

Life Lessons from the Public Square: Principles & Pitfalls

Nola Leach and Jane Norton

Life Lesson 1: My Identity is in Christ



IDENTITY
in
CHRIST

In Christ I am:

Loved
Forgiven
Redeemed
Accepted
Adopted
Secure

My identity is NOT in lesser things:
status, title, job, possessions,
relationships, reputation, wealth,
appearance, education,
accomplishments, etc

Because my identity is in Christ-

- I can stand firm under trials

“I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, **listens** to my teaching, and then **follows** it. It is like a person building a house who **digs deep** and lays the foundation on **solid rock**. When the floodwaters rise and break against that house, it **stands firm** because it is well built.

Luke 6:47-48

Because my identity is in Christ-

- No amount of BAD news can change the
GOOD NEWS!

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?..... For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Rom 8:35-39

Because my identity is in Christ-

- I can run my own race

“Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. “I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.”

1 Samuel 17:38-40

Life Lesson 1: My Identity is in Christ

- Pitfalls
 - Who I am in the public square can negatively impact the cause of Christ
 - Unfair or inaccurate stereotypes/labels
 - Under constant attack

Life Lesson 1: My Identity is in Christ

HOLD FAST TO WHO CHRIST SAYS YOU ARE

“Let us **hold unswervingly** to the hope we profess, for he who promises is faithful.”

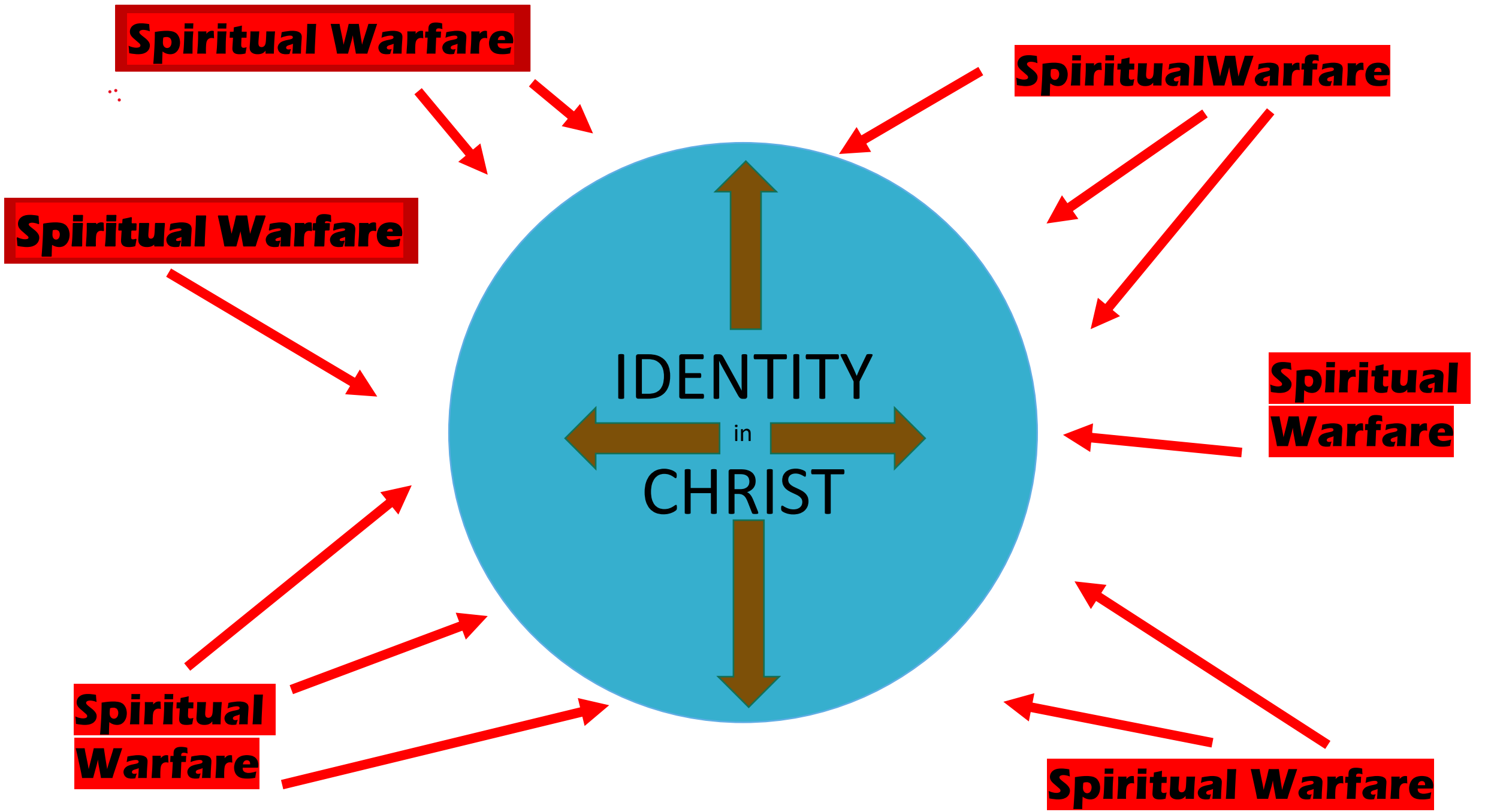
Hebrews 10:23

Life Lesson 2: I am in a Spiritual Battle

- I am in a war; my enemy is real, and he has a targeted plan to make me ineffective.

“For our battle 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.”

Eph 6:12



Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual Warfare

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IDENTITY

in

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Life Lesson 2: I am in a Spiritual Battle

- Pitfalls
 - Being unfamiliar with the enemy and his tactics
 - Not knowing my vulnerabilities
 - Not suiting up for battle
 - Forgetting who wins

