

# YWAC

## Young Women Active for Christ

### Spiritual Warfare: Tensions and Targets



### Playlist\* *Check out these songs this month.*

"If We Are the Body"—Casting Crowns

"Does Anybody Hear Her"—Casting Crowns

"Awakening"—Chris Tomlin

"Make Us One"—Twila Paris

\* All songs can be purchased on iTunes, or you can usually find videos of these songs on YouTube for free.

### Warm Up

We would like to think that we, as Christians, give off the image that everything is peaceful and perfect within our churches and homes, but in reality, the church is where Satan does his best work. It's his goal to take away our peace and cause trouble. When he is successful at creating tension between us, then he controls us. If we spend our time fighting, disagreeing and avoiding each other, then we can't be effective witnesses for God's Kingdom.

We know that we're supposed to try to get along, but sometimes that's hard. How do you handle it when one of your church friends becomes a *mean girl*, or when your little sister annoys you or when you're forced to be friendly with someone that you just don't like?

Getting along with people that you don't necessarily like is something that people have had to do since time began. The churches in the New Testament struggled with it a lot. This month, we're going to see what the Bible has to say about working out our differences and making peace with others.

### Work Out

Read John 15:1-8.

Who is the vine?

What are we?

If we stay in the vine, what will happen?

In these Scriptures, Jesus said that we must stay near Him so that we can grow and bear good fruit. If we don't stay close to Him, we will wither. Satan's main goal is to pull us away from Jesus because he doesn't want us to produce good fruit. One of the main ways that Satan pulls us away from God is by creating tension between the members of God's Church. When Satan distracts us from working for God's Kingdom and causes us to argue with each other, he succeeds in pulling us away from God and the work God has for us to do.

This month, we're going to look at three ways that Satan causes tension within the church. These will be our *Target Areas*, where we need to build up strength and prepare to fight off Satan's attacks. Next, we'll learn some *Key Moves* we can make to keep ourselves close to God and keep Satan away.

## Target Areas

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).*

Before a soldier enters into battle, he or she will go through basic training. This training is tough and it’s designed to reveal each soldier’s weaknesses so he or she can work to improve those areas.

If a soldier needed more strength in his arms, he would focus his workouts on building up his arms. If we are going to fight off Satan’s attacks, we need to build up our strength and be ready. Here are three things Satan uses to cause tension in the church. These are our Target Areas, where we need to strengthen our faith.

### Target Area 1 – Contradictions

At church, Kelly smiles and waves at you when you walk in the door. Your parents tell you to go sit with her and the other kids in the youth group, but you don’t really want to. “Why don’t you like Kelly?” your mom asks. “I don’t understand. She’s such a sweet girl.” You roll your eyes. If your mom only knew what Kelly was really like, when she wasn’t in church. She’s the definition of a *mean girl* at school, and she’s been making your life miserable. But she’s got all the parents and youth workers fooled. No one would believe you if you told them what she’d said about you and how she’d treated you. She smiles and leans over to whisper to her friend, Samantha. They both look back at you and hide giggles behind their hands.

Maybe you know someone like Kelly—a person who is a contradiction, who acts one way at church and another way outside of church. Or maybe, when you really search your heart and are honest with yourself, you know that you’re a little like Kelly.

When Satan can get us to live lives that are contradictions, he uses that to cause tension between believers and hurt our ability to witness to others. People who don’t go to church like to call Christians hypocrites because they say we profess Christianity, but don’t live out what we believe. In the story above, Kelly would be considered a hypocrite. She comes to church and acts nice and sweet, but when she’s at school, she’s a totally different person. That’s not a good way to represent Christ. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Our goal in life is to be like Christ. Every day, we should try to be more like Him. He never changes, so He doesn’t want us to live two different lives. The Book of James speaks a lot about controlling your tongue, and in James 3:8-10 we read, “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” James warned the people not to contradict themselves. James 1:8 declares, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

*If you need to work on eliminating contradictions from your life, check out Key Move 1. (See page 3.) If you have to deal with another person who lives a life of contradictions, check out Key Move 2.*

### Target Area 2 – Covetousness

Here she comes. You can already see her bright pink Otter Box shining through her fingers. She’s coming to show you her new iPhone 4S. You look down at your phone, the one that came free with your contract, and slide it into your pocket. I deserve an iPhone, too, you think. Why can’t I have cool things like she has?

Covetousness is wanting what someone else has. It’s also called envy or jealousy. Satan loves to use covetousness against us to stir up trouble.

In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

We naturally want things—its part of being human. Jesus warned us not to focus on earthly, material things. We can’t always have what we want, and sometimes that just doesn’t seem fair to us. It is especially hard when one of our friends gets something we want, but we have to remember that Jesus told us to focus on heavenly things. When we take our focus off the things of the world and put it on the things of God, then we can be content with what we have.

