

4 Battle Strategies Against Your Real Enemy

There is a middle ground between our responsibility and God's role in changing us. We have responsibilities, yet we are totally dependent on God. We must do our part, but we can't do His. It is God who makes us stand firm in Christ, but we must step unto the Rock (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:21).

Our reference point was Matthew 12:43-45 where an unclean spirit "leaves for a time, but when he returns, he finds Christ is not there to shut him out; the heart is swept by outward reformation ... and the man becomes a more decided enemy of the truth. Every heart is the residence of unclean spirits, except those which are temples of the Holy Ghost, by faith in Christ" (Matthew Henry).

The principle is that we must fill our heart with the things of God. The points discussed previously were: *expose the sin, install safeguards, and avoid the sin triggers*. Change is not easy; it takes deliberate preparation for the battle. When we see something we need, desire, or want, our first impulse is to act on it. The pressure can be unbearable and we cave in. This defining moment is often the most difficult when overcoming temptation.

Being tempted isn't sin, surrendering to it is. On a positive note, temptation is also an opportunity to grow in strength and do what is right by turning from it. The door of temptation swings both ways—you can enter or exit. If we choose to enter, once inside, we may not see the exit sign so clearly again.

Sin never stands still; it either grows or withers. Dan Delzell, in a riveting blog in 2014 entitled, *Google Executive's Tragic Death Sends Somber Warning*, wrote the

following: “How do you go from being a devoted father of five and a successful Silicon Valley executive, into a 51-year-old man convulsing from a fatal dose of heroin on your 50-foot yacht, with a prostitute walking over your dying body to take a final sip of wine before leaving you to die?” He then presented the question, “How do tragedies like this take place?”

The enemy rarely pushes us off the cliff, so to speak. We’re often led down one step at a time, one compromise at a time, one wrong choice at a time. Praise God if your desires vanish once you surrender to God, but many times, its a battle.

The Battle Strategy

1. Do not think about how to gratify your sinful desires; don’t plan ahead to sin (cf. Romans 13:14). Before sin is acted on, it’s conceived in the mind. Instead of planning to stop for a drink after work because you “had a hard day,” plan on exercising or reading. Instead of planning to misinform your doctor to acquire another 30-day prescription, plan to make health a priority. Instead of planning to look at pornography when your spouse is gone, plan God-centered activities. When we plan on sinning, we usually do.

2. Say, “No!” As a believer you do have the ability to say, “No.” The adversary can’t make you do anything; he can only influence and deceive. All temptation is common to man, but “God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13 NIV).

The power to say, “No” is possible through the aid of the Holy Spirit. One reason why we discipline our children is so they become disciplined adults. Endurance and perseverance are also the work of the Spirit. Overcoming temptation is not easy, but it is possible—it is the hallmark of the Christian life. Persevering through these pressure-filled times of temptation

are often the most difficult part of overcoming. But the desire will eventually leave and joy and gladness will follow. For most, this takes time. Don't give up, look up, and if you fall, fall forward. Take control while you are still in control.

If you are repenting of alcohol, drugs, porn, and so on, ask for God's help. Make prayer, worship, and the study of His word a daily discipline. We literally have to reprogram our minds. God's word is true: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7 NIV).

If we find ourselves saying, "I tried that. It doesn't work!" The reason may be because we have tried outward reform, not inward renewal. We relied on will-power rather than the power of the Holy Spirit. Use your failures as stepping stones to quit, rather than excuses to continue the addiction.

3. We must, "Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5 NIV). When desires come, change the environment – that may mean exchanging friends as well. Turn to prayer, worship, and the word, rather than Facebook, Youtube, and television. We cannot fill our mind with the world and expect to overcome besetting sin. *We cannot fill our mind with darkness and expect the light of Christ to shine in our lives.*

4. Never forget that it is God, not us, who makes us stand firm (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9). In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God reminds us that His grace is sufficient; His power is made perfect in weakness. God rebuilds the broken. He exalts the humble. He strengthens the weak. By turning to His strength, we create an environment where faith flourishes.

Again, don't give up; look up. Do your part and He will do His: Expose the problem, install safeguards, avoid the triggers that motivate sin, and revisit the 4 points often. God is faithful to lead those who are willing to follow.

Watch the sermon, "LORD, Help Me Change," at .

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