

# Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc.

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## Knowing The Enemy's Tactics

by Dan Trygg

**"...lest we might be exploited/outwitted/cheated/taken-advantage-of/gotten-the-better-of by the adversary; for we are not ignorant of his plots/methods/strategies/schemes/thoughts/purposes/designs."** II Cor. 2:11

In the television show, Star Trek, we see the crew of the Enterprise facing a multitude of dangers. Before they ever went out into space, they were trained at Starfleet Academy in the arts and stratagems of war. They were schooled not only in particular drills, but also in a wide range of history, so that they can draw on the information base of past experiences in order to possibly anticipate or recognize similar situations that they might encounter in their travels. When they do meet a particular species or culture in space, they search their database to attempt to discern the methods used by a potential opponent, to prepare both an effective defense, and a ready offensive strategy, for their encounter. The same principle is followed in the world of sports every week. Not only do players have to master their own skills and competency, which requires training and discipline of body and mind, they also review videos of the games of their opponents. They familiarize themselves with how other teams have played in the past, so that they might be able to anticipate, recognize and prepare for these kinds of strategies in their encounters with these teams.

**One of the strongest weapons in war is the element of surprise.** If surprise is eliminated, either by intelligence reports (scouting) or by the clear demarcation of a confrontation (a scheduled time and place for the contest), then all one's faculties can be devoted to the actual combat. If surprise is gained, either by the subtle methods of concealment of the enemy, or by the ignorance and lack of readiness of the soldier, often such a strong advantage can be won that there is no opportunity for easy recovery. Therefore, in Star Trek, when a danger is imminent, the ship goes on "red alert", which means that all hands are to drop whatever else they may have been doing, and go to their pre-assigned battle stations. If the threat is diminished, but still may be nearby, the level of alarm is dropped to a "yellow alert", which still requires a higher measure of readiness and watchfulness than when the ship is not aware of any threat. In games, the level of required alertness is generally limited by certain rules, including time and procedure rules. There are not too many games that are an all-out onslaught from start to finish, without some breaks in the action. On the other hand, **warfare, whether physical or spiritual, does not have well-defined boundaries of time, place and procedure. The intensity, or timing, of particular attacks is determined by the perceived vulnerability of the opponent, and the availability of resources and soldiers on each side.** There are no rules that say that the enemy must limit his attacks to Sundays at church (or any other time and place). He can, and will, attack us in our own homes, or in the most unsuspecting, innocuous places imaginable, ...at any time, day or night. This is war, not a game. Needless to say, if we are in a vulnerable place in our spiritual walk, the enemy will more likely attempt to take advantage of that. Or, if he can lure us into a place of weakness or defenselessness, he will readily do so. Consequently, **it is to our best interest to familiarize ourselves with the enemy's tactics enough to avoid surprise and situations of vulnerability, or he will attempt to take advantage of us.**

Peter warns us to "be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world" (I Peter 5:8,9). Coupled with Luke 4:13, "And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time", we see that **the enemy is watching us, waiting for a vulnerable moment to strike.** He is on the prowl, watching for the weak, the unaware, the unguarded, the easy prey. If we couple I Pet 5:8,9 with I Cor. 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such is common to humankind...", **we are encouraged to look beyond ourselves to observe that there are similar methods and approaches that the tempter utilizes to ensnare us, if he can.** II Cor. 2:11 indicates that Paul had been conscious of the enemy's strategies, building up his own database of experiences from which to recognize and anticipate the stratagems of our common foe. Thus, **we should take note of some of the common ways he might attack us.**

**1.) Spiritual counter attacks** -- In the skirmishes between God's kingdom and the dominion of darkness, there are on-going continual efforts to take and possess "territory". **Any time we experience freedom, or we help another person to find freedom, we should not be surprised that the enemy will return to harass us in some way.** In Matt. 12:43-45, Jesus warns us of the danger of expelling demons, and then leaving oneself open for a counter invasion.

