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SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE PRE-K – 12 CLASSROOM : A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Authors

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SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE PRE-K – 12 CLASSROOM: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE
 BY JUNE HETZEL, DAVID COSTILLO, LORENA VIDAURRE, ALY TAILLON,
 ROBIN LONGINOW, AND ROBIN LABARBERA

Abstract

The purpose of this study focuses on spiritual warfare as it relates to Christian educators in the PreK-12 classroom. Elements of spiritual warfare discussed in the literature review include: a three-fold model of spiritual warfare—worldly temptations, the human propensity towards sin, and Satanic influence (Arnold, 2011); a four-fold model of evil—the World Systems Model, the Flesh Model, the Ground-Level Deliverance Model, and the Strategic-Level Deliverance Model (Beilby & Eddy, 2012); and the history of spiritual warfare training. The questions examined in this paper are, *“As a teacher, have you ever encountered spiritual warfare? What happened and how did you or others confront evil in this context?”* This study is a subset of a larger study of 1,509 teachers in 38 countries on the *“Spiritual Lives of Teachers”* (Hetzl & Costillo, 2013). The subset examined includes 702 private PreK-12 teachers from 29 countries who responded to the spiritual warfare questions. Of the 702 participants, 598 or 85% indicated that they experienced spiritual warfare as a teacher. Narrative data indicates respondents experienced spiritual warfare through relational discord and lack of unity, demonic oppression, student misbehavior, and emotional disequilibrium. Spiritual warfare was described as daily and palpable in the classroom. When answering the question, *“how did you or others confront evil in this context?”* 49% of respondents exercised prayer and 11% Scripture as the primary defense against spiritual warfare. The results of this study indicate a critical need for teacher training as it relates to spiritual preparedness for the teaching profession.

Spiritual Warfare In The K-12 Classroom:

Public or private pre-K through 12th grade teachers readily describe the joys of teaching as well as the challenges. While the challenges of teaching often relate to learning, family, or environmental concerns, there is a growing need in school communities to re-examine the spiritual landscape of the classroom. In the decades of educational experience represented by the authors, we have observed an increasing need for teachers to have more skills in the areas of behavior management, stress management, and conflict resolution, and our hypothesis is that these are symptoms of the spiritual state of our communities. Crime, drugs, violence, broken relationships, rebellion, sexual promiscuity, and negative social media influence students, faculty, staff, and parents within our school communities, whether in public or private schools. Students and teachers do not enter classrooms with shared sets of biblically based morals and ethics, nor do they enter the classrooms with peaceful postures. Rather, students are needy and teachers are struggling with stress (Akpochafo, 2012; Chan & Hui, 1995; Chaplain, 2008; Forlin, 2001; Klassen & Chiu, 2010, and Kyriacou, 2001), whether you go to Nigeria (Akpochafo, 2012), China (Chan & Hui, 1995), England (Chaplain, 2008), or the United States (LaBarbera & Hetzel, 2015). As Anderson (2015) describes, “We live in times when *shalom* is missing from our lives, families, nations, the world as a whole – even from many churches. Many look to education for the answer to the problems of living in the 21st century” (p. 1).

While the classroom is about teaching and learning, the classroom is also a spiritual place, and spirituality cannot be separate from the teaching/learning process. What happens spiritually in the classroom either undergirds or undermines the spiritual goal of developing a lifelong learner, a good citizen (Ephesians 2:19; Lewis, 1939), and a spiritual soul who loves God and neighbor (Luke 10:27).

Simultaneous to the shaping of the child or adolescent, the teacher also is being shaped by the spiritual practices she or he exercises in the context of the classroom, desiring to educate for shalom (Wolterstorff, 2004) and produce students who are lifelong learners, good citizens (Ephesians 2:19; Lewis, 1939), and persons of peace who love God and love their neighbor (Luke 10:27). Yet, the researchers’ school observations, as well as personal communication with teachers in our local schools and in our teacher training programs, regularly indicate that this is not always the case. Negative spiritual influences in our communities fight against spiritual goals (Reutter, 2012). While many classrooms and schools are positive, life-transforming communities, many become negative communities of violence and chaos, rather than schools of shalom. Therefore, the researchers hypothesize that spiritual warfare might be a central cause to many of our schools’ challenges and a key area missing in our Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) teacher training programs.

In exploring the literature, little is written about the spiritual landscape of the public or private school classroom as it relates to spiritual warfare. Therefore, the project at hand is an exploration as to whether private PreK-12 classroom teachers believe that spiritual warfare exists in their classrooms, and if so, how have they addressed spiritual warfare? If the findings are that spiritual warfare exists in our classrooms (and this study examines primarily private schools in global settings), should spiritual warfare be a part of Christian teacher training programs at our UCCC higher education institutions?

This paper gathers the perspective of 702 private school teachers in 29 countries on the topic of spiritual warfare. The questions examined are, *“As a teacher, have you ever encountered spiritual warfare? What happened and how did you or others confront evil in this context?”* This study is a subset of a larger study on the *“Spiritual Lives of Teachers”* (Hetzel & Costillo, 2013) that gathered perspectives from 1,509 private school teachers over a three-week period. Of the 702 private school teachers who responded to the spiritual warfare questions, 598 or 85% of teachers indicated that they experienced spiritual warfare and most provided specific narrative about their experiences. The purpose of the article is to 1) heighten educators’ awareness of spiritual warfare in educational settings as seen through the perspectives of 598 Christian educators from 29 countries, and 2) to increase educators’ awareness of the spiritually strategic role they play in the lives of their students.

