



Chapter 1

Spiritual Self Defense changes everything

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Spiritual Self Defense changes everything

Key ideas

Spiritual Self Defense (SSD) gives you the power to experience life the way Jesus does. This is very different from try-hard Christianity because it gives you a defense against spiritual bullies and returns you to your God-intended state of peace and joy.

Objectives

- To distinguish between SSD and other approaches
- To identify what SSD promises
- To clarify who SSD is for

1.1. Spiritual Self Defense changes how we experience life

Key term: **Spiritual Self Defense (SSD)**

SSD is the power to experience life the way Jesus does.

Spiritual Self Defense is NOT WWJD. (What would Jesus do?)

Spiritual Self Defense is WWJB! (What would Jesus be?)

Examples

- My mortgage was seriously overdue. I'm self employed, but I had no money, no customers, no prospects. Visions of foreclosure and homelessness were knocking at the door of my mind. I used SSD, and, in a few minutes went from sleepless dread to totally relaxed, and, in fact, excited about the adventure I was on with God. My circumstances didn't change at first, but my outlook did. The money eventually came in, and I paid all my bills.
- The paramedics didn't think my son would live to see the morning. If he did, they expected him to sustain serious permanent brain damage. As I drove to the hospital, I had an SSD-type encounter with God. As a result, the whole week I was at the hospital with my son, I was calm inside, and filled with wonder at what God was doing. My son lived, and sustained no serious permanent brain damage.
- My wife was experiencing horrible panic attacks. We discovered and used SSD. She immediately experienced a 95% reduction in panic. That reduction continues today (15 years later).
- I had a problem with anger. I used SSD, and my anger dropped 90% or more. No anger management. No trying hard to be patient. The things that bothered me in the past just don't bother me any more. It truly is miraculous because I'm not doing anything to make myself calm; I'm just not angry. This is God's work, and He did it through SSD.
- As a result of SSD, I'm much happier, much more relaxed, much less tempted. Everything in my world has changed. My relationship with God has gone to a whole new level I never dreamed it would take. Thousands of lives have been transformed by SSD. Yours can too

Spiritual Self Defense (SSD) is

- **NOT** spiritual warfare
- **NOT** the armor of God
- **NOT** shouting at the devil, deliverance, exorcism
- **NOT** physical self-defense
- **NOT** an instant fix
- **NOT** faith healing
- **NOT** name it and claim it
- **NOT** therapy
- **NOT** crisis intervention
- **NOT** denial
- **NOT** Try Hard Christianity

I'm not saying all these things are bad;
I'm just saying Spiritual Self Defense is different.

This is NOT a self-help program. In fact, this isn't something you can even do on your own. Apart from Jesus, I guarantee you that SSD will not work.

You need Jesus to do SSD

- Jesus + you → SSD
- Jesus + you ~~≠~~ SSD

You **cannot** do SSD without Jesus

1.2. Here's why SSD will change everything for you

Around 1970 my parents bought some new dining room chairs. They were covered with vinyl and had an abstract pattern printed on them. For a long time, I sat in those chairs and looked at those chairs every day. Flowers. That's what I saw. There were flowers printed on those chairs.

Then one day an amazing thing happened. I was looking at the chair and realized that I wasn't looking at flowers. I was looking at cows. The pattern was pictures of cows.

What happened?

I experienced a paradigm shift. I saw the same thing a different way, and now I could never go back to seeing flowers again. From that point on, the chairs were covered with cows.

If I'm successful in communicating what I want to share with you, then I expect you will also experience a paradigm shift.

Let me explain.

I'm a Bible college graduate, but in Bible school I never heard what I'm going to teach you. I've listened to thousands of sermons, but with one exception I've never heard in a sermon what I'm going to teach you. I've been to many churches, talked to many Christian leaders, asked way too many questions; I've gone through the Bible literally hundreds of times, and it still took me thirty years to discover what I'm going to share with you.

But once I discovered it, I realized to my great surprise that it was right in front of me all the time. Like those cows. It jumps off the page at me now when I read the Bible. I see it everywhere. It has revolutionized my relationship with God. It transformed our marriage. It completely changes how I

experience all of life.

