



SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE MARKETPLACE

THRIVING AS SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

H2O
A Heart of Wisdom

“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.” Matthew 10:16 NLT

The world is filled with all kinds of evil and wickedness, yet this is the same environment that Jesus said He expects us to not only function in but to thrive and walk in dominion. We know for sure that the Lord knows the end from the beginning so He certainly knew what His children will be up against, especially in these times. How then are we meant to walk in dominion in such an environment?

This is where spiritual intelligence and wisdom come into play. The sons of Issachar understood the times (spiritual intelligence) and knew what Israel ought to do (spiritual wisdom). Intelligence has to do with the acquisition of knowledge while wisdom is the ability to correctly apply the knowledge acquired.

Bringing this to the arena where most of us operate whether it's in our businesses, careers, etc. we need to understand the specific intelligence and wisdom required to excel in our section of the marketplace. Especially as we will be dealing with different characters who Jesus called wolves.

This series we are looking at what it takes to thrive in the midst of wolves in the marketplace as we are called to do.



Day 1

Understanding the Terrain

“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 6:12 NLT

“We are human, but we don’t wage war as humans do. We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 NLT

We must understand 3 critical things about the terrain we live in. One is that there is an ongoing warfare, whether we like it or not. Second is that there are two types of weapons that can be utilized and these are worldly and spiritual weapons. Finally in order to succeed, neither the warfare nor the weapons should be focused only on the natural. When it comes to the type of people we will be dealing with, Jesus warned that we will engage a group he identified as wolves. These wolves come in two forms: there are wolves dressed as wolves and then there are wolves in sheep’s clothing. How do we know who is who and how do we battle to win and excel to bring God glory?

“So, from now on, we refuse to evaluate people merely by their outward appearances...” 2 Corinthians 5:16 TPT

Jesus calls those who follow Him sheep because they are led by Him, the Great Shepherd and by their nature, sheep are generally peaceful and gentle creatures. Wolves on the other hand are typically more aggressive by nature and are ready to attack their prey because unlike sheep who are fed by their shepherds, wolves are dependent on themselves for sustenance. The wolves in wolf clothing are people who are openly antagonistic towards a person without pretences. As confrontational as they may appear, such people are actually the easier of the two types of wolves because you know what you’re dealing with.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” Acts 1:8

“A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.” Leviticus 6:13

Wolves are apex predators by nature and so tend to look for weaker animals to prey on. This means they are less likely to attack a more powerful animal. Within the context of spiritual warfare, this means when we face open confrontation, we need to respond in the power of the Holy Spirit by asserting our authority in the place of prayer.

Prayer: Lord open my eyes to understand the terrain I am working in and how to handle open confrontations.



Day 2

Deliverance from Falsehood

“But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.” Acts 28:3

Yesterday we looked at wolves in wolves clothing and noted that they tend to be more aggressive and obvious. However wolves in sheep’s clothing are more complicated. This is because they are subtle and only tend to be revealed when a circumstance occurs that reveals their true nature, which often comes as a rude shock to us. Their subtle nature means different strategies are required for engagement. The first place to start us with prayer.

While Paul was making a fire on the island of Malta, he didn’t know that there was a viper in the middle of the sticks he’d gathered. This means that the snake wasn’t obvious to him as it was only when the sticks were laid on the fire that the snake came out. Similarly there are some things in life that will not come out until we turn up the spiritual heat.

“Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, Whose mouth speaks lying words, And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood” Psalms 144:11

Life is spiritual and we can either wait for be at the receiving end of things that have happened or we can be spiritually proactive in the place of prayer. One of the things that prayer does is it behind to “turn up the heat” around us so things that may be hidden come to light.

David was a skilled warrior, used to dealing with all manner of battles and one of the things he had to deal with was people KJV calls “strange children”: people who pretend to mean well but are secretly plotting against one. These types of people appear to speak kind words and extend hands of friendship but these are all lies.

We won’t always know who is planning something against us and the full content of a person’s heart, but we have the benefit of access to the Holy Spirit who knows and sees all things and reveals truth to us. So a strategy is to pray that He reveals those with falsehood in their hearts to us so we don’t become victims.

