

Discerning the Devil's Customized Plan Against You

Since the Garden of Eden, the devil has honed his skills on presenting his bait. And Peter gives us a glimpse into Satan's methods. "Keep alert," Peter instructed. "Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8, NRSV).

As I explore in depth in my book, *Activating the Power of God's Word*, Peter's depiction of Satan as a lion is not coincidental. You see, a lion has a small heart and lungs relative to the size of its body. This means a lion doesn't have the stamina to run after his victim for too long. Instead, the lion studies his victim to determine its weakest moment and the opportune time for him to pounce.

The devil takes the same approach with us. That is, he studies our lives to determine both how and when to attack or tempt. And he uses the information he gathers to build a customized plan against each of us.

The Devil Knows How to Tempt

Is there a struggle in your life that keeps presenting itself over and over again? Whatever it is, this is your "signature sin," or your "signature struggle." It is the one dominant, personal weakness that keeps getting you in trouble. By studying your life, the enemy quickly determines your signature struggle and uses it in an attempt to lead you into sin.

The Bible is filled with stories of those who succumbed to Satan's strategy against their signature struggles. Perhaps the best illustration is in the story of Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus. When Mary anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume, it was Judas who complained, "Why was this

ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" (John 12:5). John went on to explain that Judas wasn't really interested in the poor; he was stealing money from the ministry for which he was the treasurer (John 12:6).

Here we get a glimpse into what was likely the signature struggle of Judas—the love of money. Unsurprisingly this is the weakness that Satan used to tempt him. "What will you give me if I hand Him [Jesus] over to you?" Judas asked the chief priests. And with this, he gave up his Savior for 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14–15).

What about you? I don't need to reel off common struggles. Simply by reading this, the Holy Spirit has likely brought to mind the primary struggle in your life. Whatever it is, that's the area you need to be especially watchful of, because that's precisely what the devil will use to bring you down.

The Devil Knows When to Tempt

Having the right means of attack is one thing, but knowing the right time to launch it is crucial to its success. The devil isn't likely to make his best attack when you're prepared for him. Instead, he looks for the moments when your guard is down.

Notice that Satan used this tactic to try to take down Jesus. Jesus' temptation by the devil in the wilderness didn't happen in the first few days but at the end of his time there. Matthew records that after fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was famished. It was at this moment—when Jesus was at his weakest—the devil came with his temptations (Matt. 4:1–3).

If Satan believed he could win in Jesus' moment of weakness, how much more does he believe he can win in yours. This is why Peter instructed that it's imperative to stay alert. You must be aware of the various attacks the enemy uses against you as well as the times that he's likely to launch them. Here are some moments of weakness when the devil is bound to appear.

Stress

Be aware that when the pressure is on, so is Satan. In seasons of stress, the devil comes to offer “stress relievers.” These temptations appear as ways to ease the pressure for a time, though they end up becoming “stress creators” in the long term.

Disappointment

Times of disappointment are critical times that make people highly susceptible to the devil’s lures. When we are let down from events or situations that hurt us or don’t go as planned, we might take the devil’s bait out of sheer rebellion. Or we might give in to some solution that seems to fill the void for the “happiness” that we believe we aren’t getting in the moment.

Anger

Perhaps it’s no coincidence that anger is just one letter away from danger. Paul warned the Ephesians to be especially careful when angry because anger can “give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27). The danger of anger is that it is a highly emotional one that clouds godly judgment and reason. Instead of acting on what is right, anger causes us to behave based upon our feelings, which is often destructive.

Exhaustion

God designed sleep to be essential for health and well-being. During sleep our bodies rejuvenate, grow muscle, repair tissue and organize our minds. Exhaustion from a lack of sleep has the opposite effects and is known to dramatically impede decision making. This is why the devil almost always brings temptation during times of exhaustion.

I discuss each of these in greater detail in my book. But like your signature weakness, one of these situations is likely a

signature weak moment for you too. Examine your life. In which of these do you find yourself most often susceptible to attack?

Knowledge Is Power

Finally, to discern the devil's custom plan of attack against you, simply combine your signature struggle with your primary moment of weakness. By knowing this, you can more properly prepare to keep yourself from entering a situation in which you might be vulnerable to Satan's offers. In the least, when you do find yourself under attack, you'll have a better understanding as to why and what to do to get out of it. {eoa}

Kyle Winkler *equips people to live in victory. His mobile app, Shut Up, Devil!, is the #1 spiritual warfare app; and his book, Activating the Power of God's Word, uncovers 16 strategic declarations to transform your life. Kyle holds a Master of Divinity in biblical studies from Regent University. Get daily encouragement from Kyle on Facebook and Twitter.*