


# PRINCIPLES

*A Handbook on Strategic Evangelism*

# OF WAR

JIM WILSON



AND canonpress  
Moscow, Idaho 

The Canon Press logo consists of a stylized building or tower with a cross on top, positioned to the right of the text "AND canonpress Moscow, Idaho".

Co-published by: Canon Press, P.O. Box 8729, Moscow, ID 83843  
800.488.2034 | www.canonpress.com  
and

Community Christian Ministries, P.O. Box 9754, Moscow, ID 83843  
208.883.0997 | www.ccmbooks.org

James I. Wilson, *Principles of War, A Handbook on Strategic Evangelism*  
Fifth Edition, 2009.

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Cover design by David Dalbey.

Interior design by Laura Storm.

Printed in the United States of America.

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#### *Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Wilson, James I.

Principles of war : a handbook on strategic evangelism / Jim Wilson.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 101) and index.

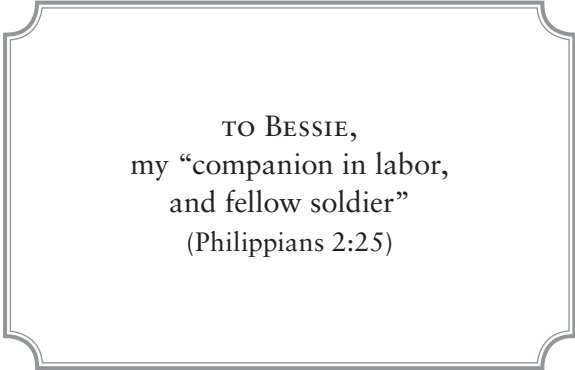
ISBN-13: 978-1-59128-065-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-59128-065-6 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Spiritual warfare. 2. Christian life. I. Title.

BV4509.5.W5 2009

235°.4--dc22

2009004470



TO BESSIE,  
my “companion in labor,  
and fellow soldier”  
(Philippians 2:25)

*Also by the author*

How to Be Free from Bitterness

Christ in Relationships DVD

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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





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)



## CHAPTER I

# OBJECTIVE

When war is declared by Congress, their objective<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>Although the word “objective” is also an adjective, it will be used as a noun in this book, meaning the “objective point” or “mission.”

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. (Mt. 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?