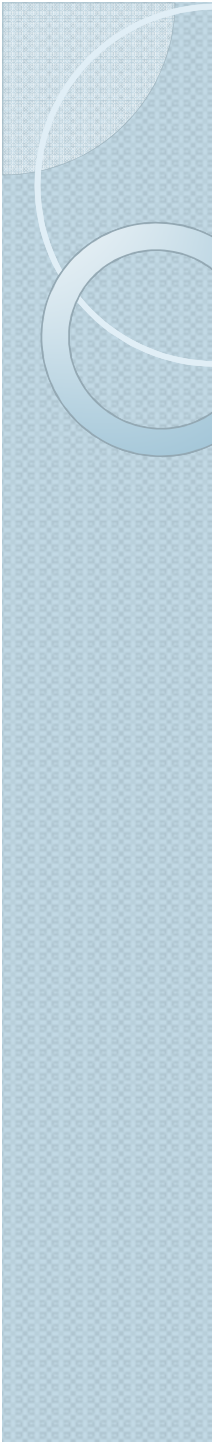


Teaching Things we do not Practice and of which we are not Convinced

- Spiritual war: superficiality, indifference, apathy, hypocrisy

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Cor 9:27)

- Lack of conviction is easily detected
- Will shy away from virtues with which I am personally struggling
- Spiritual practices neglected: fasting, confession, prostrations, asceticism

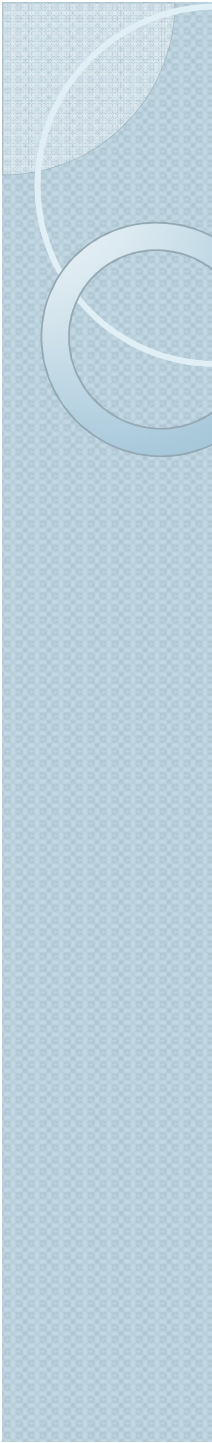


Permitting Contentions to Linger

- Spiritual war: Divisions, bitterness, hatred, inability to forgive

“And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” (Mark 3:25)

- Disagreements will inevitably happen, but how do we deal with them?
- Must everyone agree with me or face the consequence of blacklisting?
- Must a difference of opinion lead to a contention?
- The art of accepting different viewpoints and submitting to an agreed upon one
- Students detect contentions and lose respect for us and what we say



Allowing Friendships to Get in the Way

- Spiritual war: Lack of discernment and wisdom
“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal 2:11)
- A fear of straining a friendship at the expense of the service
- Allowing problems to continue
- Needs wisdom, guidance, and gentleness
- “I can only serve in this class because I am friends with the servants”

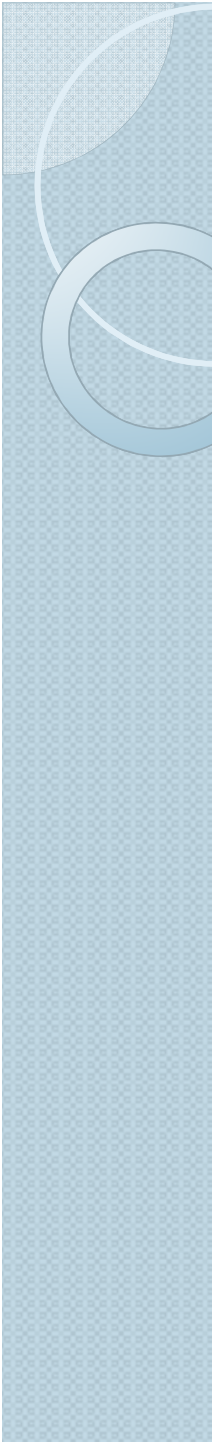


Shunning or Minimizing the Importance of Fellowship

- Spiritual war: Pride, individualism, lack of discernment

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

- We reject the model of the early church
- Shared prayer and time spent together builds unity, like-mindedness, a single heart
- “I can grow on my own, thank you”
- “So long and dull”

