

RELAPSE PREVENTION – Temptation and Deception

Once we have cleaned up our lives from all past involvement in sinful practices we are home free for a life of joy and peace and blessing, right? Wrong! That's the very time the devil will do everything in his power to draw us away from what we are now experiencing with God. When we are growing closer to God the devil hates it.

When we take back the ground of our heart or help someone else do the same the devil will do anything he can to stop us. As God is preparing us for a deeper relationship or a greater experience of His blessing and influence, the devil will naturally be afraid of that and try to block it. We have to be on guard.

So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honour you ... Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith. (1 Peter 5:6-9)

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9

The ultimate deception we face is the one that says we are not dealing with deception today. God is leading us forever forward into truth about ourselves, our addictions, our relationships, and His good plans for our lives. However, as long as we are on a journey, there is obviously still some fog of deception that the Holy Spirit needs to clear from our hearts and minds.

We are in desperate need of truth-telling and truth-receiving every day we live and breathe. We needed it the day we turned from drugs and alcohol and we need it no less today. In fact, the devil is more actively seeking to deceive us today because we potentially do more harm to his agenda today as we seek to follow God's heart. What better way to trap us than to have us acting ignorantly in a way that is harmful to ourselves or others. Only the voice of God's Spirit can keep us on the right path, recognizing what is truth and what is deception.

Jesus said: **The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment he will guide you into all truth.** John 14:26, 16:8, 13

In the Garden of Eden the devil made the apple very appealing to Eve and then had her question what God had really said when he spoke to her. He twisted what God

had said about spiritual death and applied it to physical death. Similarly, when Jesus was tempted, the devil quoted scriptures to Jesus but quoted them in a twisted way that tried to get Jesus to go against God's plan. The devil will do his best to tempt us with something appealing to us and then give us reasons why it's not so bad or why we deserve it or even remind us that God will forgive us so why not just go ahead. The devil is always twisting truth.

One of the most appealing things people crave is freedom, the opportunity to have control of our own lives and make our own decisions about what they want to do and when. In the Garden of Eden story, the real reason Satan tempted the first man and woman to eat the fruit was to have them move to a place where they thought this would give them what they needed. The temptation wasn't just about eating a piece of fruit. The temptation was to a fantasy life where a person could supposedly figure out right and wrong on their own without God having to be involved. In that way, it seemed they could be "free." What that story clearly shows us, however, is that what Satan offered was an empty lie. There is no human wisdom that can keep us free without God's voice constantly guiding us and helping us to adjust. We will self-destruct in one way or another unless we listen carefully to God's plans for this day.

We say, **"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."** God says, **"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.** Psalm 32:7-8

If God has said it's wrong, there's no condition and no argument we will ever find that will make it right. God says we are prone to being deceived about this and God lovingly and willingly calls us to relationship with Him where He will faithfully communicate the best path for us every day of our lives in every situation we encounter. We can try in whatever ways we choose to find pleasure, deal with pain, gather companionship, and search for security and meaning. No amount of money, sex, dopamine rush, prestige or power will satisfy us and give us safety or true freedom. All that will happen as we seek after these is that we'll hurt ourselves and others.

The ultimate deception is to believe that we're safe from deception. We are prone to being deceived every day of our lives and must stay on guard. God is available to help.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Where am I vulnerable to Satan's deceiving ways?
2. What am I doing to be prepared to face and defeat these strategies?