Literature Review

Spiritual warfare, from a biblical perspective, is demonic opposition against God’s work. The oppositional forces of evil began in the Garden of Eden and continue to present day. Spiritual opposition can come from without (e.g., Elijah’s battle with the prophets of Baal), from within (e.g., Elijah’s discouragement and despair as he sat under the broom tree), or from Satan himself (e.g., Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness). Evidence of spiritual opposition can manifest in the physical realm, such as in the trial of Job, the trial of a classroom teacher, the trial of a disciple of Jesus, or manifestations in the unseen heavenly realm (Ephesians 6:12, NASB). 1 Peter 5:8 (NASB) reminds us, *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”* Satan desires to destroy the effective ministry of Christian educators in the education of children and adolescents, whether in public or private schools.

Spiritual warfare is understood as the *“fight”* between good and evil in the natural and supernatural realms; however, spiritual warfare has a wide range of interpretations. Some individuals would describe spiritual warfare as only involving the evil that is inherent in humanity and in our relationships and institutions, while others would describe spiritual warfare involving a cosmic adversary that fights against the ways of God (Beilby & Eddy, 2012).

Individuals may believe one of two extremes: that real spiritual evil does not exist or is not relevant; or that it does exist and plays an exceptionally large role in our lives (Taillon, 2013).

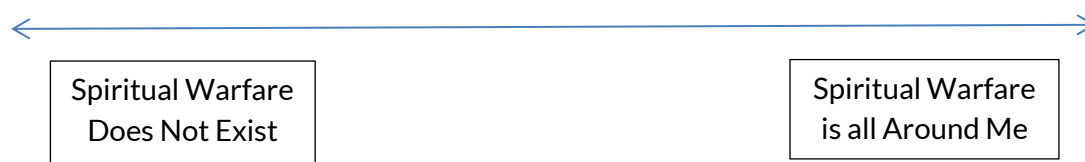


Figure 1: Spiritual Warfare Belief Continuum

While most believers do not find themselves at the extreme polarities of these viewpoints, they do find themselves somewhere in between (Taillon, 2013).

Three Elements of Spiritual Warfare

Clinton Arnold (1997, 2011b), dean of Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, describes three elements of spiritual warfare: worldly temptations, the human propensity towards sin, and Satanic influence. These spheres reflect spiritual warfare as coming from without, from within, and from Satan himself. In I John 2:16, John defines worldly temptations as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. I John 2:15 states, “If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” In other words, when educators allow space in their spiritual lives to be filled up with the love of the world (whether lust, pride, earthly goods, professional accomplishment, or similar temptations), worldly goods potentially become their god. When this happens, God’s purposes for their lives, as educators, are thwarted, negatively affecting their classroom, home, and school community.

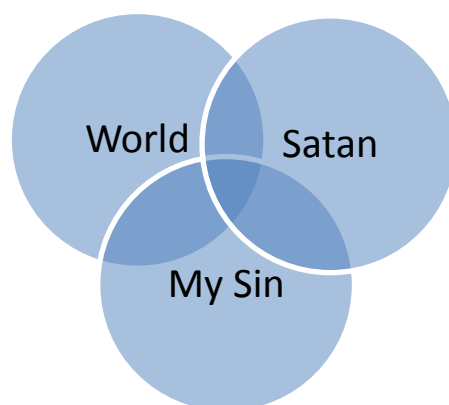


Figure 2: Arnold’s Three-Way Venn Diagram Depicting Spiritual Warfare (2011)

A second element of spiritual warfare that Arnold (2011) discusses is the human propensity towards sin: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, NASB). As a result, educators can allow their own sin and brokenness to take over their interior world, rather than being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Sin, if left unchecked by the Spirit’s

work, eventually leaks into one's personal and public life, negatively affecting educational ministry, whether through pride, impatience, self-centeredness, hunger for power over others, anger, sloth, lust, or dissension.

The third element Arnold (2011) discusses in spiritual warfare is Satanic influence, as described in Ephesians 6:10-18. This passage literally commands the reader to “put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against *the schemes of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11). Because Satan and his demons exist (Matthew 4; Ephesians 6), educators, and ministers of the gospel in any vocational path, are necessarily engaged in spiritual warfare. Hence, Christian educators are exhorted to wear the full armor of God and ready themselves for battle.