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

Eph 6:10-11

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

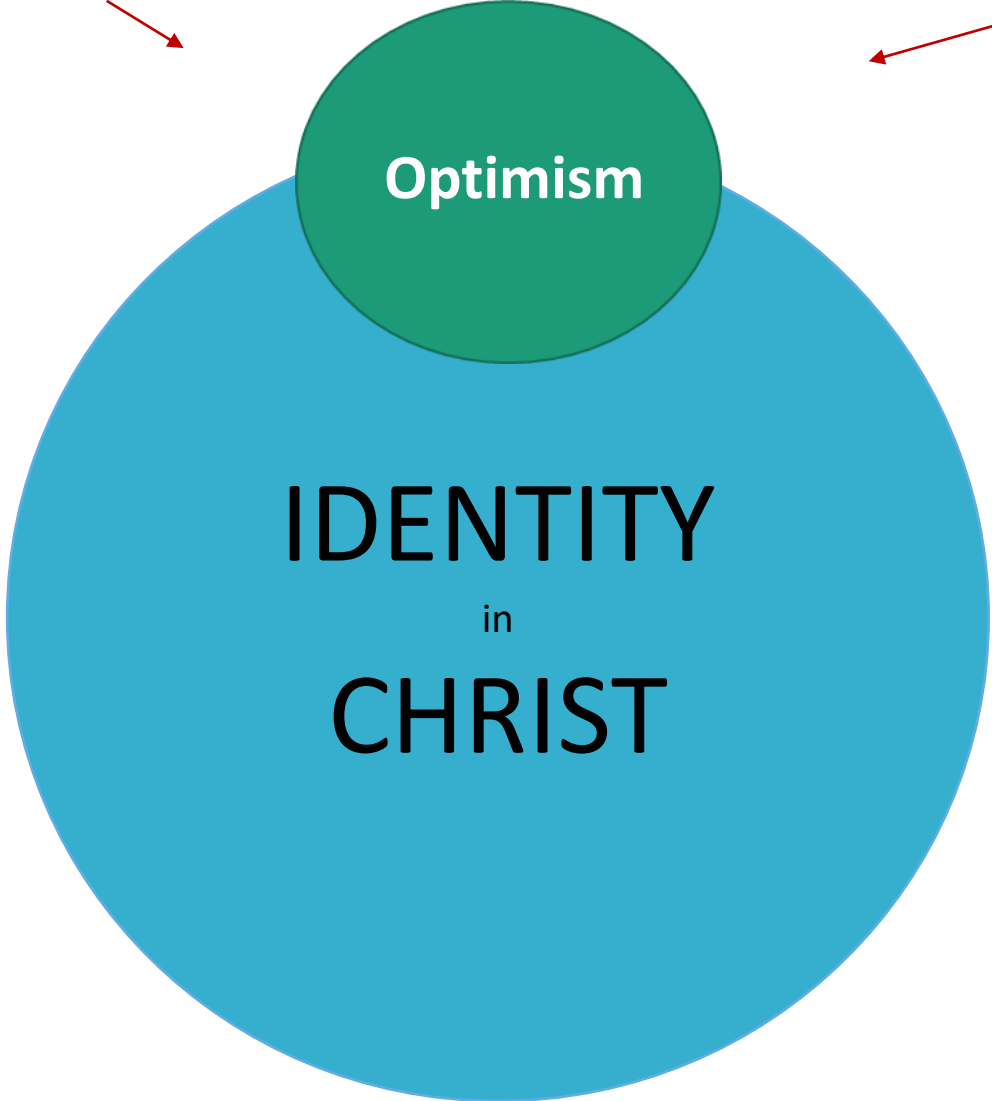
Romans 8:37

Life Lesson 2: I am in a Spiritual Battle

**TO BE VICTORIOUS, SUBMIT TO GOD AND
RESIST THE DEVIL**

“Submit yourselves, then to God.
Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7



Optimism

IDENTITY
in
CHRIST

Spiritual Warfare

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Principle 1: Optimism

- We engage with optimism because God has given us the mandate to exercise His authority
 - Genesis 1 “Rule with Him and for Him”
 - “In the total expanse of human life there is not a single square inch of which Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare “That is mine!”

Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian and Prime Minister of the Netherlands 1901-1905

Principle 1: Optimism

- We engage with optimism because **God's character** demands that we pursue justice
 - “Hate evil, love good; **maintain justice** in the courts.” Amos 5:15
 - Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to **do justice**, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Principle 1: Optimism

- We engage with optimism because of **Christ's example**
 - Matthew 23:23 “you have neglected **the more important matters of the law- justice,** mercy and faithfulness”
 - Luke 18- The Parable of the Persistent Widow who **cries out for justice**

Principle 1: Optimism

- Pitfalls
 - A false optimism- seeing things through “rose coloured spectacles”
 - Not seeing challenges clearly
 - Not preparing adequately

Principle 1: Optimism

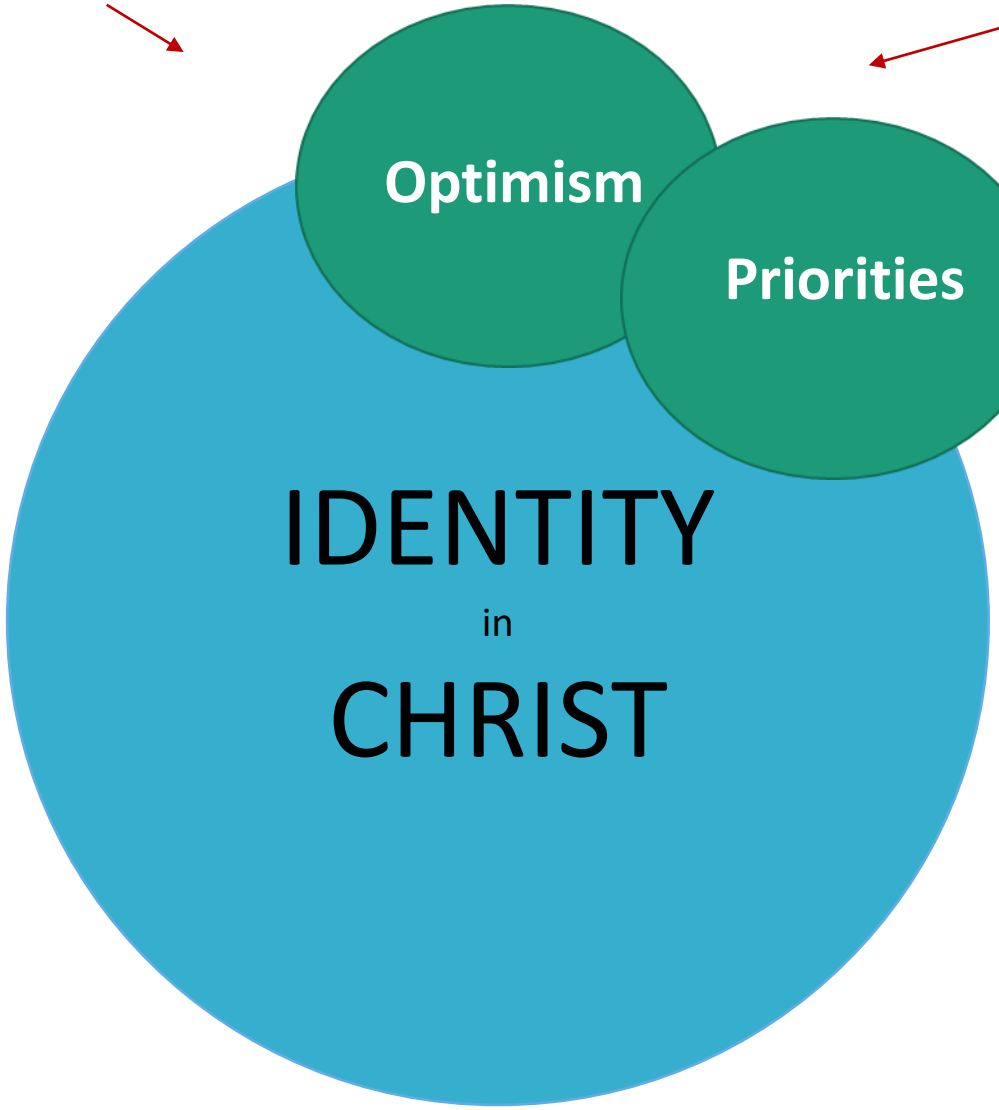
“Christians should be dispersed in the societies of the world...bringing out the best in that particular culture and preventing its worst tendencies as well. But only if Christians remain “salt” which is different to the rest of culture.”