Among other things, I'm going to teach you the principle of spiritual leverage. It will make your life so much easier.

Spiritual leverage

A number of years ago, several friends and I met with a self defense expert. He was older than all of us, and smaller than any of us. Yet he had no trouble throwing any of us exactly where he wanted us. How did he do it? He understood the principle of leverage. He used our weight and our energy to his advantage.

Many people compare the Christian life to a battle. And it is a battle. Here's the problem. Most people are fighting the battle the hard way, and losing. Once you understand how spiritual leverage works, it becomes much, much easier to win this battle.



Here are a few more things you will learn:

How to get free: Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,” (John 8:32). Here's the problem. Many people know the truth, but they aren't free. In one study, 40% of pastors surveyed had engaged in an extra-marital affair. In another survey, 61% of committed Christian men had a problem with porn. They know the truth, but they're not free. I'll explain why, and exactly what you can do about it.

Discover the key to effortless transformation: Most people set themselves up for failure by confusing repentance with behavior modification. (“Yesterday I yelled at my wife, today I stopped—see, I repented.”) I'll show you the surprising truth about repentance, why it's the best (and most enjoyable) thing that could happen to any of us, and how it leads to painless, effortless transformation.

Tap into the power God has for you: Most people say that Christians sin because they have a sin nature. I'm going to challenge that assumption, offer a different perspective, and show you an incredibly empowering way to remove sin from your life.

Neutralize your painful past: Most people say we should forget the past and move on. However, most of these same people have no idea how to do that because they don't understand how the past affects them and what they can do about it. SSD will show you how to neutralize a painful past so you can move on with your life.

Aim at the right target

Aim at the right target: Many people think we can get rid of sin by being “tough on sin.” I'll explain why that doesn't work, and what you can do instead. Here's a hint: We're aiming at the wrong target; we're solving the wrong problem.



Overcome persistent sins: Most of us struggle with a pet sin we just can't seem to overcome. I'll explain why we get stuck and show you exactly what you need to do to get unstuck, and conquer that sin for good.

Wrong tools: Most people are trying to overcome spiritual bullies with spiritual disciplines, sermons, and Bible verses. These are great things and they should be part of our lives, BUT they usually do NOT defeat spiritual bullies. I'll show you what does.

You will also learn:

- What spiritual bullies have in common; why you can defeat them
- The wall in your mind—how this changes everything
- The four kinds of lies we all believe—and how to remove them
- How to strip addiction of its power
- How to forgive people who don't deserve to be forgiven
- How to avoid becoming an easy target
- How to hear God's voice
- Who you really are, and why it matters
- Your one power
- How to use SSD to turn a “no” into a “yes”

- Truth experience—what it is and why you need it
- Truth experience with Jesus—how it happens
- Streetwise spiritual defense tactics
- How to rebuild your life after a fall
- Suffering 101: How to protect yourself when your world falls apart

1.3. All of us face spiritual bullies

Spiritual bullies are anything that rob us of peace, joy, or righteousness. There are plenty of spiritual bullies to go around. If one can't get to you, usually another one can. If you aren't troubled by anxiety, then maybe anger is your thing. Or porn. Or self righteousness. Or pride. Or whatever.

I've been hit by most of them. In my life I've come face to face with porn, homelessness, rape, business failure, sexual abuse, addiction, overdose, bankruptcy, cancer, and the list goes on.¹ I've experienced the whole range of emotions: terror, fury, dread, invalidation, shame, loneliness, and grief. But I can honestly say I'm happier now than I've ever been, and I'm deeply grateful for the journey God has given me.



1 Some of these things happened to me; some of them happened to those
closest to me.



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When bullies attack, you need a plan

When I was about eleven years old, I invited a kid over to my house. Let's call him Jack, although that wasn't his name. Even though he was in my class at school, he was much bigger than I was. I was afraid of him, but somebody thought it would be a good idea for him and me to spend time with each other.

