

# Letter 54. the Proper Way to Conduct Spiritual Warfare

by Archbishop Theophan

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*To conduct spiritual warfare properly, one must study the writings of the Holy Fathers and apply the virtues to their life.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:7, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, James 1:22

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Discipleship"

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## Description

Archbishop Theophan emphasizes the importance of engaging in the continual spiritual battle of life, highlighting the necessity of studying the writings of the Holy Fathers for guidance and victory. He stresses the need for proper conduct in this battle and the significance of aligning one's reading of the Holy Fathers with their own way of life to avoid delusion. Archbishop Theophan encourages individuals to read works by great prelates like St. John Chrysostom and Tikhon of Zadonsk, tailored to their specific circumstances, whether in the world, in monasteries, or as recluses, to structure their lives effectively and find peace of mind.

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## Transcript

Our life is a continual spiritual battle. This is why one must be surprised not when the battle is evident, but rather when it is not. In order to be victorious in this battle, however, one must conduct it properly, and in order to conduct it properly, one must study the writings of the Holy Fathers. Even one's reading of the Holy Fathers must be done properly, not in a disorderly fashion. "Try," I say to you in the words of Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, "to read the books of the Holy Fathers relevant to your own way of life, so that you will be able not only to admire and enjoy reading the writings of the Fathers, but to put them into practice as well.

A Christian living in the world should read the works of the great prelates who wrote for laypeople, teaching Christian virtues appropriate to those who spend their lives amid material concerns. Monks in monasteries should read other works, and still other works should be read by recluses and those keeping a vow of silence! Studying the virtues without taking into account one's own way of life can lead to daydreaming and delusion" (Works, v. 4, pp. 511-512).

What works did Bishop Ignatius have in mind? The works of St. John Chrysostom, the prelate Tikhon of Zadonsk, and similar writings [e.g., those recommended on the General Writings on Orthopraxis page].

From this point of view, your attitude, which you expressed in the words "I can no longer attempt to fulfill the three vows of monasticism," cannot be recognized as correct. You must try to lead not a monastic life, but a Christian life, spiritual in its general manifestations, but not monastic in form. Then your life will be more properly structured and your mind will be calmer.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/archbishop-theophan/letter-54-the-proper-way-to-conduct-spiritual-warfare/>

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