Timothy J. Keller, American pastor, theologian and Christian apologist

Principle 1: Optimism

**CHRISTIANS CAN AND SHOULD ENGAGE IN THE
PUBLIC SQUARE WITH CONFIDENCE AND AN
UNWAVERING EXPECTATION THAT OUR LOVING
GOD IS WORKING EVERY SITUATION FOR OUR
GOOD.**

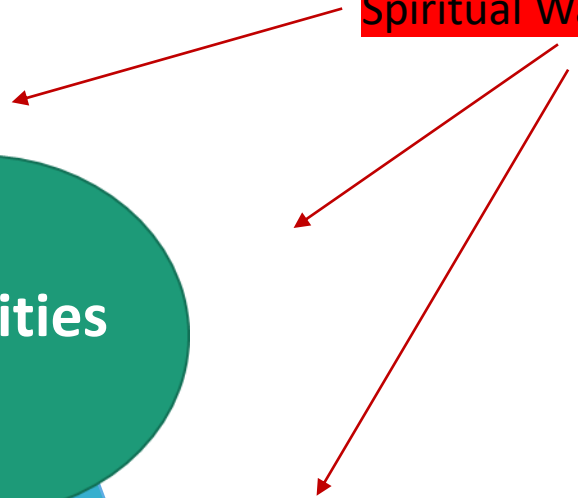
(Romans 8:28)



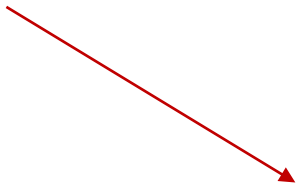
Spiritual Warfare



Spiritual Warfare



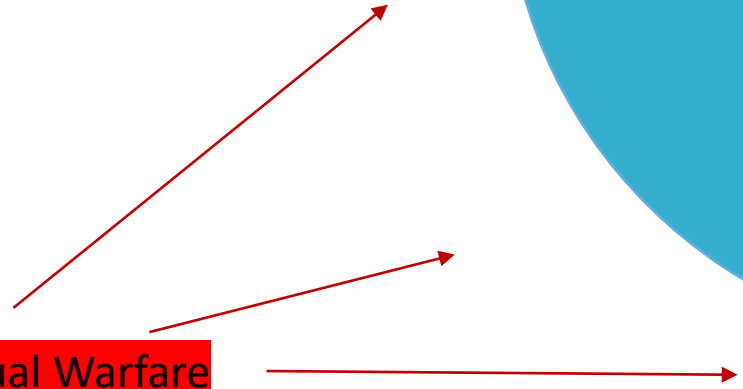
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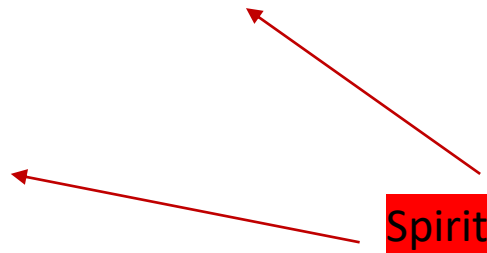
Spiritual Warfare



Spiritual Warfare



Spiritual Warfare



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Principle 2: Priorities

- They should ...
 - reflect who you are in Christ
 - dictate how and where you spend your time
 - point others to Christ

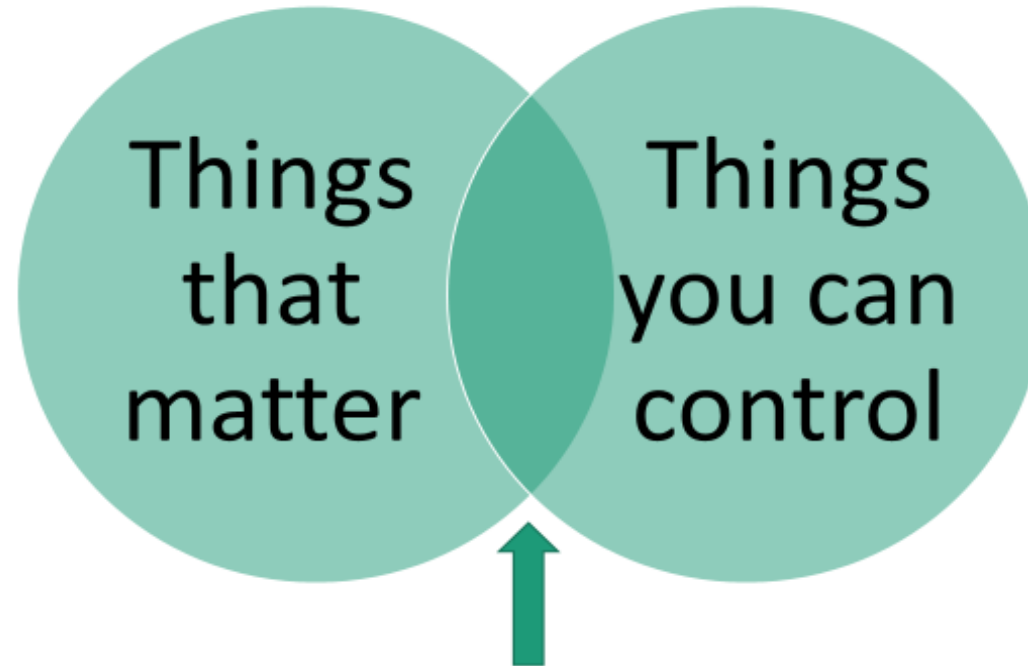
“But **seek first His kingdom** and His **righteousness** and all these things will be added to you as well.”

Matthew 6:33

“But a **noble** man makes honorable **plans**; he **stands up** for **worthy causes**.”

Isaiah 32:8

Principle 2: Priorities



What you should focus on

Am I doing things right...

OR

Am I doing the right things?

Principle 2: Priorities

- **Pitfall- “Tyranny of the Urgent”**

Charles E Hummel, former director of faculty ministries at InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

Roy’s Rule: If you need an answer NOW, the answer is NO!

Roy Palmer, Chief of Staff to Governor Bill Owens

Principle 2: Priorities

- Pitfall- Meddling

“Like one who grabs a stray dog by the ears is someone who **rushes into a quarrel not their own.**”

Proverbs 26:17

Principle 2: Priorities

- Pitfall- Lack of boundaries

Well intentioned people are always trying to get you to buy in to their cause, so make sure you have good boundaries in place to **guard your core mission.**

Principle 2: Priorities

- Pitfalls- Distractions/interruptions

“But Martha was **distracted** by all the **preparations** that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the **work** by myself? Tell her to help me!”

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are **worried** and **upset** about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:40-42

“but the **worries** of this life, the deceitfulness of **wealth** and the desires for other **things** come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

Mark 4:19

Principle 2: Priorities

- Pitfalls- Perfectionism/comparisons

- Perfectionism- impossible, exhausts and alienates
- Comparisons- divide, dishearten and disappoint

