

4: THE OPPOSER

Distinguishing God's Voice

It's a different day, but the story remains the same. He whispers: "God is not who He claims to be. He can't be trusted. He doesn't mean what He says. Do what is right in your own eyes (Judges 21:25). You *know* better. You *are* better. You can *have* more. You can *be* more. You deserve it."

With cunning words and persuasive arguments, Satan continues to poison humanity with the desires of his own sinful heart. Using age-old tactics, his sole purpose is to lure man away from God to his destruction. His primary method is to entice his flesh so that he will choose to destroy himself.

Satan's greatest victories always begin with shrewd suggestions and crafty insinuations. If he can cause a man to call God's character and instructions into question, he has gained a foothold. If he can cause him to act upon his lies, he has achieved his desire "*until another... opportune and favorable time*" (Luke 4:13, AMP) presents itself.

Ephesians 4:27 says, "*Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]*" (AMP). A man accomplishes this with a precise and growing knowledge of the Truth. Without this understanding, a man remains vulnerable to the adversary's wiles (Ephesians 6:11).

ENEMY-TALK

His whispers are subtle and beguiling; cleverly crafted to lure a man away from God and into his deadly traps. Since the beginning, every utterance has been intended to poison man's thoughts and arouse his flesh, leading him to his destruction.

How do the following passages describe the adversary? What does each title and/or passage reveal about the way he speaks?

- Genesis 3:1 _____
- Job 1:6-7 _____
- Matthew 4:3 _____
- John 8:44 _____
- John 10:10 _____
- 2 Corinthians 2:11 _____
- 2 Corinthians 11:3, 14 _____
- 1 Peter 5:8 _____
- Revelation 12:9, 10 _____

What tactics has the adversary repeatedly employed against you? Why has this particular strategy proven successful? _____

Turn to Genesis 3 and read verses 1-6.

In the form of a snake, the “murderer” approached Eve with a gentle demeanor and a soft tone. Consider the adversary’s guise. How did his approach effectively disarm Eve? Does he gain your attention in a similar manner? _____

The adversary’s approach was subtle enough to retain her attention; his inquiry was clever enough to draw her attention to her only God-given limitation. (See Genesis 2:16-17.)

“Did God really say...you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” (Genesis 3:1, NLT). With these cunning words, the adversary began his assault. “What did God actually say? And to what extent did He really mean it?”ⁱ “What is your opinion on the matter?”

How do these “queries of Satan” discredit the reliability and acceptability of God’s Word in your life? _____

God’s clear command came before Satan’s lie. Contrast Eve’s response (Genesis 3:2-3) with the Lord’s instruction (2:16-17). _____

“Eve added to the prohibition and weakened the penalty”ⁱⁱ. What emphasis does this place on *“rightly dividing the Word of Truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15) and hearing God’s voice with accuracy?

The serpent’s tainted question created doubt and confusion in Eve’s mind.

As soon as Eve began to entertain his words, the serpent’s assault intensified: *“You will not surely die* (Genesis 3:4)!” Then, subtlety gave way to blatant accusation, and he appealed to Eve’s flesh.

According to verse 5 of Genesis 3, how did the adversary disparage God and exalt Eve? _____

The murderer suggested that God could not be trusted; He had ulterior motives. This cast a shadow over God's character. How has the adversary employed this tactic in your life, preventing you from obeying His directive? _____

The serpent needed only to make three short statements to entice Eve's heart. Tainted with the desires of his heart (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28), Eve believed him when he said, "You can have more... You can be more... You deserve more."

"With this the work of Satan was finished. The woman was then left to her natural desires and physical appetites"ⁱⁱⁱ. Genesis 3:6 says, *"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."*

Feelings of doubt and confusion surely compounded. Fear, worry, insecurity, discouragement, guilt and condemnation came flooding in. It was the perfect opportunity for the serpent to spew his venom. After you've failed yourself, others, or God, do you hear words of this sort? Explain.

Now turn to Matthew 4 and read verses 1-11.

As with Eve, the adversary sought to destroy Christ, the man, with cunning words and persuasive arguments. By appealing to His flesh, he sought to convince Christ to act contrary to the Truth. Christ resisted and rebuked Satan's carefully crafted words, and by doing so, He further exposed his tactics.

Describe Christ's surroundings and His physical state. Why was this an opportune time to call God's love and will into question? _____

What does this reveal about the timing of the adversary's verbal assaults? _____

"If you are the Son of God..." (Matthew 4:3). The adversary began his assault by calling Christ's identity into question. He also insinuated that His Father was absent and inattentive to His need.

