SOFTWARE & TECH

This Present Darkness And Piercing The Darkness

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Introduction: The Enduring Legacy of a Spiritual Warfare Classic

Few novels have captured the Christian imagination quite like Frank Peretti's **This Present Darkness** and its sequel, **Piercing the Darkness**. Published in the late 1980s, these two books ignited a cultural phenomenon, selling millions of copies and introducing an entire generation to the concept of spiritual warfare in a tangible, gripping narrative. For countless readers, these stories were not mere fiction; they served as a lens through which to view the unseen battles raging around them. The imagery of angels clashing with demons over a small town, of prayer warriors interceding in a desperate struggle, became a powerful metaphor for the Christian life. But what is it about these particular novels that continues to resonate so deeply? Why do readers still return to the town of Ashton and the cosmic conflict that unfolds there? This article explores the core themes, the spiritual concepts, the characters, and the lasting impact of these monumental works, examining why they remain essential reading for anyone interested in the intersection of faith, storytelling, and the unseen realm.

The World of Peretti: A Tangible Spiritual Realm

The Setting: Small-Town America as a Battlefield

Both **This Present Darkness** and **Piercing the Darkness**are set in the fictional town of Ashton, a seemingly quiet and ordinary American community. Peretti masterfully uses this familiar backdrop to highlight the extraordinary. The local newspaper, the struggling college, the various churches, and the town's political offices are not just settings; they are the very terrain upon which a massive spiritual war is fought. This grounding in the mundane is what makes the story so effective. It suggests that the cosmic battle between good and evil is not something that happens in a distant, mythical land, but right here, in our own neighborhoods, schools, and places of work. The conflict is not just external; it invades every aspect of life, from a city council meeting to a child's classroom. This accessibility and relatability are key reasons why the books found such a broad audience.

The Unseen World: Angels, Demons, and Structures of Darkness

One of the most defining features of the **This Present Darkness**series is its detailed and imaginative depiction of the spiritual realm. Peretti gives form and function to angels and demons, making them active, strategic, and deeply involved in human affairs. Demons are not just shadowy figures; they have hierarchies, strategies, and specific assignments. They plot to corrupt individuals, manipulate communities, and advance a global agenda of moral decay and spiritual blindness. Conversely, angels are not passive guardians; they are warriors, strategists, and protectors who engage in direct combat with the forces of darkness. The novels introduce the concept of "territorial spirits" and "structures of darkness," suggesting that demonic forces can establish a foothold over a geographical area, influencing its spiritual climate. This idea, drawn from biblical passages about "principalities and powers," is made vividly concrete, encouraging readers to think about the spiritual condition of their own cities and nations.

Core Themes and Spiritual Concepts

The Power of Prayer as Active Warfare

At the heart of both books is the central, non-negotiable theme of prayer. In **This Present Darkness**, prayer is not a passive act or a mere wish. It is depicted as the primary weapon in the spiritual arsenal. The novel's heroes,

particularly Hank Busche and the small prayer group he leads, understand that their prayers are not just requests sent into a void. They are active engagements that release angelic power and break down demonic strongholds. This is powerfully illustrated in key scenes where the prayers of the faithful directly influence the outcome of angelic battles. The book essentially serves as a vivid and compelling theology of intercessory prayer, teaching readers that their prayers matter, that they have cosmic significance, and that they are a crucial part of God's strategy for redemption. The sequel, **Piercing the Darkness**, deepens this theme, showing how prayer is necessary to "pierce" the layers of deception and opposition that the enemy has established.

Spiritual Blindness and Deception

The title **This Present Darkness**itself is a direct reference to a spiritual condition: a state of blindness and deception that prevents people from seeing the truth of God and the reality of the spiritual war around them. Peretti masterfully shows how the enemy works through ideas, philosophies, and cultural trends to lead people away from the truth. The novels depict a New Age-inspired philosophy, a secular humanistic agenda, and a corrupted education system as tools used by the dark forces to undermine faith and morality. The characters who are spiritually "asleep" are portrayed as being unknowingly manipulated, while those who are awakened to prayer and the Word of God can see through the deception. This theme of spiritual discernment is a powerful call for readers to be alert and critical of the cultural messages they consume.

Community and Unity in the Body of Christ

Another profound theme in the series is the importance of the Church functioning as a unified body. The heroes are not lone warriors; they are a community of believers from different backgrounds and denominations who learn to work together. The prayer group, the local pastors, and the faithful believers who stand firm in the face of pressure all represent different parts of the Body of Christ. Their unity becomes a significant threat to the enemy's plans. Peretti demonstrates how division, suspicion, and disunity among Christians can be a major foothold for the enemy, while love, cooperation, and mutual support unlock incredible spiritual power. A powerful subplot involves a seemingly "useless" woman who, through her simple faith and prayer, becomes a key figure in the victory. This underscores that every believer has a role to play, regardless of their public status or perceived importance.

