



The Devil

Ephesians 6:11 NIV

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

What Do You Know About the Devil?

Most people aren't very clear on who the devil is or what to make of him. We almost celebrate the devil with our cute little costumes at Halloween parties without giving much thought to what we are doing. We don't think it is funny to dress up as Joseph Stalin or a child molester or a rapist, but for some reason we find it charming to play the character of the most terrifying and evil entity in all the universe. What do you really know about the devil?

The Bible says that we are to put on the armor of God so we can take our stand against the devil's schemes. That alone should be a warning to not take the devil lightly. The word devil is found thirty-three times in the Bible. The Greek word translated devil is diabolos. Diabolos is the word that was used in the Greek version of the Old Testament to translate the Hebrew name Satan. Revelation 12: 9 makes it clear that Satan and the Devil are synonymous terms. **The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.** (Revelation 12:9 NIV) What is more, the ancient serpent is a direct reference to the one that tempted Eve to take the forbidden fruit, bringing into the universe all the cruelty and evil now here. The devil, Satan and the serpent are all the same wicked spirit roaming our world and unleashing pain and horror upon each of us.

Never be confused by this point. The devil is not a metaphor for evil. The devil is a unique personality, a specific being. The devil is not a nebulous blob of evilness, but a real, thinking, plotting, scheming creature of wickedness. Just a few verses from the Bible make this clear. **But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"** (Jude 9 NIV) **The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"** (Luke 4:3-4 NIV) In both cases, the angel Michael and Jesus Himself spoke directly to the devil, as if he was an actual being that can engage in back and forth conversations. In the book of Revelation, Jesus warned the Christian community about what the devil had planned. **"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you..."** (Revelation 2:10 NIV)

The Bible reminds us that the devil, or Satan, has set up headquarters here on earth. This is the devil's field of operations. **I know where you live — where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put**

to death in your city — where Satan lives. (Revelation 2:13 NIV) Satan has made his home here, where you live, in your neighborhood. He roams about and schemes where you work and play. The devil brings suffering and heartache to your street, to your town. Never take the devil for granted. In many places we are told that the devil brings pain and grief to people. **Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"** (Luke 13:16 NIV) Famously, Job's deep sorrows were attributed to the devil. **So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.** (Job 2:7 NIV) The devil is the dispenser of death...he is the mind behind it. **Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil—** (Hebrews 2:14 NIV)

Add to all the physical evil the devil brings the psychological damage he causes. Ugly personality traits that rip apart families, churches and communities come from the devil. **But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.** (James 3:14-15 NIV) The entire world is impacted by how the devil manipulates us. **The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.** (Revelation 12:9 NIV) The devil is a master of confusing us, tricking us into misunderstanding people and making bad decisions based on the animosity and frustration he stirs in us. **Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.** (Ephesians 4: 26-27 NIV) The devil's goal is to make us his servants, participants in his wicked plots. **For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.** (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NIV) A horrifying capability of the devil is his unique ability to enter the personality of those who have left their minds unprotected. We know what the devil did with Judas Iscariot. **As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.** (John 13:27 NIV) He can go so far as remove the ability of the Scripture to influence your thinking. **Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.** (Mark 4:15 NIV)

Perhaps the most disturbing case study found in Scripture documenting the devil's capability is Ananias and Sapphira who sold a piece of land and gave a portion of the sale price to the church. There was a great movement of God working in the Christian community at the time. Many in the church were being arrested and even martyred for their faith. Large numbers of families were without incomes due to so many losing their jobs because of their professions of Christ as Savior and Lord. As a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, a significant amount of believers in a variety of churches were selling what they had to provide financial support for the families who were now destitute. At least some were selling plots of land they owned and giving all the proceeds of the sale to the church for helping the poor. A couple, Ananias and Sapphira, wanted to join the movement but weren't willing to part with all the money they received for the transaction, but they told everyone in the church that the money they were giving was everything they had received. From the human side of things, it seems odd at least that they handled their giving that way. After all, no one was demanding that anyone make such large sacrifices. It all was to be a matter of the heart. We can only speculate what motivations led to Ananias and Sapphira trying to convince everyone in the church that they were more generous than they were. The Bible though tells us a third party was involved. It was the devil who passed this plan along to Ananias and convinced him it would work. **Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?"** (Acts 5:3 NIV)

What can we do to not be trapped by the devil and pulled into his evil schemes? The problem is that what the devil tells us is generally reasonable. The temptations the devil pushed on Jesus were not bizarre or clearly evil. They just were slyly twisted; a corrupting of the Bible so that if Jesus was not careful, He could

have fallen into the trap of going against the Father in His effort to fulfill His mission as Messiah. There are two important ways we can avoid the devil's traps and not be dragged into his terrible plans. First, make sure you know exactly what the Bible has to say about as many parts of life as possible and do not be sidetracked from following the instructions. The devil will try to convince you of the rightness of something that perhaps you don't yet realize goes against God. The Bible makes it clear that the devil's schemes are evil, but you might be fooled into falling for them if you aren't reading the Bible. It could be a terrible mistake you make and bring a dreadful cost to many you love if you fall for the Devil's schemes. Trust the Lord. Trust the Bible. By obeying the Bible and God, you will be protected from much despair and hardship the devil can cause you. Second, don't hold grudges and forgive people immediately. **If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.** (2 Corinthians 2:10-11 NIV) The longer you stew over some way you have been treated badly, the easier it is for the devil to corrupt your thinking and confuse you. Unforgiveness is the worm Satan uses to get into your head. Stay faithful to Christ and do what the Bible says to do, and you will be safe. It is critical that you see through the Devil and know what to think about things and how to live in these strange and peculiar times. Read the Bible daily and don't hold a single grudge past bedtime.