

# (Know Your Enemy) 5. the Methods of Satan

by Zac Poonen

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*To resist Satan's attacks and protect our lives on earth and eternal destiny, we must know his methods, quote God's Word, and follow Jesus' example.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3, Matthew 4:1, Revelation 12:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Temptation"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity for young people to understand and resist the methods of Satan, who begins his attacks early in life. He warns against the common misconceptions of Satan's appearance and tactics, explaining that he often comes disguised as an 'angel of light' to deceive. Poonen illustrates how Jesus confronted Satan's temptations with Scripture, highlighting the importance of knowing God's Word to overcome the enemy's schemes. He urges listeners to recognize the subtle ways Satan tempts them, particularly through legitimate desires pursued in illegitimate ways, and to prioritize God's Word above all else. Ultimately, Poonen calls for repentance and a commitment to follow Jesus' example in resisting temptation.

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## Transcript

If you as a young person do not know how to resist Satan in your life, it can not only ruin your life on earth, it can also affect your eternal destiny. Satan won't wait until you have grown up, before he begins his attacks on you. He will start on you right now. So you must know something about his methods.

Unfortunately, most peoples' idea of the devil comes more from the advertisements of Onida Television than from the teaching of God's Word. And so they think of Satan as a harmless prankster with horns and claws and a forked, green tail. But we read in the Bible that Satan does not have such a hideous form at all. Satan is a spirit and he is not a fool to come in such a way as to make people run away from him. How would he be able to lead them astray then?

Satan is more like a confidence trickster who first wins your confidence and then cheats you. The Bible says Satan comes as an angel of light - as one who is attractive. And it is because he comes as an "angel of light", that he is called "the Deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

Let me give you one example - karate. Most people think of that as just a martial art-form, a method of self defence. But that is only part of the truth. Just like yoga which appears to be only physical exercise, but yet teaches people to worship of the sun, in the same way, karate too has demonic forces behind it. There are

demons of karate, and I have encountered them in demon-possessed people, but they will present themselves as harmless messengers of good things like self-defence.

Satan came in a very charming and attractive way to Eve in the garden of Eden. If he had been repulsive, Eve would have run away from him.

Notice this fact that both the Old and the New Testaments begin with description of Satan tempting people - the Old Testament with the temptation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), and the New Testament with the temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4). That shows the importance that the Bible gives to the matter of our knowing the methods of our enemy.

If we follow the example of Adam and Eve in the way they confronted Satan we will certainly fall. But if we follow Jesus' example in the way He confronted Satan, we will overcome.

Immediately after Jesus was baptised in water and anointed by the Holy Spirit, even before he began his public ministry, the very first thing we read is that He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1).

It is indeed amazing that the Holy Spirit would lead Jesus to meet the devil. One would think that the Holy Spirit leads people only to mountain tops to get visions and revelations of God and heaven!!! Yes, He does lead us to such places. But He also leads us into places where we can be tempted by Satan.

I hope you realise that the Holy Spirit will never lead us to places that are harmful for us. So we can understand from that one verse of Scripture that temptations must be useful for us. Otherwise the Holy Spirit would not have led Jesus to be tempted by Satan. And He won't lead us to be tempted by Satan either. God does not tempt anyone. But He does allow us to be tempted by Satan.

Notice the Timing of Satan's Temptations

He came to Jesus, just after Jesus had fasted for forty days and nights, when he was hungry. It is when we are physically weak or when we are facing some mental or emotional pressure in our lives, that Satan tries to attack us.

Secondly, we notice that Satan came to Jesus after He had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and had heard the voice of approval from Heaven. Satan comes to us soon after we have had a time of tremendous blessing from God.

So let us be alert to Satan's tactics. After God has tremendously blessed us, Satan will come along to try and puff us up. Or when we have failed in an examination, or are sick or physically drained out, he will come along to try and get us discouraged so that he can lead us into sin.

God's Word has been given to us in advance so that we can know "the wiles and schemes of Satan". God's Word shows us how Satan approaches, at what times he usually comes, what enticements he offers, how others were deceived by him, and how Jesus overcame.

What are Satan's Lines of Approach?

First of all, we see that he tempted Jesus through His bodily desires. Satan suggested to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread".

That is how Satan comes to us too. He tempts us to satisfy our LEGITIMATE bodily desires in ILLEGITIMATE ways. But Jesus was alert, and replied "It is written....."

When Satan had come to Eve thousands of years earlier, he had questioned God's Word saying, "Has God said...."

Do you know that there is only one book in the world that Satan hates with all his heart? That is God's Word, the Bible. And why does he hate it? Because it reveals how he became Satan, it exposes all his schemes, and most important of all, it tells us all about his defeat on Calvary's cross, and his final judgment when Christ comes back to earth.

That is why Satan hates the Bible and always tries his best to prevent people from reading it. He would rather allow you to read a novel or a comic than the Bible. Because Satan knows that those novels and comics will not help you to overcome him, but the Bible will.

When Jesus came to earth, he came as a man just like us, and was tempted in all points exactly as we are (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15). Why? So that he could be an example for us. So that he could say to us "Follow Me. Follow My example."

And what is the example that we can follow here? It is to quote God's Word alone to Satan when we are tempted. Jesus did not discuss matters with Satan as Eve did. He did not reason as to whether He needed food for His body, or whether food was good, or necessary etc. He was only concerned with what God had said in His Word. And my dear friends, I want to tell you that if you live your life by just this one principle: "What has God said in his Word,? That alone is my final authority", then you will always overcome Satan, like Jesus did. In fact Jesus replied quoting God's Word in answer to all the three temptations that Satan came with.

And there we see the contrast between Eve and Jesus. Jesus' attitude was "God's Word for my soul is far more important than any food for my body." Or in other words, "The need for food is not as important as the need to read, understand and obey the Word of God". That is the meaning of Jesus quoting that verse from the Old Testament to Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Did you understand that, my young friends? The first principle by which we can overcome Satan is by recognising that God's Word is more important for us than the satisfying of ALL our bodily needs - whether it be a hunger for food or sex or whatever. If you don't take that position right at the outset, you will certainly be deceived thereafter.

You can be sure that the devil will tell you that it is more important to eat your food than to read God's Word each day. And there are many believers who believe the devil. The proof that they believe what Satan says is seen in the fact that they never forget or lack the time to eat food (even three or more times a day), but often forget or are too busy to meditate on God's Word.

Who has done this work of deceiving believers and thus making them weak? Undoubtedly, Satan himself. What an example we have in Jesus Who, even after fasting for forty days, still felt it was more important for Him to listen to a word from God than to satisfy His bodily needs.

It is those who give the pre-eminent place to God's Word in their lives who will live a consistently, victorious life. The apostle John told young people (in 1 John 2:14), "Because God's Word is dwelling in

you, you are strong and have overcome the evil one." It is impossible to overcome Satan in any other way. I want to encourage all of you to read and meditate on the Scriptures every day of your lives.

### Let Us Now Look at the Second Temptation

Here Satan tempted Jesus to jump down from the top of the temple, and to claim God's promise of protection. It was a temptation to do something spectacular and thus earn the admiration of the crowds below in the courtyard, who would see Him descending unhurt, into their midst. What Satan suggested to Jesus was really a ploy to make Him commit suicide.

Satan will often tempt you to do something spectacular in order to get the acclaim of others, or perhaps to show-off that you are someone great etc. Notice that Satan even quoted Scripture to Jesus, saying, "The angels will take care of you."

Remember that Satan can even misquote Scripture if he can lead you astray thereby. And if you are ignorant of what the Scriptures really teach, he will deceive you.

"Do something spectacular in the Name of Christ", Satan suggests. Christianity has often got a bad name because of the stupid things that many believers have done, quoting Scripture and tempting God.

For example, there are believers who do not take any medicine when they are sick. They do not have any Scripture to base their so-called "faith" on. But they imagine that they are "trusting" God. That is exactly like jumping down from the temple, expecting the angels to provide supernatural protection! They finally die of their sickness - and the Name of Jesus Christ is dishonoured among the heathen, who get the idea that Christianity is a religion of stupid, fanaticism. And Satan sits back and laughs, for he has succeeded in luring one more believer to commit suicide, not by taking poison, but by refusing to combat the poisons in his body through medicines that God created for use. Many a child of God who could have been useful to God for the work of His kingdom on earth has been lured to their death by Satan in this way.

The devil is always tempting people to do something foolish, something that is contrary to the spirit and teaching of God's Word, and something spectacular. It is by humility - by humbly submitting to God, and by not seeking any glory for ourselves in any way, that we overcome Satan.

When Satan quoted a Scripture to Jesus, Jesus quoted another Scripture to Satan in reply. He said, "It is also written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'". We are not to tempt God by doing foolish, stupid and unnecessary things and then expecting God to protect us from the results of such folly!

### And Now, Finally, the Third Temptation

Here at last, Satan came to what he has always desired - worship. He told Jesus, "If you bow down and worship me, I will give you all the glory of this world."

The glory of this world is a tremendous temptation to all of us - money, popularity, honour, position, power etc. And the devil says, "Which of these would you like to have? Tell me, and I will give it to you. Just bow down to me a little bit, and I will give it all to you".

He will say, "Do you want to pass in your examination? Do you want to come first in your class? I will give it to you. Just bow down to me - give a bribe and get that question paper in advance; give a bribe to the examiner and get some more marks; cheat in the examination....etc."

These are the ways in which many are bowing down to Satan today.

Is it important for you young people to know about the devil's schemes? Certainly. You must know that when you cheat in an examination, you are bowing down to Satan in your mind and saying "I will obey your orders, Satan. I will take a little piece of paper with notes in my pocket, into the examination-hall".

There are many more ingenious ways of cheating that young people have discovered in these days - for Satan is very clever, and offers all his wiles to help those who want to cheat.

If Satan offered the glory of this world to Jesus, don't you think he will offer it to you as well? And as you grow older, you will find that Satan will tell you of so many other wonderful things that he can offer you. There are people who sign false statements, practise unrighteousness in financial matters, and engage in crooked activities - all in order to get a little more money, a little more popularity, or a higher position in this world.

The devil is constantly telling people, "Tell me what you want? I will give it to you." Jesus had only one reply to such a temptation. He said, "Be gone Satan. It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve'".

What a wonderful thing it is that we have God's Word to warn us of all these schemes of Satan. How blessed you young people are that you can learn all this at this young age!

When you are tempted to get something of this world and you realise that you have to sacrifice your character in order to get it, what are you going to do? Remember what Jesus said to Satan, and you follow Jesus' example and tell Satan the same thing yourself.

When Satan tempts you saying, "You don't have to be righteous, you don't have to speak the truth there. Tell a little lie, and you can gain something of this world", be bold to reply to him saying, "Begone Satan, I will not listen to you. It is written that I should bow down and worship God alone. I am going to follow Jesus."

From the time he was created, Satan has always wanted others to worship him. That is why he wanted to be like God - because he knew that God alone can be worshipped. He wanted the other angels to worship him. He wanted Adam's race to worship him. And, amazingly, he wanted even Jesus to worship him!!!

He could not succeed with Jesus. But he does succeed with many people - in fact with most people - in the world today, and even with many, many believers, who compromise their convictions in order to make some earthly profit for themselves.

There are millions who are bowing down to Satan today. They do not realize that when they yield to sin, or go against their conscience, they are actually bowing down to Satan. And why do they do it? In order to gain something of the glory of this world.

When you want success, popularity or power - maybe success in an examination, or popularity in school, or a position in the world - Satan will come to you and say, "I will give it to you. Do this. Do that. Go and say this. Go and do that.... And you know very well that everything he is suggesting is wrong. But you still go ahead and do it, and thus bow the knee to Satan. Do you think you can still call yourself a Christian when you do things like that? Certainly not. No one is a Christian who bows the knee to Satan.

What shall we do then, if we have bowed the knee like that to Satan in past years? We must repent of all those occasions when we did it, give back what we have cheated or acquired wrongly, and ask Jesus to forgive us and cleanse us. Let us do that without delay, lest Satan continue to have power over our lives.

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