

Stop It—The Devil Did Not Make You Do Anything

I have been counseling people almost two decades, and honestly, the devil gets a whole lot of scapegoating. I mean, I've heard the devil blamed for adultery, pornography, greed, embezzlement, fear and poor decisions, all the way down to the cupcake binge. Really I've heard so many stories where the devil has been blamed for a situation in which personal responsibility would have been a much better idea.

If a client isn't the problem, then they are not the solution. Let me explain this thought to you. You see if a couple comes in for counseling and the man blames the wife for all the problems, then he has no ability to be a solution, since he is not the problem. Rather, if he can see his own part of the problem then he can be the solution for that part of the problem.

If the devil is the problem, then as a counselor I'm really stuck. Now it's the devil who has all the power to be the solution. I would have to dial up the devil and ask him to stop bothering my client so my client can improve. I know you know the devil is not taking calls to help people improve their lives lately, so I would be on indefinite hold and my client, the victim of the devil, would be unable to change.

I think you clearly know where I'm going. If I blame the devil, I am making myself unable to be the solution. This gets even crazier with Christians who are supposed to have power over the devil.

Then the story goes something like this... The devil (who I, as a believer, have been giving authority to over Christ) tempted, influenced or made me do my out-of-control behavior again. The devil, which I am stronger than, made me do it. I

think we all have seen that T-shirt or bumper sticker, "The Devil Made Me Do It."

Stay with me here, it even gets more insane when we use the devil as a scapegoat. First let's talk about the devil. He (why are all the bad guys a he?), the devil, is a singular being. That means he, like us humans, can only be at one place at one time. He is not like God, everywhere all the time (omnipresent). The devil is a limited being in time and space like all of us.

If the devil is in Chicago, he can only be in Chicago. He can't be in LA, New York, Boston or Washington, D.C., at the same time. Now he would have to be pretty fast to be tempting my telephone client in Baton Rouge and Seattle within 20 minutes of each other. It's physically impossible.

I know this sounds insane, but welcome to my world. It reminds me of a joke I once heard. This joke was extremely funny to me because I worked for years in a psychiatric hospital.

Here goes my attempt at telling this silly joke. Three guys were in a psychiatric ward among others in the unit. They all believed they were God. This was getting practically unmanageable in the unit as there were three people being God in the same group on a regular basis. So the nursing staff put all three guys who were god in a seclusion room. The nurses gave them their only assignment: to be let out. When they came out, there could only be one god. Having three gods to deal with was driving the nurses crazy during their shifts. So 30 minutes went by, and the men asked to come out; they had finished their assignment. The nurses intrigued, asked how you figured out who was God. One of them said, "Tony's God, Al is Jesus and I'm the Holy Ghost."

Let's get back to the devil. We do know he is one being, so this "one being" left his place trying to control world affairs. He traveled by flight, boat or bus to arrive at your

house in, let's say, Nowhere, Ohio so that he could get you to do a cupcake binge!

Somehow I just don't think that happens. If the real devil with all his hate, fear and fallen beauty turned into ugliness came walking into your kitchen, you couldn't eat that cupcake, commit adultery, look at pornography or anything else to save your life. You would be screaming, crying or having an accident in your pajamas.

So you see the devil probably isn't a legitimate scapegoat for any out-of-control behavior. Remember, if you are not the problem, you are also not the solution. When you are the problem, you are the solution.

Now some of you Bible scholars might want to blame some of the angels that fell from heaven with the devil. You know, the demons. Demons are real, but you can still choose your behaviors. Also if you have more power than the devil, certainly you can ward off a few imps and be successful.

Hear my heart; I know there are spiritual influences, just like there are other influences that assist you in deciding to do something positive but ultimately barring severe psychological disorders, you have to choose to do this behavior. Without the choice to do the behavior, what hope would there be for you to choose not to do the behavior?

Remember if you are the problem, you are the solution. I personally love being the problem. When I am the problem I know I am the solution. I will involve God and others in the solution but I am responsible for the solution. So congratulations: You are the problem, and you are your solution! {eoa}

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