

Engaging in Spiritual Warfare and Exercising Spiritual Authority

Skills for Spiritual Warfare and Spiritual Authority: **Creating Safe Spaces**

Sermon Series Starting February 2, 2025

Thesis: **We are a people who want to grow in our capacity, skill, and desire to reach others with the love of God.**

Text: John 1:1-42; Acts 26:12-18; 1 John 5:21; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

In this sermon series, we are talking about *Engaging in Spiritual Warfare and Exercising Spiritual Authority*. Spiritual warfare is part of our current context as we reach others with the love of God.

Our desire is to develop new *Skills for Spiritual Warfare and Spiritual Authority*.

We are making a journey together with the Lord and with each other in 2025 in reaching others with the love of God.

Creating Safe Spaces and Places

One of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal regarding spiritual warfare and personal transformation is **authenticity**. **Safe spaces, safe places, and safe people are necessary for promoting authenticity.**

We define authenticity as being open and honest; walking in the light; confession.

1 John 1:7–9 (NIV84) 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

James 5:16 (NIV84) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Ephesians 5:13–14 (NIV84) 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

(Stott, John R. W. *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians. The Bible Speaks Today*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.) Verse 13 elaborates the double

value of a Christian exposure of evil. **First, when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible.** This is always good. Darkness hides the ugly realities of evil; the light makes them visible. Then evil is seen for what it is without any possibility of concealment or subterfuge. **Secondly, anything that becomes visible is light.** Paul's economy of words makes it difficult to be certain what he means by this statement. **But he seems to be describing a second stage in what light does: it actually transforms what it illumines into light.** This may mean that Christians who lead a righteous life thereby restrain and reform evildoers, yes, and even convert them. For as their light shines, what it makes visible suddenly is light, just as the Ephesians themselves are light (verse 8). JBP paraphrases: 'It is possible (after all it happened to you) for light to turn the thing it shines upon into light.' If this is correct, then Paul has brought his argument about light and darkness to a fine climax. 'Exposure' sounds negative, showing people up for what they are, judgmental, condemning. And it is that. But the light which exposes has positive evangelistic power also, 'the light of one soul making another light'. For it may bring people, as they see the ugliness of evil, to conviction of their sin and so to penitent faith in Jesus. This, then, is the twofold effect which a Christian's light has on the prevailing darkness: it makes visible and it makes light.

Verse 14 is a natural conclusion. Paul clinches his argument with an apt quotation, which either summarizes the teaching of an Old Testament verse like Isaiah 61:1 (since legei, it is said, normally introduces a quotation from Scripture) or, as many modern commentators suggest, is an extract from an Easter or baptismal hymn: Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. Here our former condition in Adam is graphically described in terms of sleep, death and darkness, from all of which Christ rescues us. **Conversion is nothing less than awaking out of sleep, rising from death and being brought out of darkness into the light of Christ.**

What are the results of authenticity?

1. **1 John 1:7-9.**
 - a. Community (fellowship with one another).
 - b. Transformation (cleansing).
 - c. Forgiveness.
 - d. Purity (purifies us of all unrighteousness).
2. **James 5:16.**
 - a. Forgiveness.
 - b. Healing/ wholeness
3. **Ephesians 5:13-14.**
 - a. Anything exposed to the light becomes visible.
 - b. Anything exposed to the light is transformed (becomes light).

We need safe spaces, safe places, and safe people where we can express authenticity, walk in the light, and confess our faults one to another.

1. We are hardwired for deep connection to God; our brains were designed to run on the fuel of joy.
2. We are hardwired for deep connection to one another. It is through authentic community with others that we experience the support and tangible presence of God through another person as we face big emotions. We are hardwired for authentic community.
3. Remember: What you can't say owns you.
4. Authenticity or vulnerability is the ability to be brave and scared at the same time (Brene' Brown).
 - a. I have to engage my courage muscle and access bravery in order to share with others.

Transformation Conversation: intentionally walking in the light.

1. A transformation conversation does two things:
 - a. It keeps transformation alive in us.
 - b. It gives the Holy Spirit room to talk to the other person.
2. A transformation conversation is a tool designed to help us tell the story of God's activity in our life.
 - a. It describes our current reality.
 - b. It casts vision about our preferred future in the Lord.
3. A transformation conversation is clear, authentic, and passionate.
4. Topics for transformation conversations:
 - a. Celebrate growth and progress.
 - b. Describe the gap between current reality and your God-given preferred future.
 - c. Share action steps.
 - d. Give your word.
 - e. Share where we are stuck or stopped, cynical or resigned (of ever changing).
 - f. Identify what God is putting his finger on in our lives.
 - g. Etc.
5. A transformation conversation can take a few minutes or it can involve a longer conversation.
6. A transformation conversation can be a powerful witnessing tool.
 - a. This is what God is currently doing in my life.
 - b. "If God can do that in this person, maybe he can do something in me."
7. Transformation conversations need to be done frequently (at least a couple of times a week) and intentionally (they won't happen by accident; they need a plan, a calendar, and some contacts).

What is an unsafe space, place, or person?