Look up the following verses about covetousness and write your favorite one here:

Hebrews 13:5

Philippians 4:11

1 Timothy 6:8

Exodus 20:17

*If you need help battling covetousness in your life, check out Key Move 2.*

### Target Area 3 – Confusion

You're talking to your friends before church when your youth pastor stops in front of your pew. "There's a visitor here today," he says, nodding towards the back of the church. "Why don't you go say hello and make her feel welcome?" You and your friend look back and see Laura, a girl from your school. "I can't stand her," you mutter under your breath. Your friend asks why, but you can't really answer. You've never really talked to Laura before, but you know that you don't like her. You shrug. "She's just weird," you say, because you can't think of anything else.

We tend to jump to conclusions about people based on the way they look or how they act. Sometimes, we make up our minds about people before we ever talk to them. In John Chapter 4, the women of Samaria had made up their mind about the woman that Jesus met at the well. They didn't like her. They had heard things about her. They weren't sure if what they heard was true, but they just knew that they didn't like her. Imagine how that woman felt. She was completely cut off from the other women in the village. They judged her before they ever knew her.

When we jump to conclusions about people, we are falling into another one of Satan's traps. He loves to confuse God's people. If he can get us to think wrong things about others, then he can drive tension between us and cause us to be less effective witnesses for Christ.

Satan is the author of confusion. If he can think of a way to confuse you, he will try it. But 1 Corinthians 14:33 says that "God is not the author of confusion, but [the author] of peace..." James 3:16 says, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work."

Satan creates confusion in lots of ways. He loves to twist around our words, to make us think people said things they didn't say or meant things they didn't mean. Satan even likes to twist God's words (remember how he tricked Eve in the garden and how he tempted Jesus by twisting the Word of God?). Because Satan is so good at confusing our words, we need to listen and speak carefully. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Paul continued his letter to the Ephesians by warning them to put away "bitterness, and wrath, and anger" and telling them to "be...kind one to another" (Eph 4:31-32). He also warned them not to let Satan confuse them, but to be wise and "[understand] what the will of the Lord is" (Eph 5:17).

*Need help battling confusion? Check out Key Move 3.*

## Key Moves

*"Now the God of peace...make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).*

Every day, we face a battle between our Spirit and our flesh. If we are going to win the battle and beat Satan's attacks, we must rely on God for strength and help. Check out the Key Moves below to help work that tension out of your relationships.

### Key Move 1 – Live a life of purity.

The best way to battle Satan is to live a life of integrity and purity. Living with integrity and purity means that you put away contradictions, covetousness, and confusion. In order to do this, you must stay close to God and rely on Him for strength.

Purity is not about trying to be good enough. None of us can be good enough. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Our best attempts to be good enough fall short. But God offers us grace and forgiveness. We must learn to live in his grace.

Look up James 4:6-7 and write out the verses here:

If you ask God to help make you pure, He will cleanse you. He wants you to come to Him just as you are. Don't worry about cleaning up before you go to Him. He knows what's really going on behind our nice Sunday clothes and makeup anyway. If we go to Him humbly and admit to Him that we need His help, He will lift us up. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10).

Purity is really about staying close to God and keeping away from the harmful things of the world. We must seek God and ask Him to help us remain pure physically, emotionally and spiritually. James 1:27 says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...to keep [oneself] unspotted from the world."

### Key Move 2 – Ask God to give you peace.

God wants us to live in peace with one another. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Peace is something that starts within our own hearts. We cannot make someone else have peace. It only comes from God. But if we ask for it, He will give it to us.

Sometimes, we will have to deal with people who live lives of contradictions. We will get confused sometimes, and we will be faced with covetousness ourselves. But God wants us to be content with what we have, and He offers us peace to deal with these situations. God isn't always going to fix everything so our lives are perfect. Paul asked God over and over to remove an obstacle from his life, but God told him, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Paul found peace in God, even when his problem still existed. We must ask God to give us peace in the same way.

### Key Move 3 – Ask God for protection.

Satan's goal is to cause you to fall, but God wants you to be victorious over Satan's attacks. God will give you the strength you need to win the battle against Satan, and He will protect you if you ask Him.

When you feel like you need strength, read Isaiah 40:28-31. God will give you strength when you need it. Wait on Him. He knows exactly what you need and He will provide.

Look up Isaiah 43:1-3. Write the verses here, putting your own name into them (for example, verse one would say: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O (your name)...."

God is on your side. He wants to help you get rid of tension in life so you can be a good witness for Him and do the work He has planned for you.

Remember, our purpose is to love God and to lead others to Him. We exist to bring glory to His name. God doesn't want us to get sidetracked by Satan's tricks. He loves us and wants what is best for us.

*\*\*Part of this study is based on a sermon preached by Bro. Rick Taylor, pastor at Sulphur Springs Free Will Baptist Church in Northport, Alabama.*

## About the Author



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