Spiritual Warfare
Pocket Principles

Equipping for Ministry
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Pocket Principles®
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Instructions For Using Pocket Principles®

What is a Pocket Principle™? Each Pocket Principle™ is a brief essay (based on WDA Teaching Outlines) that focuses on a single topic necessary to the growth and maturity of a believer.

These four Pocket Principles, about Spiritual Warfare, give the growing Christian a beginning understanding of the person and role of Satan in the world and in the everyday life of a Christian.

A word about the relationship between Guided Discussions and the Pocket Principles® and Teaching Outlines of the same name: Teaching Outlines, for use by Teachers, form the content base of the information. Pocket Principles® are essay-presentations of the same information in the Teaching Outline. Guided Discussions focus on application of the same material as the corresponding Outline and Pocket Principle, with an emphasis on small group interaction. The student (disciple) should read the corresponding Pocket Principle™ before taking part in a Guided Discussion.

Because the goal of disciple building is Christlikeness in character and conduct, we have included suggested application ideas at the end of each Principle. Pocket Principles® may be used for one’s personal growth, in a one-one interactive relationship, or in conjunction with WDA’s Guided Discussions.
The Great Spiritual Battle

Good guys and bad guys. Heroes and villains. There is a reason that a large number of the stories we read and the movies we watch trace these themes. Everything from simple childhood tales like Little Red Riding Hood to sophisticated adult science fiction dramas like Star Wars portray the conflict. The truth is that these stories, perhaps often unknowingly, reflect a key spiritual reality—there really is an ongoing cosmic battle between the good guys and the bad guys, between the forces of good and evil.

The battle is played out between nations, between groups of people, between members of the same family and, at times, within the heart of a single person. It is not just your imagination when life seems difficult. You are in a spiritual battle. The battle is not just out there. It is cosmic, yet it is close. It is of vast proportions, yet it is intensely personal.

The Unrecognized Battle

If the battle we are in is so significant, why is it that we are often largely unaware of the conflict? The battle is difficult to recognize at times for several reasons:

- We acknowledge that life is difficult, but it is easy to attribute most of the pain, brokenness, and sorrow around us to living in a fallen world. Certainly, the events recorded in Genesis chapter three had devastating effects, but that is only one chapter in the story. If we see the Fall as the beginning and source of all that is wrong in this world, we fail to recognize the Fall as one battle (although admittedly a major one) in the larger ongoing war.

- It can also be difficult to recognize the battle because evil often presents itself as good. Satan is known as the angel of light, and he can easily make darkness seem as light. It is the subtle deceptions rather than the obvious lies that lull us into complacency.

- Lastly, it is difficult to recognize because part of the battle is in the seen world (the realm of our physical senses) and part of the battle is in the unseen world (the invisible spiritual realm). The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians that we wrestle not against flesh and blood (the visible realm) but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (the invisible realm) (Ephesians 6:12).
In a story recorded in II Kings chapter six, Scripture allows us a glimpse behind the stage curtain into the reality of the unseen battle. The King of Aram, an enemy of Israel, had sent a great army with chariots and horses to capture the prophet Elisha. Elisha’s servant was very frightened when he looked out the door and saw these enemies surrounding the city, “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!” Then Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!” The LORD opened his servant’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire (II Kings 6:16-17, New Living Translation). These servants of the Lord had been sent to preserve the life of Elisha. If, like Elisha, we were able to perceive the full range of events constantly at play about us, we would be amazed at the extent of activity in the unseen realm.

This spiritual battle is ongoing and will continue until God chooses to end it at the return of Christ. Believers, as a part of the army of God, need to learn all they can about their enemy and how to fight effectively. As mentioned above, Paul told his readers that their real battle is not against flesh and blood but against evil supernatural forces of darkness (Ephesians 6:12). The following Pocket Principles® in this series will provide more information on how believers are to be engaged in this battle. At this point, we are simply trying to grasp the reality of it.

We see then that the world is the setting for a great spiritual battle between two powerful kingdoms. Let’s take a closer look at these two kingdoms so that we can better understand the conflict between them.

**Satan and His Kingdom**

Satan leads a powerful evil kingdom that opposes God and His people. But who is this adversary, and why is he set in opposition against God? Based on popular conceptions, most people have no idea who he really is. Contrary to comic book or television sitcom portrayals, Satan is not cute and he is not amusing. Light-hearted references such as, "The devil made me do it," or "playing the devil's advocate" only serve to underscore that we do not take him seriously.

