

# YOUNG ADULT

Sunday School Fall Quarter, 2017 September, October, November

# BOOTS ON THE GROUND

QUARTERLY AIM: Inspiring Christians to invade and conquer Satan's dark domain.

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# FOREWORD

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The expression boots on the ground has an extended military-jargon history. It dates back to the British officer Robert Grainger Ker Thompson, a strategist for the British counter-insurgency efforts against the Malayan National Liberation Army (1948-1960). The expression boots on the ground was also used by the American General William Westmoreland in Vietnam, especially during the massive buildup of United States combat troops early in the war (1965-1968).

Boots on the ground conveys the belief that military success can only be achieved through the direct physical presence of troops in a conflicted area. Boots on the ground was coined to express the view that other means, such as aerial bombardment, economic incentives, or satellite intelligence could not achieve victory. Today the term is applied to counter-insurgency operations in the Middle East.

God's people are at war; they are soldiers. They must be brave, strong, well-trained, willing to put boots on the ground, and then invade Satan's dark domain with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:1-4).



# A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

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**Lesson Text:** Acts 1:1-8

**Principle:** A clash exists between God's kingdom of light and Satan's kingdom of darkness and the result is spiritual warfare.

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The book of Acts graphically portrays the clash between the kingdom of God and Satan's dark and foreboding kingdom. The kingdom of God is about light, life, hope, joy and delivering people from sin. The kingdom of Satan is about darkness, death, gloom, doom and delivering people to sin. The clash of kingdoms occurs when Christians put boots on the ground and witness to the life, death, burial, resurrection and saving power of Jesus Christ.

The term boots on the ground conveys the belief that military success can only be achieved through the direct physical presence of troops in a conflicted area. When churches and individual Christians evangelize, they put boots on the ground and invade Satan's territory.

God has "delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). As Jesus told the apostle Paul, it is our duty to turn unbelievers "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18). To accomplish this mission, we have to put boots on the ground.

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He instructed His disciples to "wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). Jesus then said, "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). The disciples immediately asked when Jesus would restore

the kingdom to Israel, and He replied, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The baptism of fire—the coming Holy Spirit—empowered the first church to witness. Inflamed by the power of God, the church evangelized—by witnessing—in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the entire earth.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit, God’s people received the power and the weapons to invade Satan’s kingdom, to open the eyes of unbelievers, to turn them from darkness to light, away from the power of Satan and to the power of God.

The clash of kingdoms is what spiritual warfare is about and is our righteous mission on earth. To turn unbelievers from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the power of God, Christians invade Satan’s dark kingdom, they put boots on the ground, and they witness to unsaved people.

## EXPLORING THE PRINCIPLE

### THINK ABOUT IT



People want to be lightly governed by strong governments.

Children want fathers to protect them, but they also want fathers to deal with them gently and with tenderness.

Children want policemen tough enough to handle neighborhood bullies, but they also want policeman to hoist them on their shoulders and help them find their way home when they get lost in a crowd.

Children—and adults—want lots of muscle with lots of restraint.

### The Kingdom of God

The book of Acts begins and ends with the kingdom of God. Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He spoke “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Awaiting his trial in Rome, the apostle Paul spent two years, “Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31). From the beginning to the end, the book of Acts depicts boots on the ground as Christians invading Satan’s territory preaching the gospel.

Presently, the kingdom of God is wherever Jesus Christ is acknowledged and served as King. The kingdom of God is not a geopolitical territory with recognized boundaries. The kingdom of God could not join the United Nations. The kingdom of God is not of this world, but it is in the world. The kingdom of God—the sphere of God’s rule—is essentially

a spiritual kingdom, but it has tangible, visible manifestations.

When Jesus returns, the kingdom of God will manifest itself openly, and Jesus will physically rule and reign on earth (Revelation 12:10). As “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16), Jesus will bind Satan in the “bottomless pit” (Revelation 20:1), and will rule and reign with His saints for “a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

Until the day when God’s kingdom bursts on the scene, there will be continual clashes between soldiers in the kingdom of God and soldiers of Satan’s dark domain, the demons. Satan is the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), the “whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19), and Satan works through the “children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). The clash is real, and Satan will never back off or give up.

