

PRINCIPLES *of* WAR

A HANDBOOK ON STRATEGIC EVANGELISM

JIM WILSON



canonpress
Moscow, Idaho



Co-published by

Canon Press, P.O. Box 8729, Moscow, Idaho 83843
800.488.2034 | www.canonpress.com

and

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

James I. Wilson, *Principles of War, A Handbook on Strategic Evangelism*
Sixth Edition, 2017.

Copyright © 1964, 1983 (under the title *Principles of War: Thoughts on Strategic Evangelism*), 1980 (under the title *Against the Powers*), 1991, 1994, 2009, 2017 (under current title) by James I. Wilson.

Cover design by David Dalbey.
Interior design by Valerie Anne Bost.
Printed in the United States of America.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the author, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from the King James Version. Other versions are cited as follows:

NEB: The New English Bible, copyright © Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press 1961, 1970. All rights reserved.

NIV: The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

RSV: The Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

GNT: Good News Translation® (Today's English Version, Second Edition) Copyright © 1992 American Bible Society. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Forthcoming

CONTENTS

Foreword.....	ix
Preface.....	xi
1 Objective.....	1
2 Offensive.....	7
3 Concentration.....	17
4 Mobility.....	29
5 Security.....	39
6 Surprise.....	49
7 Cooperation.....	55
8 Communication.....	67
9 Economy of Force.....	75
10 Pursuit.....	83
11 Obedience.....	93
Bibliography.....	103
About the Author.....	105

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.

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

CHAPTER 3

CONCENTRATION

I git thar fustest with the mostest.

—attributed to GENERAL NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST

For where two or three come together in my name,
there am I with them.

—THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, Matthew 18:20 (NIV)

GENERAL FORREST WAS NEITHER A WEST POINTER NOR A War College graduate, but he knew the principles of war, and he knew how to apply them. Although it is doubtful that he used the double superlatives in the above quotation, the statement does emphasize several truths. In this one short sentence we find four principles of war, and others are implied.¹ The one word “mostest” leads us to the subject of this chapter: concentration.

1 Git—*offensive*; thar—*objective*; fustest—*mobility*; mostest—*concentration*.

Neither Alexander the Great nor Julius Caesar could have conquered the then known world if he had neglected concentration.

Occasionally in the history of warfare a new method comes to light that seems so effective or is such a surprise to the enemy that its users are strongly tempted to depend upon the new method (which is temporary) and forget the basic principles of war.

This tendency was evident when the airplane made its advent on the Western Front in World War I. It glamorized the war; men became air aces and heroes. The use of the airplane did not, however, have much effect on the final outcome, for no one used it in concentration. Major General Claire Chennault, when a young Army Air Corps aviator, noted this lack of application of principle. In his *Way of a Fighter*, he wrote:

For four months we flew and fought all over the Texas sky in the fashion of the Western Front flying long patrols in formation, looking for a fight, and then scattering in a dive on the enemy into individual dogfights. As sport it was superb, but as war, even then, it seemed all wrong to me. There was too much of an air of medieval jousting in the dogfights and not enough of the calculated massing of overwhelming force so necessary in the cold, cruel business of war. There were no sound military precepts that encouraged

the dispersion of forces and firepower that occurred in dogfighting.²

This failure to apply the principle of concentration continued through the Spanish Civil War and into World War II. Chennault himself put an end to these individual tactics with his American Volunteer Group, better known as the Flying Tigers. When he went to Burma and China, his pilots stuck together. Outnumbered in the air and on the ground, in planes, pilots, and parts, they destroyed 217 enemy planes and probably forty-three more with a maximum of twenty operational P-40s in thirty-one encounters. Chennault's losses were six pilots and sixteen planes.

In order to accomplish this, Chennault used concentration. He simply had two aircraft firing at one enemy aircraft. Even if outnumbered in the air ten to one, Chennault's two always outnumbered the enemy's one. If each Flying Tiger had taken on ten of the enemy, probably we would not remember the Flying Tigers today.

In 1956, while on the staff of Commander Carrier Division Five aboard the aircraft carrier *Shangri-la* in the western Pacific, I watched the Carrier Air Group in practice maneuvers. The F9F Cougars came down from the sky low over the waves, firing machine guns

2 Maj. Gen. Claire Lee Chennault, *Way of a Fighter*, ed. Robert Hotz (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), 11.

or rockets at the target simultaneously, then pulled up together to disappear into the blue. One evening I asked one of the pilots how he could fly wing on his leader and still aim at the target. It was easy, he said. He did not aim; he just flew wing. “When he shoots, I shoot.” This is concentration.

Now let us see how the principle of concentration applies to spiritual warfare.

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. (Luke 10:1-2)

In the chapter on the “offensive,” we concluded that the offense in winning men to Jesus Christ is carried out by preaching and prayer. In the Luke passage, we see that Jesus sent His disciples out to preach in concentration. He also told them to pray in concentration:

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matt. 18:19-20)

This is effective warfare.

Paul, one of the greatest of preachers, had a “wing man” with him in most cases, and when alone he does not seem to have been nearly as effective. For instance, in Acts 17 we find Paul going to Athens alone but asking that Silas and Timothy join him with “all speed” (17:15).

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily” (Acts 17:16–17). Paul could not wait to concentrate his forces; so he took the city on alone and had neither an awakening nor a riot. Silas and Timothy did not join him until some weeks after Paul had arrived in Corinth. Here also he preached alone with no recorded results.

“And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (Acts 18:4). When Silas and Timothy arrived, there was a marked difference in the power, the content, and the results of Paul’s preaching.

“And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:5). That was the power and the content; the results are recorded in succeeding sentences. There was opposition, blasphemy, and many conversions.