

DAILY DEVOTION

The Scheme

Golden thread: We can fight against the devil's schemes by clinging to Jesus and the truths of the Gospel.

Memory Verse: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." - Ephesians 6:10-11

Monday, August 3rd - More than Meets the Eye

We face all kinds of struggles as we go about our lives. There are daily annoyances, ongoing problems, broken relationships, sins and addictions we can't seem to shake, and more. Most of the time we do our best to work through these problems. At our best, we analyze what's causing the problem and find a way to address it. We persevere and fight through all kinds of issues, both those inside of us and outside of us. But even as we fight to work through the problems in our lives and ourselves, we usually miss the fact that there is more going on than meets the eye.

There is a very real spiritual aspect to everything going on in and around us. You are not just a physical creature and this is not just a physical world. The Bible reminds us that the battles we fight are not just against bad health or low bank accounts or people who have hurt us or personal flaws. We have a real enemy, the devil, who schemes to bring us down. As God's people, we're engaged in a real battle against powers greater than we realize. Thankfully, we do not have to fight with our own power. God gives us what we need to stand against the devil and all his schemes. Recognizing this is not superstition, it's not over-spiritualizing; it's seeing things for the way they really are, and gives us a chance to really fight and win the battles we face.

Read Ephesians 6:10-13

Journal:

1. Is anything going on in your life right now, any kind of struggle, where there may be spiritual forces at work that you haven't really acknowledged?
- 2.
3. What is one way you can rely on the strength of the Lord, instead of yourself? (Read Ephesians 6:10-20 for some ideas and greater context.)

Table Questions: How often do you think about the fact that there's a spiritual side to everything we're facing?

Pray - Father, there is so much more going on around me than I know. I think about myself and my own strength and try to do what I can. I want to remember the truth - that there are spiritual forces at war with, and that the devil is scheming against me. Help me be more aware of that, and as I am, help me to rely on Your strength instead of my own. Give me the ability to put on the whole armor of God and resist the devil and His schemes. You have the ultimate victory and You call me Yours because of Jesus. I want to live this way! Father please enable me to withstand whatever darkness there is as I rely on You.- **Amen**

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Tuesday, August 4th
Fight Lies with the Truth

Yesterday we looked at the reality of spiritual warfare. Everything in life has a spiritual dimension, and we have an enemy (the devil) scheming against us. We cannot fight against the devil's schemes the same way we fight other things. It's not a battle against flesh and blood, but a battle against spiritual forces. God equips us and empowers us for this fight. We can't just apply our smarts, we have to rely on Him.

One of the primary ways the enemy schemes against us is by getting us to believe lies. We believe lies about God, ourselves, and other people. As a result we fall into temptation, sin, and unbelief. How can we fight against these lies? 2 Timothy 2:25 and Ephesians 6:13-14 give us the primary way. By coming to knowledge of the truth, we can fight lies. Truth is like a belt that holds the armor of God together. It's the way we can recover from the enemy's attacks.

Read 2 Timothy 2:25; Ephesians 6:13-14

Journal:

1. Where's an area where you know you're believing a lie about God, yourself, or others?
2. What truth can you fight that lie with?

Table Question: What is a truth from the Bible that encourages you, or that you really need to believe right now?

Pray - Father, You are a God of truth. Everything You say and do is good, right, and perfect. I believe so many lies about You, myself, and other people. I need Your help. Please fill my heart and mind with the truth. Equip me with Your belt of truth, and give me knowledge of the truth. Don't let me fall victim to lies. In the moments I feel weak or lost or down, please bring Your truth to my mind. I want to fight the enemy with Your strength, not my own. Help me to be completely dependent on You and Your glorious truths. Give me the faith to trust You. - Amen

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Wednesday, August 5th

What Am I Missing?

It seems like we're surrounded today by marketing ads more than ever before. Hootsuite estimates that social ad spending will increase 20% throughout 2020 for a whopping total of \$43 billion. These ads constantly remind us of what we are missing to fulfill us.

If I just have the newest smartphone, the newly redesigned car, register on the perfect dating app, invest with the right financial firm, etc. then all will be well with my soul. This false gospel slowly chips away at the true gospel, replacing God's truth with attractional lies that Satan would love to use to distort our thinking. I end up focusing more on what I don't have rather than what I already have. I have the greatest gift of all, the gift of everything: Christ Himself. The only thing I'm missing is the point that Christ Himself is more than sufficient for me, and better than anything else I could have.

