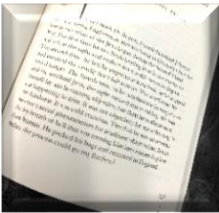


Improving Our Spiritual Habits

Adult Bible Class
March 15, 2020

Spiritual Warfare – Avoiding the Slippery Slope



The fires of
trial and
temptation
are the
greatest
tests of our

progress on the spiritual journey. They drive us to the depths of our being and strip away presumptions, forcing a person to do a ruthless spiritual inventory of personal principles and character strengths.

The Counterfeit Trinity

As we learn in The Revelation, Satan constantly seeks to imitate God in every way. We face a counterfeit trinity when it comes to remaining steadfast in our spiritual endeavors as well.

Ephesians 2:1-10

*¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, **following the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the sons*

"Know the enemy and know yourself; and in one hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant of both your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in very battle to be in peril.

Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. Trans. By Samuel B. Griffith. (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 84.

*of disobedience—³among whom we all once lived in **the passions of our flesh**, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath, like the rest of mankind**.⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

We face a 3-fold enemy:

1. The World – the counterfeit of God the Father (1 John 2:15-17)
2. The Flesh – the counterfeit of the Holy Spirit (James 1:13-15)
3. Our Devil – the Counterfeit of The Son (Matthew 4:1-11)

Satan's Strategy

- Distraction from spiritual priorities
- Deception about the true nature of ourselves and the world around us
- Discouragement from our failures
- Nagging feelings of guilt over a lack of perfection
- Exhausting attempts to live up to a legalistic religious system
- Ordinary activities that leave us weary
- Amusements / ordinary earthly pleasures
- Personal ambitions
- Pride the separates us from others
- Hurt feelings the pull us inward in self-pity and resentment
- Depression over our "lot in life"
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We may overlook these things as they don't stand out as offensive to God.

Your #1 Defense against the wiles of Satan → **Recognize your own vulnerabilities.** If you know your weakness, you are far less likely to stumble over it.

Three Unlikely Sources of Help

1. The Ten Commandments
2. The Sermon on the Mount (The Beatitudes – Matthew 5-7)
3. The 7 Deadly Sins (“A classification of the normal perils of the soul in the ordinary conditions of life.” Gregory the Great – 540-604AD)
 - a. Gluttony
 - b. Greed
 - c. Sloth
 - d. Envy
 - e. Wrath
 - f. Pride
 - g. Lust

Lines of Attack/Resistance

1. Renew your vision – what does a positive spiritual situation look like?
2. Renew your mind – live in reality rather than fantasy
3. Picture Temptation in the Negative
4. Anticipate Spiritually Dangerous Situations
5. PRAY

A Rapid Response Strategy

If you ever get caught in quicksand:

1. Stop struggling
2. Tilt your head back and look skyward
3. Breathe deeply
4. Now move slowly and thoughtfully

The Spiritual Application

If you find yourself in a bad spiritual situation:



1. **Stop** doing what you're doing – interrupt the cycle of temptation
2. **Look Up** – you're only solution is going to come from God
3. **Breath** – In other words – pray

Other Tools – God doesn't leave us defenseless

The Full Armor of God – Ephesians 6:10-18

*¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on **the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on **the belt of truth**, and having put on **the breastplate of righteousness**, ¹⁵and, as **shoes for your feet**, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up **the shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take **the helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.*