Prayer: Lord rid me completely of people who speak lying words, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Day 3

Operating with Discernment

“But Jesus didn’t trust them, because he knew all about people. No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person’s heart.” John 2:24-25

Many people surrounded Jesus because of the signs and wonders He performed. They were intrigued, expectant, but not necessarily loyal to Him. Jesus knew this and so He handled His relationship with people intentionally from a place of discernment. He knew who He was, the people around Him, their role in His life and how to respond to them.

“But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors... [Israel] did not ask counsel of the Lord.” Joshua 9:3,14

We get tripped up with people when we don’t recognise their real agenda per time and may be tricked into partnerships, relationships etc. based on false pretenses. Joshua learned this the hard way with the Gibeonites who pretended to be from a far land though they were neighbours so they could trick Israel into a treaty. As a result Israel had to go to an unnecessary war on their behalf. Are there battles you’ve dealt or are dealing with right now due to not recognising people’s true intentions upfront?

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth... and He will tell you things to come.” John 16:13

Jesus knew what was in the heart of the people who were around Him, so He didn’t respond to everyone based only on what or how they presented but based on what the Holy Spirit revealed to Him about who they really were and what they were up to. He alone can guide us into all truth: what’s really going on behind the scenes (1 Cor 12:10). He also tells us things to come, by alerting us in advance. So when the Holy Spirit prompts us to beware of a person, it may not be because of what the person is doing now, but may speak to events that will occur in the future so discernment should be a daily prayer for us.

Prayer: Lord, help me be sensitive to Your promptings. Grant me the gift of discerning spirits so I know what’s really going on behind the scenes and I’m not swayed by what I see or hear.



Day 4

The Wisdom Factor

“Jesus grew in wisdom...” Luke 2:52

“One wise person is stronger than ten leading citizens of a town!” Ecclesiastes 7:19

Wisdom is a valuable currency when dealing with people, especially when we may not have the full picture of what’s going on. We see that Jesus advanced in wisdom first, showing us the priority we should place on this critical area because many battles in the workplace are won with God’s many sided wisdom.

“This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.” John 8:6

“The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, “Where did he get all this wisdom...?”” Mark 6:2

We will certainly encounter all manner of challenges in the marketplace, some as a matter of daily living, others intentionally instigated by others to try and trip us up. One person who encountered the latter often was Jesus as people were frequently testing Him so they could have a reason to accuse Him. But He won with wisdom each time. Sometimes the wisdom was in His direct response as He responded to those trying to test Him. We see this in His response to the men who brought the woman found in adultery and many other situations. His responses always amazed them.

“Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem...paid a visit to Philip... They said, “Sir, we want to meet Jesus.” Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus. Jesus replied, “Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory.” John 12:20-23

Other times the wisdom was in knowing who and what to ignore as He did to the Greeks who wanted to see Him. We don’t know why He chose to ignore them, especially as they’d come from afar, but this teaches us that it’s not every interaction that requires a response from us. Not every battle needs to be fought, wisdom is in knowing the ones that do and what our response should be.

Prayer: Lord help me increase in wisdom daily, let me respond accurately to every situation whether I know I’m being tested or not.

Day 5

Insider Information

'And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.'" 2 Kings 6:12

The king of Syria was planning an attack on Israel, yet each time Israel seemed to have insider knowledge and avoided the ambush locations. It happened so often the king of Syria was convinced he had a spy in his camp. What he didn't know was that Elisha in Israel was receiving spiritual insider information on what the Syrian king was planning and using this information to alert Israel's king.

Had Elisha been in Syria, we could have assumed someone slipped him some information, but given that he was in a different location, there's no logical reason Elisha should have known what was going on, especially to the frequency and level of accuracy he did. Clearly his source wasn't of this realm. Many times, when there's a gang up taking place against us there's no physical way we could know what's going on as these things are often carried out among a few people in relative secrecy. But we carry in us the Holy Spirit who knows ALL things and He reveals them to us.

'Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.' Matthew 2:12

'But Paul's nephew—his sister's son—heard of their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul.' Acts 23:16

Sometimes the insight may come through dreams as with the wise men who were warned not to return to Herod after visiting Jesus. It may be a 'knowing' that a specific action should/should not be taken. The Lord may also position someone strategically to hear and provide critical information as Paul's nephew did, so Paul wasn't ambushed by the men planning to assassinate him. The methods God may choose to use are limitless. The truth of life is that there's a lot we simply do not know. But we have access to all the insider information we could ever require if we tap into our walk with the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord give me access to the specific and strategic intelligence I need for my preservation so I don't ever fall into the hands of the wicked.

Day 6

The Power in Speaking

“So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.” Mark 11:22-23

When we go through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation we see the power of speaking divinely inspired words, whether it is God speaking directly or people speaking what they were instructed to say. This tells us that one of the greatest tools believers have access to is the spoken word of God. There is power in speaking the word not just to people, but also to situations.

“The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Again He said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!” Ezekiel 37:1, 4

When Ezekiel was in the valley of the dry bones, God didn’t tell him to just observe the situation or pray about it, Ezekiel was meant to speak to the bones and give them specific instructions. This means when we encounter situations in the marketplace, one of the first things we should do is find out what the word of God says about the situation and speak to it. The same way one medication doesn’t work for all ailments, there is a specific word that is relevant for the situation we need to address. One of the things we need to ask God for in prayer is the relevant word to speak per time and per season as what we speak must be in alignment with His will.

'Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.' Matthew 24:35

'For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow...' Hebrews 4:12

The word of God isn’t just text, there is a spirit in it that causes the word to act as we speak. Sometimes we need to speak just once, other times we need to speak to speak over and over until we see what we have said. There isn’t a formula to this but one thing we can be assured is that the word works.

Prayer: Lord give me the word to speak per time and to the situation I am facing today.

Day 7 Resilience

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

When (not if) we face battles we must pre-determine not be a casualty of situations that consistently and persistently try to overwhelm us. Jesus made it very clear to us from the start that we will (not might) have many challenges in the world. This is inclusive of the challenges we will face in our careers, businesses and all aspects of life. Jesus encourages us not to not only be resilient but to be cheerful as we do so. This sounds like an oxymoron as cheerfulness and challenges generally don't go together, but then He gives us the reason we should be cheerful: Jesus has already won!

“He frustrates the devices of the crafty, So that their hands cannot carry out their plans. He catches the wise in their own craftiness, And the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them. They meet with darkness in the daytime, And grope at noontime as in the night.” Job 5:12-14

'But the Lord stands beside me like a great warrior. Before him my persecutors will stumble. They cannot defeat me. They will fail and be thoroughly humiliated. Their dishonor will never be forgotten.' Jeremiah 20:11

When we encounter enemy-inspired situations, the enemy tries to make us feel we're alone and helpless, but that is a lie. As believers we do not walk alone, our Father is also the Commander of the Armies of Heaven (Ps 46:7) and as His children we have access to this army. When we speak God's word, we are also activating the angelic forces to work on our behalf (Ps 103:20). We also have the confidence in knowing that Jesus has won the victory on our behalf so we don't face situations fearfully, but with confidence that everything will work out for good. So let's face each day with the comfort that we have already won.

Prayer: Lord help me to stand strong daily in the confidence of the spiritual resources You have made available to me and the victory Jesus won for me.

Day 8 Unique Enablement

'You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed and placed and purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain and be lasting, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name [as My representative] He may give to you.' John 15:16 AMP

Excellence is one of the non-traditional weapons of warfare that we win with in the marketplace. When we are in alignment with God's agenda for our lives, He positions us in specific places per time and equips us to stand out as we are there as His representatives.

'Look, I have specifically chosen Bezalel... I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts.' Exodus 31:2-3

'God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.' Daniel 1:17

God didn't just choose Bezalel, He equipped him with unique capabilities to excel in his assignment. Similarly, the Lord equipped Daniel and his friends with exceptional capabilities which stood them out in Babylon. When God gives us an assignment, He doesn't set us up to fail. Rather we are partnering with Him to fulfil His plan, so success isn't dependent on our strength alone as our strength is inadequate. When He assigns us, He also supernaturally equips us to stand out and succeed so that our light shines and the glory comes to Him.

