



Dear Phil

RESISTING THE DEVIL

James 4:7 says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” How does one resist the devil?

—Your Student

Dear Student,

Effective resistance depends largely on proper preparation. If you wait till temptation strikes, you will be an easy kill. We must do several things in preparation to resist the enemy.

First, we submit ourselves to God. James 4:7a says, “Submit therefore to God.” No one can resist the devil who is not in submission to God. An unyielded will makes you open prey to our roaring adversary (1 Pet. 5:8). You have submitted yourself to God if you are walking in full obedience to God’s word, are willing to do whatever God wants you to do (John 7:17), and have cast all your anxieties upon him (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Second, we must know God’s word. We put on the whole armor of God through regular reading, memorization, and meditation on His word. Most know that Jesus quoted Scripture when Satan tempted him (Mat. 4:3-10). Few know that Jesus quoted only from Deuteronomy (Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 10:20). Apparently Jesus had memorized large portions of Deuteronomy, perhaps all of it. How much Scripture have you

memorized? If you are a typical Christian, not much. I would encourage you to begin with Matt. 22:37-40, and then identify passages that discuss the virtues that you know God wants to build into your life. If you struggle to memorize scripture, work at it. Read it repeatedly. Paraphrase it. Talk about it with your friends. Ingrafting God’s word arms us against the foe.

Third, we must know ourselves. Knowing ourselves involves recognizing our areas and times of weakness, i.e., where and when the devil is most likely to attack. Romans 13:14 commands, “Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.” We prepare to resist the devil by avoiding known areas of temptation and making ourselves accountable to trustworthy fellow believers.

Fourth, we must know our enemy. The devil is a liar, a thief, and a murderer (John 8:44; 10:10). All his temptations distort the truth. That’s why it’s so crucial to know the truth of God’s word. The devil’s tactics commonly include questioning God’s goodness, love or wisdom, enticing us to satisfy a legitimate desire outside of God’s parameters, focusing on the negative aspects of our circumstances and trying to get us to compare ourselves with others. Although some have claimed that the devil does not know our thoughts and does not have access to our minds, I know of no biblical

basis for this claim, and the testimony of believers throughout the ages contradicts it. The mind, in fact, is the battleground of the soul. It is where the enemy most often aims his fiery darts (Eph. 6:16).

When an attack actually begins, we resist the devil first by asking God to rebuke the devil. Man was made a little lower than the angels (Heb. 2:7, 9). On our own we are no match for Satan or his minions. It has been common in some circles to talk about “giving the devil a black eye” or to call the devil abusive names (e.g., “ol’ split hoof”). In Jude 9, we learn that Michael, an archangel, did not dare to rail on Satan, but instead appealed to God to rebuke Satan on his behalf: “May the Lord rebuke you.” In the next verse, Jude compares men who revile (fallen) angelic beings to unreasoning beasts. It is, therefore, foolish for a Christian to rail at the devil.

Second, we resist by asserting God’s truth that exposes the enemy’s lie. To Satan’s whispered, “No one will ever know,” we reply, “There is no creature hid from His sight” (Heb. 4:13). Do not argue with the devil. Those who pit their minds against the devil usually lose; and none are better for it. A scriptural response should be followed by focusing our mind upon God and what is true, honorable, pure, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). You don’t resist the devil by focusing on him or his temptation. Replace evil thoughts with good. Have a ready store of worthy thoughts prepared for times of temptation.

Finally, stand firm in faith that God’s word is true, and sooner or later the enemy will flee!

Sincerely,
Philip Brown ■

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