After he got over to my house, he turned his attention to my little brother. He thought he would do an experiment on my brother. He thought he would see if he could push my brother's eyeballs back into his brain.

I looked around in horror. The adults were standing around talking and laughing. Nobody was paying any attention.

So something inside me snapped. I ran at Jack and started pounding him with my fists the best I knew how. The attack barely registered with him, but he did let go of my brother.

I looked around hoping the adults were on their way over to put a stop to it. Surely they would stop this dangerous bully who was now fighting my brother and me and winning.

Nope.

Talking and laughing and somewhere else off in adult land.

I tell you this story because this is how my Christian faith worked for a long, long time.

The bullies in my life kept pulling me off to the side and terrorizing me. I tried to fight my way out, but they were way too big for me. I couldn't win.

Where was God?

He was talking and laughing and somewhere else, far away in God land.

Or so I thought. I later learned a much different reality. But we'll get to that.

When I talk about bullies, I'm talking about the kind of stress that kept me awake night after night, problems with my marriage, problems with money, anger I couldn't manage, lust, shame, homelessness, abuse and the list goes on.

It was crazy.

All my life I wanted to follow Jesus. Being a super compliant kid growing up, I thought if I only was good for God everything would be okay.

But it wasn't okay. My faith wasn't working. I served a God who manned heaven's switchboard turning down my prayer requests because they weren't His will, listening to me confess the same sins over and over again because I couldn't get it right. This God was disgusted with me because I was such a sinner even though I tried to be good. He was no fun at all, and He didn't care if I got hurt because somehow pain was good for my character. Whatever that meant.

While I had my moments—good and bad—I was mostly miserable deep inside.

I didn't understand that I was a target—just like you are. Nobody ever explained to me how spiritual combat works. Nobody told me why these attacks are successful, and how to defend myself against them.

Sure, I heard things about “spiritual warfare,” and I tried practicing some of the techniques I learned (with limited results). But the deliverance and spiritual warfare tactics I learned were about as effective on my bullies as I was back there as an eleven year old child trying to fight that boy who was so much bigger than me.

It took a little over thirty years for me to finally figure out what was going on—what all these spiritual bullies have in common, why their attacks work, and what we can do to disable them.

Once you figure it out, however, you will walk through the dark alleys of life with a whole different kind of confidence, because you'll understand why and how God defends His kids.

You need that defense because—believe me—you will be attacked.

By the way, I'm still alive and so is my brother. The adults put Jack in a car and drove him home.

1.4. What we're doing isn't working

Sometimes when we try to fix things, they just get worse. Many people are trying to deal with the spiritual bullies in their lives, but they're using the wrong tools.

The standard advice for dealing with spiritual bullies is usually some form of spiritual discipline.

Wrong tool.

Spiritual disciplines—prayer, Bible reading, church attendance and so on—are all very important. But, by themselves, they won't protect you.

Millions of Christians are walking time bombs. They think their bases are covered, but they wake up one morning in a terrible mess and can't figure out what happened.

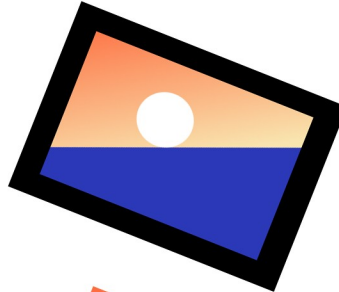
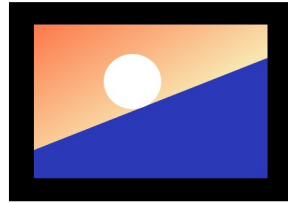
I've talked with good Christian men who loved God and loved their families—yet they were taken down by adulterous affairs.

As I was talking with one of these men, he described to me how unreal his own behavior seems to him. He didn't see it coming. After it happened, he felt a sense of complete bewilderment. How could he have done this? How could he have been “bewitched” by this other woman?

I wish his situation was just an isolated case, but it isn't.

According to one source, almost 40% of pastors polled said they have had an extra-marital affair since beginning their ministry.² It's common knowledge that over 60% of Christian men have a problem with porn.