Although the earth belongs to God (Psalm 24:1), Satan has succeeded in usurping power and control over humankind and social institutions. Two-thousand years ago, Satan was in such control that he confidently told Jesus he could give the kingdoms of the world to whomever he wanted (Luke 4:5, 6).

Jesus literally invaded Satan’s kingdom when He preached, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). When Jesus invaded Satan’s domain, He established a pattern for things to come. His soldiers would be recruited through salvation, mobilized, and empowered to move with force against Satan on behalf of the kingdom of God. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christians can put boots on the ground, open the eyes of unbelievers, turn them from darkness to light, rescue them from the power of Satan and point them toward God (Acts 26:18).

### Power for the Mission

It is surprising, even after Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, that the apostles had not yet comprehended the nature of the kingdom of God. The apostles still desired something physical. Jesus, however, wanted the apostles, the first church, and future churches to realize the power they needed to invade Satan’s kingdom is spiritual power (Acts 1:6-8).

Is it possible for twenty-first century Christians to be like the disciples prior to Pentecost? Are

People want to be lightly governed by strong governments because that’s how God governs (Matthew 1:28-30).

—Joel Belz, *Tender Toughness*

The kingdom of God is about being lightly and lovingly governed (Romans 14:17).



### THINK ABOUT IT

The late pastor and writer Hershel Hobbs, often quoted the words of an old friend:

“If the Holy Spirit were suddenly taken out of the world, 95% of the world would go on as usual.”

The point is, much of the world does its work without God's power.

When Christian soldiers put boots on the ground, they are doomed to failure, if they try to defeat Satan using their own strength and power.

The power to invade Satan's dark domain is tied to the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Without the power of God, defeating Satan is a losing proposition (John 15:5)

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there times when we just can't take it anymore and feel we must take up arms and physically move the kingdom of God forward? We can sign petitions, picket abortion clinics, and join Christian coalitions to further God's agenda politically. These things aren't wrong. But do they advance the kingdom of God?

Several years ago, an ROTC college student came to me and asked, "Does God use real soldiers to do kingdom work?" I replied, "Yes," quoted 2 Timothy 2:3, 4, and told the young man that we are all soldiers. He said, "You don't understand what I'm saying. Does God use real soldiers to take out evil men and women?" I replied—quickly I might add—that the weapons a Christian soldier uses are not physical but spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3, 4), and that our strength is in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10).

Every generation must stand for Bible principles. However, we shouldn't overlook the fact that we move the kingdom of God forward through evangelism, not through force. In fact, our power is tied to evangelism. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered the first church, and twenty-first century churches, to witness and to invade Satan's territory (Acts 1:8).

Physical weapons won't tear down the fortresses Satan has built worldwide, but evangelism will, one person at a time. The power and the method we use to accomplish the mission comes from God (Matthew 28:19, 20). We do have a mission (evangelism) and we do have power (the Holy Spirit). We can, therefore, invade Satan's domain and gain valuable territory for the kingdom of God.

Satan doesn't want us focusing on evangelism, because he knows he can't stop a spiritually empowered army that puts boots on the ground (Matthew 16:15-19).

## THINK ABOUT IT



Churches are foundational to their communities; they are bastions of truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

## Keys to Victory

During the forty days from Jesus' resurrection to His ascension, He spoke "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). When Jesus began His ministry, His message was, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Jesus bravely invaded Satan's domain and declared war. Satan

recognized the threat and stated that he could give the kingdoms of the world to whomever he wished (Luke 4:5, 6). To Jesus, the way to invade Satan’s kingdom—then and now—was through the gospel, that is, His death burial and resurrection.

We, the people of God, have been recruited, mobilized and empowered to move with force against Satan and his kingdom. Jesus gave us our marching orders and said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Using every tactic his evil mind can conceive, Satan fights to keep Christians from witnessing and invading his territory. Consequently, we are fighting principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He taught His apostles about “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:6). I am sure Jesus talked about the keys to the kingdom and expanding the kingdom.

