



## Episode 005

# The Battle is Won Inside First

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## Introduction

Have you ever seen leaders breakdown or give up even though the challenges around them did not seem to warrant it? Or perhaps leaders who cannot seem to breakthrough challenges that you would think are not insurmountable?

You might think that surely, these leaders can face such battles and overcome them. So why did they fail? The reality is that many battles are not only fought on the outside but also on the inside. In our minds, our emotions, our spirit. We must come to grips with the internal battles that we face in order to gain the victory in the external battles.

In this episode I will explore the importance of winning the inside battles. We will look at some of the key internal battles that we must win and offer some quick tips to winning these battles.

## Why Battles Must be Won Inside

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When a submarine dives down to great depths, it must be able to withstand the pressures of the deep. The pressure increases by 1 atmosphere for every 10m of depth. An atmosphere is the air pressure that exist at the level of the seashore. Submarines can only go to depths that their reinforced steel hulls can withstand. Even the best designed hulls of nuclear submarines apparently cannot exceed 1000m. That is 100 atmospheres. Beyond that, its hull will buckle in. Crushed from the outside in. That is why every submarine cannot dive beyond certain depths known as its crush depth.



As leaders, we can face some intense battles. After all, being in leadership tends to place us at the frontlines. Any significant battle on the outside also becomes a battle on our inside. It is no longer just what is happening outside, but also what is happening inside our soul and spirit. This is because it is no longer a quick, short battle that has no inner impact upon us. Instead, an extended or intense battle impacts our soul. For it requires our hearts and minds to engage at a significant degree over an extended period.

When we face such intense battles, how well we cope with such battles depends on our inner fortitude. Sometimes the intensity of the battle may seem like more than 100 atmospheres! If we lack the necessary inner strength - we are crushed inside. External collapse is now inevitable. Hence, such battles must be won inside so that we can deal with the pressures brought by the external battle.

## Why Battles Ought To Be Won Inside First

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Having the necessary inner strength only ensures we can cope with the external battle. Sometimes that is what is required because we are unable to sway the course of certain battles raging around us.

But there are battles in which our response can impact the outcome. In such times, whether we can win the external battle could depend on us winning the inner battle first. Imagine fighting on 2 battle fronts at the same time: one inside and another outside. It splits our attention, our mental, emotional and spiritual resources. Winning the battle inside first means we can have the excess energy, motivation to focus on pushing forward externally, during an intense battle.

Imagine a leader that has issues with insecurities but the battle has not been won on that front. Then his leadership is challenged by others in the organisation due to on-going disagreements. The external battle now impacts severely on the inside because his insecurities will flare up. He now has to struggle with his insecurities and at the same time deal with leadership challenges. His attention, energies are diverted on two fronts. It becomes much tougher to win the battles.



Now imagine if this leader manages to resolve his internal issue quickly. He can now give his full attention to the external battle. The possibility in overcoming the leadership challenge now increases markedly.

Hence, the more inner battles we can win first and quickly, will mean greater success on the external.

Let me examine some key battles that leaders will face.

## The Key To Spiritual Victory Is Winning The Faith Battle

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As spiritual leaders, we will engage in the spiritual battles. Naturally, spiritual battles involve the spirit realm.

### **Ephesians 6:12 (NIV84)**

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Such spiritual enemies cannot be defeated by human efforts and human means. It requires spiritual armours, weapons and strategies.

### **Ephesians 6:13 (NIV84)**

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

### **2 Corinthians 10:4 (NIV84)**

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.



Yet the use of these armours and weapons requires our faith. Faith to put it on and faith to wield it. In fact, Scripture tells us that faith is our shield which is able to extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one. Our key weapon is the sword of God's Word, which also requires faith to be effective in our hands. Will our faith be found adequate or wanting in the thick of battle? Will we have the faith to trust in God more than the problem at hand? The faith to fight the good fight despite facing a big enemy.

Will our faith overcome our fears, doubts, unbelief, etc? We must win first the battle of faith in our hearts.

Years ago, I fell sick. I had a raging high fever that could not be brought down by the usual means. When I went to hospital the doctor who examined me told me that I had the worst case of pneumonia he had ever seen, there was so much fluid in my lungs. They pumped antibiotics into my arm but the fever kept raging on. Eventually they discovered I had Legionnaires disease. A medical friend told me that people die from this disease. Which was not very helpful information for someone inflicted with it.

At the same time, I was due to go to preach in an important camp in Melbourne in less than 2 weeks time. While I was in bed, with a high fever, I was busy doing what I could to prepare for the camp. I was able to focus on it because I had already won the battle of faith inside. I was utterly convinced that God had the situation in control. That I would recover very soon. As a result, I could focus all my limited energy to the task at hand.