Spiritual disciplines are great, but there's a reason they don't protect us from spiritual bullies. I'll explain that reason to you, and show you what you can do instead of or in addition to spiritual disciplines to neutralize every spiritual bully in your life.



2 maranathalife.com/lifeline/stats.htm

1.5. Don't settle for anything less than freedom

Freedom is different than coping. Coping says the fruit of the Spirit, joy and peace, are just words—mere illusions. Coping says that we must grit our teeth, say our verses, go through all kinds of gyrations, expend enormous amounts of energy to appear spiritual, to act normal, to avoid sin.

Freedom is different than performance. Performance is focused on behavior modification.

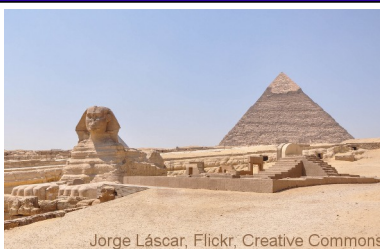
When you are completely free, evil desires lose their attraction. Freedom causes temptation to lose its power. Freedom means I'm no longer controlled by my circumstances—they no longer have the power to *make* me anxious, afraid, angry or anything else.

The Pharaoh principle

"They are lazy." Exodus 5:8

Do you want to be a better Christian? Try harder.

This advice is ubiquitous, but where does it come from? Doesn't it come from Pharaoh?



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Pharaoh says, "Oh, you don't like being slaves? Try harder. Supply your own straw for making bricks. Try harder. Don't reduce your quota. Try harder."

God is not another pharaoh. When we crossed the Red Sea, we stepped into freedom. God has done the hard work. Our work is to believe (John 6:29).

**God is not at war with you.
God is at war with the Egypt that enslaves you.**

Most people act as if God is unnecessary. Most people believe that if they just try a little harder, if they just spend more time in prayer, make another trip to the altar, get the right kind of counseling, or whatever, that they will

be free. But freedom doesn't come from us. It doesn't result from our efforts.

Freedom understands the words of Jesus: "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:30

Freedom is a miracle. Freedom is impossible. Only God can make us free.

Bully profile: **Try Hard Christianity**

The Try Hard message

- Fake it 'til you make it.
- God would like you more if you sinned less.
- How have you sinned? Let me count the ways!
- Your problems are your own fault.
- If you were good, you wouldn't suffer.
- Repent! Stop sinning and do what's right.
- Read your Bible more. Pray harder. Give more.
- Clean up.
- Straighten up.
- Try harder.

Try Hard Christianity robs us. Jesus restores us.

Try Hard's close relatives:

Performance, Self Righteousness, Legalism, Religion

Shame theology

As [Jesus] went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." John 9:1-3 NIV

Like the disciples, many Christians practice what I call "shame theology." Shame theology teaches this: If a little bit of conviction is good, then a whole lot of conviction must be better. If you have a problem, there must be something wrong with you. Shame on you. Don't you realize that you've sinned? Snap out of it! When someone has a problem like sexual addiction or depression (or whatever), the shame theologians never consider that the problem might be an opportunity for God to do something special. Instead, they are ready to jump in with their prescriptions: read the Bible more, pray more, give more money to the right TV evangelist, or whatever—because your problem is your own fault and you need to fix it yourself.

Shame theology isn't anything new. Job's three friends relied on it, because when Job's experience shattered their paradigms about who God was and how He works, they decided to hold on to their paradigms instead of accepting reality. Read the Old Testament book of Job. In the end, you'll find out what God thinks of shame theology.

Don't keep God in a box

I saw...someone "like a son of man"
Revelation 1:12-13

Wait a second! Isn't this the apostle John writing this? Couldn't you argue that he was the closest friend Jesus had on earth, the most intimate apostle, the "disciple whom Jesus loved"? Now Jesus shows up, and John doesn't even greet Him by name? In a way, John hardly seems to recognize Him. He just spends five verses describing what He looked like and then, in verse 17, he "fell at His feet as though dead."

What's going on?

