



Main Idea: There's an invisible spiritual world where good and evil are in conflict.

Scriptures: Ephesians 6:10-18

Game Suggestion: Capture the Flag

Instructions: Split your group into two teams and assign each team a territory. Place each team's flag on their side. The goal is to sneak into the other team's territory, grab their flag, and bring it back to your own side. If a player is tagged while on enemy territory, they go to a designated "jail" area until freed by a teammate. The first team to successfully capture the other team's flag wins!

After the game, bring everyone back together and say something like: This game makes me think about our world. We're in a battle, but not the kind you can see. This is a spiritual battle, and it's happening all around us.

Message Manuscript:

Today, we're kicking off a brand-new series called *Stranger Realms*, where we're going to dive into the supernatural like angels and demons, Satan, the Holy Spirit, and a cosmic spiritual battle that's happening all around us. It's going to be incredible! But before we dive in, who here has seen the show *Stranger Things*?

It's this amazing show about a group of kids who discover a hidden, dangerous dimension called the Upside Down. One of the kids, a girl named Eleven, has superpowers. She can tap into the Upside Down with her mind. Throughout the show, they face scary monsters, tricky puzzles, and threats that could destroy the world. The cool part is, even though these threats are unseen, the kids succeed because they work together. And that's kind of what we're going to be talking about in this series: the unseen spiritual world, the battles happening around us, and how God equips us to stand strong.

Point #1: There's an unseen, invisible spiritual world.

We all experience things that are real but invisible. Think about it... can you see the air you breathe? Not really, unless it's freezing outside. Can you see the wind? No, but you can feel it on your face, and you can see its effects like trees swaying, flags flapping, hair flying everywhere. What about gravity? You can't see it, but you know it's there when you jump in the air or drop something. There are so many things in our world that are unseen but still 100% real. Just because you can't see something doesn't mean it isn't there or that it isn't powerful.

[Leader Note: Consider using an object lesson here. Set a fan on a table with a few lightweight items like feathers or tissues in front of it. Turn on the fan and let the air blow them away. Ask, "Can you see the wind?" Then say, "No, but we can see what it does." It's the same with the spiritual world.]

We can't see the wind, air, or gravity but we see their effects. The same is true for the spiritual world. You can't see God, Satan, angels, demons, or the Holy Spirit with your physical eyes, but you can see what's happening because of them. You can see the effects in real life through prayers that are answered, in people's hearts being changed, in moments when you clearly sense right and wrong, or when you feel convicted about something. There's more to reality than what we can touch, hear, or see.

In the same way, there's a whole spiritual world that we can't see with our eyes, but it's just as real. The apostle Paul wrote about this in Colossians:

¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:16, NIV)

Paul said that God created everything, not just what we can see, but also what we can't. There's a whole unseen dimension where spiritual beings exist and where real spiritual battles are happening.

One of the coolest stories that shows this is found in Numbers 22, and it's kind of wild. There was a pagan prophet named Balaam who was hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel. So, Balaam hopped on his donkey and started traveling down the road to meet the king. But suddenly, the donkey

stopped. Balaam couldn't figure out why, so he got mad and started hitting the poor donkey to get her to move.

What Balaam didn't realize was that there was an angel of the Lord standing in the road with a sword blocking their way. The donkey could see the angel, but Balaam couldn't. After the donkey stopped a few more times, Balaam completely lost it and started yelling at her. Then, God opened the donkey's mouth, and the donkey actually talked to Balaam! She said, "What have I done to you to make you beat me?"

At that moment, God opened Balaam's eyes, and he finally saw what had been there all along, the angel of the Lord standing in front of him. The angel basically said, "You're lucky your donkey stopped, because she just saved your life." This story gives us a glimpse into something we often forget that there's more happening around us than what we can see. Just because we can't see the spiritual world doesn't mean it isn't real. God's angels are at work. Spiritual battles are being fought. The unseen world is real.

And that's what makes our *Stranger Realms* series so cool. In *Stranger Things*, the Upside Down is this hidden world that exists alongside the normal one. Most people don't even realize it's there. But it's real, dark, and dangerous. The heroes can't always see it, but they can see its effects: lights flicker, walls move, and monsters creep into their world.

In the same way, the Bible teaches that there's an unseen spiritual realm. It's not fantasy, but reality. There's a world beyond what we can see with our eyes. Darkness tries to invade, but God's light and power are greater. Just like the characters in *Stranger Things* fight back against the evil that's trying to take over, we're called to stand firm against the darkness.

Point #2: There's a battle going on between good and evil.

If you think about it, almost every great story is built on a battle between good and evil. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the kingdoms of men, dwarves, and elves unite to fight Sauron and his armies of orcs and darkness. In *Star Wars*, we see the epic clash between the Light Side and the Dark Side. Darth Vader versus Luke Skywalker.

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