

Are You a Target for Seduction?

WE ALL HAVE UNSEEN WEAKNESSES THAT COULD MAKE US VULNERABLE TO THE ENEMY'S ATTACK. HERE'S HOW TO BE ON YOUR GUARD.

Many people who by the grace of God have never been “had” by the devil wrongly assume that all departures from godliness are nothing but rebellion and proofs of inauthenticity. They have no idea of the suffering involved when someone with a genuine heart for God slips from the path.

I don't know how many times I've repeated the statement I'm about to make, but I'll keep saying it until at least one skeptic hears, “Not everyone in a stronghold of sin is having a good time.”

The times in my life when the powers of darkness seemed to rage most violently against me were seasons when I had never loved God more. I was not walking in sin prior to either of the times I fought my hardest battles with the kingdom of darkness.

In 2 Corinthians 11:3, the apostle Paul wrote: “But [now] I am fearful, lest that even as the serpent beguiled Eve by his cunning, so your minds may be

corrupted and
seduced from wholehearted and sincere and pure devotion to
Christ" (The
Amplified Bible).

How does a wholeheartedly, sincerely, and
purely devoted servant of Jesus Christ become vulnerable to
demonic
seduction? If you're thinking, Surely there is something that
the enemy
is latching onto, you are absolutely right. At the same time I
will tell
you that the thing Satan latches onto often is not sin.

HOW THE GODLY ARE BEGUILED

None
of us is ever sinless, but where this kind of victim is
concerned, the
enemy more often latches onto weakness—a hidden spot of
vulnerability.
Satan knows that weakness can turn to sin in a heartbeat when
exposed to
the right amount of pressure.

I have become more and more
convinced that victims of seduction share certain
vulnerabilities at the
time of their attacks. Please consider carefully this list of
the
weaknesses that many Christians carry in their hearts, minds
and souls.

1. Ignorance.

Without exception, the No. 1 element that sets believers up
for
seduction is ignorance. Throughout the remainder of the list,
you will
see signs of ignorance—things the seduced did not know.

Speaking

of the high priest who served in the Old Testament tabernacle, the writer of Hebrews said, "He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness" (Heb. 5:2, NIV). We are at great risk of going astray over ignorance and weakness.

In The Amplified Bible, 2 Corinthians 2:11 tells us to forgive, "to keep Satan from getting the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his wiles and intentions." The apostle Paul and his well-educated crew may not have been ignorant of Satan's schemes, but most of us are.

How many times have I looked at some of the ways I allowed Satan to defeat me in the past and cried to myself: "How could you be so stupid! You idiot! Haven't you learned anything?"

Long after I was set free, I was still punishing myself unmercifully. So much so, the self-condemnation became its own form of bondage.

The last thing I want to do is give the enemy another moment's satisfaction. That's exactly what self-condemnation does. Let's be delivered from it.

2. Spiritual passion that exceeds biblical knowledge.

The Scriptures talk about the serpent getting to our hearts

through our
minds (see 2 Cor. 11:3). The person described in this verse
has
wholehearted devotion to Christ, but his mind still is
vulnerable.

Most
of our minds are, too—until we have a horrible scare that
teaches us
to love God with our whole mind and not just our whole heart.
The church
in Corinth was passionate but lacked the knowledge to provide
a firm
foundation.

Paul's thesis on tearing down strongholds is this:
"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth
itself
against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:5, KJV). If we don't
have the
knowledge of God, we are ill-equipped to recognize
imaginings that are
exalting themselves over God.

We can't have just knowledge about
warfare to defeat Satan. We need the knowledge of God! Our
only means
of getting it is through an intense relationship with God
through His
Word.

You might be wondering, "Why do so many godly pastors fall
to the seduction of Satan when they are constantly preparing
sermons?"

Let me tell you what I think.

I think many of them unknowingly
fall into the trap of spending time in the Word almost

entirely for
message preparation. Satan desires the destruction of anyone
who keeps
his or her sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) sharpened by
personal
use.

He knows that weapon becomes dull once the believer's use of
Scripture becomes mechanical. I believe that many of those in
ministry
who have fallen for seduction were so busy doing the work of
God that
they slipped away from pure intimacy with God.

We must remember
that God doesn't want only to talk through us; He wants also
to talk to
us—intimately. When we cease letting God speak to us, it is
only a
matter of time before He will cease speaking through us.

Allow me
to offer a word of caution on the other side of this issue.
Yes,
spiritual passion exceeding biblical knowledge is a definite
weakness.
But biblical knowledge without a heart passionately in love
with Christ
is terribly dangerous. If we are not given to godly passion,
we will be
tempted by counterfeits.

3. A lack of discernment.

I am convinced that discernment is one of the most important
criteria
in the devoted believer's life to provide protection from
seduction.
Most victims of seduction have not had a history of

particularly great
discernment.