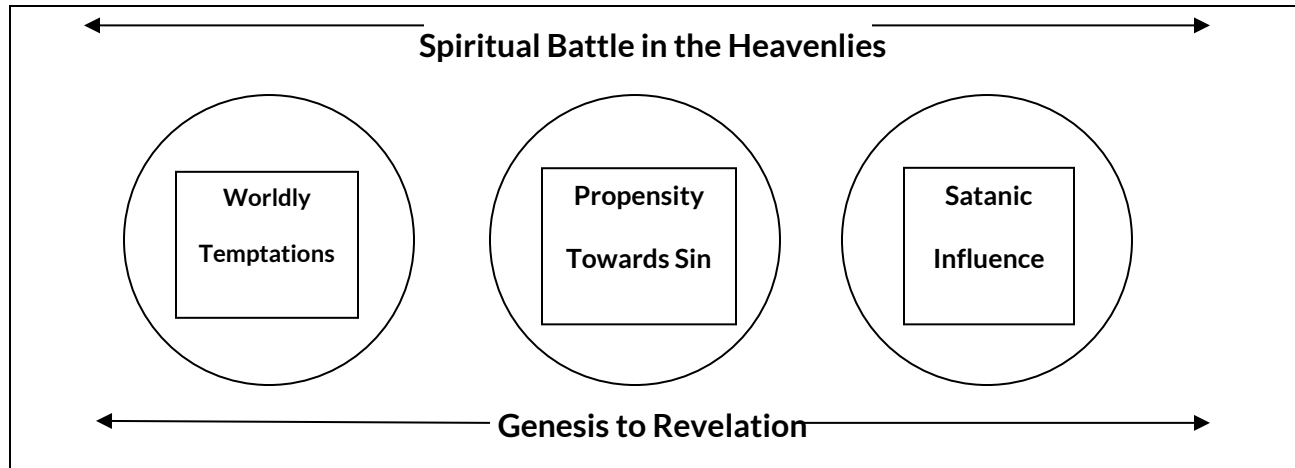


Figure 3: Spiritual Battle in the Heavemies (Hetzel, 2013)

These three overlapping elements of spiritual warfare—worldly temptations, human propensity towards sin, and Satanic influence—encompass our human experiences, providing the perfect confluence for believers to forget their spiritual mooring (Hetzel, 2011). Thankfully, Christian educators, indwelt by the Spirit of God in their inner being (Eph. 3:14-17), need not fear because the Spirit of God triumphs over evil and can enable them to withstand the trials of spiritual warfare in their public or private school classroom.

Four Models of Spiritual Warfare

Four models for addressing spiritual warfare emerge in the literature (Beilby & Eddy, 2012). The first model for combatting spiritual warfare, the *World Systems Model*, focuses on evil in the world and how it is imbedded within the constructs of human relationships and institutions. The second model, the *Flesh Model*, focuses on evil and how evil manifests itself in our personal brokenness and propensity towards sin. While the first two models focus primarily on human sin, the final two models focus on external evil and the devil (Taillon, 2013). The third model of spiritual warfare, the *Ground-Level Deliverance Model*, focuses on demonic influences at a personal level while the fourth model, the *Strategic-Level Deliverance Model*, focuses on territorial spirits (Beilby & Eddy, 2012).

<p>The World Systems Model (corporate sin manifestation) Q1</p>	<p>The Flesh Model (personal sin manifestation) Q2</p>
<p>The Ground-Level Deliverance Model (demonic influence at personal level) Q3</p>	<p>The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model (territorial spirits) Q4</p>

Figure 4: Four Models of Spiritual Warfare

Quadrant 1: The World Systems Model

According to the World Systems Model, spiritual powers exist only insofar as they are inextricably linked to the structures of human relationships and institutions in the world (Beilby & Eddy, 2012; Taillon, 2013). Spiritual realities then of any kind—good or evil—are neither personal nor independent in nature, but are linked to what is already good or evil in humanity (Taillon, 2013). Evil of this kind is seen in institutions that have “become oppressive, demonic systems of domination” or in “systematic evils [such] as racism, sexism, classism, and violence” (Beilby and Eddy, 2012, pp. 32-33).

Quadrant Two: The Flesh Model

Unlike the World Systems Model, the Flesh Model holds that the predominant trespasses of evil are not at the systems level but are instead the daily sins that we perpetrate against one another and against God (Powlison, 2012). The Flesh Model notes that the Bible gives the most attention to our flesh as the residing place of evil in the world—in the sinfulness of the human heart (Powlison, 1994; Taillon, 2013; Romans 8:6-8, 13; Galatians 5:16). In the Flesh Model, there is a spiritual enemy who seeks to kill and destroy, but his nature and direct activities are not our only or even primary concern. In its purest sense, the Flesh Model claims that even Jesus’ acts of demonic deliverances were momentary solutions in the course of His larger mission . . . to free us from the slavery of our sin. A focus on freedom from demonic evil, while important, is not what ultimately brings us redemption. Only Jesus’ work on the cross and the Spirit of God in us can transform the heart. This means that in addition to binding up the enemy or being delivered supernaturally from evil spirits, teachers’ and students’ hearts and character must be redeemed and shaped into the ways of Christ. This is the process of discipleship, and it is an act of war (Taillon, 2013).

Quadrant Three: The Ground-Level Deliverance Model

Different from the World Systems Model and the Flesh Model, which deal with evil in human relationships and in the heart of man, the Ground-Level Deliverance Model deals directly with independent and personal demonic agents. This view holds that evil in the world is ultimately derived from evil spiritual entities actively working against the will of God. This view argues that there are spiritual realities and agents beyond what we can see in the natural world. In this battle, the God of the Bible, YHWH, is the preeminent and superior Being who must continually battle enemies that seek to usurp Him and bring destruction upon His creation (Boyd, 2012; Taillon, 2013). In the gospel of John, Jesus said that we have a real enemy who seeks “to steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10; Kraft, 1997); he prowls “like a lion to devour us” (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus showed complete and unprecedented authority over the work of the enemy when confronted by him (Kraft, 1997; Taillon, 2013). Christian educators in public or private schools are not immune to the influence of spiritual warfare as they are broken themselves and

interact with broken individuals. As believers, we are called upon to partner with Christ in coming against the work of the enemy when we encounter him in the classroom.

