



CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES
— FOR LIFE • FOR FAMILY —

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN A SECULAR WORLD:

Part 2: Inclinations

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DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS ISSUE?

Spiritual Warfare in a Secular World: Part 1: Pro-Life Political Realities

Can laws alone build a culture that values every human life? While politics matters, lasting change begins somewhere deeper—in the human heart.

This article explores why the Gospel is essential to shaping a culture of life and examines the challenges facing the pro-life movement.



<https://bit.ly/3WUbyHW>

In Part 1 of this series, I discussed “Pro-life Political Realities,” focusing on absolutism vs. incrementalism. Now let’s explore how evil inclinations challenge us as we navigate controversial issues in a pluralistic society.

Government Brings Order to a Disordered World

Paul says that creation groans under its bondage to decay and that believers groan as they await the redemption of their bodies (Romans 8:22–23). The Greek word *stenazo* conveys groaning under pressure. It suggests a condition that makes life less habitable than originally designed.

No one is free from this, but everyone is “squeezed” differently. Because people live with conflicting desires and interests, governments seek common ground to preserve public order. Civil order can restrain some outward wrongs, but it

cannot remake the human heart.

James Madison wrote in Federalist 51: “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” We often try to leverage government to make “better angels” out of people. As much as we want to fix problems in others, let’s start with the one person we can change—ourselves.

Introspective Awareness

One of my favorite quotes comes from a conflict between two former business partners who were beginning to have difficulties with each other. One said to the other,

Everyone in the world is quite mad, except for me and thee—and sometimes I have my doubts about thee.¹

We see others’ faults more

¹ Modernized from a 1828 remark by Robert Owen during a dispute with his business associate, William Allen.

readily than our own. We saw this in Eden:

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12–13)

Adam blames God and Eve, Eve blames the serpent, and so it begins. Cain denies accountability (Genesis 4:9), Aaron blames the people (Exodus 32:21–24), Saul blames the troops (1 Samuel 15:13–21), and Pilate blames the crowd (Matthew 27:24).

Jesus warned that we are people inclined to see the speck in another’s eye and miss the plank in our own (Matthew 7:3–5). Sin affects every person (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23).

Imposters

We have an innate sense about right and wrong,

which seems reliable most of the time (Romans 2:14–15). However, it falters in self-evaluation. We are quicker to see the fault in others than in ourselves, and it is a serious problem.

Consider what led to the Great Flood:

The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:5)

Noah built the ark, gathered the animals and his family, and then God sent a global flood to wipe out what remained. Noah eventually exits the ark and builds an altar to worship God. God places a rainbow in the sky and then says:

“Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.” (Genesis 8:21)

Evil was not wiped out in the flood. As long as human beings exist, evil remains because it resided in the hearts of Noah and his family and continues to this day.

Genesis teaches that the human heart bears an evil inclination from youth (Genesis 8:21).



For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8–9

Failure to recognize this biblical truth feeds the notion that we are saved by performance (Ephesians 2:8–9). We start to believe

that by keeping the rules and regulations of our religion, we are more deserving of God's mercy and better situated to call out the flaws in others.

Clarity on this comes with introspection. It requires humble, and often public, acknowledgment that we are imposters. For centuries our liturgies have contained a public confession of sins. Yet our evil inclination rears its ugly head, catching us praying thoughtlessly, confessing superficially, and changing how we act in

public to suit our audience. While others might see this lack of genuineness, God surely does (Psalm 139:1-4). Jesus called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside and ugly on the inside (Matthew 23:27).

Yet we have wonderful examples of God-pleasing introspection.

Biblical Lessons in Introspection

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus encounters a Roman





centurion who sought His help to heal his servant. When Jesus offered to come and visit the servant, the centurion felt unworthy to have Jesus in his home, to which Jesus replied:

“Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.” (Matthew 8:10)

Grasping one’s lowly state before the perfect Son of God was deemed exemplary faith.

We see this in Matthew’s account of the Canaanite woman, who acknowledges her status as outside

“the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). The Canaanite woman accepted Jesus’ imagery of the children’s bread and appealed for mercy; Jesus commended her great faith (Matthew 15:21–28).