**The person who has recently been delivered should take extra measures to fortify him or herself against a renewed attack by the enemy. What should they do? (a.) They should be especially careful to expose and tear down any "strongholds",** or internal messages, reasonings or arguments that had been used by the demon to influence them. If they are relatively new, or unschooled in the faith, they should take every advantage to build fortifications against a return attack. This can be done by working hard to clearly understand the concepts of salvation by grace, and who they are as new creations in Christ. **(b.) They must seriously devote themselves to following Christ.** Don't think that you can accept deliverance in a piecemeal fashion. Going on with Jesus and learning to abide in Him with a single, yielded heart of obedience is the only really safe course (Jas. 4:6,7; I Pet. 5:5-9). Arrogantly continuing in sin, or choosing to not address other areas of known disobedience, or being double-minded (wishy-washy) about pursuing Jesus, leaves the door open to attack. **(c.) It is vital to get "knitted in" to a network of relationships with people who are upbuilding and "safe",** people who will be able to monitor their lives and will take action if things seem to be going awry. **(d.) Become familiar with a number of worship songs, and begin to worship in private.** Drawing near to God in humility and submission is the first step in being able to ward off any attacks of the enemy, so we need to develop the ability to do that effectively (Jas. 4:6-8). **(e.) Get involved in serving others.** Not only does this keep a person from being too self-focused, but will hopefully help them begin to discover their own spiritual gifts. Once they understand who they are, and how their gift works (at least in general), they will be able to experience the "flow" of the Holy Spirit, as He works through them in ministering to others. This will recharge, revitalize and strengthen the person, and make it more difficult for the enemy to promote the discontent that is fertile ground for temptation.

**2.) Emotional counter attacks -- The "Elijah Syndrome" --** In I Kings 18, Elijah the prophet wins a great victory over his enemies, the prophets of Baal. It was the climax of his life and ministry to that point, a day for which he had been waiting for over three years. He was victorious, the Lord was vindicated, the people turned back to Yahweh, and he was on fire with joy and exhilaration. *The very next day* (chapter 19), however, the bottom fell out. *Confronted with a threat* from the queen, Elijah became afraid and fled for his life. *He entered a period of deep depression,* and wanted only to die. **This "let down" experience, this emotional collapse after a spiritual high point, is such a common experience that it has been called the Elijah Syndrome,** after this incident in the great prophet's life. Pastors often experience this on Mondays, because Sundays can be so exacting. Anytime we are involved in spiritual warfare, or any other highly demanding service, we can expect that, no matter how energized and spiritually "in tune" we may have felt at the time, there is often an emotional, physical, and sometimes even spiritual let down of some kind in the days to follow. **During such times, if we are not especially vigilant, we are vulnerable emotionally, ...and the enemy is well aware of our vulnerability.** He will stir up discord in our family, or on the job, ...or engineer some disheartening or frustrating chain of events, and our knee-jerk reaction is to fall right into old behavior. We seem to be especially vulnerable to the "woe is me", or "it's not fair" kind of suggestion at such times, which gets us off into feelings of self-pity and bitter resentment. **These emotions can pull us into a whirlpool, where we lose perspective and get pulled farther and farther down.** At such times, the most effective thing we can do is get a lifeline to the larger reality. It is the confusion and inflammation of emotion that keeps us off balance. Once we can start to get our bearings again, and drain off some of that emotional energy, we can generally get back on track. This may be something you can do by taking time out to refocus, or you may find it helpful to talk to someone else in the Body (that's what we are here for). Interestingly, **God did not chide Elijah for his feelings. He simply helped him refocus** by (a.) calling him aside to seek His voice; (b.) giving him some specific things to do; and (c.) directing him to begin a relationship with Elisha. **Taking time out with God; focusing on practical, specific things that you know He wants you to do; and, sharing your struggles with another, are helpful, time-tested methods for getting out of the emotional vortex,** when it begins to pull you down.

**3.) Physical counter attacks --** When you read Job 1 and 2, you can begin to appreciate the power of the enemy to attack our own physical well-being, our families, and our possessions. Fortunately, we also learn that he is restrained, to some degree, by the permission of God. Nevertheless, we must recognize that God has allowed Job, and countless others, to go through some very difficult and heartbreaking experiences. **If we inflict damage on the realm of the prince of darkness, we should not be surprised if he retaliates by attacking our goods, our loved ones, or our own physical health.** This is not to say that all difficulties in life can be attributed to willful attacks of the enemy. We are in a broken world, one afflicted with imbalance, disease, corruption, decay, and human evil. Bad things would still happen to us, if Satan never gave us another thought. However, there are afflictions that are directly attributable to him. These can be recognized and resisted. We are not simply "sitting ducks", defenseless objects of Satan's target practice. **God has given us some tools with which to combat the enemy when he would attack us. Sometimes we can stop the attack, and the damage will be reversed. At other times, the damage remains, and we must do what is necessary to repair or replace what was destroyed.**