Quadrant Four: The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model

The fourth view on spiritual warfare, the Strategic-Level Deliverance Model, integrates aspects of the World Systems Model and is related to the Ground-Level Deliverance Model as it focuses its attention on demonic spirits that have authority over geographical areas, nations, or human institutions (Beilby & Eddy, 2012). This view also holds that fallen angels have authority and rights over certain nations or areas of land (Taillon, 2013; Daniel 10). The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model focuses on these high level demonic powers that reside over areas of land, groups of people, alliances, or any other widespread spiritual captivities (Wagner, 1996) and requires a robust understanding of the spiritual world as it pertains to spiritual beings associated with geographic regions. Ultimately, the goal is for Christian educators to take the area for Christ through unified focused prayer against the territorial spirits (Beilby & Eddy, 2012).

History of Spiritual Warfare Training

Historically, new believers were trained for spiritual warfare. In the early church, new believers were called *catechumens*. This Greek word means “pupils” and is related to the word *catēcheō* which means “to instruct” (Arnold, 1997; Dujarer, 1979; Glazer, 1992). The early church took training of *catechumens* seriously. Arnold (2011a) describes that the training involved four areas, according to the *Apostolic Tradition*: “intensive instruction in the Scriptures, training in Christian lifestyle with admonitions to give up and renounce ungodly practices, deliverance ministry, and baptism—including renunciation of Satan and the confession of allegiance to Christ” (p. 6).

Deliverance ministry was exercised during the time of baptism and those who baptized prayed over the *catechumen*, renounced all evil spirits. Many traditions of baptism included the *catechumen* renouncing Satan and his evil works at the time of baptism (Arnold, 2011a). History of the *catechumen* training and preparation for baptism “is attested all over the Mediterranean world—Italy, Egypt, North Africa, Palestine, Syria, Greece, and Asia Minor. It is also attested by many early church writers to the time of Augustine. Although there were minor variations in the way the *catechumenate* was carried out, the basic outline remains similar” (p. 6) to the *Apostolic Tradition’s* four categories of training: 1) intensive training in Scriptures, 2) training in Christian lifestyle, 3) deliverance ministry, and 4) renunciation of Satan and confessed allegiance to Christ (Arnold, 2011a, p. 6).

Spiritual warfare training was essential for new believers. In studying the Gospels, spiritual warfare is present in each historical narrative, from the point of Jesus in warfare with Satan Himself, countering the devil by quoting the Scriptures (Matthew 4); to Jesus casting out

demons and or saying to Peter “Satan get behind me!” (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33); to Jesus in intensive prayer with the Father to the point of sweat like drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44).

Following Jesus’ ascension in Acts 1, the Holy Spirit descends and indwells believers. Believers in the early church then experienced the power of the Spirit manifested in countless ways—speaking in tongues (Acts 2), healing (e.g., Acts 3; 4:22), and casting out demons (e.g., Acts 10:38). The disciples regularly experienced the Holy Spirit’s supernatural direction (e.g., Acts 16:9), empowerment (Luke 9:1-6), and victory over evil spirits (e.g., Acts 10:38). Ephesians 6 provides the most structured biblical passage for defining and preparing for warfare. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (NASB). The warfare directive is to “put on the full armor of God” (Eph. 6:13) which includes having your “loins girded with truth” (Eph. 6:14), wearing the “breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:14), shodding your feet with the “gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15), taking up the “shield of faith” (Eph. 6:16), wearing the “helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17),” and carrying the “sword of the spirit” (Eph. 6:17) which is the Word of God. We are to put on these spiritual weapons and use them in the context of prayer (Ephesians 6:18), which is the central element of spiritual warfare.

While historically the early church trained new believers regarding spiritual warfare, this intensity of spiritual warfare training was mostly lost over time. While the Catholic Church retained the intensive training of *catechism*, the Protestant church at the time of the Reformation, found new paths for training new converts. John and Charles Wesley demonstrated one of the most intensive trainings in the Protestant movement for new believers as they provided the house groups where believers stayed accountable to one another in their Christian walk, committing their time to prayer and study of the Word (Whaling, 1981). However, a paucity of formal spiritual warfare training programs exists for the lay persons in our churches today, and spiritual warfare training for PreK-12 teacher training programs in UCCC institutions of higher education is almost non-existent. The exception to this is the spiritual formation movement emerging in many of our UCCC institutions that emphasizes prayer and the process of sanctification through the work of the Spirit, though spiritual warfare often remains on the sidelines of the curriculum.

Summary

Entering the teaching profession necessitates an intense engagement with spiritual warfare, involving three unavoidable spiritually negative elements: worldly temptations, the flesh, and the devil (Arnold, 1997, 2011b). Throughout Old and New Testament Scriptures, literature, and through life experiences, observations of evil in the context of the World Systems Model, the

Flesh Model, the Ground-Level Deliverance Model, and in the Strategic-Level Deliverance Model are evident. The *catechumen* of the early church were systematically trained for spiritual warfare regardless of their vocation; whereas, new believers today are seldom trained for spiritual warfare in the church and with rare exception in the Christian university's teacher training programs.

Research Question and Methodology

The central question of the "Spiritual Lives of Teachers" survey (Hetzl & Costillo, 2013) is, "What does the spiritual life of a Christian teacher look like?" thereby examining characteristics of a Spirit-led teacher as well as obstacles. This paper focuses primarily on one question on the survey, "*As a teacher, have you ever encountered spiritual warfare? What happened and how did you or others confront evil in this context?*" (item 24).

Twenty teachers, administrators, and professors assisted in the development of the 45-item survey, including professors of Education, Christian Education, Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, and Spiritual Formation. Responses were collected through an online tool and each narrative response was analyzed for themes and coded for reporting purposes.

