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BATTLE PLAN



Where do you turn when you need a fool-proof plan?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLdarkside

THE POINT

We can follow Jesus' example in defeating spiritual attacks.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

On October 8, 1871, a fire broke out in Chicago that killed an estimated 300 people, left 100,000 others homeless, and destroyed over 17,000 buildings. Over the years, Mrs. O'Leary's cow took the heat (no pun intended) for the Great Chicago Fire, but historians eventually removed the blame from this poor animal.

One good thing came out of this tragedy: people became more aware of the need for fire safety. Since 1922, America has commemorated the date of the Great Chicago Fire by observing a National Fire Prevention Week. Schools perform fire drills with their students, and firefighters encourage families to identify ways to prevent fires and establish plans for what to do when a fire does occur.

We face the threat of fire in another way. Satan, our enemy, seeks to harm us with "the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). He continually seeks to tempt us and pull us away from God's gracious and loving desire for our lives. Satan may be crafty, but our Lord is greater, and He modeled for us a foolproof plan to avoid getting burned by spiritual attacks.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Matthew 4:1-4

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” ⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

None of us is immune to temptation. For some of us, certain things continually tempt us. When we read of the temptations Jesus faced, we might be inclined to assume temptation wasn't a struggle for Him because, after all, He's God! Surely He didn't face the temptations we face today.

Think again. Jesus is God, but He's also fully man. And although He didn't face the exact same temptations we faced last week, He faced the same *types* of temptations. The writer of Hebrews had this to say about Jesus: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Satan came against Jesus with three temptations. The first temptation centered on Jesus' physical needs. The purpose of fasting is to focus on God through intense prayer. So, Jesus had been feeding Himself spiritually in prayer and communion with His Father. Yet He was likely weak on a physical level, since he had not eaten in 40 days. Satan attempted to exploit this weakness.

“If you are the Son of God” carries the force of jeering—as if to say, “*Why not use your power as God to meet a legitimate need in Your own life?*” The temptation was for Jesus to misuse, even exploit, His Messianic power for personal gain. Jesus insisted He would not act according to His own will, but only the will of the Father. (See John 6:38.) Therefore, Jesus would trust the provision of His Father instead of taking action for self-gratification.

What are some ways we face temptation through our physical appetites?

QUESTION #2

Jesus responded to Satan by quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy: "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Jesus would live in obedience to the Word of God and nothing else. No matter how physically hungry He may have been at the moment, He would maintain His trust in a loving Father who would provide what He needed.

Matthew 4:5-7

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: " 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Satan is cunning. Since Jesus deflected the first attack by reminding the devil that we live in obedience to every word of God, Satan's next attempt involved using Scripture as part of his temptation.

Satan took Jesus to Jerusalem and "had him stand on the highest point of the temple." The temple represented God's presence and power to the Jewish people. Therefore, if Jesus jumped from this highest point, He could demonstrate God's power because, as Satan quoted from Psalm 91:11-12, "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

There's a big problem with that: Satan was taking the passage out of context. Satan used a psalm centered on God's care and protection for us when difficulties arise, then tried to justify putting God to the test. Instead of rightfully treating the passage as an acknowledgment of God's protection when harm comes, Satan tried to make a case for Jesus deliberately putting Himself in harm's way.

PROMISES, PROMISES

Use the space below to record promises we often encounter in our culture—promises from advertisements, from entertainment, from politicians, and so on. Add as many promises as you can think of in a few minutes.

What's one step you can take to get better at using Scripture to evaluate these promises?

"Jesus refused to exchange the end-time exaltation by the Father for a right-now exaltation of a snake."

—RUSSELL MOORE

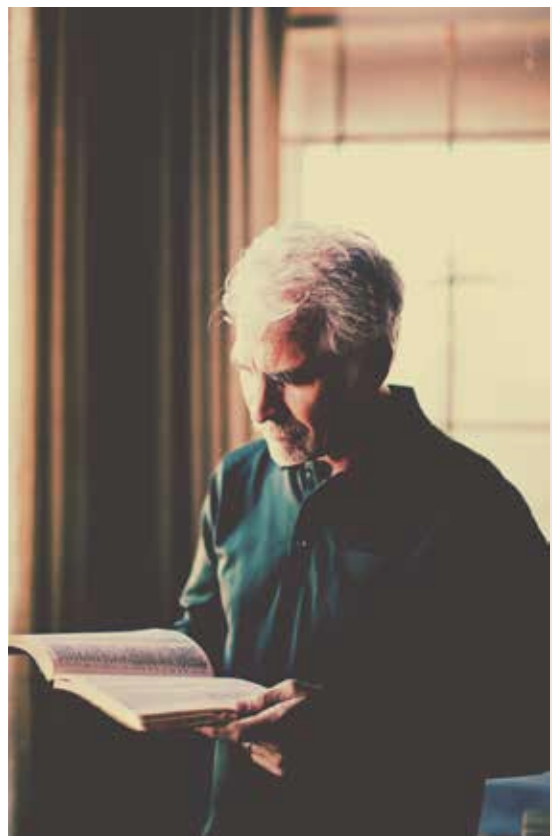
We're often tempted to challenge God, as well. The Israelites did that when they needed water in the wilderness. Instead of praying and looking to God for provision, they questioned and doubted His plan. They put God to the test. Years later, Moses reminded the people of this incident. (See Deut. 6:16.) Now, as He stood before a Scripture-twisting tempter, Jesus repeated the same command God taught His people through Moses: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