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

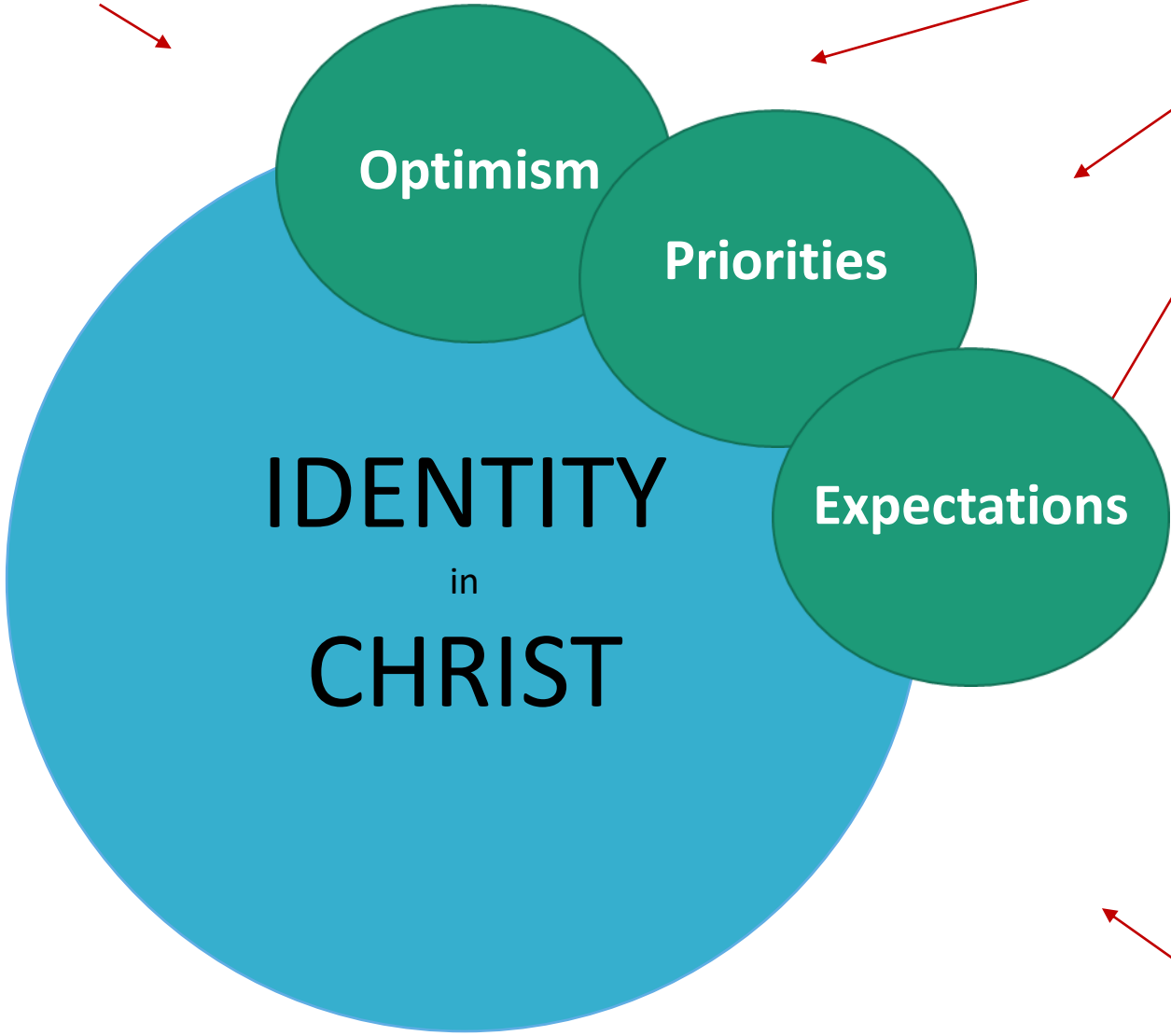
1 Cor 12:4-6

Principle 2: Priorities

WELL-DEFINED PRIORITIES ALLOW ME TO FOCUS
WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE IS SHIFTING

“Be still in the presence of the LORD and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked
schemes.”

Psalm 37:7



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Optimism

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Expectations

Principle 3: Expectations

- We must manage them
- We must set realistic goals
- We must work with integrity and faith

Principle 3: Expectations

- We live in a fallen world. We live in the “City of Man.”
- There are certain things we can do in the public arena, but we will not bring in the “City of God.” That will happen when Christ returns.
- But we can seek to advance God’s Kingdom by building relationships and showing care to those in authority over us.

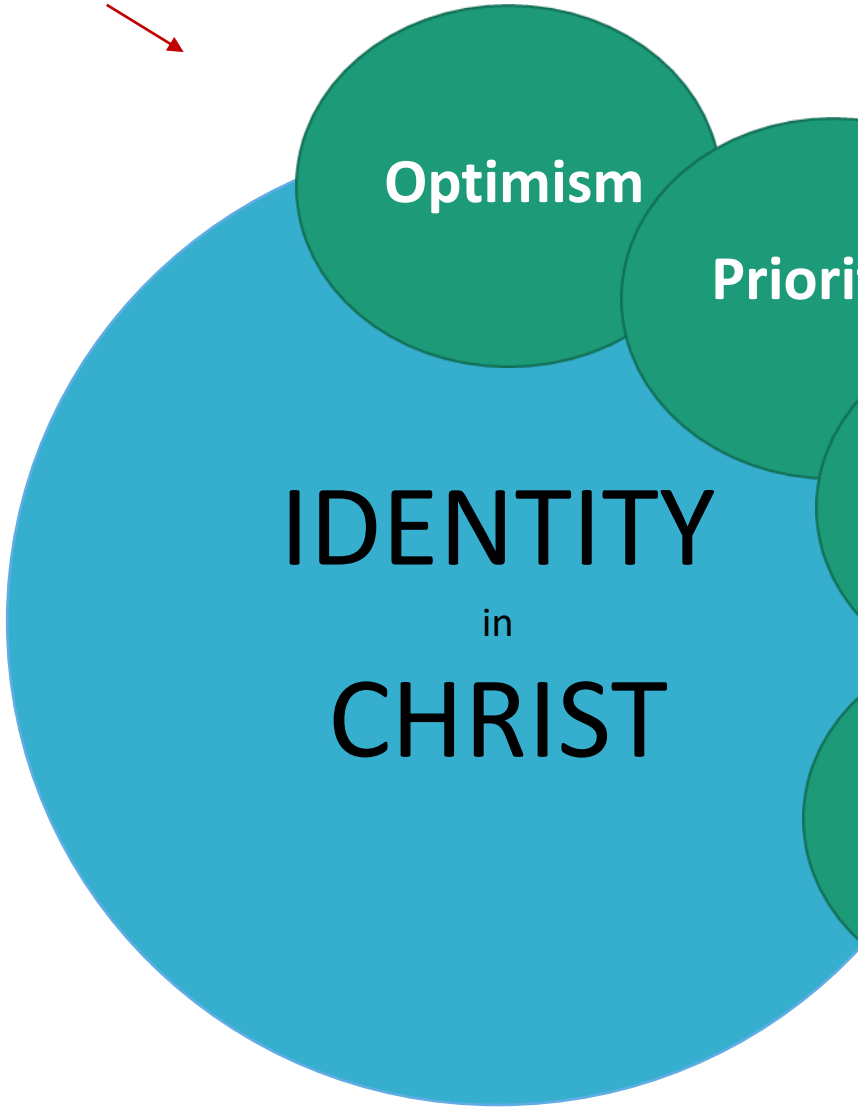
Principle 3: Expectations

- Pitfalls
 - A flawed definition of success
 - Thinking everything depends on me
 - A failure to rely on God

Principle 3: Expectations

**THE WORLD WILL NOT BE PUT “RIGHT” BY POLITICS-
OUR HOPE IS IN CHRIST ALONE.**

“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy” (Titus 3:5)



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Respect

Principle 4: Respect

- All people as image bearers of Christ-

- “God created human beings in his **own image**” Gen 1:27

- Fellow believers-

- “Be devoted to one another in love. **Honor one another** above yourselves.” Romans 12:10

- Non-believers-

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to **everyone** who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness and respect**, keeping a clear conscience, so that **those who speak maliciously against your good behavior** in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1 Peter 3:15-16

Principle 4: Respect

“Respect is not a feeling. It is how we treat another person.”

Peter Scazzerro “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality”

“Say what you mean, mean what you say, and don’t say it mean.”