Character Study: Heroes of the Faith

Hank Busche: The Pastor as Warrior

Hank Busche is the quintessential small-town pastor. He is not a perfect super-saint; he struggles with doubt, fear, and the overwhelming scale of the battle he discovers. Yet, his defining characteristic is his obedience and his commitment to prayer. When he is shown the reality of the spiritual war, he does not run from it. He is willing to be seen as a fool, to lose his reputation, and to stand alone if necessary. Hank embodies the call to be a shepherd who fights for his flock. His journey from a somewhat conventional pastor to a spiritual warrior who understands the power of intercession is the narrative spine of the first book. He is a relatable and inspiring figure, showing that courage is not the absence of fear but the decision to act in faith despite it.

Talia and the Prayer Warriors

Talia, Randi, and the other members of the prayer group are the unsung heroes of the series. They are not the ones preaching from the pulpit or leading public campaigns. They are the quiet ones, the ones who gather in a small room to pray while the rest of the world sleeps. Peretti elevates their role, showing that their intercession is the most critical battlefield of all. Their persistence, their faith, and their willingness to wrestle in prayer directly influence the angelic battles and the fate of their entire community. They represent the vital, often invisible, ministry of intercession that supports all other forms of ministry.

The Antagonists: More Than Just Villains

The human antagonists in the books, such as Alexander Kaseph and his network of New Age operatives, are not simply evil for the sake of being evil. They are portrayed as people who have consciously or unconsciously yielded themselves to demonic influence. They are intelligent, strategic, and deeply committed to their cause of establishing a one-world government and a humanistic religion. Peretti avoids making them cartoon villains by showing that their power is derived from the spiritual forces they serve. Their defeat requires not just human effort, but the direct intervention of God through prayer and angelic warfare. This layered presentation of evil makes the conflict more profound. The enemy is spiritual, and the human agents are ultimately pawns in a much larger game.

The Impact and Legacy of the Series

A New Genre of Christian Fiction

Before **This Present Darkness**, mainstream Christian fiction was largely dominated by historical novels, romance, or simple allegories. Peretti's work was a game-changer. He created a supernatural thriller that was both deeply theological and wildly entertaining. It opened the door for a whole generation of Christian authors to explore the genres of suspense, horror, and fantasy. The book's success proved that there was a massive audience hungry for Christian fiction that was engaging, creative, and willing to tackle "heavy" spiritual topics in a direct way. It remains a landmark text in the history of Christian publishing.

Influencing a Generation on Spiritual Warfare

Perhaps the most significant legacy of the series is its impact on how many Christians think about spiritual warfare. For millions of readers, **This Present Darkness** and **Piercing the Darkness**were their primary introduction to the concepts of intercessory prayer, spiritual mapping, and the idea of territorial spirits. The books sparked widespread discussion, teaching, and even controversy within churches. Some praised Peretti for giving believers a tangible vision of the unseen world and motivating them to pray more fervently. Others raised concerns that the books focused too much on the demonic realm or that they promoted a specific, sometimes debated, theology of spiritual warfare. Regardless of one's perspective, the books' cultural and theological influence is undeniable. They put the topic of spiritual conflict on the map for the average Christian.

Relevance and Meaning for Today

A Timely Message in a Divided World

Decades after their publication, the themes of **This Present Darkness**feel more relevant than ever. Our world is characterized by deep cultural division, a proliferation of competing worldviews, and a sense that there are powerful, invisible forces shaping events. The books' warning about the dangers of a secular, humanistic agenda that seeks to exclude God from the public square resonates with many contemporary concerns about the erosion of religious freedom and moral absolutes. Peretti's message is not just about nostalgia; it is a call to awareness. He reminds readers that the ultimate battle is not between left and right, liberal and conservative, but between the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness.

The Call to "Pierce" the Darkness

If **This Present Darkness** is about recognizing the problem, **Piercing the Darkness**is about actively engaging it. The sequel's title is a powerful metaphor for the Christian's mission. To "pierce the darkness" means to bring the light of Christ into the very strongholds of the enemy. It requires courage, strategic prayer, and a willingness to speak truth even when it is unpopular. For the modern reader, this is a challenge to move beyond passive observation of a troubled world. It is a call to become an active participant in God's redemptive plan. It means using

our influence, our prayers, and our voices to be agents of light in our own families, workplaces, and communities.

Conclusion: An Unfinished Battle

This Present Darkness and **Piercing the Darkness**are more than just classic novels. They are a powerful allegory for the Christian life, a vivid Bible lesson in spiritual warfare, and a rousing call to prayer. While the specific cultural battles may have changed since Peretti first wrote them, the underlying spiritual reality remains the same. The battle between good and evil continues, the power of prayer is still the most potent force on earth, and the call to stand firm in the faith is as urgent as ever. For those who have not yet read them, these books offer a thought-provoking and thrilling journey into the unseen world. For those returning to them, they serve as a timeless reminder that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, and that the light of Christ has the power to pierce even the deepest darkness. The story of Ashton is not just a story; it is a mirror held up to the soul of every believer, asking a simple, profound question: Will you join the battle?

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