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# PRINCIPLES *of* WAR

A HANDBOOK ON STRATEGIC EVANGELISM

JIM WILSON

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# FOREWORD

IN THE STUDY OF WARFARE, GREAT MEN HAVE concluded that there are some overriding principles that, if followed, will always tend toward success in battle, and if neglected or ignored, will tend toward defeat or even destruction. These principles have been entitled the principles of war.

All except the most naive know that the Christian is engaged in warfare.

All except the most foolish know that in war it is imperative that those involved apply the principles of war.

Just as these time-tried principles are effective in waging secular warfare, the author presents in quick succession these same principles as the key to assured victory in our spiritual warfare.

In the true military style of being brief, perspicuous, and succinct, the author with power plunges the reader

point-blank into the fight—a very present institution. The enemy is Satan, the objective is the acknowledgment and fulfillment of the commandments of God, and the ammunition is the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian, clothed in the whole armor of God and applying these pertinent guiding principles of warfare, is an army, a communication system, a weapon to be used, and a soldier to participate forcibly in the battle, to the glory of our Lord.

GRANVILLE A. SHARPE  
Colonel, United States Army  
1964

# PREFACE

IN THE DECADES SINCE THIS LITTLE BOOK FIRST appeared, many changes have taken place in the sophistication of weaponry for physical war. We now have “smart” bombs and guided missiles that are very accurate. If a cruise missile were fired from Boston, it could be guided through the goal posts at JFK Stadium in Washington, D.C.

The principles of war have not changed. Superior weapons have always had an effect on the outcome of a battle or war. However, superior weapons have not guaranteed the outcome. The morale of combatants, the reason for fighting, and most of all, the implementation of the principles of war, are the main guarantees of victory.

The United States lost the war in Vietnam because of the practical disregard of these principles. We had no clear political or military objective. We had clear

superiority in weapons, training, and men. But morale was low, and the men did not know why they were fighting. If they did know, the people at home did not know. The Viet Cong, in contrast, knew where they were going and observed the principles of war. I will mention other examples of violated principles in the appropriate chapters.

In the war to liberate Kuwait from Iraq, we had clear superiority in weapons, training, and morale. In addition, we observed the principles. Ultimate and limited objectives were clearly stated. Even with multinational forces, and with different services in the same theater of war, there was clear unity of command, and clear cooperation between units. The blockade of Iraq, the interdiction of the lines of communication, and the encirclement of Iraq's Republican Guard showed clear understanding of the principle of lines of communication.

We as Christians may not have learned as much in the last twenty years as the military has learned. Even so, there are some positive signs in the prosecution of the war in world evangelism. The most positive sign is the aggressive translation, retranslation, publication, and distribution of the Scriptures in modern languages. The next most positive sign is prayer meetings for revival. Both of these are using the principle of the offensive. Other good signs are changes in mission

organizations so that the doctrine of operation is not fixed. More versatility and flexibility is allowed.

However, there are a few things that we are still doing wrong. We are still using the challenge/volunteer mode of recruiting instead of teaching obedience. We are still teaching loyalty to organizations and methods that hinder obedience to God and cooperation with other units.

We have many individual Christians and married couples in Christian work who are emotionally and/or morally fouled up. If these people are in leadership, this affects the morale of everyone and results in a consequent nonaggressiveness in evangelism.

Our hospitals for casualties are staffed by casualties, and by sympathetic but misguided people who accept the casualties as permanent casualties. People are not being healed so they may get back into battle; they either become permanent invalids, or the cure is planned to take the rest of their natural lives.

It would be too easy for this preface to turn into a book in itself; I will end here so you can read the book.

JIM WILSON

1991

## CHAPTER 1

# OBJECTIVE

In war then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.

—SUN TZU, *The Art of War*, 500 B.C.