Christian counselor Jim Cress in “Good Boundaries and Goodbyes” by Lysa Terkeurst

“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”

2 Cor 4:1-2

Principle 4: Respect

- Pitfalls
 - Takes great effort- everything we do and say to others makes a statement about our regard for them
 - Takes significant practice and self restraint- especially when personally attacked or deliberately misrepresented

“it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance”

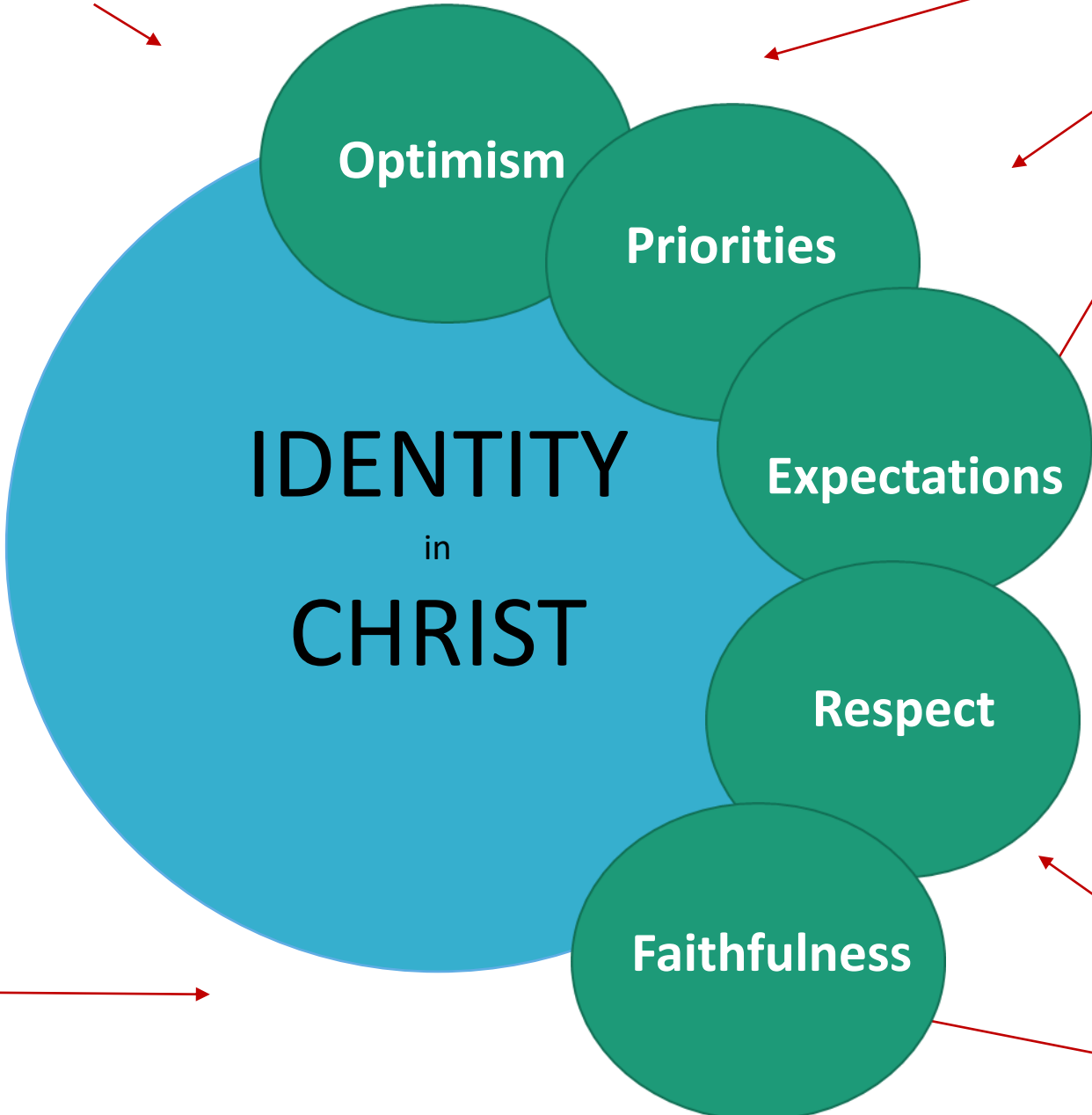
Romans 2:4

Principle 4: Respect

THE RESPECT I SHOW TO OTHERS IS ONE OF THE MOST
POWERFUL WAYS MY WITNESS IS STRENGTHENED

“Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear
God, honor the emperor.”

I Peter 2:17



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Faithfulness

Principle 5: Faithfulness

- We are called to be faithful not successful.

“You Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted. You encourage them and you listen to their cry.”

Psalm 10:17

Principle 5: Faithfulness

- Relentless in pursuing a goal
- Resilient in the face of obstacles
- Persevering under pressure
- Praying at all times
- Falling down and getting up

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;
⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

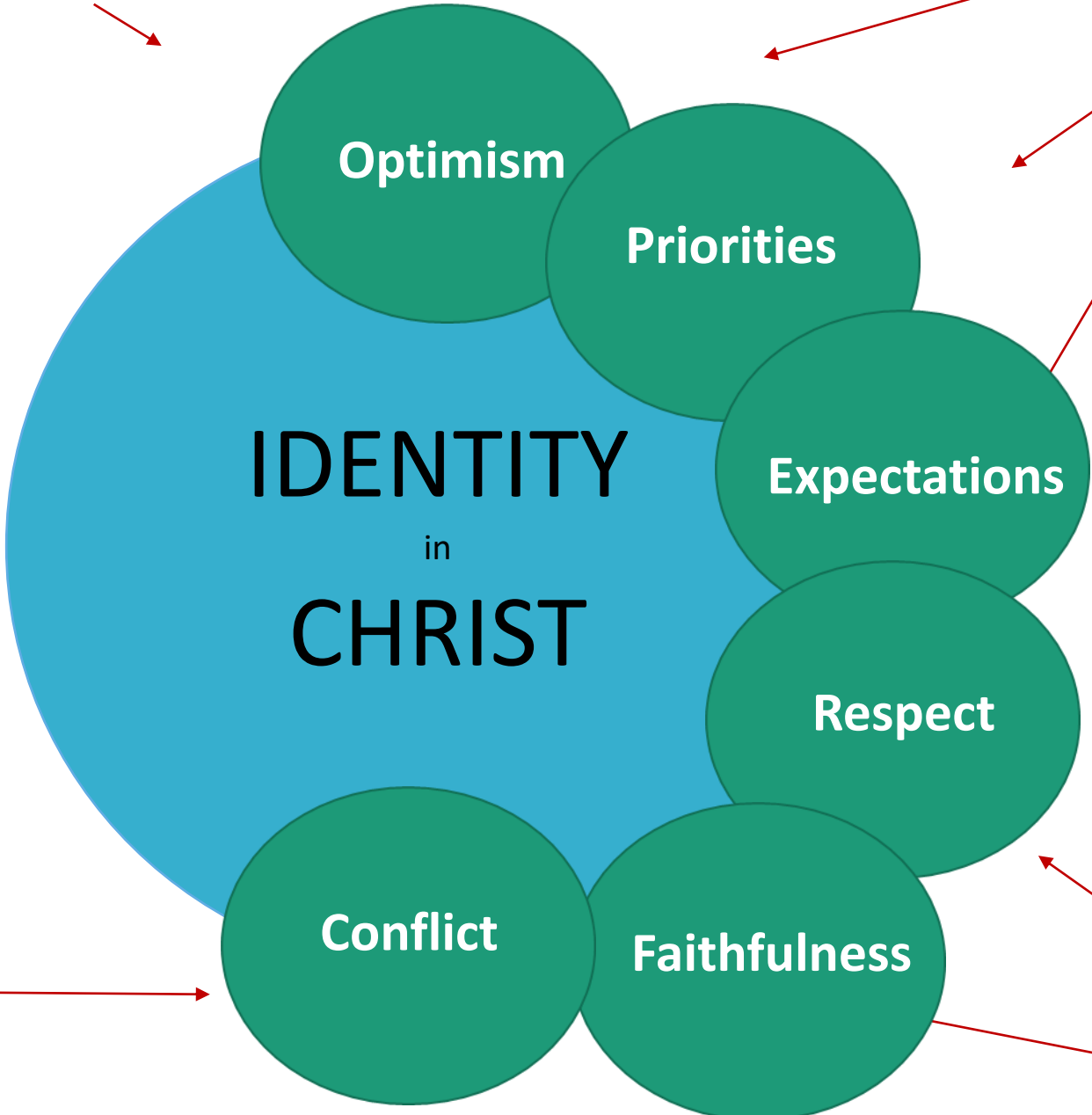
2 Corinthians 4:8-9

Principle 5: Faithfulness

- Pitfalls
 - No right theology of failure
 - Assuming a quick result
 - Forgetting prayer