Glance at the following Scriptures and relate them to our
subject matter:

“Rebuke
a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge” (Prov. 19:25,
NIV). Those
who have discernment don’t get defensive and start
rationalizing when
they’re rebuked! Instead, they gain knowledge.

“This is my
prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge
and depth
of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best
and may be
pure and blameless until the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:9-10).

After
God broke my cycle of defeat, I began praying, “God, I can’t
do
anything to change the past. I have been neither pure nor
blameless, but
would You enable me by the power of Your Word and through the
filling
of Your Holy Spirit to live every day of my remaining years in
purity?”

To
come anywhere close to my deep hope, I am going to need lots
of
discernment. Celebrate the fact that God honors the heartfelt
petition
for discernment and will graciously give it and more.

4. A lack of self-discernment.

David, a man who fell into sin after godliness, wrote this

very private

prayer: "Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep

your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over
me. Then

will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression" (Ps.
19:12-13).

In

this particular verse, the Hebrew word translated "error" is
shgiyah.

According to the "Old Testament Lexical Aids" of the Hebrew-
Greek Key

Study Bible (AMG Publishers), it means "error, transgression,
sin

committed inadvertently." It stands in contrast to the
psalmist's

petition for God to keep him also from willful sins.

We commit

some sins willfully and presumptuously. We commit others
inadvertently.

The former flows from rebellion and the latter from error,
ignorance and
weakness.

Our weaknesses and areas of ignorance can quickly lead
to sins committed inadvertently. However, Satan's seduction is
purposeful and utterly intended for evil. Nothing about it is
accidental
or coincidental.

In the book of Proverbs, most of the seducers and seductresses
were intentional in their actions. Most, but not all.

Could

it be that some who are used as puppets for Satan's seductions
have

themselves been seduced? I think so. In fact, the seduced may become seducers if they fail to let God radically deal with them through and through.

One of our best defenses is to recognize where our own personal weak places are. We've got to replace our self-condemnation with self-discernment.

5. Exposure to or experience with false worship or depravity in the past.

I am convinced that one reason the apostle Paul was so worried about the Corinthian church is that they had been exposed to so much false worship and depravity (see 2 Cor. 11:4). In addition, they were surrounded by ungodliness in their attempts to live godly lives.

Any level of exposure can open a door in the mind that Satan might decide to take for his advantage. I've heard people talk about finding pornographic magazines in their father's things when they were young. Such a discovery frequently has a huge effect on that life and gives Satan a trump card for later.

Experience can open an even wider door than exposure. As a child, I was not only exposed to things I shouldn't have been but also forced to experience some things no child

should ever experience.

I tucked many of those memories as far down in my subconscious as possible. The problem was, Satan had stuffed them in his pocket for later.

In addition to being victimized, I also made numerous poor choices. Don't think he didn't use those against me as well.

Thankfully,
God has taught me volumes, and I am no longer easy prey. Still, I will always have to be on guard because I have a past that other, less vulnerable believers don't have.

If we don't let God deal with every part of our pasts—hurts, secrets, errors in judgment, mistakes or sins—any one of them can be like a hibernating bear. Satan, the prowling lion, stalks the mouth of the cave, waiting for just the “right” season.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE PAST

Beloved,
Satan plays hardball. When we have a disaster, we can count on his being right there confronting us at our weakest point.

We can't just put our pasts behind us. We've got to put our pasts in front of God.

The very thing Satan used against me was precisely that I had not done anything about my past! We can take our pasts to Jesus. We

need Him to
take full authority over them so that they are no longer a
playground
for the enemy.

God longs to let us see our pasts against the
backdrop of His glory. Let Him redeem every bit of your past,
not just
the injustices but the willful sins and the excruciating
losses (see Ps.
130:7).

For 30 years Satan used my past in various ways until I
allowed God to snatch it from him and use it for Himself. I
have given
God permission to take every one of my memories captive to
Christ.

Now
I see my abuses and sins in the forgiving, nail-scarred hands
of Jesus
where He is cleansing them and transforming them into the
stuff of
mercy. Now, God uses them every single day in ministry, in
parenting and
in friendships.

Satan targets sincere believers through their
sins as well as their weaknesses. One of the times when Satan
used my
sins against me, I had already repented of them. But I had
never asked
God to heal me completely, redeem my past, sanctify me and
help me to
forgive myself.

Until I allowed God to take full authority over
them, my past sins were still areas of vulnerability where

Satan could
prey. Thank goodness, they're not anymore, and yours don't
have to be,
either.

God is so inconceivably faithful. Hear His tender voice
speak to you now. "'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid'"
(Matt.
14:27).

I've learned to give Him full authority over my past and
bring every part of it under His wings and into His
possession. Trust
God with every inch of your past, present and future. Because
until you
do, you are susceptible to seduction.

Read a companion devotional.

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