

From *How to Meet the Enemy*, by John MacArthur:

Not only is much of the current spiritual warfare movement based on extra-biblical ideas, but it also raises numerous questions of logic. For instance, how long does it last when someone "binds" Satan or his demons, and why don't we just bind them once for all? If demons need to be cast out of believers, what keeps them from coming back in if the Holy Spirit's presence isn't enough? If territorial demonic strongholds need to be broken before evangelism can be successful, why did Jesus or the apostles never give us instructions for doing so?

All believers need to understand the reality of spiritual warfare and be involved in it. Ephesians 6:12 makes that clear. But the following verses in that great chapter reveal our part in the battle--and please notice that the armor of God does not include talking to Satan or his demons, "binding" them, claiming authority over territorial spirits, or any similar tactic. Rather, the armor consists entirely of spiritual character qualities (i.e. knowledge of the Word of God, righteous behavior, faith). So it's not *what we say* (or some ritual we stage) that renders the devil ineffective in our lives, but *who we are*. Remember Paul's statement that "the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Our confidence cannot rest in extra-biblical methods devised by man or learned from lying demons, but only in the sufficient truth revealed in the Word of God.

We do realize that many of the concepts contained in these books (especially Anderson's and Warner's) are biblical, but those truths are mingled with error just enough to make the books dangerous to the undiscerning. May I give you a simple guideline for judging the things you read and hear about spiritual warfare? If it clearly proceeds from a solid interpretation of biblical texts, then practice it. If it is something based on a questionable interpretation of one text or not based on Scripture at all, do not even consider it (1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Unfortunately today's teaching about binding Satan, rebuking him, casting out demons, territorial spirits, and the like fall into the latter category and have no basis in the Word of God. They are man-made ideas and practices that will only turn our focus to the things of hell rather than the things of heaven and divert us from the personal discipline and spiritual growth that will *really* make us victors over sin.

From *The Gospel According to Jesus*, by John MacArthur:

CAN A PERSON BE SAVED WHO DOES NOT CONSCIOUSLY COUNT THE COST OF FOLLOWING CHRIST AT THE TIME OF CONVERSION?

A person can be truly born again without considering the cost of following Christ, but no one can be saved who counts the cost and is unwilling to pay it. As I mentioned in the preface to this book, we are sure that no one ever understands the full implications of Christ's lordship at the moment of conversion; in fact, none of us probably ever do in this life. But the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a true convert creates a surrender to Christ's authority and willingness to obey what light he or she has received.

CAN A TRUE CHRISTIAN BE "BACKSLIDDEN"?

Whether a true Christian can be "backslidden" depends on our definition of that term. If by it

we mean a state that people live in (i.e. the pattern of their lives), then that is a sign of false profession (1 John 3:4-10; Matthew 7:21-23). Or if we use that term to describe people who forsake Christ and "lose their faith," then we are really describing those who were never truly saved (1 John 2:19; John 8:31; 1 Timothy 2:12). The word "backslidden" is used in those two ways in Scripture. It is found only in Old Testament references to the nation of Israel, which was filled with unregenerate people (cf. Romans 2:28-29). And in that sense the Word cannot be used to describe true Christians. God will not allow His elect to continue in an unbroken pattern of sin (1 John 3:9), but will chasten them to bring about holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

On the other hand, all Christians go through times when they do not grow or are set back in their growth by sin ("back-sliding"?). In that sense the word could apply to true believers. So "backslidden" is a misnomer if used to describe a "Christian" who lives in a never-ending state of sin or indifference toward God, but it can be the periodic experience of those who love God and want to serve Him (Romans 7:15-25).

From *Run to Win*, by Tim Challies:

Do It Now

Here are some practical ways that you can increase your motivation to live for the purpose of bringing glory to God:

- *Lay up treasure in heaven.* Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The more time and energy you spend on spiritual endeavors (if done through the power of the Holy Spirit), the more your heart will become motivated to love and serve Christ. We place a high value on material possessions when we pay a lot of money for them or put a lot of time into them, and that "treasure principal" applies to our relationship with God as well.
- *Lift up the Lord in worship.* In Psalm 73 David describes how he was envying the prosperity of the wicked and thinking that his own pursuit of purity was in vain. But then he "went into the sanctuary of God" and was reminded that he would be much better off in the end (vv. 16-20). His God- and Word-centered worship caused him to value the Lord so much that he ended up saying, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (v. 25).
- *Lead others to Christ.* In Luke 16 Jesus told a parable about an unjust steward who used his earthly treasure to build relationships with people who could help him in the future. Drawing a spiritual parallel, the Lord said, "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." The idea is that if you use your treasure, time, and talents for the sake of the kingdom in this life, you will be blessed with true friendships both now and in eternity. And this will make you more able to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever."