

Middle School November 2 & 3



There's a spiritual battle between the kingdoms of God and of the world and we get to be spiritual fighters for the winning team.

Small Group

1. **Discussion.** This is time to process the ideas of the two kingdoms being at war and how we can be spiritual fighters. This is a hard message, and it's OK if the kids aren't totally onboard!
2. **Activity.** This activity is designed to help the kids practice being spiritual fighters. Encourage them to participate, but don't force it! Repentance is a vulnerable thing. Try to lead by example!
3. **Training.** This week, we're learning how to be a spiritual fighter by believing what our King says is true. Make sure each kid gets an FIGHT card.

1. Discussion

1. Last week, we talked about responding to God's love by obeying him. We each took home an OBEY card with a challenge to obey God in a specific way. For those of you who were here, did anyone complete their OBEY experiment last week? What did you do and how did it go?
 - a. Did you find any connection with obedience and freedom?
2. Do you believe the force of evil exists? Why or why not?
3. What does it look like for the kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God to be at war?
 - a. What are they fighting over?
4. What is your reaction to hearing about these kingdoms being at war and us being caught in the middle of a battle? How does that make you feel?
5. Why is it that we can hear about an enemy who comes to steal, kill and destroy and not be terrified?
 - a. *We can be strong in the Lord! If we remember his character and story, we don't have to be afraid. Jesus already has authority over anything evil, and in the end he will be victorious! If we're fighting with the Kingdom of God, we know that we will win.*
6. How else can we be spiritual fighters? (Read Mark 1:15 if you need a hint)
 - a. *Repent and Believe!*
 - b. What do you think it means to repent?
 - c. What do you think it means to believe?

2. Activity

For Kingdom purposes, repenting simply means to change our minds. It's turning away from the kingdom of the world and turning toward the Kingdom of God. Repenting has nothing to do with shame or condemnation or self-hatred. It's as simple as saying, "God, I don't want to be angry at my brother anymore. Give me more of you and help me love him like you love me!"

Even though it may not feel like an aggressive thing to do, repentance is a powerful way to be a spiritual fighter. So everybody, lace up your repentin' shoes, and let's give this thing a try. It may be way outside your comfort zone, but it's worth it.

Set a timer for two minutes. Give each kid a marker with a body template. Tell them to complete part A.

Time's up! For part B we're going to practice repenting in front of each other. If you feel uncomfortable doing that, you don't have to do it. BUT, in my experience with this, a little discomfort in repentance leads to lots and lots of freedom on the other side. Everyone find a partner, or if you'd feel more comfortable, I can do this part with you. Follow the instructions to part B.

3. Training

In the Bible verse we read earlier, Jesus told us to "repent" and "believe". This week's challenge is where the belief comes in.

These days, to believe is to accept something as true. But in Jesus' time, belief had a whole other meaning. Back then, if you said you believed something, it was assumed that you did something about it. In other words, belief meant action.

Leader, distribute the FIGHT cards.

This is the Fight Experiment. We'll be spiritual fighters by following through on our repentance experiment throughout the week. You'll notice that one side of the card is blank. That's for you to complete. Based on the repentance exercise we just did, think of one actionable way you will turn toward God this week. So if you wrote down that you've been frustrated at your sibling, what's one way that you can combat that? Maybe that means going out of your way to say something kind to him or serving him. Write it down on your card, then share if you'd like! Thanks, everyone! I'm excited to hear how you are spiritual fighters next week!

Pray.

Dismiss.

Large Group

Welcome and Series Recap

Hey everyone! Welcome to Middle School. No matter where you're at on this journey of figuring out what you believe about God and Jesus, we're really glad you're here. For the past three weeks, all of Crossroads and lots of other churches in Cincinnati have embarked on a journey to learn more about God's Kingdom and how we can be a part of it.

Before we get ahead of ourselves, let's play a little game. Are you all familiar with Rock, Paper, Scissors? Great! Well, this game is very similar to that, only we're using Ninja, Bow and Arrow, and Gorilla. You have to use your whole body to play the part. So the first option is Ninja. To be a ninja, you have to strike a karate pose and make a ninja noise. (*Demonstrate*). The second choice is Bow and Arrow. For this one, hold your arms like you're shooting an arrow. Think Katniss Everdeen! (*Demonstrate*). And for the third choice, Gorilla, you'll beat your chest and make loud, obnoxious gorilla sounds. (*Demonstrate*).

SLIDE:

Ninja beats bow and arrow.

Bow and arrow beats gorilla.

Gorilla beats ninja.

If you tie, you're both out.

If you get out, go to the perimeter of the room so you can watch the rest of the game! Once we have two pairs left, we'll bring them onstage so that everyone can see the end of the game. Ready, set, go!

Awesome job, everyone! That was super fun. And appropriate for what we're going to talk about today! We're going to talk about being spiritual fighters. But before we get to that, let's recap what we've learned about the kingdom so far...

Two Kingdoms

The first week of this journey, we talked about the fact that there are two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. The Kingdom of God is ruled by a gracious, loving king who is interested in our freedom and the kingdom of this world is ruled by a deceptive king who is interested in controlling us. In every decision we make, we choose to align ourselves with either the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of this world. There's no in-between.

