

[n]gaging in servant warfare

By Steve Sjogren

Binding the powers of darkness. Jesus spoke in Matthew 12 of the necessity to “bind” the darkness as the Kingdom of God goes forward upon earth. He essentially said, “Where you find darkness, bind it that the light of the kingdom might come near.” But what exactly does it mean to “bind” evil forces?

Jesus made it clear that binding is an integral part of spiritual warfare when he said, “*How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house*” (Mt 12:29, NIV). When Jesus spoke of tying up the strong man he was referring to binding darkness.

To clearly understand binding, we need to look at the original concept behind the word. Christians typically think of binding as a prayer activity, but author David Stern has a different interpretation. He writes in his Jewish New Testament Commentary that binding is a concept rooted in Judaism. It was a common rabbinical term in Jesus’ day, referring to what was either allowed or forbidden in temple services. Stern says that Christian binding, based on the rabbinical context of the word, is the rule of the church being exercised on earth. In other words, where the reign of our God and King is in place, the powers of darkness are bound. Where our God is not yet in charge, darkness prevails and needs to be bound.

A working definition of binding I find helpful is to choke off darkness in order that God’s light can shine into souls.

When Jesus confronted evil, he didn’t argue, plead or negotiate. He took charge and issued commands to the powers of darkness by his Father’s authority.

One young mother learned about choking off the power of darkness one night on a trip to the grocery store. She was apprehended at gunpoint as she stepped into her car at the store parking lot. The man carrying the gun said, “Get in the car and drive! I’m going to rape you, and then kill you.”

This woman shot a quick desperation prayer to the Lord: “O God, O God, O God!” The thought came to her, “Don’t fall apart. Instead, look him in the eye and show him the love of God.”

She said, “You are not going to kill me. You are going to allow God to touch your heart and heal you with his love. To be as upset as you are, you must have experienced a lot of pain in life.” Her words stunned him. She continued, explaining the love of God in a compelling way. Two hours later she had gained his trust and convinced this escaped convict to turn himself in to the police. He did so without incident. Later when the local newspapers asked how she defended herself she simply said, “Instead of fighting him, I asked God to fill me with his love. I think God melted that man’s heart and changed everything.”



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EVADE, PERVADE, INVADE

Christians take a number of approaches as they attempt to deal with darkness. Some try to bind darkness with an **evade** approach; that is, binding evil with the power of holiness. Evaders speak about the need to “come apart” from the world (see 2 Corinthians 6:17). By removing themselves from the world in as many ways as possible, they feel protected from evil and believe darkness has been dealt with adequately. Evaders are accurate in recognizing that we live in a world beset by darkness, but their desire to flee, while it can appear to honor God, is often based on fear. The underlying attitude of those who seek to evade darkness is “out of sight, out of mind.”

The apostle Paul makes it clear he was not an evader when he said, *“I have written you not to associate with sexually immoral people- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral... In that case you would have to leave this world”* (1 Cor. 5:9b, 10b). Despite their good intentions, evaders are hiding from darkness, not changing it.

Other Christians try to bind darkness by **pervading** it; that is, overtaking it through the power of confrontation in the political, organizational, or spiritual realm. If the evader’s motto is Run away!; the pervader’s rally cry is Run ‘em Over!

While it is sometimes appropriate for Christians to be politically active, when we take our actions to an extreme we can look more political than Christian. The underlying attitude is, “We’re big, we’re bad, and we’re taking over this city!” The more organized we become politically, the weaker our most powerful weapon—love—becomes.

There’s no question that we must be active in the world, but what is the best strategy? I believe it’s jumping in head-first, armed with the practical love of God.



“greater is he who is
in you than he who is
in the world.”

1 John 4:4

Scripture and common sense tell us that there is a time to flee from evil. There is also a time to fight evil head-on. Both the evasion and pervasion approaches to dealing with darkness have a measure of effectiveness, but both are dangerously close to an attitude that is antithetical to the spirit of Christ. There is a “we’re right and you’re wrong; we’re in and you’re out” smugness in both of these approaches. Rather than expressing the healing love and gentleness of Christ, we can develop outright disdain for the world that Jesus loved enough to die for.

When Jesus confronted darkness he didn’t use evasion or pervasion. Rather, he **invaded** it with his own light. In servant warfare we invade darkness with light. We operate on the assumption that “greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.” Because he was convinced of the power of God, Jesus was in the

world, but not of the world. He loved the world, but the love of the world was not in him. He desires the same paradoxical love to be in us.

When darkness and light cross paths, conflict is inevitable. God wants us to learn what it takes to effectively bind the strong man so that when we encounter darkness, we can render it ineffective and set free those who have been slaves to its power.

Binding the darkness with groceries. The Christians at New Life Church in Akron, Ohio, have sought out in recent years to be an invading force in their community by doing acts of servant warfare at a local abortion clinic. While other Christians yelled condemnation at clinic workers, people from New Life felt a special kinship for the supervisor. She was angry and bitter and would often swear at them. They began to pray for her as well as look for opportunities to touch her life in a practical way.

They discovered she is a single mom with several teens at home. The following Saturday morning they filled the back seat of her car with groceries. She cried in response to their kindness and it wasn’t long before she was asking them to pray for her. Though she hasn’t yet come to Christ, she now calls her Christian friends regularly to request prayer.