'You are My battle-axe and weapons of war...!' Jeremiah 51:20

Unfortunately, many times we limit ourselves to what we think we can do, rather than what God can do through us when we let Him. When the Lord says we are His battle axe, it helps to note that a battle axe doesn't swing by itself, its power lies in the strength of the one swinging the handle. Our effectiveness in winning in the marketplace doesn't depend on our self-preparation alone as there will always be people who know or can do more than we can. The gamechanger is when the Lord gets involved and supernaturally enables us to consistently stand out. This is a call to continuous and intentional personal and professional development so when God breathes on our work, the returns more than outweigh the effort put in.

Prayer: Lord, breathe on the works of my hands, enable me by Your strength and crown my efforts with supernatural success.

Day 9 Shrewdness

'Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.' Matthew 10:16

Jesus didn't want us to be naïve about the world we're functioning in so He gave us very clear advice: be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. For Jesus to have given this advice means in it lies significant keys to success so let's unpack this advice and understand what exactly we're supposed to do in practice.

'The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made...' Genesis 3:1

'The rich man had to admire the dishonest rascal for being so shrewd. And it is true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with the world around them than are the children of the light.' Luke 16:8

The dictionary defines shrewdness as the ability to understand and judge a situation quickly and to use this understanding to one's advantage. Jesus Himself noted in the story of the rich man with the dishonest manager how shrewdness is required in dealing with the world around us. If not, we will wrongly assume everyone who smiles or acts friendly is doing so genuinely. Shrewdness requires that we function with discernment and intelligence to quickly assess a situation. It is in responding that we now demonstrate the quality of a dove.

'Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.' 2 Corinthians 5:14

Doves are closely associated with innocence, love and peace. Doves are not harmful creatures and are generally known for their high level of adaptability to different environments, so they can function anywhere. Bringing this back to Jesus's advice, it means while we are to function with high levels of intelligence and judgement, we are not to be manipulative in our response. The Lord wants us to be equipped and aware, but to still remember that we are His and whatever we do should be in line with the fruit of the Holy Spirit we are called to demonstrate. This is where the grace of God comes into effect for us as we have died to the old version of ourselves who may have been underhanded in our dealings and keeps us reliant on the Holy Spirit to keep us from returning to those ways.

Prayer: Lord I recognize that it takes Your grace to be shrewd and harmless at the same time, please help me to balance these so I walk in victory and bring You glory all the way.

Day 10 Dominion Mandate

'Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" Genesis 1:28

As believers we carry a mandate to extend the frontiers of God's kingdom here on earth. Jesus was well aware that believers will be functioning as sheep in wolf territory. Yet this does not in any way minimize His expectations of our ability to not only function but dominate in the spheres we find ourselves. This mandate isn't dependent on our natural circumstances, but on who and whose we are.

'I say, 'You are gods; you are all children of the Most High.' Psalms 82:6

'God has spoken once, Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God.' Psalms 62:11

We carry our heavenly Father's DNA which means that we are not limited to the natural realm alone. We have access to the power and authority that equips us to walk in dominion regardless of how seemingly outnumbered we may be in the marketplace. It's not about the number of wolves we encounter that determines our success. It's the power of God in us that makes the difference. Since the dominion mandate is God's instruction, we know we have His support in excelling even in the most difficult terrain/circumstances.

'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.' Psalms 23:5

'It is God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect.' Psalms 18:32

The fact that we are functioning in enemy territory isn't a hindrance for God in any way. Rather the Lord uses our challenging circumstances as a backdrop to showcase His glory through our lives and our victories. He gives us the strength, wisdom, capacity and all we require to overcome and dominate for His name's sake.

Prayer: Lord help to remember that I am made in your image and You have designed me to walk in dominion. Help me to live consistently as an overcomer knowing You can use the challenges I face as a platform for my lifting.

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