

After the Dove, Beware of the Snake: 6 Times the Devil Loves to Attack You

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove upon Him. Then God the Father spoke audibly, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). What a divine endorsement and spectacular display of the supernatural! Notice what happened next: The snake showed up. Jesus was led into the wilderness to endure 40 days of intense temptation by the devil.

When God moves, you can count on it, the devil moves too. He tries to undermine what God is doing and steal our spiritual momentum. Remember, it is not a sin to be tempted. It just means you're human (welcome to the club). Shakespeare said, "Tis one thing to be tempted, another thing to fall." Martin Luther observed, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

We all have an Achilles heel, some area of weakness the enemy tries to exploit. A bumper sticker reads, "Lead me not into temptation, I can find it myself." It is different strokes for different folks. Some people are tempted by alcohol, drugs or gambling. Others are lured by lust, pride, greed or jealousy. Still others are prone to lying, stealing or outbursts of anger. Satan knows how, when and where to push our buttons.

Notice the timing of Jesus' temptation. Satan attacked Him during 40 days of fasting when He was hungry, weak and alone. The tempter hits us the hardest at six specific times when we are the most vulnerable:

1. **After a big victory:** It was right after Elijah prayed

fire down from heaven on Mount Carmel and confronted 450 false prophets that he had his biggest battle with doubt and depression. When Jezebel put a bounty on his head, he fled and hid in a cave and, thinking he was the only true prophet left, asked God to kill him. He didn't really want to die; he was just discouraged. After big victories, we are vulnerable because we tend to let down our guard. We think we have it "made in the shade" and become overconfident and complacent.

2. **After a big defeat:** Don't you imagine after Peter denied Jesus, Satan tried to drive him to the brink of suicide just as he did Judas? You see, he uses our mind as a punching bag. When we fall, he wants to keep us down with dark thoughts of condemnation. He plays on our emotions and tries to convince us that we are worthless. He tells us we should quit serving God and that life is not worth living. Remember, he is a liar and we must "Resist the devil and he will flee from [us]" (James 4:7). Like Peter, we can rebound from defeat and abound in grace.
3. **When we are idle:** The old saying is true, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." When did David commit adultery? 2 Samuel 11:1 informs us that it was "At the time when kings go out to battle." Instead, he lingered at the palace relaxing, then saw Bathsheba bathing, and his heart lured him into sin. Amos 6:1a warns, "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion." We need to occupy our time productively. Stay so busy for God that you don't have time to backslide. Too much idle time opens the door to temptation. For that reason church, sports, music, art, reading, hobbies, volunteerism and other wholesome activities are good to keep us occupied and out of trouble.
4. **When authority is absent:** "When the cat's away, the mice will play." The Israelites built and worshipped the golden calf when Moses was gone on Mount Sinai. There is a principle at work here—behavior observed changes. Some

people only do what is right when leaders are nearby. Employees tend to work harder when a boss is looking over their shoulder. Students study more when teachers are in the classroom. Children behave better when parents are present. Citizens obey the law more when police are in view. Why? It's the accountability factor. Temptation beckons when authority is absent, but if we realize God always observes our behavior, it will profoundly affect our choices.

5. **When we are desperate:** Desperate people do desperate things. When Esau was desperate, he did something irrational—he sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. His tricky twin, Jacob, was all too happy to oblige. When people go through a crisis like a divorce, the death of a loved one, loss of a job or a financial setback, they are especially vulnerable. When we are hurting, we just want to feel better fast. So the tempter comes to offer us a quick escape. Hasty and emotional decisions often compound the problem. Let your desperation spur you toward God not away from Him.
6. **When we are alone:** The serpent, it seems, tempted Eve when Adam wasn't around. Why? A predator isolates its prey from the herd for easy pickings. There is a reason Jesus sent His disciples out in pairs. Solomon explained, "Two are better than one .. .for if they fall, then one will help up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has no one to help him up" (Eccl. 4:9-10). That's why it's vital to have a church family that loves and supports you and a network of friends you can lean on when you're facing tough times. We are much stronger together than we are on our own.

Someone said, "Opportunity may only knock once, but temptation leans on the doorbell." Friend, you have a target on your back. Be alert. The enemy is lurking, setting traps to ambush you. Jesus warned, "Watch and pray that you enter not into

temptation" (Matt. 26:41). You may be enjoying smooth sailing for now, but rest assured, the tempter's imps will be back. After the dove, beware of the snake. {eoa}

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