In May 2013, ACSI Vice President, Dr. Derek Keenan, endorsed the survey and electronically sent the link to 3,390 Association of Christian School (ACSI) administrators in the U.S. and 200 ACSI administrators in English-speaking schools outside the United States, 88% of whom are registered as private schools. Teachers then elected to voluntarily complete the survey. Quantitative data was electronically summarized for central tendency, and qualitative items were analyzed following Creswell's (2013) qualitative procedures.

Participants responded to the survey in a three-week period in May 2013. Seventy-three percent of these teachers were from the U.S., and 27% resided outside the U.S. (item 7). Seventy-two percent were female and 28% male (item 6). The mean age was 44 with an age range of 21 to 76 (item 14). The mean number of years teaching was 16 with a range of 1-52 years of experience (item 3). The majority of the respondents taught PreK-12, and there were just a few higher education responses (Hetzl & Costillo, 2013). Most teachers reported they taught at a private school (88%), followed by international schools (13%), mission schools (7%), and public schools (2%) (Hetzl & Costillo, 2013).

Analysis of the Data

The directions asked teachers to pray about which questions to respond to and then to respond in narrative format. For the specific question of this study, "*As a teacher, have you ever encountered spiritual warfare? What happened and how did you or others confront evil in this context?*" (item 24), 702 teachers responded to this item and 598 of teachers responded in the affirmative that they did experience spiritual warfare. Regarding what happened when

they experienced spiritual warfare, 59% cited relational discord and lack of unity; 20% cited demonic oppression; 20% cited student misbehavior, such as disrespect and rebellion; 19% cited emotional disequilibrium of the teacher, such as negativity, discouragement, and confusion. See Table 1.

Table 1: *Spiritual Warfare Symptomatology*

Rank	*Themes	Percent of This Category	Frequency of Theme
1	Relational Discord and Lack of Unity	59%	355
2	Demonic Oppression	20%	123
3	Student Misbehavior	29%	123
4	Emotional Disequilibrium of the Teacher	19%	116

*Some responses were coded into more than one category.

Relational Discord and Lack of Unity (59%)

Relational discord and lack of unity was the most frequently mentioned theme in the narrative responses. Relational discord could involve other teachers, students, or parents . . . and even the board or administration . . . from preschool to graduate school. One preschool teacher described, “I have encountered spiritual warfare in the form of exclusion and backbiting by co-workers” (ID#0140, Preschool, Female, United States). Another teacher summarized the situations that arise among colleagues when she stated, “I mostly have experienced spiritual warfare in the area of unity among co-workers” (ID #0911, Preschool, Female, United States). A middle school teacher described the struggle with a controversial colleague as she wrote, “A spirit of dissension was growing around a controversial colleague. It took all of our spiritual resources to respond appropriately when we were so tempted to lash out and contribute to the mess” (ID# 1276, 7-8, Female, United States).

Some teachers, however, focused primarily on student behavior as how they encountered spiritual warfare. For example, a kindergarten teacher wrote, “Spiritual warfare often shows up in a child’s behavior. Prayer is the only answer” (#0578, K, Female, United States). A primary teacher from Taiwan wrote, “I have definitely encountered spiritual warfare with students’ behavior in class or unwillingness to help each other” (ID #0305, 1-3, Female, Taiwan). Other teachers focused in on the struggles with the parents. A teacher from Brazil wrote, “Parents’ attitudes made me feel I was being tested and the enemy was putting my Christianity in check” (ID #1425, Preschool, Female, Brazil).

Spiritual warfare was identified in relationships with colleagues, students, and parents, but it did not stop there. Teachers also encountered spiritual warfare in the context of

administration and boards. One teacher wrote, “A spirit of deception has blinded the school board in the decisions it has been making. Teachers have confronted the board about this” (#ID0017, 4-6, Male, Canada). Another teacher wrote, “At present, there seems to be spiritual warfare between the board and staff” (ID #0016, 1-3, Female, Canada). An upper elementary teacher stated, “To be a teacher in a Christian school is to invite and expect spiritual warfare. The only way to combat it is through faith and trust worked out in prayer” (ID# 0569 (4-6, Female, United States).

Demonic Oppression (20%)

Demonic oppression was described by 20% of the respondents. For example, a male kindergarten teacher said that he sees demonic oppression in children “in the fears, hatreds and self-worth problems students are always struggling with” (ID# 0025, K, Male, Canada). A middle school teacher explained, “Last week I taught students who recently watched an explicit horror movie, and presented that they thought nothing of it. I prayed through the conversation and with them” (ID# 0274, 7-8, Male, Canada). One high school teacher in the Philippines described, “Students occasionally chat to me about demonic activity and fear” (ID# 1459, 9-12, Female, Philippines). Teachers from all grade levels around the world readily described areas of behavior and activities that were suspected to be demonic from these respondents’ perspectives.

Student Misbehavior (20%)

Twenty percent of the respondents indicated that they saw spiritual warfare in the context of student behavior. For example, a kindergarten teacher from Peru recognized a trend of illness amongst students during their Spiritual Emphasis Week reporting, “We had more students sick and some had more behavior issues [during Spiritual Emphasis Week]” (ID# 0577, K, Female, Peru). A teacher in Taiwan acknowledged that oftentimes she experiences spiritual warfare in the context of student misbehavior. She wrote, “I have definitely encountered spiritual warfare with students’ behavior in class” (ID #0305, 1-3, Female, Taiwan). A teacher in the United States wrote, “. . . I believe many of the disciplinary issues that go on in the classroom are really spiritual issues . . .” (ID# 1243, 1-3, Female, United States). Indeed, teachers who taught across the grade levels described spiritual warfare evidenced in student behavior.

