

Matthew 4 the Marketing of Evil

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman discusses the devil's deceptive marketing strategies that lead to sin and the importance of resisting temptation through faith and accountability.

Duration: 59:53

Scripture: Luke 4:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Ephesians 6:10, James 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Temptation Resistance"

Description

This sermon delves into the tactics of the devil's marketing plan, focusing on how he uses our desires, minimizes the consequences of sin, and appeals to our pride. It emphasizes the importance of resisting temptation, obeying God's Word, and being filled with the Spirit to overcome the enemy's schemes. The victory at the end of the struggle is highlighted, encouraging believers to trust in God's provision for a way of escape and to resist the devil. The sermon concludes with a call to seek God's strength and guidance in facing temptations.

Transcript

But I want to talk to you tonight from the topic of the marketing of evil. Do you realize that the devil has a marketing plan? The enemy of your soul has a marketing plan, and it's not what we want to hear. Well, actually, it is what our flesh wants to hear, but it goes against God's standard and how he does it.

I'm going to talk to you about that tonight from Matthew four. If you have your Bibles, we're going through Matthew systematically, chapter one, two, three and four. And I'm not going through this rapidly.

I'm trying to stop and look at what is what is this saying to us today in our personal application? And you're not going to get one of the one of the actually you're not going to get a better illustration of how the enemy comes against you than how he's going to come against Jesus here shortly. This is the marketing of evil. The devil, what he does, he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

We know that, but he does it in such a way to where it looks good. He presents the bait and it looks good. I'm going to take that.

That's the marketing plan. You guys have heard big corporations have a marketing plan, right? They get a whole bunch of high paid executives in a room. And they talk about how are we going to market something? Do you know many times they're not concerned with if the results pay off, they're concerned

with does it sell the product? And what they've done is they actually tapped into exactly what the enemy taps into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the boastful pride of life.

If you can overcome those three areas, you will overcome every attack that the enemy will ever throw at you. That's it. He'll come at the lust of the flesh.

What our flesh craves, the lust of the eye, which is eye candy for those young adults. Lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. And that's what we're going to get into.

But the enemy markets his evil. It doesn't look like destructive right then. It doesn't say, oh, man, that's going to destroy me.

He presents it in such a way. And I like what C.S. Lewis wrote. I was going to I was going to quote this later.

It's on your bulletin. I think if it's not, just listen up. The safest road to hell.

There's another word you're not going to hear in a lot of churches anymore. They're avoiding this topic because it offends people, but it's OK to offend people. As we talked about before, the safest road to hell is the gradual one, the one that's gentle.

It's gentle under your foot. It's an easy slope without sudden turnings, without milestones and without signposts. And he's absolutely correct, the safest road to hell, the enemy uses it, it's soft.

There's no warnings. Right. So this is nice and comfortable.

This feels good. This is easy. This is great.

And then you get there. How did I get here? Because it was a marketing plan of deception. And then you're here, there are people are here saying this is outer darkness.

This is weeping. This is gnashing of teeth. How did I get here? See, he doesn't show you that.

He doesn't show you that part of it. That's why you've got to read God's word. And I believe that's what the big push in the church is today is to remove these things.

Don't talk about hell and damnation. The condemnation of God. Don't talk about these things.

Why? Because it's a marketing plan and he's got many churches hooked on it, too. Because he wants people to come in slowly, one step at a time, one compromise at a time, one wrong choice at a time until they're at the bottom saying, how did I get here? It's a very deceptive marketing plan. And I saw that book a few years ago, I saw the cover and it brought I mean, it was it was.

It was kind of scary because a lot of young adults were reading it, watching the movie. It said, I think something like, I hope they serve beer in hell as if. Talk about a marketing plan.

These kids are looking forward to hell. I hope they serve beer. They're going to party with all my friends.

ACDC song, I'm on a highway to hell. And it's a marketing plan. That's what the enemy does.

He shows us what the flesh wants, what the eye craves and the boastful pride of life. And then he catches us with that. And that's how he traps people.

You wouldn't take the bait if it didn't look good. I'm getting ready to go fly fishing pretty soon. I'm getting out my little mosquitoes and little thing.

