

Understanding Satan

Lesson 4: Satan's Tactics

Having seen that Satan desires to destroy us, we now must consider how he is trying to do this. For, the Bible makes it clear that Satan is trying to attack, entrap, and destroy you (Ephesians 6:16; 2 Timothy 2:26; 1 Peter 5:8). Fortunately, God has revealed Satan's strategies for attacking us (Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 2:11). If you want to be successful in overcoming Satan, you must be able to identify these tactics.

1) Deception (John 8:44). Consider how Satan uses doubt. Satan works to undermine the trust people would have in God. For example, this was at the heart of how Satan tempted Eve (Genesis 3:1-6) – to get her to doubt what God said (v. 1), that the consequences were real (v. 4), and that God was looking out for her best interests (v. 5). Satan knows that doubt will lead people to disobeying God (Hebrews 11:1, 6)!

Consider how Satan uses the distortion of reality. Like a master magician, Satan wants to create false illusions about how people see things related to this life so they do not please God. For example, Satan worked so Eve would have a distorted perspective of the tree (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:2-3, 6). Satan works to harden/blind people's hearts to the truth of God's word so they do not believe and obey God (Luke 8:5, 12; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 3:12-13)!

Consider how Satan uses religious lies. Although Satan would like people not to believe in God or think about having a spiritual nature at all, he can still attack those who do choose to be religious. For example, Satan worked to deceive Eve (Genesis 3:1, 4-5) and Jesus (Matthew 4:5-7) even though both believed God is real. Satan continues to spread religious lies by even disguising himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 Timothy 4:1-2)!

2) Worldly desires (1 John 2:15-17). Consider how Satan uses the lust of the flesh. He knows we are spiritual beings in physical bodies and attacks us by appealing to the desires of our physical bodies (Romans 7:14; Hebrews 11:24-26). For example, Eve saw the tree as good for food (Genesis 3:6) and Jesus was tempted both with desire for food (Matthew 4:3) and to have the kingdoms of the world without suffering (vv. 8-9). Satan works to entice us to do many works of the flesh today (James 1:14-15; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5)!

Consider how Satan uses the lust of the eyes. Satan wants to make worldly things look as enticing as possible. For example, Eve saw the tree as something delightful to look at (Genesis 3:6) and Jesus was tempted to look at the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8-9). Satan knows how to make sin (which creates destruction, suffering, and pain) look enticing – such as the appearance of someone sexually (Proverbs 6:25), intoxicating drink (Proverbs 23:31), another's possessions (Exodus 20:17), etc.!

Consider how Satan uses the pride of life. As Satan is filled with pride (1 Timothy 3:6), he knows the more we inflate our estimation of self and worldly things, the less opportunity we give God to influence our lives. For example, Eve sought wisdom that was different from God's (Genesis 3:6) and Jesus was tempted to prove He was the Son of God (Matthew 4:5-6). Satan wants us to think of things related to our earthly lives in a pride-filled way (i.e. knowledge, wisdom, possessions, abilities, wealth, etc., James 4:6; Proverbs 16:18; Daniel 4:28-37)!

3) Suffering (2 Corinthians 12:6-10). Consider how Satan uses trials. Satan has some power to inflict people with trials of various sorts to cause suffering and test one's faith. For example, this was the case regarding Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7) and Job's many tests (Job 1:6-19; 2:1-8). Satan

continues to use physical pain, financial loss, relationship loss, etc. to attack our faith and defeat us (James 1:13)!

Consider how Satan uses persecutions. Persecutions allow Satan to bring physical and emotional consequences to those who follow Jesus. For example, Satan was going to test the Christians in Smyrna with persecution (Revelation 2:10) and Jesus's disciples are often warned of such attacks (Matthew 5:10-12; 10:34-39; 16:24-27; 2 Timothy 3:12). Satan uses various types of persecution to try and destroy the faith of those he was unsuccessful in convincing to reject the Lord initially (Luke 8:12-13; Revelation 12:13-17)!

Consider how Satan uses death. Satan is the one who was behind the introduction of death into this world (both physically and spiritually, Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6), so people will fear death (Hebrews 2:14-15). For example, Satan can use the fear of death to deter people from faith (Matthew 10:28; Revelation 2:10) and to encourage the pursuit of earthly enjoyments (1 Corinthians 15:12-19, 32). Satan is happy to continue using the leverage of death over those who fear this experience (though death has no power over those in Christ, Matthew 16:18)!

Although there may be other tactics Satan uses to defeat us besides these, we must carefully identify his tactics through a study of Scripture. Then, we should also recognize that he can use multiple tactics in conjunction with each other (as he did with Eve and Jesus). Knowing that he attacks us in these ways should cause us to put the appropriate defenses in place (Ephesians 6:10-18)!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What are some key lessons learned from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this teaching to be trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work?