

The Enemy's Strategies Against You (1)

In this next part of our series, we will be exploring the various strategies the enemy uses against believers. Part of knowing our enemy is knowing his assignments against us. When you are aware of these strategies you are better positioned to deal with them. Sun Tzu, a Chinese military general, strategist, and philosopher, once said *"Know thy enemy and know thyself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated."*

1. He tries to intimidate you

By making himself BIG in your eyes, he makes you overestimate his power over you. Often, he uses people to do this so that you do not walk in fullness.

Colossians 2:9-13 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, **and you have been given fullness in Christ**, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in circumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ, He forgave us all our sins.*

We were with Christ in death and resurrection. He died for us, and He rose for us.

Colossians 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

The devil was stripped of his arms. Remember James 4:7, he flees when you resist.

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant. Your adversary, the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.*

The term "be vigilant" is the word Gregoreo in Greek which means, to watch or to stay awake. Often the enemy waits for when we are in slumber. He is like a roaring lion trying to scare people with his roar. It is important to note that Peter was speaking to believers.

Matthew 8:28-34 *When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs". He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including*

what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

From this passage, ask yourself the following questions:

- How scary were these men to those around them?
- How scared of Jesus were the demons?
- How would those same spirits respond to you?

Of what are you afraid?

Corrie Ten Boom said, **"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength."** Someone once said, **The things we fear the most have already happened to us.** Cognitive distortions are often the result of fear within. Wars often start due to fear. (World War 1, 1967 6 Day War, 2003 Iraqi War etc). What do you do when you are afraid? Fight, flight or fear. The enemy wants you flooded with cortisol. Fear is based on what you believe. Fear is faith in reverse. If you believe lies, you will be bound by fear. Often the lies we believe come in the form of exaggerations or distortions of the truth. "If I give them this feedback it will permanently alter the relationship". No, it will feel a bit awkward. Elisabeth Elliot said, **"Fear arises when we imagine that everything depends on us."**

2. He takes advantage of your ignorance

Hosea 4:6 (NIV) *My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.*

Hosea 4:6 (NLT) *My people are being destroyed because they don't know me. Since you priests refuse to know me, I refuse to recognize you as my priests. Since you have forgotten the laws of your God, I will forget to bless your children.*

Knowledge is indeed power, especially knowledge of God.

Our ignorance has an impact on the next generation. Intimacy precedes warfare. A lot of people are trying to cast out demons, but they don't really know Jesus.

Martin Luther King Jr said, **"Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."**

Matthew 7:21-23 *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord,*

did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

It is most tragic when a person goes through life thinking they are on the right side of God when in actual fact they are on His wrong side.

Matthew 17:14-20 (NAS) *When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill, for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith, for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting".*

The term, "This kind" in the word *Genos* in Greek which means family, offspring, people group. It is important to know the different ways of dealing with different types of spirits. The word "rebuked" is translated *Epetimesem* in Greek and means, to warn, to charge or to tell sternly. It is the same term that Jesus used when He rebuked the wind and also when he told his disciples not to tell anyone. I have had to ask myself, "How many prayers do I pray that do not get answered because I do not have the technology of intercessory prayer"? How many prayers are not being answered because you are operating in intercession when you should be operating in authority and casting the demon out? Very often our prayers are not answered because of ignorance. When the disciples could not cast the demon out, Jesus did not hide the answer from them. He told them that this type comes out by prayer. The Bible tells us that, it is the glory of kings to search out a matter. We are kings on the earth, the Bible says that we reign on earth as kings. **Many people give up to soon instead of searching out a matter.** The disciples could have resigned themselves to the idea that it was God's will for the boy to remain like that. The key learning here is that there are kinds of spirits and perhaps they each require specific strategies when dealing with them. For example, do you know what the spirit of poverty requires, in order to be cast out?

3. He influences you to violate universal laws

There are certain laws that God has put in place and the enemy's strategy is to influence us to violate those laws. **When the devil influences you to violate universal laws, then the law works against you without the need for demonic assistance.** This means that his demons can be deployed elsewhere. This often happens when we are ignorant of these laws. Laws will affect you

even when you are ignorant of them. We see this a lot when it comes to medicines interacting with other things.