Kingdom Of God

The Kingdom of God sounds much more appealing, right? So why isn't everyone doing their very best to be a part of that kingdom? If I had to guess, I think it has a lot to do with the fact that the Kingdom of God doesn't operate like anything we're used to. First, instead of earning our place in this kingdom by working and doing good things, we simply have to receive the love of the King. Seems simple, but it's actually pretty difficult to really believe that we can't do anything to earn our way into the kingdom. And once we receive the loving King's perfect love, we come under his authority. Last week, we wrestled with what it looks like to give everything up to him and follow him wholeheartedly by being obedient. Fortunately for us, he's a perfect king who gives us freedom when we obey him!

How The Kingdoms Interact

And that's where we left off. Today we're talking more about the two kingdoms. We've spent quite a bit of time discussing their differences, but today we're going to look at how they interact with each other and what that means for us.

At War

So how do these kingdoms interact? These two kingdoms, the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God, cannot co-exist. In fact, they're at war with each other. Jesus says this,

SLIDE: Matthew 12:30

"Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me."

The truth is, we're in the middle of a war, even if we can't always see it happening. There are two kings vying for our hearts and in every decision we make and thought we have, one of them wins. The king of the kingdom of this world is the devil. And the Bible is pretty clear what he does. Media has done a really good job of making him seem like a little pesky guy that sits on your shoulder and tempts you to tell little white lies here and there.

SLIDE: cartoon picture of the devil

This couldn't be farther from the truth. Here's what Jesus says about him...

SLIDE: John 10:10

"The thief has come to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

There's nothing cute or friendly about this evil king. He's interested in devouring us. This is why we see broken relationships and people getting sick and dying. This is serious stuff that you and I deal with every day. We were born in the middle of the war. On one side is the devil and on the other is a powerful and loving God who wants to give us life. We can choose to ignore it or we can choose to fight.

Rules of Engagement

So, what does this mean for us? Well, practically, what happens when a country enters into a war, there are rules about how they are and aren't allowed to fight. These are called rules of engagement. If that's the case for a war between countries, why should it be any different than a spiritual war between these two kingdoms? Let's see what Paul says about the rules of engagement with this spiritual battle...

SLIDE: Ephesians 6:10-12

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

That's a pretty intense picture of an epic battle. Just like Paul says, we're not fighting this battle against things we can see. So what do we do? How do we handle that?

First, this verse tells us to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Simply stated, this means to know his character and story so that we can have complete confidence that our King's victory is certain. God did an awesome thing for us: he has told us the end of this story. It eventually ends with him winning the battle! We don't have to worry about the outcome of this war. This is what Jesus says about the end of this war...

SLIDE: Revelation 12:10

Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, "It has come at last- salvation and power and the Kingdom of God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accursed of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth- the one who accuses them before our God day and night.

This is a picture of the last battle! It reminds me of a scene from the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Let's watch it together. In this scene, Peter and the evil

witch are battling. Around them, it's beginning to look like the bad guys might win. Hope is fading fast. Let's see what happens...

VIDEO: Battle scene from the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Aslan saves Peter and kills the witch.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXH7XHDYrCQ> (12:13-14:06)

In this clip, Aslan represents our king, Jesus. Jesus is going to crush evil once and for all, similar to what Aslan did. Knowing this makes a huge difference! If we're not confident in this, all of this talk about being in a war can be really scary and uncomfortable. Not to mention, it's really easy for me to get discouraged by the bad things that happen around me or to me during the day. But as soon as we begin to actually believe that we're on the winning side of an epic battle, it's way easier to want to be a spiritual fighter! When we fight this war, we get to see little victories right here and now. We get to see God's Kingdom here on earth!

What Else?

If we're having faith in His Story and character as a victorious King, what else do can we do? How do we become spiritual fighters? We use spiritual weapons like repentance and faith. Before Jesus begins his ministry, he announces this:

SLIDE: Mark 1:15

The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good news!

Repentance

For Kingdom purposes, repenting simply means to change our minds. It's turning away from the Kingdom of the world, and turning toward the Kingdom of God. Repenting has nothing to do with shame or condemnation or self-hatred. It's simply saying, "God, change my ways and thoughts so that they don't lead to my destruction, but rather they lead to your kingdom coming."

Even though it may not feel like an aggressive thing to do, repentance is a powerful way to be a spiritual fighter. Remember, Jesus is a perfect, loving king who wants to give us freedom.

Believe

The "belief" part of this equation is important too! These days, to believe is to accept something as true. But in Jesus' time, belief had a whole other meaning. Back then, if you said you believed something, it was assumed that you did something about it. In other words, belief meant action.

This week in small groups, we're going to be spiritual fighters by repenting and believing God's truth. And it's going to be awesome! After I pray, we'll break up into small groups.

Pray.

Dismiss to small groups.

Prep AV Needs

Small Group:

- LIVE Bible
- Repentance Template (on public drive)
 - Each of these should be ½ sheets of 8.5x11 paper
- Pens/markers
- FIGHT cards

Large Group

- LIVE Bible

AV Needs:

1. Slide: Middle School Graphic
2. Slide: Ninja beats bow and arrow.
Bow and arrow beats gorilla.
Gorilla beats ninja.
If you tie, you're both out.
3. Verse: *"Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me."* Matthew 12:30
4. Slide: Cartoon picture of the devil (on public drive)
5. Verse: *"The thief has come to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* John 10:10
6. Verse: *A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.* Ephesians 6:10-12
7. Verse: *Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, "It has come at last- salvation and power and the Kingdom of God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accursed of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth- the own who accuses them before our God day and night.* Revelation 12:10
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