

Enemy at the Gate

By John Malham • Study download 1

SESSION 1 — CHAPTERS 1-3

CHAPTER 1

The Battle Before the Battle

Theme: The invisible war is real, you were born into it, and the first fight is always inside.

READ FIRST — Open your Bible to these passages before continuing.

Ephesians 6:10-12

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Paul is not speaking in metaphor. There is a real war with real enemies. The first thing you need to know is that you are already in it, whether you acknowledge it or not.

1 Peter 5:8

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

The word 'devour' in Greek is katapino — to swallow down completely. This is not a manageable threat. It is a predator looking for the unprepared man.

2 Timothy 2:3-4

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

A soldier is not recruited into neutrality. You were chosen for this. The question is whether you will fight like it.

THE TEACHING

Most men do not know they are on a battlefield. They wake up, go to work, come home, scroll, unwind, sleep, and repeat. Life feels random — good days, bad days, wins and losses that don't seem to add up to anything. But what if it is not random? What if there is a war older than any nation, older than any empire — and you were born into it? Not recruited. Born.

Scripture is clear: there are no civilians. You do not get to sit this out. Silence is not safety. Passivity is not peace. The enemy does not need your attention — he only needs your absence. While you are distracted, ground is being taken. While you are comfortable, gates are being breached.

But here is the other side of that truth: the war has already been decided. The enemy lost at the cross. He is fighting a retreat. He can harass. He can deceive. He can delay. But he cannot win. The question is not whether victory is secure. The question is whether you will take your place in it.

Three commanders in Scripture show us how God forms a fighter. Moses was made in 40 silent years in the desert before he ever faced Pharaoh — slow of speech, certain he was the wrong man. God does not recruit the qualified; He qualifies the called. Abraham waited 25 years for a promised son. The long wait — when nothing moves and the promise looks dead — is its own kind of warfare. David was formed in the field, alone with God, fighting lions and bears when no one was watching. By the time he walked toward Goliath, that fight was already won. The courage he carried into the valley was drawn from an account he had been filling for years in the dark, faithful when it counted for nothing yet.

The external battle is never the first battle. Not one of these men was forged in front of a crowd. Every one of them won the invisible fight first. So will you. The battle before the battle is fought inside — in whether you open the Book or let it gather dust, whether you pray when you don't feel like it, whether you keep your word when breaking it would be easier. Guard the mind, and the rest of the wall holds.

- There are no civilians. Passivity is not peace — it is surrender. The enemy needs only your absence.
- Moses, Abraham, and David were each forged in invisible seasons before facing any public enemy. None were built in front of a crowd.
- The war has already been decided at the cross. You are not fighting for a victory that is in doubt — you are holding a wall for a King who has already won.
- The first and most critical battle is always the one fought inside, in the mind and the will, before any visible enemy appears.

"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." — Romans 12:2

1. The book opens with this challenge: if you do not have something worth dying for, you do not have something worth living for. What is the thing in your life that would qualify?
2. Which of the three commanders — Moses, Abraham, or David — do you most identify with right now, and why? What season are you in that mirrors theirs?
3. Where in your life have you been treating passivity as if it were peace? What has the enemy gained in that space while you were absent?

4. What does it practically look like to 'win the invisible fight first' in your current season — before the visible battle arrives?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Where in your life have you been treating passivity as if it were peace? What has the enemy gained in that space while you were sitting it out? Be specific.

CHAPTER 2

Learning to See the Thread

Theme: Truth has always been present — we have trained ourselves not to see it.

READ FIRST — Open your Bible to these passages before continuing.

Romans 1:19-20

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

Creation is not silent. It is preaching — constantly, in every direction. The man who cannot see God in the design of the world is not lacking evidence. He is lacking attention.

Psalms 19:1-2

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."

Every sunrise is a sermon. Every galaxy is a billboard. God has been speaking through His creation since the first morning — you do not need a theology degree to hear it.

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

God does not ask you to check your brain at the door. He invites you to reason with Him. Faith and evidence are not enemies — they are partners.

THE TEACHING

There is a peculiar blindness that afflicts modern men — not of the eyes, but of attention. We have trained ourselves not to see. A man can walk beneath a thousand trees and never ask why they grow upward. He can watch his children breathe in their sleep and never wonder how their lungs obey. The ancient man saw miracle. The modern man sees furniture. We have not grown wiser — we have learned to stare without thinking.

The fine-tuning of the universe confronted this. The physical constants are set with a precision so exact that if you moved one dial by a fraction of a hair, none of this exists — no

stars, no planets, no life. Move one dial. Music stops. If the universe is designed, there must be a Designer. C.S. Lewis came at it from a different angle: if there is a moral law written on the heart of every human being across every culture, there must be a Lawgiver. Different doors. Same room.

Think of it this way: imagine a man grasping a smooth rope. He wants to climb but cannot get a grip. Each argument becomes a knot — a place to hold. The Kalam argument is a knot. Fine-tuning is a knot. The moral law is a knot. With each one, you climb a little higher. And here is the deeper truth: the knots were always there. God had woven them into creation before you ever reached for them (Acts 17:26-27). The rope was ready. You needed eyes.