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

—THE APOSTLE PAUL, 1 Corinthians 15:57 (NIV)

WHEN WAR IS DECLARED BY CONGRESS, THEIR objective is victory. They pass this assignment over to the commander in chief. The commander in chief, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, makes an estimate of the situation, comes to a decision, and develops a plan. To oversimplify it, the decision might be to invade and occupy specific nations in Europe and Asia. The plan would be to assign Asia to commander in chief,

Pacific, and Europe to commander in chief, Atlantic. These subordinate commanders must then make an estimate of the situation, come to a decision, and develop a plan. They, in turn, assign objectives to subordinate commanders.

Commander in chief, Pacific, orders the commander of the Seventh Fleet to land certain armies and marine divisions in the assigned country in Asia. This process of estimating the situation, making a decision, and assigning objectives to subordinate commanders continues right down to the company, platoon, and squad levels. Every man in the chain of command has his objective assigned to him by higher authority.

Now, suppose an individual infantryman has as his objective the top of a sand dune on a beach in Asia. He is pinned down by enemy fire, and he cannot make a move. While he is in this position, he suddenly sees a paper floating across the beach.

So far, this is a very realistic situation; but suppose we make it unreal, even ludicrous. The paper happens to be a page from the Joint Chiefs of Staff Operation Order. As the page lands in front of him, he reads the assigned objective to the commander in chief, Pacific: Invade and occupy \_\_\_\_ on the continent of Asia. This is too much for him. He cannot even get off the beach and they are telling him to occupy the whole nation. To him it is unrealistic. Since he cannot understand

how the whole can be taken, he might even lose the will to get to the top of the sand dune.

Enough of the illustration. Jesus Christ is our commander in chief, and He has assigned the overall objective and put it in the grasp of every one of His followers in the directive of the Great Commission: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations” (Matt. 28:18–19). To any individual Christian who thinks he is fighting the war all by himself, this objective seems not only unrealistic, but also impossible. Like the soldier on the beach, it is easy to adopt a “What’s the use?” attitude.

The problem is the same in both cases. The man at the bottom of the chain gets a view of the objective of the person at the top. He is looking up the chain of command without the benefit of intermediate objectives. He sees only the objective of the top and the resources of the bottom.

So it is for the Christian. He may see with his commander in chief the complete objective assigned to the whole church. He may also see the smaller parts of the church, groups of believers raised up to reach a special segment of the world’s population. God has raised up specialists with limited objectives in His church.

Rather than lament the multiplicity of Christian organizations, we should rejoice that an intensive effort to meet our objective is being made. Of course, there is

a danger that such groups will be filled with too great a sense of importance. If, however, they seek to occupy their own limited objective with all faithfulness, then the warfare of the church is advanced. These many organizations may be in existence, not because of doctrinal differences, but because God has given them different objectives under the Great Commission.

The first objective is one of sowing the seed. The second is reaping the harvest when the seed falls on good ground. If we sow the seed in every heart, but do not reap where the seed prepares a harvest, then we have not reached our objective. We have in effect added to the condemnation of men with the gospel. We have been a savor of death unto death rather than life unto life (2 Cor. 2:16).

If, on the other hand, we reap where we have sown, but we do not sow in every heart in our assigned mission fields, then we still have not reached our objective. This is serious. This objective is not a mere psychological goal that makes us feel good when we get there. This is a mission assigned by our commander in chief. Not to get there is failure to carry out the assigned mission: it is defeat. Even if people do not or will not respond to the message of good news, this has no bearing on the objective to communicate the message to them. God assigns the objective; the people do not choose their own.

Sun Tzu said, “In war then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.” This truth was violated partially in Korea, completely in Vietnam, and not at all in the Gulf War in Kuwait. In the Korean and Vietnam wars, we rotated men and units in and out of the theater of operations. That meant everyone got ribbons and medals. It also meant lengthy campaigns, more casualties, and no victory. In Vietnam, our objective deteriorated to counting the bodies of the enemy killed.