Emotional Disequilibrium of the Teacher (19%)

Nineteen percent of teachers who responded to the spiritual warfare question indicated they had experienced some type of disequilibrium in their personal lives. For example, a primary teacher wrote, “The spiritual warfare I often face is the lie that I am incompetent at my job. I fight this lie with the truth that I can do all things through Christ” (ID# 1260, 1-3, Male, Canada). A middle school teacher wrote, “I experience spiritual warfare on a regular basis. I

feel that Satan tries to plant seeds of doubt in my mind related to decisions I've made on behalf of my role as a teacher" (ID# 1426, 7-8, Female, United States). A high school teacher described, "I feel like I have to constantly fight feelings of inadequacy or comparing myself to older/more veteran teachers. I am reminded though that He has called and equipped me" (ID# 1268, 9-12, Female, United States).

Additional Observations

While respondents would describe or cite specific incidences of spiritual warfare, there was also clear evidence in the data regarding the *daily*ness of spiritual warfare in the lives of teachers. A high school teacher in this study described that she experienced spiritual warfare "all the time!" She went on to share, "I try to teach students to expect the attack, especially when they have set out to do something very intentionally for God" (ID# 0053, 9-12, Female, United States). Respondents also mentioned experiences of sight, sound, and touch or feeling, demonstrating the palpable nature of spiritual warfare. A teacher from the United Kingdom stated that "during Bible time I could see the children getting distracted and very restless when I started talking about salvation" (ID# 1193, Preschool, Female, United Kingdom). Another teacher mentioned that a student of his "would become like a dog, barking and crawl[ing] on floor . . ." (ID# 0435, 1-3, Male, United States). Teachers often described chaos, confusion, heaviness, or feelings of eeriness surrounding their awareness of demonic forces. These testimonies from teachers around the world explicitly describe the dailyness and palpable nature of spiritual warfare in the classroom while indicating that prayer and the Word of God are the primary means of defense.

Countering Spiritual Warfare

When analyzing the data related to, "how did you or others confront evil in this context?" 49% of respondents said prayer and 11% Scripture as the method to counter spiritual warfare. Also, some interesting patterns emerged regarding spiritual warfare prayer as well as spiritual warfare strategies. Five subthemes or observations about *how* teachers prayed emerged as researchers coded each narrative response on spiritual warfare that *included* prayer. The five themes were: secular strategy, sacred strategy, corporate strategy, supplication, and individual prayer. See Figure 5. The *secular strategy* subtheme meant that respondents *combined* prayer with a secular strategy that non-Christians would also deem as wise (e.g., prayer plus psychological assessment). The *sacred strategy* category meant that respondents combined prayer with other sacred, biblically supported strategies, such as fasting, trusting God, anointing with oil, confronting sin, etc. *Corporate prayer* meant that the teacher gathered strength by joining in prayer with other colleagues. The *supplication* category meant the teacher prayed for specific things in regard to the spiritual warfare issue. The *individual prayer* category meant the teacher indicated that he or she prayed individually, with no indication the teacher was praying

in conjunction with other believers. As the researchers coded the data, individual responses could be coded in more than one category, and it must be assumed that respondents may or may not have been comprehensive in their responses.