We can examine some examples:

The Law of Sowing and Reaping:

Galatians 6:7-8 *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction, the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

Do you know how to sow to please the Spirit? When you sow seed it multiplies. Many Christians want breakthrough but they are breaking God's universal laws. The deception of the enemy is to convince you that you do not reap what you sow. This law also works in the negative. If you sow bad thoughts, you will reap bad behaviour. Often I find that when I think good thoughts about someone, the good thoughts bless me. **What harvest are you going to reap as a result of what you have been thinking or speaking?** Many Christians cancel their prayers because they pray one way and think another way. **Heaven responds to the declaration of our words and responds to the conversations we make especially when we are in agreement.**

Matthew 7:2 (NIV) *For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

What are you sowing? In the same way you judge you too will be judged. So when you measure out stinginess, that is the same measure that comes out to you. Sometimes as Christians we tie God's hands by putting a small measure out. Do you give people the benefit of the doubt or are you suspicious? Don't be surprised if after some time people treat you accordingly. **Perhaps you keep praying for favour and grace but never get breakthrough because you dish out the opposite to those around you.**

Matthew 7:2 (NLT) *For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.*

2 Corinthians 9:6 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

If you are reaping sparingly in your life, maybe the issue is not necessarily about rebuking the devil, maybe it is about a universal principle that God has put in place that you are violating.

Some Christians do not give and are not generous and yet they keep praying expecting God to answer their prayers and make them prosper. There is a law, the law of sowing and reaping. These universal principles, also work for unsaved people. Here are some other examples of these universal laws:

- **The Law of Opposing Forces or Displacement** – Martin Luther King Jr said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." The Bible says in Rom 12:21 *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* Nature abhors a vacuum. It is impossible to have a completely empty space in your mind and in your life.
- **Law of Unity** - There is strength and blessing in unity and agreement.

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. (Mt 12:25, NKJV)

- **Law of Humility** - Humility leads to exaltation, while pride leads to downfall.

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10)

- **The Law of Use (Stewardship)** - What you do with the gifts, talents, or resources given to you will determine your future opportunities. **You can pray as much as you want for growth in your gifts but are you faithful in their use?**

"For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." (Matthew 25:29)

4. He uses the element of surprise

1 Corinthians 10:12 NIV *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*

1 Corinthians 10:12 ESV *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

Many of you are familiar with the concept of guerrilla warfare. The enemy uses the tactic of ambush. *For successful operations, surprise must be achieved by the guerrillas. If the operation has been betrayed or compromised it is usually called off immediately. Intelligence is also extremely important, and detailed knowledge of the target's dispositions, weaponry and morale is gathered before any attack.* Many of you never plan to fall but the enemy ambushes you and so you end up falling into sin. We must watch, be alert and proactive. A study was done on a group of pastors who fell into adultery and a large number of them confirmed that they never thought that it could happen to them. **A lot of Christians fall into sin because they do not have a script for when they are tempted.** What's your Achilles heel? The enemy studies your areas of weakness. **What will cause you to fall tomorrow and what are doing about it today?** What will you say when someone comes to bribe you? You must have a script beforehand on how you are going to respond to temptation, you must be watchful and sober. One man of God tells a story of when he was once on a plane and a certain stewardess kept flirting with him, so at some point he shouted, "Whore of Babylon, whore of Babylon". She distanced herself from him, not wanting to be implicated. He went on to say that, **you**

have to embarrass sin before sin embarrasses you. Sometimes you have to be bold enough to address the spirits that are assigned against you. Do you know what they are? It's a ticking time bomb that will surprise everyone one day, but had roots from long ago.

A strangler...is like a virus that grows onto the tree, usually in the roots when the tree is young or little. As the tree grows, so does the matapalo ("killing stick"). It appears on the surface somewhat like it's actually a part of the tree, but don't be fooled — it's not. – Steve Bremner

These thought seeds or desires start small, but like James says...*each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (James 1:14-15, ESV)*

Conclusion – May God help us as we become aware of the enemy's strategies against us; fear and intimidation, ignorance, violating universal laws and being caught by surprise.

Reflection Questions

1. How does fear or intimidation manifest in your life, and what steps can you take to see through the enemy's exaggerations of his power?
2. In what areas of your life do you tend to act out of fear rather than faith, and how can you align your thoughts more closely with God's truth?
3. Are there moments in your life when ignorance or lack of knowledge has allowed the enemy to gain a foothold? How can you pursue a deeper knowledge of God to prevent this?
4. How aware are you of the universal laws set by God (e.g., sowing and reaping)? In what areas of your life do you need to better align yourself with these principles?
5. Have you ever experienced the consequences of violating spiritual or universal laws? How did you respond, and what did you learn from that experience?
6. Do you tend to fall into traps of the enemy by being caught off guard or surprised? What proactive measures can you take to be more vigilant?
7. When you are faced with temptation or moral dilemmas, do you have a "script" or plan of action? How can you better prepare for moments of weakness?
8. How do you handle thoughts or seeds of sin in your life? Do you recognize them early enough to prevent them from growing, or do they catch you by surprise?
9. Are there areas in your life where you believe lies that result in fear or anxiety? How can you replace those lies with God's promises?
10. Reflecting on the importance of humility, where in your life might pride be leaving you vulnerable to attack, and how can you practice greater humility?