

# Battlefields of Children's Souls

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The “world” has always been a “battlefield” on which the forces of God and the forces of the enemy engage in “mind-to-mind” warfare. In the scriptures, the “world” is also called the “flesh.” All of us engage in daily battle between the “flesh” and the “spirit.”

Children are born with a human nature that naturally seeks selfish pleasure. A child's “natural” tendencies are quickly expressed when he/she says, “Mine” for the first time. Parents throughout time have wrestled with how to lovingly shape a child's “nature” from self-centeredness to an ability to love others sacrificially. Without the presence and power of Jesus who lives “in” a child through the Holy Spirit, the challenge of becoming a “new person” would be impossible!



God clearly identifies the home as the primary “battlefield” for a child's soul in Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

*“These are the commandments and statutes and ordinances that the LORD your God has instructed me to teach you to follow in the land that you are about to enter and possess, so that you and your children and grandchildren may fear the LORD your God all the days of your lives by keeping all His statutes and commandments that I give you, and so that your days may be prolonged...*

*...Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.”*



We in children's ministry (CM) serve as assistants or “allies” to the parents. As “allies,” we provide support and encouragement to the parents. As “allies,” we also do all we can to carry out the work of the parents when they drop their children off at the CM programs.

Here is a description of the battles that are waged for the souls of the children, and some strategies to employ both at home and at church.

## 1. **Spiritual** (the meaning of life, who we are, God's existence, etc.)

*The World says...*

- a. God is “old fashioned”!
- b. God is too restrictive!
- c. God is whoever you make him, or her, to be.
- d. There is no God!
- e. All religions worship the same “god.”
- f. God doesn't understand.
- g. God wants only to punish.
- h. The presence of God shouldn't be included in government, education, or moral choices.
- i. Talking about God is offensive to most people.



2. **Morality** (right and wrong, a personal conscience, accountability, responsibility, etc.)

*The World says...*

- a. There is no clear “right” or “wrong”!
- b. “Right” or “wrong” is based on your own perspective or situation.
- c. Nobody has the right to dictate others’ views of “right” or “wrong.”
- d. Stand up for yourself!
- e. It is not healthy to feel “guilty” for your actions – get over it!
- f. The strength to excel and be successful in life comes from within yourself.
- g. Freedom and tolerance require us to accept differing views of “right” and “wrong.”
- h. Each of us must do what we feel is important for us to do, regardless of others’ opinions/



3. **Humanity** (value of human life, respect/love for others, sacrifice for others, submission, etc.)

*The World says...*

- a. Life doesn’t begin until after birth.
- b. Life came as a result of billions of years of evolution.
- c. The world, and all that is in it has come about through natural selection, and survival.
- d. Each of us must take responsibility for ourselves, we can’t expect others to care for us.
- e. Get all that you can out of life!
- f. Take care of your own needs, nobody else will.
- g. Everybody is out to get what you have, protect yourself!
- h. Question authority.
- i. Submission is weakness!
- j. Be powerful, protect yourself, be ready to fight for what is yours.



### **Defensive Strategies**

Here are some ways engage children regarding their own choices and their “souls.” Some of these strategies can be planned and some happen without planning. Some of these techniques happen in the CM setting and some happen outside the church or ministry “walls.”

Jesus was a master at using every connection or encounter to challenge people with thoughts about God. He met with people formally or engaged people casually in the city streets, marketplaces, or in open fields. His “battlefield style” was to “infiltrate” and effect the way people thought. Very seldom did we see Jesus formally teaching in the temple.

Jesus’ style of engaging in everyday life is exactly what God describes in Deuteronomy 6. We are to take full advantage of every encounter to “battle” the world’s influence in the children’s souls! Here are some ideas for engaging the children on the “battlefields” of their lives:

#### **1. Engage Them!**

- a. In the parking lot before or after church.
- b. In the hallways before or after the service.
- c. At the door of the classroom or ministry area.
- d. In the classroom or ministry area.
- e. At the soccer field (visit their games during the week).
- f. At the mall or store if you see them while shopping.
- g. At school if you are able to visit them or their Christian club.
- h. At home (this is for parents).
- i. At fun or social events that you have planned.



## 2. Infiltrate Their Worlds

- a. Go beyond “Hi,” or “How are you?”
- b. Ask specific questions about:
  - Their home
  - Their school
  - Their pets
  - Their siblings
  - Their feelings
  - Their likes / dislikes
  - Their successes / failures
  - Their fears
  - Their toys / games
- c. Listen to them in order to understand them.
- d. Pray with them, then remember previous prayer subjects at next encounter.
- e. Get on their “level” (physically and perspectively).
- f. Pay attention to them with your eyes.
- g. Touch (appropriately and often).
- h. Ask for their opinions, and listen!
- i. Compliment publicly and privately.
- j. Use “guided conversation” at all times.
- k. Be aware, and use, “teachable moments.”



## 3. Influence Their Morals

- a. Respect their current situation, needs, fears and interests.
- b. Help them see the value of God’s standards.
- c. Encourage or reward “movement” in the right direction.



## 4. Establish Relations With Them

- a. Offer them what they want or need
  - Relationship
  - Security
  - Significance
  - Hope
  - Adult approval
  - Direction
  - Encouragement
  - Identity
- b. Hold consistent standards while they are at the CM.
- c. Compliment them and reward good choices.



## 5. Use Conversation And Questions To Challenge Their Thinking

- a. Use questions like:
  - “How do you feel about...?”
  - “What do you think should be done about...?”
  - “Why do you think people do...?”
  - “What do you think would make God happy about...?”



b. Use conversation starters like:

- “Sometimes it’s hard to figure out what God wants...”
- “Life is scary sometimes, isn’t it?”
- “It’s so weird to make good choices and feel like I’m the only one who does it.”
- “How does God hear everyone’s prayers?”
- “God’s definition of ‘good’ must be different from ours.”

The “bottom line” is that we must be ready at a moment’s notice to engage children about God, their choices, and the “world’s” influences. Children are hungry for the truth. They are hungry for real connections with people who really care and who support and protect them. We are God’s voice as they navigate a world that is shouting with the enemy’s voice! The battlefield is difficult at times, but we know who wins the war!