Principle 5: Faithfulness

**WORK AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON US,
PRAY AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON GOD,
LEAVE THINGS WITH HIM.**



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Conflict

Principle 6: Conflict

Every work of God is always opposed.

Conflict-

- Occurs when you are making a difference-

“Dogs don’t bark at parked cars- if you are **moving**, you will be **criticized.**”

Principle 6: Conflict

- Occurs when you confront evil-

“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

2 Timothy 3:12

“We knowingly enter into and initiate conflict with evil whenever we proclaim the gospel, preach holiness, protest against sin in our society, teach against cults or testify to Christ in the midst of a world that does not want to change.”

John Edmiston

Principle 6: Conflict

- Often comes in obedience to Christ-

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side...the boat was ..buffeted by waves because the wind was against it. ...During the night...Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him.., they were terrified.”

Matt 14:22, 24-26

Principle 6: Conflict

- Pitfall

- Valuing comfort over obedience by-
 - Avoiding
 - Compromising
- Forcing redemption rather than offering it freely

“Get curious, not furious.”

Christian counselor Jim Cress in “Good Boundaries and Goodbyes” by Lysa Terkeurst

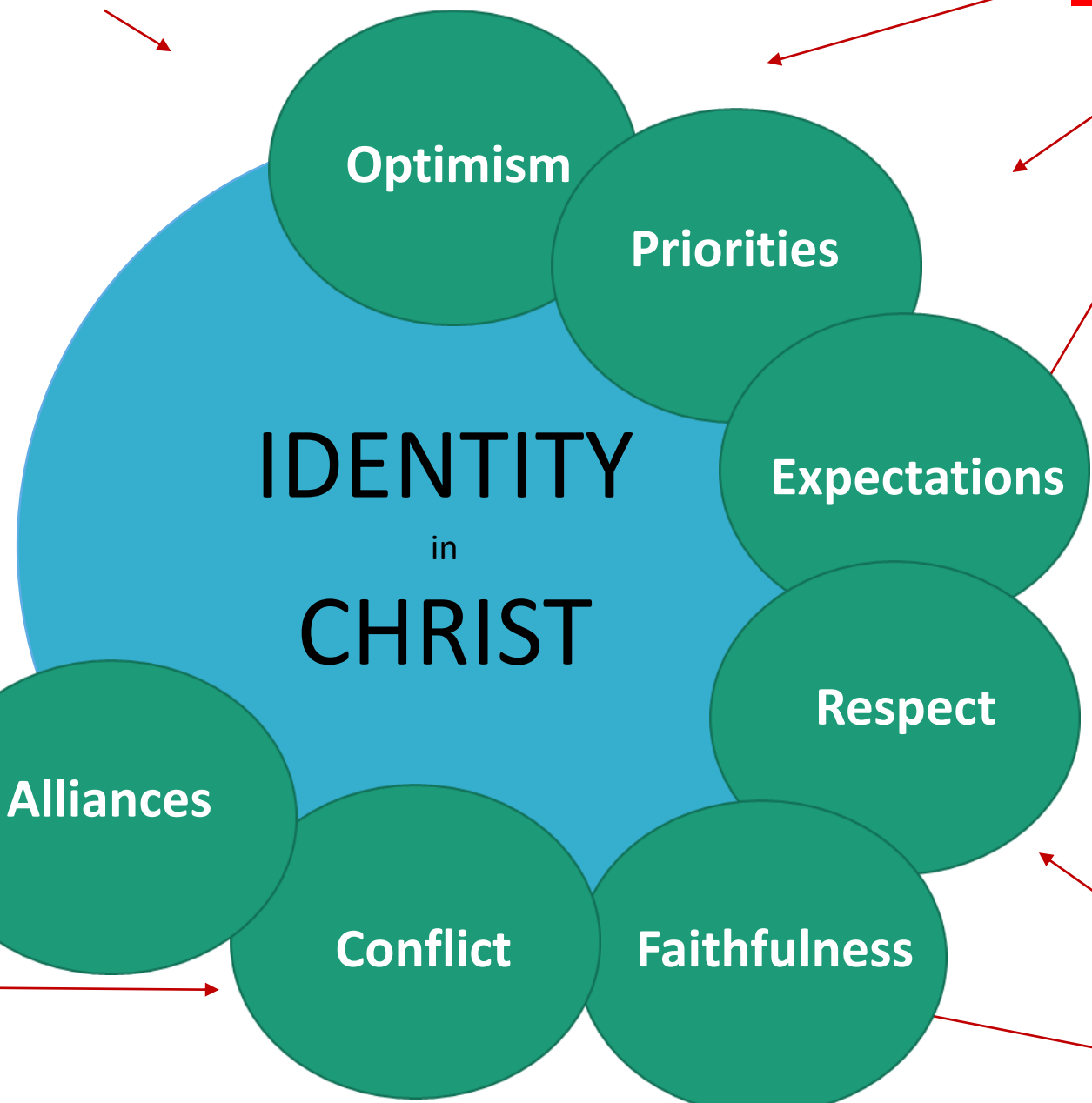
Principle 6: Conflict

EVERY WORK OF GOD IS ALWAYS OPPOSED.

**CONFLICT ALLOWS ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRUST
GOD AND GO DEEPER IN MY WALK**

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”

2 Cor 4:17



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Alliances

Principle 7: Alliances

“Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God.”