Your DNA is a four-letter language executing flawlessly inside you right now. Information of that magnitude does not arise from chaos. 'In the beginning was the Word' (John 1:1). God spoke creation into being — and when He made you, He wrote you (Psalm 139:13-16). Sin is interference, not design failure. The Gospel is the Author restoring His own work.

Formation is what you repeatedly feed your mind — not what you decide once. Lewis said he believed in Christianity the way he believed the sun had risen — not only because he saw it, but because by it he saw everything else. That is what truth does. Once you have it, distraction feels thin.

- The universe is fine-tuned with a precision that demands a Designer — move one physical constant by a hair and nothing exists.
- The moral law written on every human heart across every culture points to a Lawgiver. Different doors. Same room.
- Each argument for faith is a knot on a rope God already anchored in creation — your job is to reach for it.
- Formation is slow and repeated. You become what you feed your mind, again and again, when no one is watching.

"Come now, let us reason together, saith the LORD." — Isaiah 1:18

1. Have you ever had a moment when truth broke through while you were doing something ordinary — driving, working out, sitting alone? What happened?
2. What has been a 'knot on the rope' in your own journey — an argument, a person, an experience that gave you something to grip?
3. What is the lie about God, yourself, or reality that has had the most power over your thinking? Where did it come from?
4. What are you feeding your mind with daily — hour by hour, when no one is watching? What does that diet produce?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

If you audited the last 30 days of what you have consumed — podcasts, social media, books, conversations — what would the pattern reveal about the direction you are heading?

CHAPTER 3

The Image: Who You Actually Are

Theme: Your identity was declared before you were born — in the mind of God.

READ FIRST — Open your Bible to these passages before continuing.

Genesis 1:26-27

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

Before the world had an opinion about you, God declared who you were. Image-bearer. Vice-regent. Made in the likeness of the Creator of everything. That is the identity no failure can revoke.

Psalms 139:13-16

"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret... Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written."

God was writing your story before you breathed your first breath. Nothing about you is an accident. The ache you feel is not a defect — it is the echo of your original design calling you home.

Romans 8:29

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

In Christ, your identity is not shrinking — it is expanding back toward what it was always meant to be. You are being conformed to the image of the Son. That is not a small calling.

THE TEACHING

Before a man ever asks what his life means — before he wonders why he feels unfinished, before he senses that no achievement will finally quiet him — something older and deeper is already at work: identity. There is an ache in every human being, a quiet restlessness that appears when life goes still. We try to drown it: work, noise, entertainment, achievement, busyness. But the ache is patient. It waits. And when the noise fades — late at night, early in the morning, in moments of crisis — it speaks again.

Here is where it begins: identity is not discovered in a mirror. It is not earned through achievement or constructed through reputation. Biblical identity begins long before your birth. It begins in the mind of God (Psalm 139:13-16). Before you breathed, before your name was spoken, before anyone formed an opinion about you, God willed you into being.

Culture tells you to construct identity. Scripture tells you to receive it. You were made in the image of a Designer whose fingerprints cover the universe (Genesis 1:27). Nothing about you is accidental.

The ache is not a defect in the soul. It is a signature of origin. We were made for a world without decay, without death, without separation from God. That memory, buried in us, keeps calling us home. Animals do not wrestle with meaning. Stars do not question purpose. But people do — because people alone carry the image of God. No paycheck silences the ache. No achievement satisfies it. The hunger is not failure — it is formation calling you toward what you were made for.

The enemy's primary target is not your behavior. It is your identity. If he can distort who you believe you are, your behavior will follow automatically. This is the deep logic of spiritual warfare and it is as old as Eden. In the garden, the serpent's first words were not 'You can have more' — they were 'Did God really say?' (Genesis 3:1). He didn't attack what Eve was doing. He attacked what she was. In the wilderness, Satan's first words to Jesus were 'If you are the Son of God...' (Matthew 4:3). One strategy across every age: attack the image. Answer the attack the way Jesus did: with what is written.

In Christ, you are not just forgiven — you are restored to your original calling. Paul says we are being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). That means your identity is not shrinking; it is expanding back toward what it was always meant to be. The question is not whether you were made for this. The question is whether you will step back into it.

- Identity begins in God, not in achievement, failure, or other people's definitions. You were spoken into existence as an image-bearer before the world ever had an opinion about you.
- The ache inside you is not a malfunction — it is a signature of origin, the echo of what you were made for calling you home.
- The enemy's primary target is not your behavior — it is your identity. Change the identity and the behavior follows automatically.
- In Christ you are not just forgiven — you are restored to the original calling spoken over you before your birth.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." — Genesis 1:27

1. When do you feel the ache most clearly — the restlessness that tells you life was meant to be more than this? What has that ache been pointing toward?
2. How has your identity been shaped more by the world than by Scripture? Where do you see the evidence of that shaping in how you think and act?
3. The enemy's first move in Eden, in Egypt, at Elah, and in the wilderness with Jesus was to attack identity. Where is that attack landing in your life right now?
4. What does it mean practically — not just theologically — to be an image-bearer in your home, your workplace, your neighborhood this week?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Write out in your own words who Scripture says you are. Not who you feel like today, not who others say you are — what does God declare about your identity? Start with Genesis 1:27 and Romans 8:29.

Prayer and next step

What will you put into practice before your next meeting? Who will you pray for?