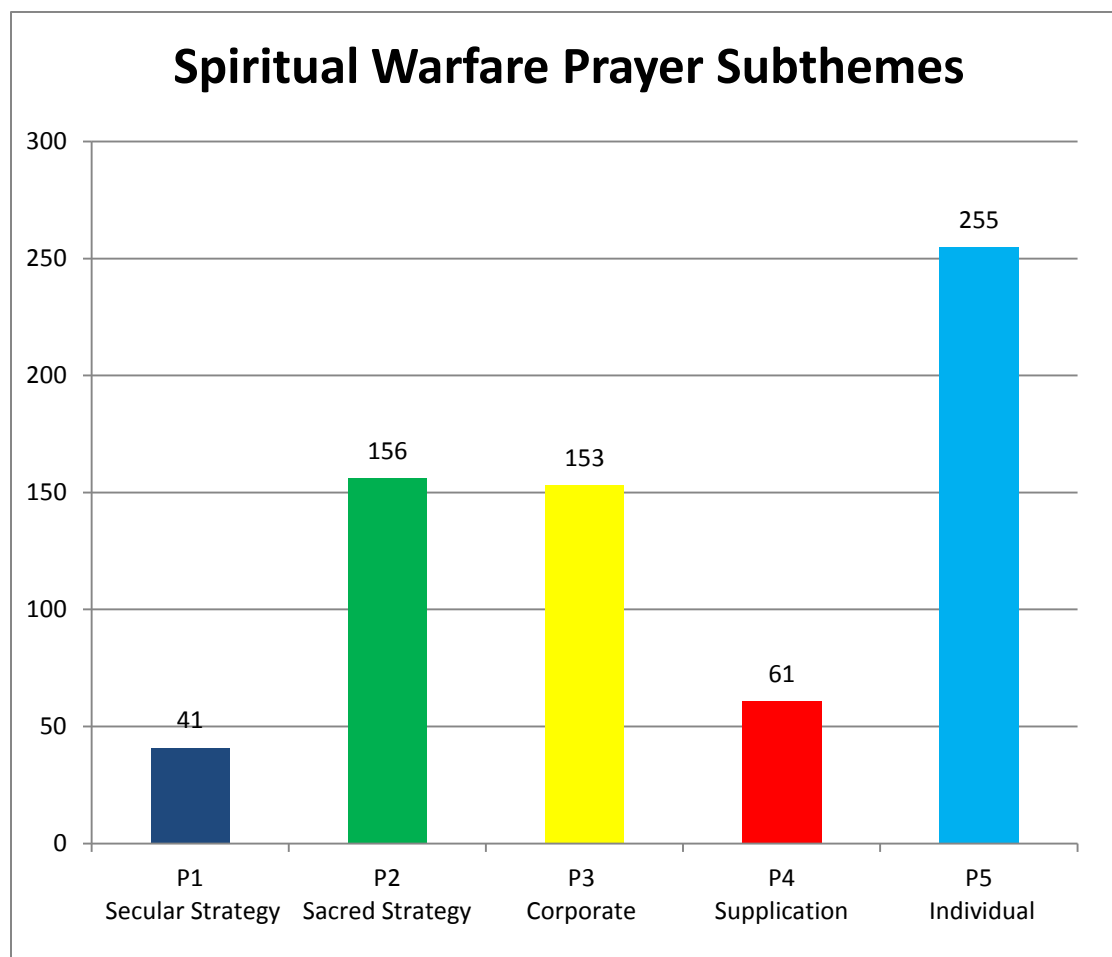


Figure 5: Spiritual Warfare Prayer Subthemes

Upon further review of responses involving prayer, researchers explored spiritual warfare prayer strategy subthemes, such as rebuke/power encounters, sacred strategies, secular strategies, strategic use of the Word of God, and body of Christ involvement. While the theme of prayer remains utmost in how teachers self-reported confronting evil in their educational roles, there were significant strategies within prayer that teachers incorporated in an effort to confront evil. See Figure 6.

