

APOSTOLIC LIVING

ONE PRAYER WARRIOR'S APOSTOLIC WAKE UP CALL

THE FRUIT OF THE APOSTOLIC lifestyle is excitement, fulfillment - and warfare. Since the very nature of the apostolic is warring unto breakthrough, learning the art of war is a given.

I CAN STILL REMEMBER WHEN I joined the staff of one of the largest apostolic churches and Bible schools in Europe back in 1988. The church's vision was to preach the Gospel and establish new churches in Scandinavia, Russia and around the world. It was so exciting to be a part of an active church where every believer was challenged to evangelism, missions, an overcoming lifestyle and holiness, and the services were filled with the glory of God.

BUT THE EXCITEMENT AND FULFILLMENT was also accompanied by battles and challenges that were, at that time, new to me. There was a feeling in the overall atmosphere of constant heaviness and oppression. It almost felt like I was breathing depression. I knew it was not homesickness or even the adjustment to a whole new culture, rather I had entered a completely different spiritual climate - one that I had never known before.

I ALSO experienced real persecution for the first time when I decided to join a local basketball team to stay physically fit and make some non-Christian friends. After a practice, one of the girls asked me why I was in the country. My answer was simple - to serve on staff at the church and Bible school. I was shocked by the hatred that came into her eyes; her attitude influenced the whole team. They refused to speak to me in English, never let me in the game, and eventually asked me to leave.

THE BASKETBALL story may sound trivial, but it led me to an understanding that this was a strongly anti-Christ country and that the God-hating spirit was deeply embedded in the people. It opened my eyes wide to the fact that I had just entered into a new kind of war! It was a battle that could not be fought in the natural. It was a spiritual battle that had to be fought with spiritual weapons.

KEEP IN MIND that in the late 1980s there wasn't much available teaching on the ministry of an apostle. Only in recent years has the revelation on the apostolic come to the forefront. But teaching or no teaching, one thing was certain: If I was going to be apostolic (and survive) I was going to have to know how to fight, stand, plow and press through to victory in many areas.

OF COURSE, I was a strong, mature believer before I joined an apostolic church, but becoming an active part of an apostolic church sometimes brought out the worst in me (for holiness and cleansing). Still, for the most part it was one of the most rewarding, exciting and fruitful times of my life and ministry. Now, I don't want to be a part of anything but an apostolic church!

BUT BE prepared: One of the most basic, but frustrating, experiences of coming into the apostolic is that an apostolic anointing arises out of war and conflict. It seems like warfare and attacks are everywhere. The most important lesson is to learn how to fight - and to get good at it. A powerful way to dominate and subdue the enemies and spiritual atmospheres is through prayer. If you are apostolic you will have to learn how to pray, and make prayer a way of life. Prayer is a launching pad for God's weapons. I discovered that my personal prayer life and my participation in corporate prayer was a key in my victory and the church breaking through with its vision.

FOR SOME believers the paradigm shift from the "standing in faith" brand of kind, gentle, loving Christianity to a warfare lifestyle and mentality is difficult. The Scriptures make it clear that God has weapons that He wants us to use for pulling down strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). He has also given us armor (Ephesians 6:11-12). Part of the "standing" process is actually engaging in the battle through prayer by using the armor and the weapons to fight and eventually win for yourself and the Kingdom of God.

A THOROUGH study of Scripture makes it clear that God's very nature is that of a warrior (Exodus 15:3); we are to be like Him. He wants every generation to be taught the art of war (Judges 3:1-2). Other biblical terms such as subdue, occupy and possess are actually military terms.

IT'S EASY in today's culture of ease, comfort, entertainment and peace to accept these Scriptural commands as just symbolic, or to make excuses leading to passivity instead of engaging in the spiritual battle that is raging from the heavenlies into the earth realm today.

MAKING THE choice to enter the battle instead of running takes commitment, integrity, patience, fortitude and learning how to fight everyday. It also requires you to develop covenant friendships with people who will stand together in every battle. One of the greatest rewards for living as an overcomer is watching God manifest through you and in you as you obey Him and act on His Word and leading. The victories are sweet and the spoils help transition you from a part-time apostolic career to full-time apostolic living.

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