

Winning the War: The Secret Mark 12 Weapon to Crush Temptation

Pure bliss filled my heart. I was in love. Not like I'd ever been before—not like with Romeo, not like with music, not like with my dreams. This time I was in love with Love Himself. I had finally been found by the only One who could fulfill me, understand me, and keep me safe and on the right path throughout my life. I had hope again. I had joy. I'd been redeemed, and my sins were washed away forever.

Then, shortly after, the real test began. As if out of nowhere, I began receiving phone calls from every one of those people I'd previously hung out with to sin. I started letting the calls go to voice mail, but the messages became interestingly appealing.

Thoughts of lust and immorality, pride and entitlement, anger and friction, inefficiency and inadequacy, fear and depression, deception and manipulation, disappointment, alcoholism, suicide and even sinful appetites I had never before indulged in came roaring and pulsing through my brain.

I thought, *What's going on? Why is this stuff coming to me now, just when I am determined to fix my life with God?* I ran to Him instead of my heart's crooked desires. I prayed, "Lord, help me. These temptations are getting too hard to handle. What should I do?" When I spoke His name, I could feel Him steadying my heart as I sensed Him speaking one simple word: "Resist."

Caution: Ghosts at the Door!

The past has a way of haunting us, and even more so when we turn from old lifestyles and truly decide to improve the way

we lead our lives. For me it was hard to deal with the shame and guilt I felt as a result of my sins. At times I felt as if my mind were under siege; I couldn't think about anything else but what I had done.

This mental battle usually came in two forms. The first was a strong sense of guilt because of my sins. This guilt drove me to resign to the belief that nothing I could do would ever bring me closer to God, that I had ruined every chance to have intimate communion with Him. It was a more subtle way to deplete my self-worth and entice me to revert back to old behaviors. The second, however, was more direct. Seductive thoughts reminded me of how good it felt to do what I wanted to do. Accompanying these thoughts were carnal inclinations and a whole lot of me, myself and I.

I had made up my mind to obey God and resist these invading thoughts and desires. Though that was not easy, in doing so, I learned how to be guided by the Holy Spirit and emerge from this inner conflict victorious. The Lord directed me to His Word to understand what was really going on during that season of initial restoration.

How to Resist Successfully

I know of no place in the Bible where it speaks of anything besides submitting to God and resisting the devil being powerful enough to cause the devil to flee from us. You see, it is when we submit to God that He enables us to resist temptation. It is by His power working in us that we can stand against the devil's ruses. We cannot stand against the enemy on our own. We are only human and are weak. But it is in our weakness that He is strong and in our admittance of our weakness that He becomes stronger in us (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

As a public figure I constantly get asked, "How do you stay close to God and live purely for Him?" My answer is something I discovered as I was learning to run to God and depend on

Him: "Love God and love people."

The Word says in Mark 12:29-31:

Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Think about it: when you love someone—truly, deeply, wholeheartedly love someone—you strive to please that person. I've seen people change their lives around to accommodate what the beloved prefers. It is the same with God. Love—for God and for others—is the ultimate power we need in order to stay away from sin. When we truly love God, we will do anything and everything necessary to make sure He's delighted in our lives, just as when we truly love others, we'll do anything to not sin against them. Therefore the key to successfully resisting temptation and sin is to love God and people so much that our love makes us second-guess sinning against them. {eo}

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