

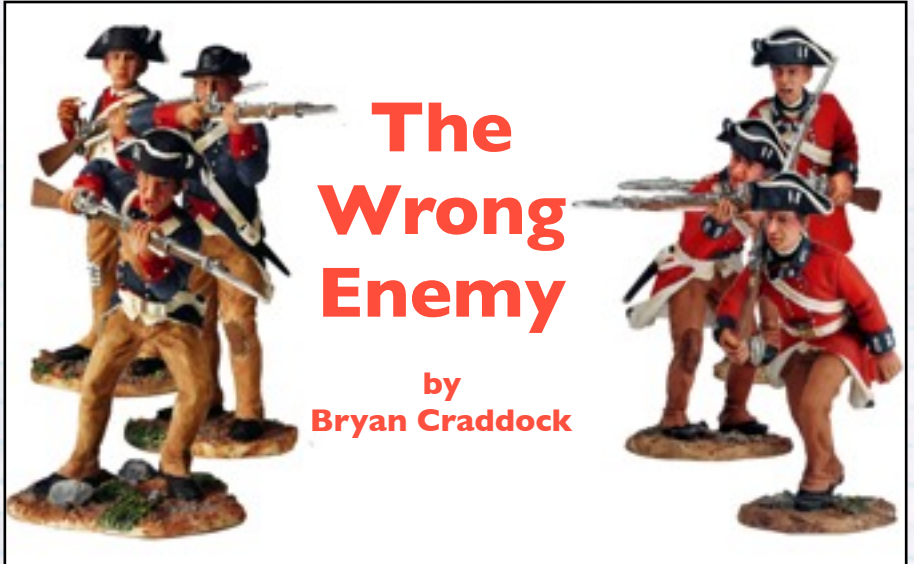


EQUIPPING U

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION/NOVEMBER 2013

Ephesians 6:10-20

[10] [B]e strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.



There was a time in history when warfare seems to have been relatively simple and straightforward. Your enemies were those lined up on the opposite side of a field wearing a different colored uniform. But modern combat situations are not so simple. Soldiers can easily find themselves targeting the wrong person.

against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul identifies a similar problem that all Christians face. He says, *For we do not wrestle*

Christians have always been tempted to regard non-Christians as enemies. When someone contradicts biblical teaching or disregards biblical moral standards, we may perceive it as a personal affront.



TEACHING TIP. On the 28th, Americans will celebrate Thanksgiving. Help your students recognize it is more than a day set apart to express generic thankfulness. It is a day set apart in our nation's history to give thanks to God.



TEACHING TIP. In 2 Timothy, Paul instructs Timothy, *"what you have heard from me...entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* Encourage those in your class to invest in others, especially the next generation.



TEACHING TIP. Serving others in love is an important, yet often overlooked, aspect of our faith. Consider how you and your students can serve someone this month. Perhaps you can visit a widow or offer to rake her leaves.

To make matters worse, both pundits and the press play up this conflict to grab our attention. Nothing draws a crowd like a fight. The result is catastrophic. Christians either isolate themselves in fear or lash out with brash, angry words provoking the very people we are supposed to reach.

We end up fighting the wrong battle against the wrong enemy.

We end up fighting the wrong battle against the wrong enemy using the wrong methods, all to our true enemy's delight.

We have to remember that from the standpoint of the gospel non-Christians are not enemy targets but captives who need to be rescued. Paul says, *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will (2 Timothy 2:24-26).*

We can only rise to such behavior as the Holy Spirit enables us to put on the mind of Christ. Matthew 9:36 tells us, *When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Matt De Minico

ICEA is a volunteer staffed ministry. Each month Equipping U highlights and honors one of our faithful volunteers.

ICEA Workshop Leader, Matt De Minico, equips conference attendees to understand God's will in suffering. Through his ministry with The Voice of the Martyrs, Matt has helped us highlight both the reality and the needs of the persecuted church. As a result, our faith has increased. Matt, thank you for your service to ICEA and to our brothers and sisters who are tortured for Christ.

Non-Christians are not enemy targets but captives who need to be rescued.

May God fill us with the grace and love to look beyond offensive words and deeds to the spiritual struggle of the heart, so that we can humbly proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ.

Bryan Craddock is the pastor at Calvary Bible Church East in Comstock, Michigan. Each week he devotes much of his time to studying the Bible so that he can present God's truth in a way that is clear and compelling.

FROM THE EDITOR

I am so pleased to be able to introduce you to the writing of Bryan Craddock. Each week I have the privilege of learning biblical truth from this humble-hearted man. After reading "The Wrong Enemy," an article he wrote for our local body, I knew I wanted to share it with you.



Can you relate to "fighting the wrong battle against the wrong enemy, using the wrong methods?" I certainly can. I pray we'll now be wiser to our real enemy's schemes.

Serving with U,

Kim
Kimberly von Oeyen
EquippingU@iceaOnline.org

GET INVOLVED

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EQUIPPING U

ISSUE no. 11
VOLUME 2

Equipping U is a publication of the
International Christian Education Association
16130 Northland Drive • Southfield, MI 48075
248-557-5526 • www.iceaOnline.org



Request a free electronic subscription by e-mailing EquippingU@iceaOnline.org

CONTRIBUTORS

Writers

Bryan Craddock
Kimberly von Oeyen

Photographers

Sheri Dillon
Pat Kush

istockphoto from:

Jan_Kowalski
digitalskillet
fstop123