As I write this, many Christian missions have set certain measurable objectives to be accomplished within the next ten years. However, there are three problems with this kind of thinking:

1. The objectives are too small.
2. They are too far away.
3. They should not be measurable. (In the spiritual war, God keeps the records.)

In other words, we are planning for lengthy campaigns, not victorious campaigns. Ten years from now is too far away.

In World War II, the Allies defeated the two most powerful, industrialized, militaristic nations of the world, which already had a head start when the United States entered the war. They were already off and running, while we had to start from nothing with our Pacific Fleet sunk. We defeated them in three and a

half years. They were at the extreme end of our supply lines. Men who had fought for two years in Africa and Europe boarded ships in France and headed directly for the invasion of Japan. In other words, we had an objective of victory, not a lengthy campaign.

The Church has been counting on the victory prophesied in the second coming, rather than seeking the victory commanded and mandated in Matthew 28:18–20 before the end of the age. This is a cop-out from present responsibility.

Unless we know where we are going, it is of little importance how we go about getting there. The objective is primary.

## QUESTIONS

1. Study personally or in a group: Matthew 28:16–20 and Colossians 1:24–29.
2. Who assigns our objectives?
3. How can I know what has been assigned to me?
4. What are the objectives assigned to us as a local body of believers?
5. What are the objectives assigned to my family?
6. What are the objectives assigned to me?
7. Is there a time limit given in accomplishing the objective?

## CHAPTER 2

# OFFENSIVE

They want war too methodical, too measured; I would make it brisk, bold, impetuous, perhaps sometimes even audacious.

—ANTOINE-HENRI JOMINI, *Summary of the Art of War*

This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

—THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, Luke 24:46–47 (NIV)

**IN WARFARE, THE OFFENSIVE IS THE MEANS BY which one takes the objective. It is an aggressive advance against an enemy to wrest the objective from his possession. An army on the offensive has a moral and physical advantage over the enemy at the point of contact.**

The offensive is an attitude as well as an action. The attacking general has the advantage of making his decisions first, and then carrying them out. The defender must first wait to see what his opponent does before he makes his decision. The decision he makes is usually forced upon him by the attacker. The aggressor has the advantage of the initiative. He can choose whether to attack and when and where to attack. The defender must wait for him. The aggressor is in the superior position.

There are two general ways in which the offensive can be directed.

1. It may be directed *against the whole front* to take it simultaneously. This is not ordinarily feasible in that it requires much more logistic support (weapons, food, and ammunition), much more fighting, and will sustain many more casualties.
2. The offensive may be directed *against one segment* of the enemy army, the defeat of which will mean a decisive victory. Decisive means that this defeat of the enemy may cause the rest of the army to capitulate, or it may mean a breakthrough has been made so that the rest of the army remains in a very weak position.

One of the major problems with a direct attack against an enemy is that he wants to shoot back. An

attacking force can sustain many more casualties than a defending force (e.g., the Somme in World War I).

This is also true in evangelism; the enemy does not like to be preached to, so he shoots back. Christians do not like to be shot at, so they have opted not to preach. That is one solution, but not the right one.

In the Gulf War over Kuwait, there were six weeks of air bombardment and one hundred hours of ground attack. The coalition forces suffered very few casualties. I would like to compare the six weeks of air bombardment to concentrated prayer. I can touch the enemy, but he cannot touch me. This concentrated prayer softens up the objective so that when I go in to preach I do not get shot at.

Whether the offensive is directed against the whole front or against one segment of the enemy army,

In either case it should be well understood that there is in every battlefield a decisive point, the possession of which, more than any other, helps to secure the victory by enabling its holder to make proper application of the Principles of War. Arrangements should therefore be made for striking the decisive blow upon this point.<sup>1</sup>

There are two things that determine a decisive point. The first is the relative importance of that point compared

<sup>1</sup> Antoine-Henri Jomini, *Jomini and His Summary of the Art of War*, The Military Classics series, ed. Lt. Col. J.D. Hittle (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Co., 1947), Article XXXI.