When God shows up, He blows apart all our preconceived ideas about who He should be. In the First Century, the Jews were expecting a military messiah to throw off the Roman yoke and establish a sovereign Jewish state. Jesus came along and showed no inclination to pick a fight with the Romans. He told His followers to help the Roman soldiers carry their bags. And when He finally met with the Roman authorities, He simply said, "My kingdom is from another place."

Now we live in a world where most people have Jesus pegged to be a wimp, a feminine creature with a soft and glowing face who hides in His churches and whines, "Why can't we all get along?"

Most people are in for a major surprise.

God seems different today than He seemed yesterday not because He changed—He didn't—but rather because our minds and hearts and situations weren't big enough to contain all of Him yesterday, and they won't be big enough today. That's why we get the gift of eternal life, because only eternal life is big enough to contain the full discovery of God.



Tyler Spaeth, Flickr, Creative Commons

1.6. What to expect

Spiritual Self Defense will require you to get honest with yourself about what you are feeling (your emotions). That can be a scary step for some people. However, at no time are you ever expected or required to do anything you don't want to do. All the steps in this process are voluntary, and as you study this, you'll have plenty of time to consider what is or is not right for you.

Is SSD for you?

If you can answer “yes” to any of the following questions, then SSD can help you.

- Have you ever had trouble forgiving someone?
- Do you struggle with porn, addiction, life controlling issues?
- Are you a survivor of abuse, molestation, or violence?
- Have you experienced anxiety or depression?
- Do you feel like there's gotta be something more?
- Do you suspect you might have a problem with anger?
- Are you experiencing challenges in a relationship?
- Do you feel trapped in unpleasant circumstances?
- Do you sometimes feel distant from God?
- Are you experiencing anything less than peace and joy?
- Do you feel stressed, lonely, ugly, like a failure?
- Are you tired of Try Hard Christianity?



SSD is NOT a good fit for you if you struggle with challenging mental health issues or those who have experienced extreme trauma. While the principles can help you, they should be applied only in a safe setting with a professional counselor or a highly skilled prayer minister. Otherwise, you could be triggered by this process. And, of course, if you're not willing to consider Jesus as a possibility, then SSD is not for you because it relies on Jesus.

How will Spiritual Self Defense help you?

You will

1. Connect with Jesus on a whole new level.
2. Learn how to experience less stress.
3. Discover surprising secrets to spiritual breakthroughs.
4. Discover how the abundant life Jesus promised really works.
5. Learn how to repair damaged relationships.
6. Gain a deeper understanding of the Bible.
7. Learn how to remove triggers from your life.
8. Restore peace and joy to your life.

You will also learn

1. Why trying harder doesn't work.
2. What gives temptation its power.
3. Creative strategies for getting around the wall in your mind.
4. The surprising answer to: "Can you trust your feelings?"
5. How to experience real freedom.
6. How forgiving others really works.
7. Who you really are and why it matters.

Spiritual Self Defense makes you stress resistant and addiction resistant. SSD isn't about coping; it's about overcoming. Through SSD, Jesus gives you the power to recover peace and joy in any set of circumstances.

Peace and joy: Our intended state

for the kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17 NASB

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace... Galatians 5:22

Our intended state

The Bible describes what God intends for you and me in this verse:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit... Romans 14:17 NIV (emphasis added)

Many Christians have mistaken the Christian life for an exercise in behavior modification. Stop doing bad things. Start doing good things. But Jesus offers something far better. He offers a whole new life. And that phrase, “a whole new life,” is NOT religious code words for smile and pretend you’re enjoying the present life, no matter how miserable it might be. No. Jesus invites us to experience everything differently. Where once there was emotional pain, Jesus invites us back to genuine peace and joy. These are not imaginary states of being. They are real. And they are available to you once you learn how to receive them from Jesus.

You can master this, but it will take courage and commitment

The biggest thing that slowed me down from making this huge shift in my life was this: denial. I was clueless about how much I was lying to myself. I could not honestly face what I really was experiencing inside. It took a long time for God to get me to the place where I could be real with myself, real with Him, real with others.