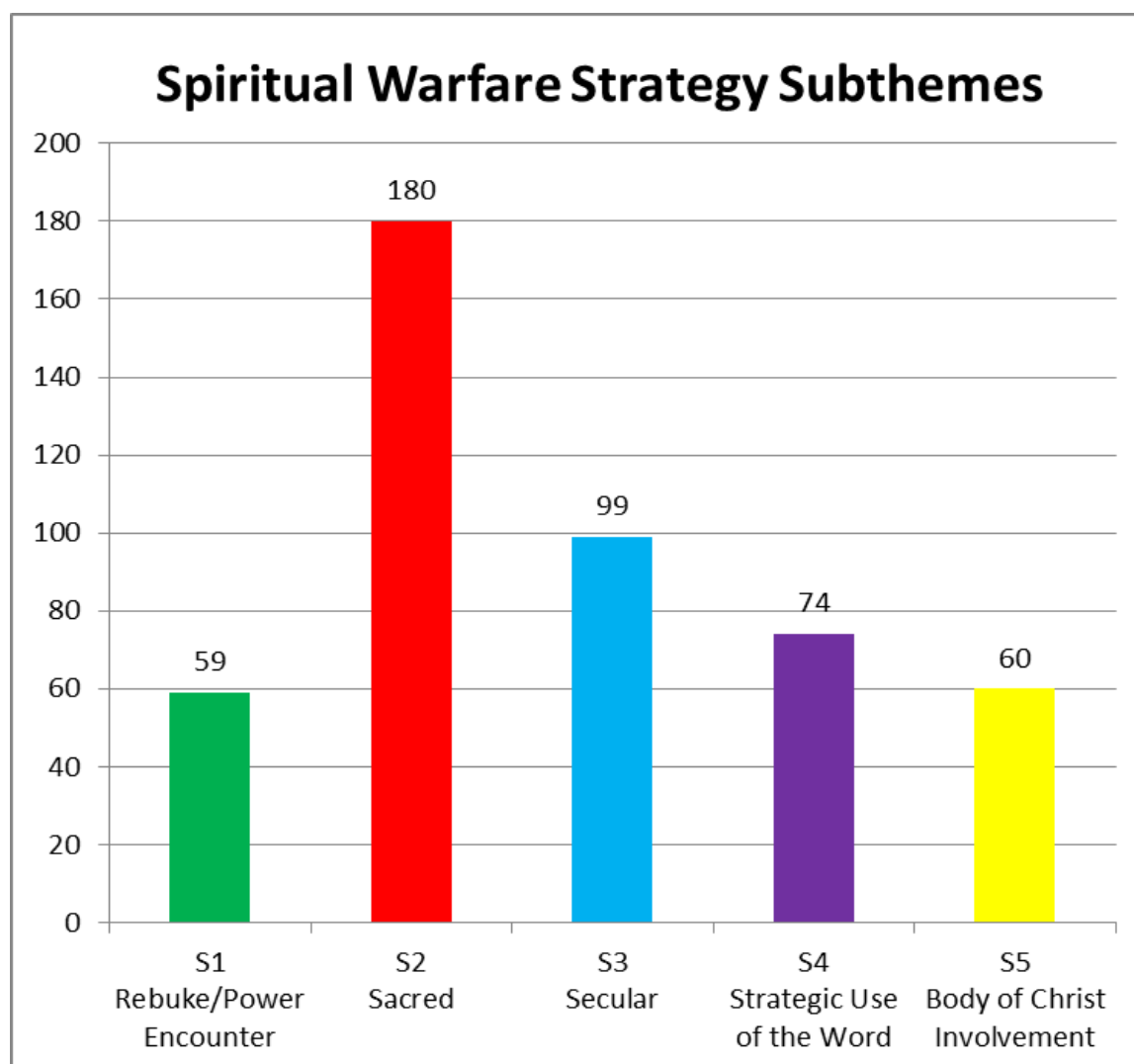


Figure 6: Spiritual Warfare Strategy Subthemes

A *rebuke or power encounter* refers to the concept of taking a stand against supernatural evil forces and includes laying on of hands, rebuking in the name of Jesus, claiming the blood of Jesus, and putting on the armor of God. The *sacred strategy responses* category included fasting, forgiving, confronting sin, seeking godly counsel, relying on the Holy Spirit, and worship. *Secular strategies* refer to wisdom strategies that non-believers would utilize to handle a challenging classroom situation, including classroom management practices, efforts to improve communication, and diligence in classroom preparation. The *strategic use of the Word* may include reading Scripture aloud, memorizing verses, and praying Scripture. The *body of Christ involvement* included practices such as recruiting prayer warriors, seeking godly counsel/guidance in prayer, receiving encouragement through prayer, and scheduling times for fellowship and corporate prayer.

Conclusion

Public and private school educators, by the very nature of their responsibilities, are in spiritually influential territory where they must be aware of evil as it exists in the World Systems Model, the Flesh Model, the Ground-Level Deliverance Model, and the Strategic-Level Deliverance Model (Beilby & Eddy, 2012; Boyd, 2012; Powlison, 2012; Wagner, 1996; Wink, 2012). Evil promotes injustices and the work of the Spirit rights injustices. Christian teachers are targets because of their spiritually strategic roles. Children and adolescents are prime targets for Satan's work, because they are the next generation of disciples of Jesus.

The data indicated that the role of prayer was primary throughout the spiritual warfare data from the Christian educators. The data also underscored the role of Christian educators to teach the truth via the Word of God, the second most prominent theme the educators reported as a method to combat spiritual warfare in the educational setting. As one teacher commented, "the very act of education is spiritual warfare, shining the light of truth into the darkness of ignorance . . ." (ID# 1174, 9-12, Male, United States); therefore, it is critical that teachers *know* the Word of God and *use* the Word of God, as Jesus did (Matthew 4), as they engage in spiritual warfare throughout the school day. The emphasis of the data on prayer and the Word of God was aligned with the training of Jesus' disciples (e.g., Matthew, Acts) and the historical training of the *catechumen* in the early church (Arnold, 2011a).

The study provides vivid insight into global spiritual warfare conditions in primarily *private* educational settings, providing evidence and argumentation to advance spiritual warfare training for pre-service and in-service Christian educators worldwide, particularly as it relates to prayer and a deepened understanding of the Word of God in the context of what it means to lead a Spirit-led life as an educator and to promote justice on our campuses in our communities. "It is essential that educators who are Christian act as peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) to promote shalom in the individual classroom and throughout the school community [so that] the lives of the administrators, board members, teachers, staff, students, and their collective families" (Anderson, 2015, p. 2) might flourish in Christ and live in shalom.

"Spiritual warfare is a lifestyle. The battles will be many, but the ultimate victory is assured. We go with confidence that the strong man has been bound as we plunder his house, demolish strongholds, and set the captives free in the power of Christ" (Anderson, 2015, p. 6).

To be a Christian educator is to invite spiritual warfare.

Limitations of this Study

Participants in this study were teaching in schools registered with the Association of Christian Schools International. Public school teachers who profess the Christian faith were not included in this study. The researchers have not yet gathered formal data to indicate whether

Christians teaching in public school settings would have similar or different experiences than those reported by the private Christian schoolteachers.

The private Christian schoolteachers reported strategies for spiritual warfare, some of which could not be legally implemented in a public school setting. This limits the ability of a public school teacher in applying some of the spiritual warfare strategies that emerged in this study.

Only 702 of the 1,509 teachers who participated in the study, elected to respond to the spiritual warfare question. The researchers do not know if these teachers chose not to respond due to preference in responding to other items, the length of the survey (i.e., survey fatigue), lack of belief in spiritual warfare, or because they had no experiences in spiritual warfare. The directions on the survey specifically stated, “Feel free to skip questions if you feel uncomfortable, unsure, or nothing comes mind.” Therefore, an analysis could only be made of 702 teachers’ responses which represented only 47% of the entire number of participants in the survey.

Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this study indicate that spiritual warfare is a common experience among private school educators around the globe. Hence, there may be a critical segment of teacher training that is missing from most Christian university teacher preparation programs as it relates to spiritual preparedness for the teaching profession. Further research is warranted in regard to the following question—*what higher education training in spiritual warfare exists and/or ought to be included in a Christian teacher’s spiritual training?*

The researchers recommend that additional studies survey Christians who teach in public schools to determine whether or not spiritual warfare exists in the public schools and, if it does exist (which we suspect it does), explore how teachers are coping with the complexities of spiritual warfare in the public school classroom. Additionally, *if spiritual warfare exists in the public school classroom, what type of spiritual warfare do public school Christian teachers experience—is it more intense, the same, or less intense than in the private Christian school setting? What spiritual warfare strategies are being applied in the public school settings? What spiritual warfare strategies should be included in our CCCU teacher training programs? And, if spiritual warfare strategies should be included in our teacher training programs, what should they be so that our Christian educators are instruments of justice in our communities?*

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