**Satan’s Origin**

While most of what Scripture tells us about Satan's origin is written in figurative language, we still are able to understand certain things about him. In Ezekiel chapter 28 the prophet Ezekiel conveyed a message to the king of Tyre, but his message appears to also apply to Satan. In it we learn that Satan was a highly favored angelic being, with great power and privilege. However, he was not satisfied with his exalted position and
his pride led him to rebel against God. The prophet Isaiah captured Satan’s intent in these words, "I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:13-14)

Satan paid a great price for his rebellion. In the Apostle John’s revelation, he records that there was a great battle in heaven between Satan and his angels and the archangel Michael and his angels, resulting in the expulsion of Satan and his followers from heaven (Revelation 12:1-9). The reference to one third of the stars in verse four may be a reference to one third of the angels, the number who fell with Satan.

**Satan’s Character**

Sathan’s character is described by the following words and phrases used in Scripture. As you read through the following descriptions, note the stark contrast with God’s nature. God and Satan are not simply two opponents with somewhat different political orientations or points of view. Rather they are bitter enemies—God is determined to thwart Satan’s evil designs and to condemn him to everlasting punishment once His purposes have been fulfilled, and Satan is equally determined to hurt God any way he can and overturn His verdict of condemnation.

• First, we consider his name. Revelation 9:11 tells us that Satan’s name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon—both of which translate to the Destroyer. Satan is intent on destruction; it is inherent in his nature. As Brent Curtis writes in *The Sacred Romance*, "The one purpose of his [Satan’s] heart is the destruction of all that God loves, particularly his beloved." (1) By contrast, God is the creator of all that is good and beautiful.

• Satan is called the evil one in Matthew chapter 13, verses 19 and 38. He is thoroughly corrupt in his nature, his character, his intentions, and his actions. God is good and perfect in His character and in all His ways.

• Scripture teaches us that Satan is our enemy, our adversary (I Peter 5:8-9). Peter compares him to a roaring lion, looking for a victim to devour. Satan is always seeking to attack us; God is our defender and protector.

• In a conversation recorded in John 8:44, Jesus called Satan a liar and the father of lies. There is no truth in him. By contrast, God is truth. In fact, the writer of
Hebrews tells us that it is impossible for God to lie. We cannot believe anything Satan tells us; we can always take God at His word.

- In the same passage, Jesus also said that Satan has been a murderer from the beginning. Satan seeks to extinguish life; he has no respect whatsoever for the sanctity of life. God, who created man in His image, is the giver and source of all life.

- Satan is also known as the “accuser of the brethren” (Revelation 12:10). In fact, he is said to accuse the children of God day and night—relentlessly, unceasingly. By contrast, Christ is our advocate and our mediator. I John 2:1 reminds us that when we sin, "we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."

- Satan is known as the deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He began his assault against God’s creation by deceiving Eve in the Garden of Eden, culminating in the fall of the human race. In II Corinthians 4:4 we read that, "Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them." (New Living Translation) There is no deception with God. While it is true that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways than our ways (Isaiah 55:9), He delights in making Himself known to us.

- Paul, writing to believers in Thessalonica, referred to Satan as the Tempter (I Thessalonians 3:5). James tells us that, "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone." (James 1:13) Rather, He always provides a way of escape when we are faced with temptation (I Corinthians 10:13). Satan tempts us to do what is wrong; God guides us into right paths.

- In what is perhaps a surprising statement, Paul writes to the Corinthians that Satan is the god of this age or world. Satan is the ruler of what is temporal; God is the ruler of what is eternal. Satan has limited authority; God is sovereign over all creation.

The preceding descriptions demonstrate that Satan and God are diametrically opposed to one another. There is no point of similarity in their character. However, while their natures can only be contrasted, their abilities can be compared.
• God is omniscient—He is all knowing. Satan does have vast knowledge (presumably accumulated through the centuries), but there are limits to what he knows.

• God is omnipresent—He is present everywhere at once. Satan is limited to one location in time and space.

• God is omnipotent—He is all-powerful. Satan has great power, but it is limited. He is a powerful beast, but on a leash, which God can yank at any time.