If we hope to approximate the lifestyle of Jesus, we must leave the safe confines of a Christians-only-world. To avoid building a Christian ghetto we must invade the world with the love of God.

JESUS CHRIST: BINDER OF DARKNESS

The goal of all binding, as Jesus modeled it, is to liberate lives trapped in darkness so they might commit themselves more fully to God. He “prohibited” darkness wherever he found it.

Jesus had many options available to him for battling darkness. Angels were at his disposal. Because the power of God rested upon him, he could have called upon the Lord like Elijah did on Mt. Carmel and wiped out his enemies in one fell swoop (See I Kings 18). On occasion Jesus did move in miraculous power, but he preferred to use a variety of tools to usher in his kingdom: miraculous work, inspired words, and works of practical mercy.

It’s exciting to watch a gifted person speak eloquent words or even perform miracles, but most Christians can’t picture themselves using these weapons for spiritual warfare. On occasion an unusual baseball player comes along who is ambidextrous; that is, he can bat either left-handed or right-handed. While it may be hard to picture Jesus playing baseball, I believe he was ambidextrous in the way he advanced his kingdom. He moved from person to person, approaching each one according to the need at hand. In his right hand he wielded the power of kindness while in his left he swung the power of miracles.

When people in renewal speak of a power encounter, they are referring to the dramatic meeting of darkness and light. A power encounter could be a healing, miraculous knowledge (a “word of knowledge” as Paul calls it in I Corinthians 12:8), or the casting out of a demon. While God often

uses a power encounter to get people’s attention and shake loose satanic forces from the lives of those we seek to bring to Christ, a truth encounter is the effective presentation of the gospel message so that non-Christians can deeply comprehend our words.

In the words of Paul, we must “overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21).

Servant warfare is a subtle type of power encounter, and in the Western world today, it is often the most appropriate way to bind darkness. By demonstrating

kindness in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will enlarge people’s spiritual borders.

Excerpt taken from Changing the World Through Kindness, © 2005. Used by permission of Regal Books. This title is available at Amazon.com.

(Steve Sjogren has been leading a Kindness Revolution since the early ‘90s when he and the members of his church in Cincinnati, OH, served over 12 million people during a 15-year span. Steve and his wife Janie currently pastor a church in Oregon. Steve is one of our speakers at the August 1-4, 2012, Holy Spirit Conference, “To the Ends of the Earth.”)



Steve Sjogren

“overcome evil
with good.”

Rom 12:21



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All In

by Denise Siemens

Graham Cooke was our main speaker, but he does more than talk. He inspires, challenges, teaches, prophesies, disciples and at the same time has us rolling in the aisles with laughter because of his hilarious stories and funny phrases like, "What a pelican!" He called us to see ourselves the way God sees us, to walk in the reality of being in Christ. I may face difficulties, hardship, pain, and loss, but knowing I am IN Christ and that He wants to manifest Himself to me while in the problem is such a message of hope. We are so grateful for our friendship with him.

Carolyn Haas, co-lead pastor at Substance Church in the Mpls./St. Paul metro, shared about trusting God no matter what He calls you to do. She and her husband Peter have not only walked out of their box, they've jumped without a chute in their obedience to His call.

Diane Brask challenged us to "Go, girl" by highlighting some of the women in the Bible and then by telling us of women around the world who are "loving their neighbor" by starting schools, orphanages and churches. We took up a separate offering to support Diane's ministry to women and children and were thrilled to send her \$18,426.49.

One of those in attendance received this vision on the day after the conference:

"I suddenly experienced myself, actually as a girl around 12 years old (just stepping into womanhood), walking forward and then seeming to fall through a massive pane of glass. I didn't feel any impact of it; I only heard the massive shattering of glass all around me. I had the sudden realization that I was in a completely different place with a complete sense of newness in me.

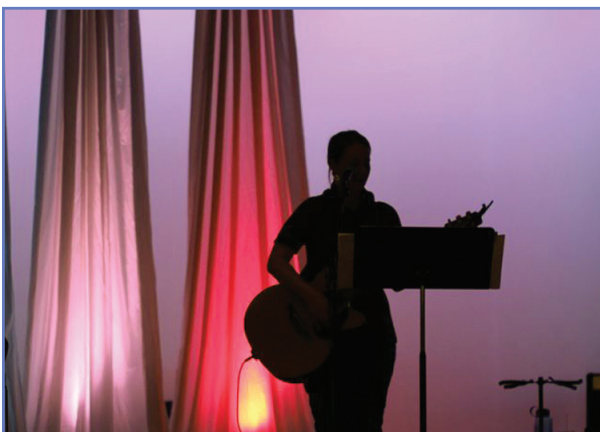
"Then I stopped and inquired of the Lord what was happening and I heard 'You are breaking through.' Then I heard multiple times, the same shattering of massive panes of glass that kept crashing to the ground all around me, and I came to know this as the reality that we ALL had in the conference."

That vision is a picture of what happened in so many of our lives. We experienced breakthrough into the heart of God, breakthrough out of the places that held us captive, breakthrough into newness of life.

All in to break through and love the world!



Two women from Hawaii who have been involved in an Arise! Uplink home group blessed Graham with gifts and a lei.



Graham Cooke will be coming back to share Part Two on April 19-20, 2013, in St. Paul, MN.

To read the entire "All In" recap, please go to the Arise! Women's Ministry facebook page.