

Ephesians 6:12 *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Know your enemy

1. Who your enemy is not
2. Your enemy is evil
3. Your enemy is powerful

When you Google something, that search engine actually only searches about 4 percent of everything out there in cyberspace. Something called the deep web has the other 96 percent—all of which is hidden to most people. There is some technical stuff and some military stuff on the deep web, as well as secret, forbidden communications and more.

The really scary part is that there is another hidden part of the deep web. That hidden part is called the dark web, where you can find stolen credit card numbers for sale, mail order marijuana, killers for hire, sex trafficking, medical experiments on people, illegal betting, and much more. To read about it sends shivers up your spine!

When God tells us there is a darkness to this world, he includes SOMEONE in that darkness—an enemy who is both invisible and evil. We are in a struggle with this darkness. We should not enter battle without knowing something about whom we will face. You need to know your enemy.

Know your enemy implies we are in a battle, a war. Make no mistake about it. We are. In this chapter the Apostle Paul warned about when the day of evil comes. It may be a day of severe trial or temptation. It may be a time of sickness or suffering. It may be the days leading up to death. Or it could be those every day temptations and trials that Satan shoots at us like a sniper from a rooftop. So, we need to be ready.

We may want to sit out the fight. We may try to flee to our sanctuaries of sugar or shows and pretend that all is okay with us. But we can't escape this fight. We were drafted into this war when we were baptized and we don't get a furlough until we reach the shores of heaven. We're in this fight whether we want to be or not. So we need to know the enemy.

First, we need to understand who our enemy is not. *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.* George Armstrong Custer is famous for one thing: getting his troops massacred at the Little Big Horn. Why did that happen? Because he terribly underestimated the strength of the enemy. We have to recognize the real battle of life. We are not fighting our own little addictions. We are not fighting a battle against calories or cholesterol. We are not fighting petty battles with laziness or materialism. Our biggest battle is not against a political party or government intrusion in our lives. Our struggle is not with your difficult boss, or crabby co-worker. It's not with the sibling or classmate you haven't spoken to in days. No, we are fighting with evil forces greater than ourselves that are set on destroying us eternally.

As the commander-in-chief of enemy forces, Satan schemes to fool you and me about the real war. Satan wants us to get so wrapped up in the battles of this world that we forget about him entirely. Satan wants us to think of him as a funny guy in a red suit. Satan's tactic is deception. It has been that way from the beginning. He is a liar and the father of lies.

A certain football coach of a certain Wisconsin football team once said, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing!" Despite the way fans may act during games, I don't think any of us would say that winning is the only thing. When all is said and done, it really doesn't matter who wins or loses a football game. Oh, we all want to be on the winning side, otherwise why play the game? Right? But there are certainly more important things in life than winning a game. Still, that saying by Vince Lombardi is true – not when it comes to football – when it comes to eternal life. Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing. Winning the battle for our eternal souls is what Paul is talking about in our text for today. He wants us ready to fight, to battle, to go to war.

We know who our enemy is not. But then we need to know who our enemy is and we need to understand that our enemy is pure evil. *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* Your enemy is the forces of evil. These enemies don't follow the Geneva Convention. They don't care about collateral damage. In fact, they want to destroy us all. It doesn't matter if it is your cute five-year-old or your sweet grandma. Satan and his army are not

afraid to deceive the child at school for the first day, the teenager on his first date or an elderly person dealing with the concerns of ill health.

He doesn't play by the rules. He will kick you when you are down. He will attack us when we are the most vulnerable. He jumps us when we least expect him, tempting us to doubt or to sin. If we fall, he condemns us, filling us with guilt and despair. If we don't give in to him, he tempts us to pride so that we feel we don't need Jesus.

Jesus knew Satan. He knew that he has the blackest, vilest, most deceitful heart. He is a hater of God, and he hates you and me. He even wants to murder us eternally in hell, where the screaming will never stop.

If you speak English or Spanish or another language as your native language, you use that language all the time, every day. Satan's native language is lying. He uses it all the time, every day. All he wants is to hurt, damage, and destroy. The name devil means "slanderer; one who brings charges with hostile intent."

He likes to use two favorite and effective lies. First, he tells you that you are such a good person that you don't need Jesus because God could never damn you to hell. The second lie is just the opposite but no less effective. He will tell you that you are so bad that not even God would ever want you. Both lies. He wants us to believe that God is not fair and doesn't care about you or me. He wants us to get deeper into his darkness: to be angry at God, to reject God's promises, and to hate God. He wants you to abandon God's Word so that you will be totally, spiritually dark and dead.

The goal of all demons is to remove saving faith from the earth—to steal it from you and me and to prevent unbelievers, who are already cut off from God by their unbelief, from hearing about God's grace for them. That's what spiritual darkness is—being separated from our Savior. It's walking and talking and appearing to be doing the things of a normal life but having a dead soul inside. It's being dead to God. No desire for him. No love for him. No faith in him. Satan hates you. He is actively waging war on you. The devil wants your soul to be dead so that you end up dead eternally.

Know your enemy. He is not only evil; he is powerful. He had the power to show Jesus every empire of the world in an instant and to tempt him with that power. He had the power to ruin God's creation by leading mankind into sin. And he is not alone. He has a whole army of demons lined up against us. We are at war with *the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*.

But we are not alone either. We turned the lights on for worship today. And light always defeats darkness! Even a small candle pushes back the darkness of a big cave. More important, another light shines here, far more powerful than the bulbs shining forth above our heads! That light led you here. That light has pushed out the very darkness that Satan has tried to shove into your heart. That light has given you hope and faith and a future in heaven so bright that the Bible describes us as no longer needing the sun or moon for light at all for eternity! St. John is talking about Jesus when he says, "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4,5).

I can't see anything when I'm in the dark, so I need to get my flashlight to walk around without smashing into something. But it's much worse for those who do not trust in Jesus, because they are existing in spiritual darkness. There's only one flashlight for that kind of darkness, and it is Jesus. Jesus is life, the source of all light and life.

Jesus stepped onto the battle field to fight the forces of evil for us. He knew the enemy and not once did he let his guard down. Not once did he complain, talk back, or lust. Not once did he give into frustration. He was tempted in every way like we are, but he never sinned.

Then, he lured Satan into a battle that Satan couldn't win. The Apostle Paul tells us, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 2:15)

Know your enemy. But don't just know him, you need to do battle. And don't trust yourself. There is a traitor within that is in league with the devil. Look to Jesus. Walk in his light by staying in his Word. With the weapons of the Word and clinging to Jesus, we can fight and we will win.