**Satan’s Influence**

Satan’s kingdom is composed of Satan as its king, demons as his loyal servants, unbelievers as his unwitting servants, believers as his targets, and the world as his playground. Satan, who is not omnipresent, exercises his influence throughout the world through his hierarchy of subordinates (the rulers, authorities, powers, and forces mentioned in Ephesians 6:12). The Jews and early Christians understood these powers and authorities as representing a chain of command and authority of angels, both good and bad.

The self-centered ambitions of the nations, the deceptive practices of politics, the bitter rivalry of commerce, the false religions of the world, broken relationships, fractured families, and personal traumas all spring from and are fostered by Satanic influence. All that is evil finds its ultimate source in Satan; all that is good finds its ultimate source in God.

**Christ and His Kingdom**

God’s Kingdom is composed of Christ as King, angels as His loyal servants, and Christians as His subjects and partners in rule.

Christ’s Kingdom is invisible to the world in that it currently exists in the hearts of believers as the Holy Spirit indwells them. One day His Kingdom will be visible to all when He returns in power and glory. At this time, it is visible to the world in the godly conduct and character of believers and their influence on non-believers. This is why Jesus said in His Kingdom teaching, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Christ came to this world to rescue us from the clutches of Satan, to save us from our sins, and to establish His eternal Kingdom. Colossians 1:13 tells us that God "has
rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves." The verb tense is important here. The rescue has already been accomplished; we have been delivered from Satan's kingdom. However, we continue to live in occupied territory and remain vulnerable to Satan’s influence and attacks.

It is important to remember, as we struggle against the forces of evil, that God is not asking us to do anything that He has not done or does not continue to do Himself. He is no armchair quarterback or boardroom general. Rather, He leads us into and through the battle. This truth is vividly illustrated in the life of Christ while on earth. He was continually involved in spiritual battle, both direct and indirect. Following are a few scenes from the battlefield:

• The conflict began at the announcement of His birth as King Herod ordered the death of all Jewish children in Bethlehem under the age of two. Herod hoped, in so doing, to exterminate the threat of this Messiah (Matthew 2:13-17).

• Satan himself appears on the scene when Jesus’ ministry began. Immediately after Christ's baptism by John, He was led into the wilderness and tempted by Satan repeatedly over a period of forty days. None of us can truly appreciate the intensity of this battle (Luke 4:1-13).

• Throughout Jesus’ ministry He cast demons out of people, healing them of diseases and other problems (see Luke 4:40-41, for example). In each encounter, Christ was directly challenging and overcoming the power of Satan.

• The blindness of the Jewish leaders, in spite of the many miraculous signs that Jesus performed, their rejection of Him as the Messiah, and their plots to kill Him were all evidences of spiritual battle (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

• Satan entered Judas and influenced him to betray Jesus into the hands of the Jewish leaders (John 13:27).

• Jesus was engaged in intense spiritual warfare the night before His crucifixion. Face down on the ground in prayer, He had all the power and fury of hell arrayed against Him. In anguish, He overcame the forces of evil and submitted to the will of the Father (Luke 22:40-46).
• The Cross itself represents the climax of the battle between God and Satan, between the forces of good and evil. It was there, despite all appearances, that Christ achieved His greatest victory and Satan realized his greatest defeat (Colossians 2:15).

Because of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, believers are transferred out of Satan’s domain and into Christ’s Kingdom at the time of their salvation. God has brought us into His Kingdom to deliver us from darkness and bond-age and also to equip us as warriors in His Kingdom (Ephesians 6:10-18). Satan views us as pawns—expendable objects of his wrath. However, God views us as persons of great worth and enlists us as trusted allies in His holy cause. What an awesome privilege to serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

**Conclusion**

There is bad news and there is good news. Believers need to understand that the world is dangerous, and life is difficult because of the evil influences of Satan and his kingdom. However, the good news is that Christ has rescued us from Satan’s kingdom, and He is able to help us navigate through life's difficulties and to impact this world for good.

Just a reminder—one of Satan's favorite ploys is deception and getting people to believe lies. Even now, he would have you disbelieve the bad news (and minimize the reality) and disbelieve the good news (and minimize the opportunity). Stand firm in the truth of God’s Word and do not allow Satan to deceive you on these important points.

**Application:**

• Meditate on Colossians 1:13-14. Praise God for what He has done for us.
• Write a list of some of the ways you see Satan's influence in your world.

**End Note:**