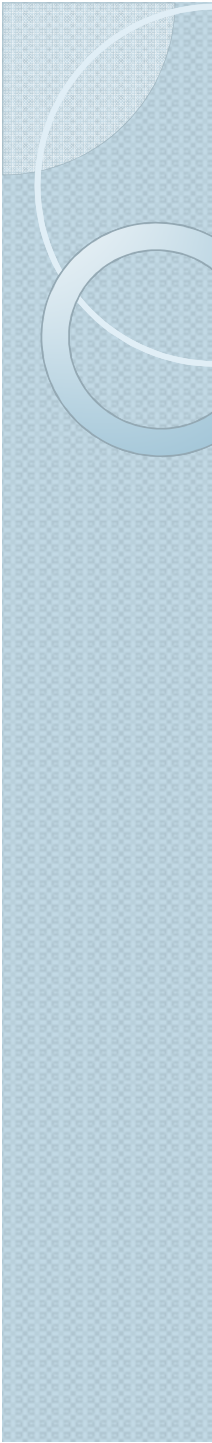


Losing Sight of the Vision

- Spiritual war: loss of vision, confused priorities

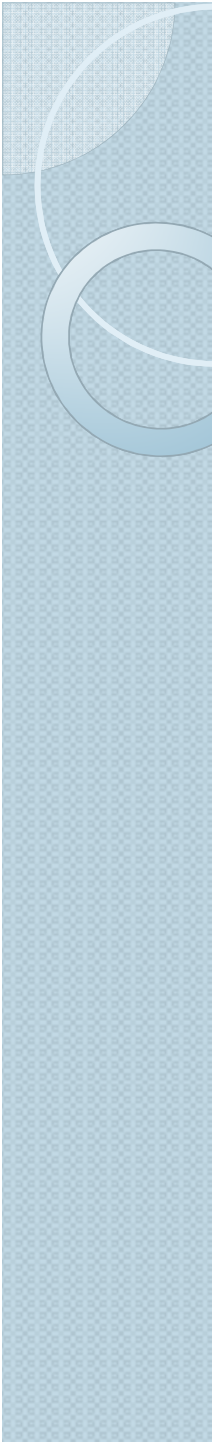
*“I will meditate on Your precepts, And
contemplate Your ways.”* (Psalm 119:15)

- Loss of vision
- The salvation of our souls and those of others by uniting them with the Lord Christ
- What good is the service if I lose sight of this goal?



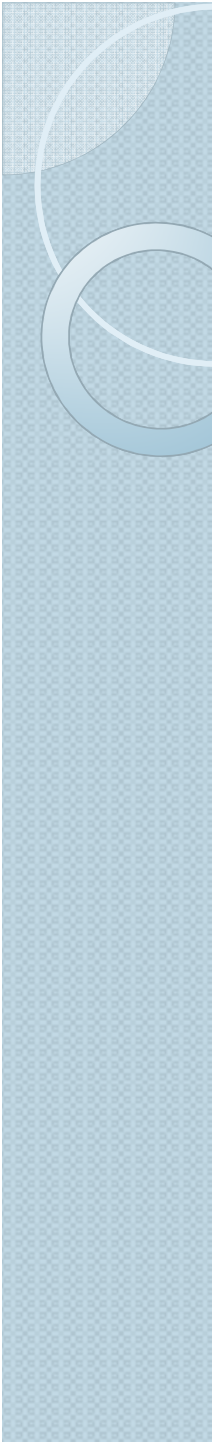
Confusing the Common with the Holy

- Spiritual war: Lack of discernment
“that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean”
(Lev 10:10)
- At one point the differentiation was clear
- Now the gray area is much bigger
- Those things that used to be off-limits to me as a servant, I partake of now freely



Review

1. Unwillingness to Accept Criticism
2. Unwillingness to Follow or be Led: Rejection of Discipleship
3. Desiring “Advancement” and Struggling with Contentment
4. Becoming Comfortable: Losing Zeal
5. Accepting Mediocrity
6. Permitting One or Two Servants to Do Most of the Work
7. Neglecting the Spiritual Basics: Stunted Growth



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8. Justifying Ourselves: Making Excuses
9. Feeling Threatened by Those More Talented than Ourselves
10. Teaching Things we do not Practice and of which we are not Convinced
11. Permitting Contentions to Linger
12. Allowing Friendships to Get in the Way
13. Shunning or Minimizing the Importance of Fellowship
14. Losing Sight of the Vision
15. Confusing the Common with the Holy