Read the verses preceding Christ's temptation in Matthew 3:16-17. Continue through verse 1 of Matthew 4. For what reasons could Christ be certain of His identity, His Father's love and will, and His presence amidst His sufferings? _____

How can simply believing God's words deter the enemy? _____

In the same breath, Satan appealed to Christ's physical need by calling attention to His lack. Similarly, the adversary points to our physical, emotional, and spiritual deficiencies and limitations when he speaks. Has this proven to be an effective and/or immobilizing tool in your life? Why or why not? _____

In essence, Satan said, "You cannot trust your Father's care. Take matters into your own hands. Cause these stones to become bread by Your own power." How did Christ respond? (v.4) _____

Christ's reply revealed yet another of Satan's strategies: to cause a man to cease depending upon God and to start relying upon himself. According to John 15:4-6, what occurs when a man acts autonomously of God? _____

Additionally, the adversary can always be counted upon to draw attention to physical matters before spiritual ones. How can this prevent a man from hearing and obeying God's voice? _____

Return to Matthew 4. After appealing to His hunger, Satan tempts Christ to presume upon His Father's power and promises by perverting the meaning of God's words (v.6). He hisses: "If you really believe God, you will jump! Do you doubt the Lord's protection?" Like the first assault, the adversary will condemn a man's lack of trust in God in order to pressure or push him to do what he wants.

Does the wicked one often condemn you for not having enough faith? Explain if and how this has been a successful ploy. _____

As in Christ's situation, the adversary tempts man to alter God's Word to fit his personal plans and purposes, preferences, situations, and circumstances. How can this prove to be detrimental? _____

Before continuing, go back and circle every description of the adversary's voice. Then continue to do so through the remainder of the lesson.

The murderer had failed in two tactics, so he quickly presented a third. Once again, subtlety gave way to blatancy as he clearly stated his intentions. What did Satan offer Christ? (Matthew 4:8-9)

If Satan cannot lure us into his trap with words, he will present enticements intended to appeal to the flesh. His intention is to remove God from the throne of our hearts. As Christ said, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”* (Matthew 6:24).

How are we enticed *and* why is the above verse true? (Also consider Luke 8:14, James 4:4, and 1 John 2:15.) _____

The schemer placed power, riches, honor, and glory before Christ’s eyes with greater purpose than was obvious. Consider the following: According to Psalm 2:8, what had long-since been promised to Christ? What must occur before He obtained God’s promise? See Luke 24:26. _____

What, then, was Satan seeking to prevent? _____

The adversary argues, “If you’ll turn your back on God, I’ll give you everything you’ve ever wanted, *and* you can avoid suffering.”

Which component of Satan’s appeal is a greater source of temptation for you—power, riches, and honor, or the evasion of suffering? _____

Ultimately, can these temptations result in the “worship” of another god? Why or why not? _____

Read 1 John 2:15-16 and 5:19.

With this verse in mind, compare Eve’s temptation (Genesis 3:6) with Christ’s. How did Satan communicate the same temptation differently? What does this tell you about his schemes? _____

FLESH-TALK

In both accounts, the devil launched and sustained his attacks with appeals to the sin nature or flesh, as deemed in the New Testament (Romans 8, Galatians 5, etc.). His tactics remain

unchanged. With few words, he arouses and provokes to destruction the man who is not under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Think back to the account of Eve in Eden (Genesis 3). How did Satan provoke her? Did he put her hand to the forbidden fruit? _____

Unlike the voice of the adversary, which comes from without to incite a man, the voice of the flesh comes from within. Always seeking to preserve itself, it refuses to “die to self” (Matthew 10:38, 16:24) and submit to God’s authority. In short, the flesh stands in opposition to God’s character, His will and ways. It is unconcerned with kingdom purposes and, instead, acts independently of God.

Define the term “selfish”. _____

The definition states, the flesh is “devoted to or caring only for [it]self; concerned primarily with [its] own interests, benefits, welfare, etc., regardless of others”^{iv}. It declares, “What about me? What do I get out of it? How does this benefit me?” It is plain to see that where self is ruling and reigning, Christ is not.

Read Romans 8:5-8.

When the flesh, or sin nature, is doing the talking, its words are:

- Self-exalting: _____
- Self-preserving: _____
- Self-gratifying: _____

Define the above terms in the spaces provided. Then put words to these “inner attitudes and dispositions”^v. Examples might be: “I would never do that.” “He deserved it.” Or like Eve, “I need more. I can be more. I deserve more.”

How do the statements you recorded stand in opposition to Christ’s character and His Word in verse and/or principle? (Consider Luke 9:26, Romans 12:3, 1 Timothy 6:17, and 1 John 2:15-16.)

The voice of the flesh rings with the desires of the adversary’s sinful heart—the exaltation of one’s self against the knowledge of God.

Finally, Proverbs 28:26 says, *“He who leans on, trusts in, and is confident of his own mind and heart is a [self-confident] fool, but he who walks in skillful and godly wisdom shall be delivered”* (AMP).

ⁱ Knowles, A. (2001). The Bible Guide (1st Augsburg books ed.) (24). Minnaeapolis, MN: Augsburg.

ⁱⁱ Walvoored, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983). The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An exposition of the scriptures (Genesis 3:1-7). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Walvoored, J.F, Zuck, R.B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (Genesis 3:1-7).

^{iv} www.Dictionary.com. (2018). Term: Selfish.

^v Unknown.