Phil 2:15 The MSG

Principle 7: Alliances

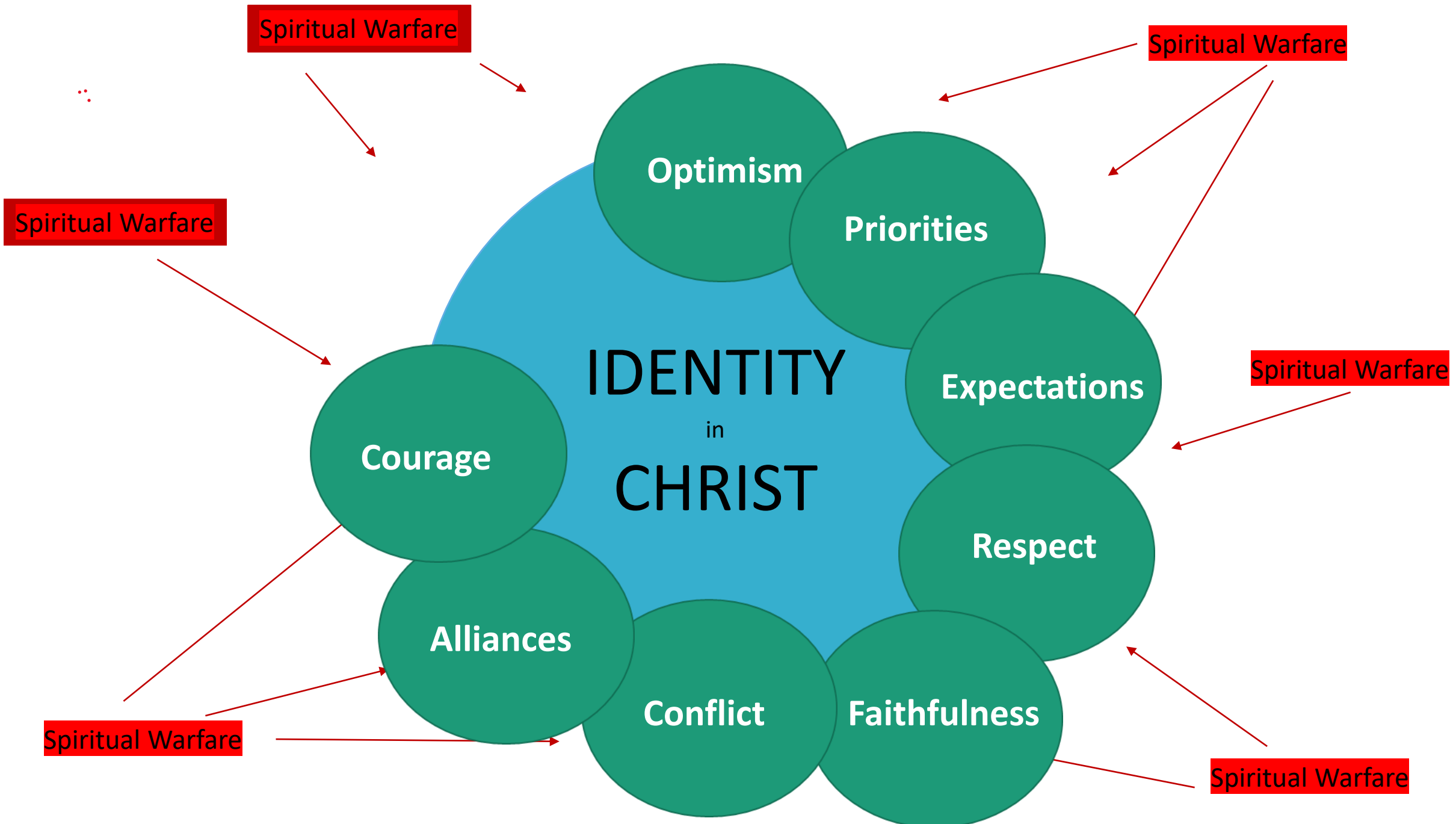
- Work with men and women of good will
- What about compromise?
 - Daniel's example
- Effective relationships are built on authenticity

Principle 7: Alliances

- Pitfalls
 - Compromising the truth
 - Passion leading to harshness
 - The temptation to dilute the message to fit in

Principle 7: Alliances

HOLDING PUBLIC OFFICE IS LONELY AND PRESSURIZED. WE EARN THE RIGHT TO SPEAK BY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.



Principle 8: Courage

- When called to serve in the public square, courage is often demonstrated through challenges-
 - Being the minority that reveres God (Noah preached to an unresponsive world- Heb 11:7)
 - Hearing clearly but without clarity (Abraham went, though he didn't know where he was going- Heb 11:8)
 - Believing the impossible (Sarah bore children when past age- Heb 11:11)
 - Trusting God's timing and God's ways (His ways are higher- Isaiah 55:8-10)

Principle 8: Courage

- Pitfalls

- Being so mired in the culture that I have lost sight of the cross

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Cor 12:9

- Not taking God at His Word

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

Principle 9: Courage

“Bind up the brokenhearted.’ ‘Correct oppression.’ ‘Bring justice to the fatherless.’ ‘Speak the truth in love.’ By mounting a defense against the Reproductive Health Equity Act, my colleagues and I were merely trying to be **obedient** to the Lord’s commands. Through the use of our legislative tools, we sought to love God and love people.... I hope our story will inspire others to **fight the good fight** of faith even in the face of **overwhelming opposition.**”

Colorado State Representative Stephanie Luck

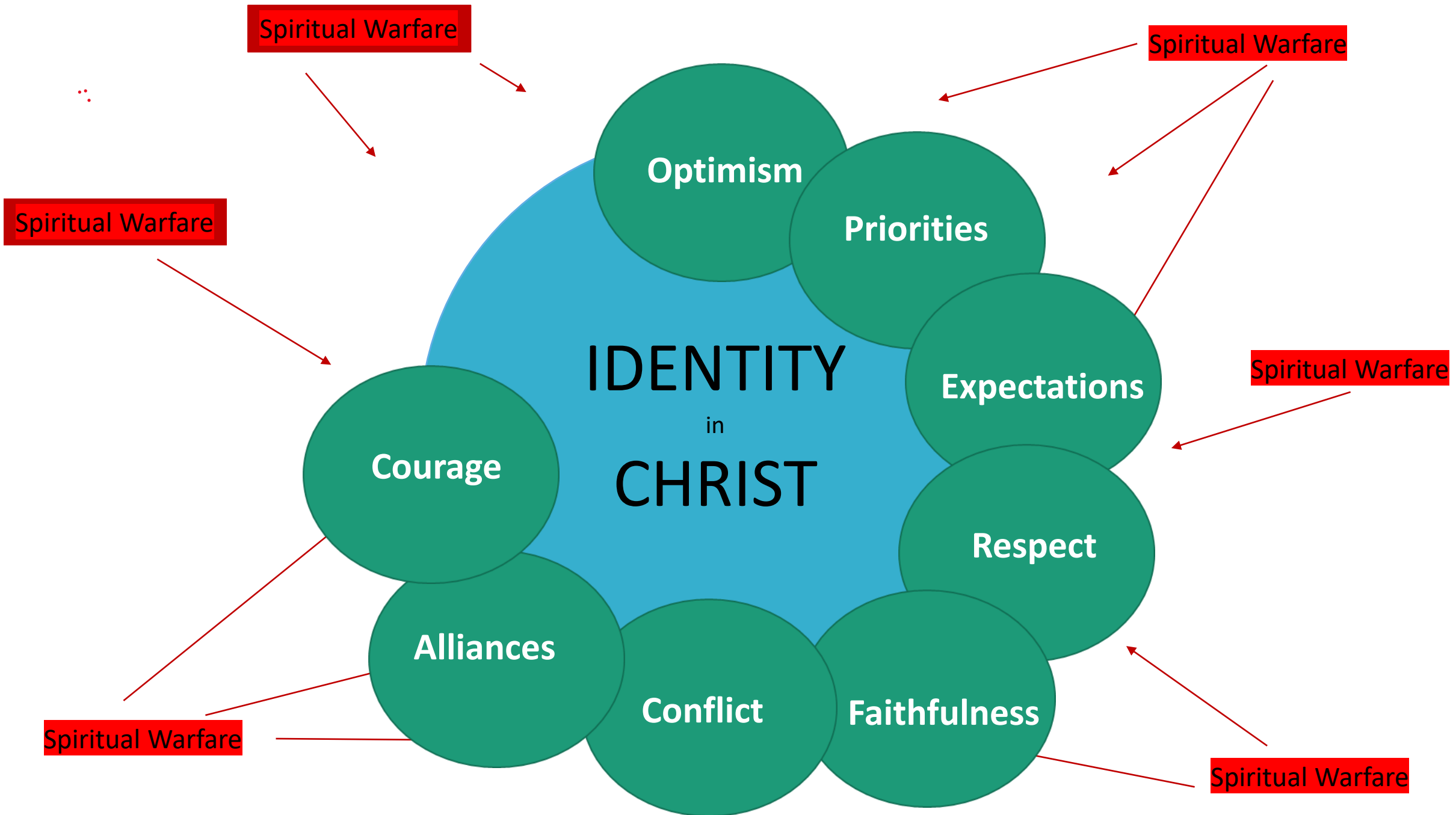
Principle 8: Courage

IT TAKES COURAGE TO SERVE IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

- Be obedient!
- Fight the good fight!
 - Stand firm!
 - Trust God!