Consider the story Jesus told of the Pharisee and tax collector praying in the temple (Luke 18:10–14). The Apostle Paul said that the scriptures were written for our benefit (Romans 15:4), so what is the point of this story? We want to see ourselves as the tax collector, humbly seeking God’s mercy; but it wouldn’t

make much sense to tell the story if that were the case. The point is that many who call themselves followers of Jesus carry the pride of the Pharisee, not the introspective humility of the tax collector.

Introspection Brings Perspective - Gradually

Spotting the plank in our own eye comes from knowing Christ and using Scripture to reflect on our desperate need for Christ as our Savior. That is introspection. It is not an event but a process. Consider how sin creeps its way into your life:

Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.
(James 1:14-15)

This process, which breeds self-righteousness and

blindness to our own faults, comes gradually. Undoing it is gradual as well.

Consider the course of the Apostle Paul's life. His encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus was transformative (Acts 9:1-19). How great it must have been to encounter Christ in this way. Yet, his transformation was still a process.

Paul spoke candidly about his continuing desire to sin (Romans 7:19). He called himself the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), using the present tense. He wasn't merely reflecting on his life before Damascus. After his conversion, he saw himself as the worst of sinners.

The evil inclination within us meets a new adversary: faith. It is miraculous to believe in Christ for our salvation because, left as sinners, we are hostile to God (Romans 8:7). Believers' faith remains incomplete and often weak in this life. Like Peter, we can



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sometimes walk on water and, shortly thereafter, sink in fear (Matthew 14:22–33).

When Jesus told the story of the unforgiving servant, it was more than a lesson in social injustice (Matthew 18:21–35). It illustrated how transformative introspective faith can be. Once we realize the magnitude of our debt (sin) and the sacrifice made to pay it (Christ's death), we see life's challenges through a different lens. We understand ourselves as beneficiaries of great and perfect love. It is life-changing.

When God's people are changed internally, it changes how we view and treat other people. Because of Christ's love for us, we find cause to be more loving, patient, and, essentially, more Christ-like toward others (2 Corinthians 5:14–15; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 4:19).

As we live in this secular world, we see evil inclination at work. It takes lives, inflicts

suffering, and blasphemes God along the way. In righteous indignation, we want to call it out, stand unwaveringly by the truth of God’s Word, and perhaps even dole out a punishment worthy of the crime.

Introspection, however, gives us a pause. While we are to “correct and rebuke,” we are to do so “with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). We are to proclaim the reason for our hope, but to do so “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). And if this approach grates against your nature, you see my point that this is a process and not an event.

As we interact with people in this world who live solely

for this world, we are to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, and give our shirt along with our coat (Matthew 5:38–42). Paul adapted his approach to those he sought to reach, “that by all possible means” he might save some (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

Next time, we will look at the influences of this world, which provide us with challenges and opportunities in our work of glorifying God in all things. 



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3 WAYS TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES





The Power of One

By Rachel Greiner, Director, Bridge Ministries

CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES **BRIDGE MINISTRIES**

You are among 500 people at an event. The energy is high, and yet so often the moments that stick with us are those shared with a single person. One-on-one exchanges change us. So often CLR makes its greatest impact one conversation at a time.

We can be inspired by how often Jesus stopped to speak with someone, looked them in the eye. He was never too busy or “too important.” That kind of attention is rarer these days, but it’s still where the Holy Spirit does personal work.

A few weeks ago, in between activities at a presentation, we had a chance to talk with a boy who wondered what makes someone valuable. He heard that a person’s value does not rest on perfect performance, but on God’s love.



Some people exude warmth; such a woman recently attended a Care Box event. We shared a moment praying about her miscarriage. We were connecting to the One who perfectly understands what we go through. This wasn’t the first time I’ve walked with someone through that kind of loss, and it won’t be the last. In those

moments, questions are shared and we talk about what we know with certainty: God loves us.

There was the “after-hours” call with a woman experiencing homelessness. By the time we finished talking, she had resources and felt seen.



One person at a time is often exactly how God chooses to work.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” – Galatians 6:2

This week, we invite you to look for one person:

- **a neighbor**
- **a coworker**
- **someone in line who starts chatting with you**



and give them your full attention. Ask a real question, and actually listen to the answer.

You may never know what it means to them.



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