Hopefully, you don’t have that barrier inside. But if you do, no worries. God knows how to move you from where you are to where you need to be. God has always been kind to me. He will be kind to you as well.

Years ago, my pastor, Dr. Warren Heckman, shared this story: A woman was pulling out of a parking lot when she noticed that a truck was right behind her. She turned right. The truck followed. Two blocks later at the traffic light, she turned left. The truck was still behind her. She pulled onto the entrance ramp of a freeway. The truck followed. She sped up; her pursuer sped up. She slowed down; he slowed down. She pulled off the freeway with the truck following, turned into the parking lot of a convenience store. She slammed the car into park, tore off her seat belt, and ran inside the store to safety. Meanwhile, the truck driver jumped out of his truck, ran to her car, opened the back door, and pulled the rapist that was hidden behind the front seat out of the car and wrestled him to the ground.

Sometimes the very thing we run from is the thing we need the most.



Chapter 1 > Summary and Questions

Spiritual Self Defense or SSD is the power to experience life the way Jesus does. This is important because God is not just interested in our behavior, but also in how we experience life. You cannot do SSD without Jesus. God means to return us to our intended state of peace and joy. From that position of strength, we will be able to take on any spiritual bully including anxiety, temptation, anger, suffering and the list goes on. SSD also maps out an escape route from Try Hard Christianity, with its emphasis on behavior modification and its reliance on human effort rather than God's power. Embracing SSD is a paradigm shift for most of us—it involves seeing everything through new eyes.

Video

For you, your home group, your church. Online: kim51.com/8715

Order the more complete DVD here: kim51.com/4734

? Check your understanding

(See answers on page 278.)

1. Which phrase best describes Spiritual Self Defense:
 - (a) spiritual warfare
 - (b) paradigm shift
 - (c) behavior modification
 - (d) What would Jesus do? WWJD
 - (e) self help program
2. Define Spiritual Self Defense (SSD).
3. Give examples of Spiritual Self Defense (SSD).
4. What is a paradigm shift?

5. Can you do Spiritual Self Defense without Jesus?

Yes

No

6. What are spiritual bullies?

7. Spiritual Self Defense would be inappropriate for whom? Why?

Group discussion

1. Have you ever experienced a paradigm shift? Explain.

2. What tactics have you found to be most effective or least effective when dealing with spiritual bullies?

3. Has it ever seemed to you like God was far away and didn't care? How did you deal with that?

4. Why do you think dedicated Christians fall into traps like adultery (extra-marital affairs) or addiction?

5. How would you describe the difference between freedom and performance?

6. Why is it important to avoid trying to keep God in a box?

7. What does peace and joy mean to you? What do they look like in your world?

8. How would you define denial? Can you give examples?

9. What would you say to a friend who admits to you that s/he is involved in an extra-marital affair?

Journal / on your own

1. Which benefit of SSD promises to be most meaningful to you?
2. What comes to mind when you read: “spiritual leverage,” “effortless transformation,” “painful past”?
3. Have you ever been bullied (in the usual sense of the word)? How did you handle it?
4. What spiritual bullies have you faced? How have you dealt with them?
5. How easy is it for you to get honest with yourself about what you are feeling?
6. What best describes you: “sinner,” “average Joe/Jane,” “saint”? Why?

Prayer possibilities

Father in heaven, please protect me with Your truth. As I study Spiritual Self Defense, guide me into the truth and the life You have for me. As I read this chapter, here are my thoughts...

I also find myself feeling...

What, if anything, do You want me to know about these thoughts and feelings?

Connect with the author

Questions? Comments? Thoughts? Yes, I would love to connect with you. Let me invite you to explore our online learning community.

Visit kim51.com/3798 for details.



Resources

The Gift of Transformation describes how God empowered author Dwight Clough to overcome spiritual bullies resulting in the transformation of his life and marriage. Although he doesn't use the term "Spiritual Self Defense" in this book, the book is a great example of how God can use these principles to change a life. Although this is a quick and easy read, many people report being profoundly affected by this book, and it remains one of Dwight's best selling books of all time.

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