For example, in Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “I will build My church” and told His apostles, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). The keys to the kingdom of heaven are directly related to evangelism and they contain the power to bind and loose (Acts 1:8).

The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub (Luke 11:15). Beelzebub is a principality ranking somewhere near the top of the hierarchy of evil. In response to the accusation, Jesus said, “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace” (Luke 11:21). Obviously, the most prized possession of a ranking principality is unsaved souls. The evangelistic implication is that if the principality’s armor remains intact, lost souls won’t be saved.

The truth every community needs to hear is, Jesus is the Son of God and He is the way to Heaven (John 14:6).

Communities may be filled with what some call “undesirable” people.

Christians shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that Jesus ministered to undesirables and basically told Israel’s religious leaders that the sick need a physician.

Unchurched people cannot change themselves; they need the gospel.

When Christian soldiers put boots on the ground and share Jesus with their neighbors, they are invading Satan’s domain biblically.

Every time a lost soul is saved, Satan’s kingdom shrinks and God’s kingdom advances.

If Christians aren’t witnessing, Satan’s kingdom remains strong.

Churches must evangelize or fossilize.

It is possible, however, “When a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils” (Luke 11:22). When this happens, the principal-ity’s armor is ineffective and his spoils, unsaved souls, can be divided. This doesn’t mean that overcoming or binding the strong man saves souls, but it does mean that it frees unsaved souls to hear the gospel and to make their own decisions about Jesus Christ.

The word “overcome” *nikao* in Luke 11:22, is a parallel expression to “bind” *deo* in Matthew 12:29. This means there is a direct application of the use of the keys of the kingdom—binding and losing (Matthew 16:19)—to evangelism.

The “stronger than he” (Luke 11:22) cannot be a human. It refers to “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20), or the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus said He relied on to cast the demon out of the dumb man in the same context (Luke 11:14).

Sadly, every unsaved soul will not be saved when Christian soldiers use the keys to the kingdom; they may hear the gospel, refuse it, and return to a worse state than before (Luke 11:24-26). A Spirit-powered witness, however, loosens armor so that God’s Word can penetrate and change a person’s life.

## GRASPING THE PRINCIPLE

Military strategist, B. H. Liddell Hart, wrote, “The argument that defense always catches up with attack is much favored by those who are opposed to progressive developments, even in the means of defense. History justifies it to a certain extent. But the assertion overlooks the historical fact that defense has often failed to catch up in time to save armies and navies, and the countries they are intended to protect, from defeat in the interval.”

God’s kingdom of light and Satan’s kingdom of darkness battle one another daily. To expand God’s kingdom, we cannot remain a defensive army. To expand God’s kingdom, we must become an offensive army, that is, we must be evangelistic, put boots on the ground, and share the gospel with our family, our friends and our acquaintances.

There is a clash of kingdoms occurring in the world: the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of Satan. Lost souls hang in the balance. Christians, therefore, should project God’s power and wisdom by putting boots on the ground and leading lost souls to Christ (Ephesians 3:8-10).

## **DISCUSSING THE PRINCIPLE**

1. Since the book of Acts begins and ends with the kingdom of God, what does that say about the importance of kingdom work?
2. Discuss ways to invade Satan's domain through evangelism.
3. Explain why physical weapons won't work when we do kingdom work.
4. Discuss the power and the weapons God has given us to do kingdom work (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4; Ephesians 6:10-18).
5. What is the key to invading and overcoming Satan's domain?
6. What loosens a strong man's armor in spiritual warfare?

## **APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE**

How do we apply a clash of kingdoms?

Recognize that the clash of kingdoms is real and that the kingdom of God is not just a future concept (Romans 14:17, 18). Understand that you're not a passive participant in the clash of kingdoms and that you should be involved, deeply involved, in evangelism. Develop a concern for lost souls and pray for them (Romans 10:1). Move from concern to action by putting boots on the ground and witnessing to your family, friends and acquaintances.