“But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.”

Hebrews 10: 39



Principle 9: Context

- The importance of-
 - language
 - timing
 - worldviews
 - being well informed
- Example- “What is Romans?”

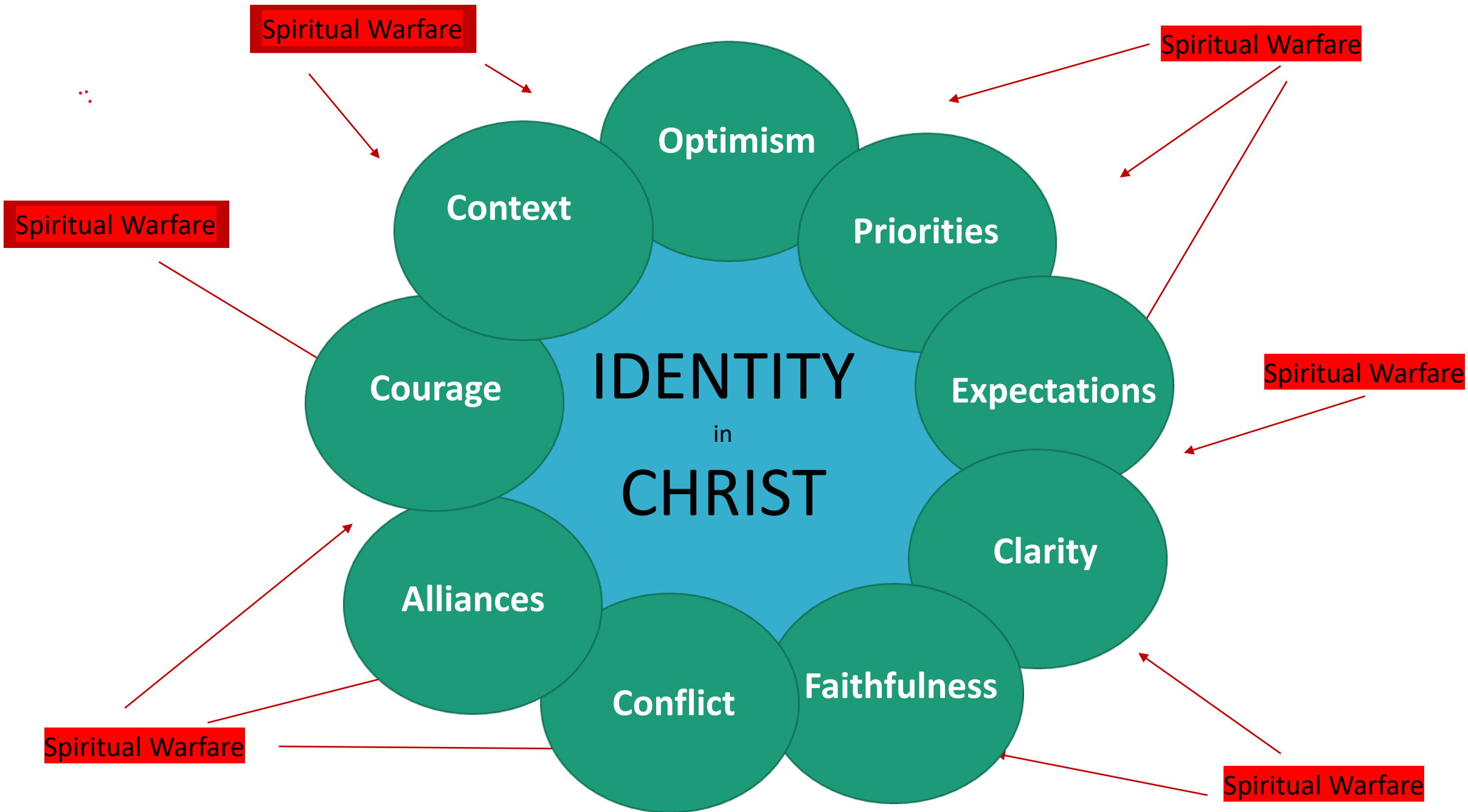
Principle 9: Context

- Pitfalls
 - Assuming literacy- people know the Bible
 - A wrong use of language
 - Insensitivity
 - Lack of rigour in study

Principle 9: CONTEXT

**KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE (CONTEXT)
INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD OF ACCOMPLISHING
YOUR GOAL**

“I LIKE CHOCOLATE CAKE, BUT WHEN I GO FISHING, I USE WORMS
BECAUSE FISH LIKE WORMS!”



In Summary

“Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God.”

Phil 2:15 The MSG

In Summary-

We are called to:

- " Seek the peace and prosperity of the city...pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers you too will prosper." Jeremiah 29:7
- We have a Mandate from God "To Rule the World With Him and for Him" Genesis 1
- We have a Right to Speak Truth to Power

In Summary-

Therefore, we must do so:

- Courageously
- Faithfully
- Honestly
- Wisely
- Winsomely
- Relationally
- Respectfully
- Relevantly

“ Looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith”

Nola's Recommended Reading

- **The Death of Humanity: and the Case for Life-** by Richard Weikart
- **Politics According to the Bible-** by Wayne Grudem
- **Silencing the Lambs: How Truth Became the New hate Speech-** by Todd Starnes
- **A Better Story-** by Glynn Harrison
- **Against the Flow-** by John Lennox
- **A Free People's Suicide-** by Os Guinness
- **City of God-** by Augustine
- **Christ and the Just Society- in the Thought of Augustine-** by Robert Dodaro
- **Lectures on Calvinism-** by Abraham Kuyper
- **Creating a Christian Worldview-** by Peter Heslam
- **A Secular Age-** by Charles Taylor
- **My Life Among the Deathworks-** by Philip Rieff
- **Political Vision and Illusions-** by David Koyzis
- **Defending Life-** by Francis Beckwith
- **One Blood-** by John Perkins
- **Dignity Revolution-** by Daniel Darling
- **Issues Facing Christians Today-** by John Stott
- **Love Thy Body-** by Nancy Pearcey
- **Gender Ideology- What do Christians Need to Know?-** by Sharon James
- **The Global Sexual Revolution: Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom-** by Gabriele Kuby
- **Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind-** by Tom Holland
- **Right To Die? Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide And End-Of-Life Care-** by John Wyatt
- **Matters of Life and Death-** by John Wyatt
- **Dying Well-** by John Wyatt

Jane's Additional Resources

“Emotionally Healthy Spirituality” by Peter Scazzerro

“Good Boundaries and Goodbyes” by Lysa Terkeurst

“Tyranny of the Urgent” by Charles E Hummel

“A Christian Approach to Conflict Resolution” by John Edmiston