1. Judging.
2. Fixing.
3. Controlling.
4. Correcting.
5. Having all the answers.

6. What else would you add to this list?

What is a safe space, place, or person?

Creating a safe place to be in authentic community is vital to our work and life as a family and community. We believe that authenticity is the gateway to transformation. Unfortunately, most of us have had at least one bad experience with authenticity. In this congregation, we will work hard to keep this a space safe and a safe place. As leaders and church members of Calvary Community Church, we give you our word to that promise.

Here is what a safe community (space and place) looks like for us:

1. We promise that we will serve as a space and place where people can ask questions, share, learn, and grow without being looked down on, laughed at, rejected, or judged.
2. We promise that we will not gossip or share your story with others.
3. We promise that we will not judge, condemn, or shame anyone.
4. We promise that we will not try to fix you or control you.
5. We promise that we will be vulnerable and authentic with others.
6. We promise not to think less of anyone no matter what they share.
7. We promise to be compassionate with ourselves and with every other person.
8. We promise to speak the truth in love and not to use the truth as a weapon against you.

What else would you add to this list?

We can't create a safe community without your help and intentional effort.

More about speaking the truth in love.

1. *Ephesians 4:15 (NIV84) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*
 - a. Just knowing and sharing the truth is not enough.
 - b. We are called to speak truth in the context of love. That means loving in action, showing we care, listening well, having empathy and compassion, and accepting people where they are.
 - c. Then, in the context of relationship, we can help them realize that the way they have chosen is not workable. We can help them see a better way.
 - d. Here is a process of transformation: belonging, becoming, believing.
2. *Psalms 85:10 (NASB) Lovingkindness (mercy) and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*
 - a. Mercy and truth have met together.
 - b. Righteousness (relationship with God and others; not just being right) and peace (shalom, wholeness, peacemaking) have kissed.

- c. If truth goes before and mercy follows me, then the place where truth and mercy is me. I am supposed to walk in such a way that I am the meeting and collision point between mercy and truth.
- 3. *Psalm 43:3 (NIV) Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.*
- 4. *John 1:14 (NIV) John 1:14 (NIV84) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
 - a. Jesus came full of grace and truth.
 - b. Truth without grace is only half the story.

Why are we talking about creating safe spaces where we can express authenticity and vulnerability as weapons of our warfare?

- 1. A pastor in a church recently shared a conversation he had with his Gen Z daughter. With their permission, I want to share this conversation with you.
 - a. Context: Recently, another leader of a mega ministry was indicted, booked, and released on bond.
 - b. Daughter: How can y'all keep the trust of our church knowing so many other pastors are dropping like flies?
 - c. Dad: That's such a great question. In fact, I've asked the same question myself. I'd love to hear more of your thoughts.
 - i. How are you as a young woman in the church feeling right now?
 - ii. Do young women in the church feel like they can trust their pastors?
 - iii. Do you feel threatened, vulnerable, or uncovered?
 - d. Daughter: I think, for me, it's easy to trust our church since I've grown up with everyone . . . but then again, some of these victims grew up with (and were close to) their pastors, too. I can't speak for everyone, but sometimes it's hard not to think, "what if we're next?" And that's the last thing I want to think, but it's a rapidly growing issue with more victims and suspects seemingly daily. No young woman wants to be "next" which could cause them to distance themselves from the church a little bit. I just don't know how someone with such good insight and biblical teachings can do something like that. It's just sad.
 - e. Dad: I know. It's heartbreaking. But remember, great biblical insight doesn't necessarily equate to great personal character. We have to pursue both. As a pastor myself I just want to say that I'm sorry that we've created an atmosphere of fear and distrust. I'm sorry that we've abused and exploited young women for our own sinful pleasure. We should be a safe place for young women, but we've become a source of pain. I'm so sorry.
- 2. Do you hear the cry of a generation? *Whom can I trust?*
- 3. There are enough Christian leaders falling that it is affecting the trust of the younger generation.
- 4. If we don't have safe spaces, safe places, and safe people, shepherds and sheep will continue to hide, to walk in the dark, and to fall prey to the enemy.
- 5. If we don't feel safe, we won't feel secure. If we don't feel safe and secure, we will use emotional and physical energy to be on guard and to self-protect. Or, we will withdraw from churches and ministries all together.

Some closing thoughts:

1. Let's pray for our leaders.
2. Let's repent where we have made meaning, judged, slandered, received false or bad reports. Not every accusation you hear is true; not everything you hear or read is accurate.
3. Let's repent and grieve over what has happened to leaders, followers, and the generations in this hour.
4. Let's practice authenticity, vulnerability, and walking in the light.
5. Let's stay committed and connected to one another, and let's commit to being a safe place (Psalm 139:5).
 - a. *Psalm 139:5 (NIV84) You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.*
 - i. I am committed to staying connected to you.
 - ii. I am closing the distance.
 - iii. I am not backing away from you.
 - iv. I will lay hands lovingly on you and pray.
 - v. And, I won't broadcast what you share with me.

The stakes are high. One of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal regarding spiritual warfare and personal transformation is authenticity. Safe spaces, safe places, and safe people are necessary for promoting authenticity.

With God helping us, may we create such a space and be such a people.