When we're tempted to question God, doubt Him, or put Him to the test, we can stand strong by doing the following:

- ▶ **Know what God's Word says.** We should always read a Bible verse or passage in its correct context. Scripture interprets Scripture. Jesus would not let Satan twist a passage of Scripture for his own agenda, and neither should we. Psalm 91 needs to be understood in light of Deuteronomy 6. The Bible corroborates the Bible. The more we immerse ourselves in Scripture—all of Scripture—the better we become at detecting Satan's lies.
- ▶ **Rest in God's love and security.** Jesus knew the truth of Psalm 91:11-12, which is that God does protect and care for us; God gives us no reason to question that or test its truthfulness. We can always trust God regardless of what may tempt us to think otherwise. God loves us completely, and nothing will separate us from His love and protection. "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31; see also vv. 32-39).

What are some ways we are tempted to test God?

QUESTION #3



Matthew 4:8-10

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Finally, Satan offered his boldest temptation. He took Jesus “to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” Satan could offer those kingdoms legitimately, since even Jesus acknowledged him as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). But why would Jesus even consider such an offer? After all, Jesus knew God’s plan. He knew He would ultimately gain all these kingdoms and rule them forever.

One thing made Satan’s offer attractive. Jesus also knew the plan of His Father—that the road He was about to travel would include pain, suffering, and death. Jesus could avoid all that if He accepted Satan’s offer. It would mean the instant achievement of His goal without any of the suffering.

We face the same type of temptation today. We want success, pleasure, possessions—things that are not wrong in and of themselves, but are wrong when we take shortcuts to achieve them. But the temptation to take such shortcuts always comes with a catch, and Satan’s offer to Jesus was no different. “All this I will give you ... if you will bow down and worship me.”

Jesus had enough. “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Pride will lead us down the enemy’s short path to success, happiness, or whatever we’re chasing—but the price we pay will destroy us. On the other hand, humility before God will ultimately lead us to experience far more than we can imagine. When tempted to take the shortcut and compromise our worship of God, we should remember God’s promises: “‘What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived’—the things God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

What are we often tempted to worship in place of God?

QUESTION #4

What can we learn from Jesus’ example about overcoming spiritual attacks?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

Based on our study this week, what steps will you take to defeat the attacks that come your way? Consider these suggestions:

- ▶ **Look to Jesus.** Be intentional about keeping your focus on Christ. Lean on Him for strength to stand, knowing He understands. "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:18).
- ▶ **Stay clear.** If you know of people, places, or circumstances that fuel your vulnerability to temptation and spiritual attack, resolve to avoid those things. For best results, talk to someone else about your decision.
- ▶ **Memorize Scripture.** Make Scripture memory a weekly discipline and habit. Begin with memorizing verses that address areas where you often feel tempted or under attack.



Expect opposition when you step forward in faith. Spiritual attacks will come. But we can follow Jesus' example to stand against those attacks and remain victorious.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLdarkside**



UNITED IN PRAYER

BY STEPHEN KENDRICK AND ALEX KENDRICK,
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When an army of people work together to accomplish a goal, it becomes a formidable force indeed.

An interesting passage in Genesis 11 describes the construction of the tower of Babel. In this biblical account, ungodly people decided to build a city with an enormous tower for their own glory and prestige. They planned it out and began the challenge, and at first found success in their efforts.

But God looked down from heaven and basically said, “Because of their unity, nothing will be impossible for them.” (See v. 6.) So He intervened.

God divided them by changing their communication into numerous languages to prevent them from finishing their prideful monument. In the confusion and chaos, they abandoned the project and separated themselves by language, spreading out across the land.

What is so striking about this passage of Scripture is that God Himself noted that when people are unified, they’re able to exert tremendous power and momentum. Even ungodly people! So imagine how powerful unity can be for people who worship and obey the God of the universe.

If they seek the Lord and act in unity, nothing can stop them.

Imagine how powerful unity can be for people who worship and obey the God of the universe.

That’s why the enemy does everything possible to keep God’s people divided. Because once we come together in unity, we gain momentum and ground for the kingdom. United prayer is powerful. But prayer from a divided people—well, not so much. This is why removing bitterness toward others and choosing to forgive is so crucial. In fact, any pride or selfishness should be seen as an enemy of unified prayer.

In John 17, Jesus prayed a beautiful prayer, asking God to unify believers into one body, that the world would know He was sent by God to bring salvation to the world. (See v. 21.) Psalm 133:1 echoes the same theme: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!” (CSB).

God loves and blesses unity. It speaks volumes about the body of Christ when we worship together and love one another as God intended. It also draws attention to our Savior, who died to cleanse our sins and now lives to intercede for us to God the Father.



When people see unity, they see purpose, love, and power. It's attractive and beautiful. And when an army of people work together to accomplish a goal, it becomes a formidable force indeed.

John 13:34-35 says: "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (CSB).

Jesus' words here are clear, and the model Jesus gave us through His life and ministry makes it even more clear—we're to love our neighbor. And our neighbor is anyone and everyone who is a part of our lives.

So, before we can tackle this concept of prayer in a serious way, we need to not only evaluate our relationship with God, but also our relationship with others.

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