Read John 4:7-15

Journal:

1. Jesus says here that He is the living water, quenching a thirst that will never happen again for those that receive it. In what areas of your life have you experienced this type of satisfaction from Christ?
2. The devil entices our thoughts with shallow reminders of what we don't have, creating a sense of thirst for things other than Christ Himself. What's one area you've been struggling with for a while that you need to remind yourself has already been fulfilled by Christ Himself?

Table Question: What's one thing you feel you really want right now? If you got it, what type of emotion do you think you'll get from having it? How can Christ fulfill that right now?

Pray - Lord, I know you are sufficient. I know you are enough. Forgive me for forgetting and placing my hopes in things that'll fade. Please guard my heart from what can be more attractive than you alone. Remind me of the promise I have in you, the assurance I have with you, and the love and grace you continue to show me day after day. I don't need the latest and greatest, the relationship status change, the larger bank account, the perfect bill of health. All of those just point to and should reveal even more to me how much I need you. - Amen

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Thursday, August 6th - Shifting focus, part 1

All week we've been focusing on some of the Devil's schemes. Some have been obvious, some subtle. Today we get to one tactic that has tremendous power over many of us.

Think about a recurring sin in your life. The one that you've promised not to do anymore; you've sworn to God that you won't do it time and time again. Let's be honest for a moment, even when that sin comes to your mind, you start to feel sick to your stomach or worried. That's one of the Devil's tricks...getting you to focus more on your sin than your Savior!

Read Romans 5:20

Journal:

1. When we fall into patterns of repeated sin, we often focus on what we did wrong instead of what it cost Jesus to make us right. Take some time right now to think about Jesus and His work for you. Specifically think through:
 - Who is Jesus? List out Jesus' amazing character and qualities.
 - What did it cost Jesus to come down to Earth? List what He gave up to come here and how He should have been treated vs. how he actually was treated.
 - What punishment did Jesus suffer for that one sin--along with all other sins you commit?
 - Bring all these together and let your soul focus on Jesus' amazing love for you! Don't let your heart go to guilt. Rather, think of God's amazing grace and love for you.
2. We need to change our focus away from guilt and toward grace! Take some time today to write out a poem of thankfulness to God. Focus on His grace instead of your sin.

Table Question: One of the ways we can keep away from sin is to focus on God's grace for us. Let's share some stories about God's grace to us today and thank Him through prayer together.

Pray - God, I confess that I often focus more on what I'm doing wrong instead of what Jesus did right. Jesus, help me to see your grace for me. Help me to experience it. Help me to believe it. Forgive me for thinking more about myself and my actions or thoughts. I believe that your grace is greater than any sin I can ever commit. I believe that your love for me covers my flaws in ways I can't imagine. Today I choose to live through your grace. I choose to trust your love over anything I can bring. Thank you Jesus for your grace. Help me to be moved by your love and grace today. - Amen

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Friday, August 7th
Shifting focus, part 2

Yesterday we saw that one of Satan's schemes is to get us to focus on our sin rather than God's grace. However, we can't just stop there. God has given us an amazing weapon to fight off the enemy's attacks. God has given us himself!

Read Romans 8:1-11

Journal:

1. First things first. Many of us have been so controlled by sin that we may not believe that God even loves us or wants to work inside of us. Read the passage again. Write out all the ways that God shows his approval for you based on Jesus' work:
 - Look specifically at verses 1, 3, 4 and 9.
2. Verses 5-9 show us what is true for every Christ follower: the Spirit of God lives in us! We need to focus on what the Spirit is telling us to do, not what our sinful desires or the enemy tells us to do. (Note: We do this because Jesus loves us, not to earn his love!)
 - Take some time to think through the last 24 hours. Ask the Spirit to show you when you listened to Him and when you listened to your sinful desires or the Devil.
 - Ask the Spirit to show you how to shift your focus to Him this weekend. Trust that He will give you the power to do this.
 - Take some time to thank the Spirit for the freedom He makes available to you!

Table Question: We believe in the Holy Spirit! When we trust Jesus to forgive us and bring us into his family, God gives us an amazing gift: God's spirit lives inside of us. Let's take some time to ask the Holy Spirit to show us how to live holy lives so we can honor Jesus.

Pray - God, I'm lost without you. I have no power to defeat sin or the Devil. But thankfully, I am not condemned because Jesus was condemned in my place. Not only did you pay for my sins, you gave me the Spirit so that I could live a holy life for you. I know I won't be perfect, but by focusing on the Spirit more and more each day instead of my sinful desires, you make me more like Jesus. Thank you for this amazing gift God! I believe it even when I don't see the changes in my life. Holy Spirit, help me to hear your voice more each day. Forgive me for not listening in the past. I long to hear your voice today. - Amen.