## The Key To Compelling Victory Is Winning The Conviction Battle

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2 Kings 13:15-19 tells the story when King Jehoash visited a dying prophet Elisha. Elisha instructed him to strike the ground with his arrow. King Jehoash struck it only 3 times. Elisha was upset because he should have strike it 5 to 6 times. Elisha prophesied that King Jehoash will only defeat the Arameans 3 times. If he would defeat them 5 or 6 times, he would have completely destroyed them. Jehoash will not fully succeed because he lacked the conviction. On the other hand, David convincingly beat Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 because of conviction. It was a clear win. A compelling victory.

Why? Conviction motivates us penetrate further into enemy lines, hit harder, more persistently. Deep conviction will not allow us to be satisfied with partial, temporary victories. Conviction means we go all the way to complete the job. That is how we obtain compelling victories.

Leaders must have the strong, solid conviction about the mission they are on. The principles upon which they stand. I shared about the importance of The Leaders Convictions in an earlier episode. Do check it out.

I have had to face many trials along the way in my leadership. Trials which could have blown me off course from the mission God gave me. But because I had deep convictions about the certainty of God's calling upon my life, I refuse to be pushed off course. I have stood my ground for the past 30 years.

Our church, Hope Church, now have our own facility called Unidus Community Centre where our main broadcast service is. The journey to building our own facility was arduous. We have a long struggle with our local council to get permission to build. There were all kinds of resistance.



The land was not the right zoning for a large building. There was substantial vegetation protection requirements so they did not like us removing trees which covered more than 2/3 of the land. The council did not want our building to be visible due to the rural feel of the area. And on and on. The problem was the requirements kept changing. It was enough to cause anyone to give up in utter frustration.

But we fought on for 5 years until we gained the victory. We could do so because I had a deep conviction that God had spoken to us. That the land was ours. Even though we would face many battles. A depth of conviction that help me keep our church focussed on staying the path despite the many challenges.

## The Key To Lasting Victory Is Winning The Character Battle

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Some battles never seem to end. Instead, they seem to be on a merry-go-around. Coming back again and again. A major area of battle is due to our own character weaknesses impacting upon our leadership competence and capacity. Perhaps it is an anger problem. Moses had an anger problem and it costed him entering the Promise Land. Perhaps it is a negativity. The prophet Elijah had a depression tendency. As a result, he could not continue to confront Ahab and Jezebel. Perhaps it is jealousy. King Saul's jealousy of David drove him to extremes, and he became obsessed with getting rid of David.

There are many battles which are not won once but the fruit of the victory has to be maintained. One key area that helps us maintain that victory is due to the strength of our character. Otherwise, the same battles will return again. Lasting victory requires us to resolve that specific character flaw. To win the character battle inside.



Growing up, I was a self-centred person. I was much more concerned about myself than others. If I had continued with that character weakness, I would not be available to be used by God as I am today. God had to transform my heart. I had to win the character battle in this area to become much more selfless. So that I would willingly avail myself to God. Make huge personal sacrifices for the sake of the church and others. And continue to do so. Lasting victory is possible when we win the character battle first.

## Quick Tips

Let me now briefly provide some quick tips on how to win the internal battles.

- Resolve to win the inner battles.

Often it is easier not to focus on winning the inner battles. Because it is less visible to others. Because the rewards are not so tangible nor immediately obvious. But when we realise its significance and its impact upon our external battles, it will motivate us to deal with them. Give it priority. Give it your attention. Win the battles quicker, sooner, fully and we will reap the long-term results of less inner battles and greater victories externally.

- Lean upon God for help

We are so limited in what we can achieve inside. With God's help, far far more is possible. The Holy Spirit is the key to help us identify the inner issues we have to deal with. The Holy Spirit is the one who can empower us to gain inner victories. God can renew our minds, transform our hearts and strengthen us to win the battles inside.

- Develop a positive mindset

Developing and maintaining a positive mindset is a crucial element in the inner battle. Because at times, it deals with some deep-seated issues in our lives. This can be done by having hope in winning the internal battle because God is with us. Having faith in God who can transform us inside. Having a vision that motivates us to persevere for a greater good.



- Seek assistance

Having others around to encourage and support us, even holding us accountable can make a big difference. Some of the internal battles may be much more complicated and we may need counsellors to help us. Get the help you need, whatever it takes.

## Conclusion

Leaders often overcome the external battles because they have won the internal battles first. Such leaders can go further and win bigger battles.

Don't neglect your internal battles. You do it to great detriment to your leadership. Win them, and the external battles becomes much easier.

## Discussion Questions

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These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. Are you finding that you are losing external battles because you are struggling with internal battles? Can you identify what some of these key internal battles are?
2. Are there some faith battles that you are struggling with because of some inadequacy in your faith? Why is that faith area inadequate?
3. Are there some conviction or character battles that you are struggling with because of some inadequacy in your conviction/character? Why is that conviction/character area inadequate?



## Actionable Steps

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Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. What specific actionable steps can you take strengthen your faith in the identified area?
2. What specific actionable steps can you take to deepen your convictions or mature your character according to God's Word?
3. What specific actionable steps can you take to improve facing your internal battles?





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