They got to look just like the bait, just like so when I throw it right out there on that, it's going to look just like a mosquito landing on the water. And then when he has it, I have him. You see how that works? That's all the enemy does.

So if you know he's going to come at you through the lust of the flesh, what's your flesh craves? And see, there's a balancing act because some fleshly desires are good. I got I have to eat. I have to drink water.

I have to drink, you know, well, I won't say soda because I'm pretty healthy, but lemonade or whatever. I mean, I'm hungry right now and it's OK. I've got it, you know.

But when those fleshly lusts get out of balance and they begin to control you rather than you controlling them. Then we're in trouble and we've seen the big drift in our culture today, sex is God designed is great within the context of marriage, remove that those guardrails and then it becomes a perversion, flesh takes over and it becomes a perversion and lust of the flesh, the flesh, whether it's drinking too much or eating too much or pornography for men or even pornography for women or the whatever it is, the lust is pulling and that's what the enemy shows you. Isn't that enticing? And then the eye, the eye candy, that's what's happened with the big housing market we saw in the last five, six years.

Everybody bigger, bigger, bigger, more, more, more, more, more, more, more, more. And then it exploded. Now, while the economy is back up on the rise again, here we go again, bigger, better, faster, stronger, good old America.

Isn't it interesting how that, but it's hard, I mean, I fight against these things too. I mean, we actually were looking for homes and I found one and a while back, this is years ago, I told my wife, I don't want to go look at model homes. It's too deceptive.

They'll kick up the square foot, a thousand dollars. Look at all this you can have. Wow, look, look, it does not look good.

And some of these things aren't bad. Let me, don't get me wrong. I mean, we need a vehicle, we need a home.

But the eye starts to say, isn't that nice? Isn't that? And I would submit to you that I think many young people, this is what happens in marriage. They want a trophy wife or they want this husband, just look at this man. He's got he's got abs.

He's always with the gym. I mean, you don't want somebody like that. I was somebody like that, and that is the most selfish lifestyle you'll ever know.

The physical fitness industry, it's where it's body worship. And you have to be very careful with that. But why they like what they see.

I don't care if they have no character. I can change that. No, you can't change that character very easily.

Who a person says when they say who they are, when they say I do is usually who they are when they're married, and then it gets worse. Usually. It doesn't get better.

Remember when we talked about the marriage series last year, and if you guys weren't here, we have a whole marriage series on our front home page there, I made the statement and it still still rings in my head many times I'm counseling people, is that a man goes into the relationship thinking, I hope she never changes. And the woman goes in thinking, well, change him. And it doesn't happen.

We have a good marketing plan, too, don't we? Now, on the flip side, I believe that God has a marketing plan, and not in a bad way. He wants us to market or should I say promote the gospel. That's why he'll take a lot of people from sales backgrounds, Billy Graham, I have a background in sales and marketing because it's the same thing.

Now they don't do it for money and the wrong motives. Now we do it for for for souls. We're marketing the gospel.

We're promoting the gospel. We market it. We share it with Facebook.

We've we're marketing and we're sharing. It's free. Come all who are heavy and weary.

Come to Christ. All who are thirsty come to the fountain that will never disappoint. We're marketing.

We're promoting. You see the difference there. So this topic I'm hoping I'm going to walk you through step by step is going to be because when I when I realized this by 10 years ago that this is all the enemy is ever going to use against me.

He's going to less my less. So unless get out of check, it's him less the eye when the eye gets things, seeing things that the pay the paycheck can't pay for or under budget and all these things. And you have to fight those things.

I just mentioned we're buying a house. We decide to just come in 100000 less than what we qualify for. So our payment will drop a lot less.

We'll pay off some cars. Does it feel good? Not really. I wanted the bigger, better, faster.

But I know I can't do that. But the flesh says, yes, the spirit says you better not use wisdom. Be thankful.

See, you have to fight that out. Me, too. And that's a danger with me being a little too transparent.

You might say pastor struggle with that stuff. Oh, absolutely. There's no difference.

The same the same things are there. The only difference is a pastor, according to First Timothy guidelines, and Titus is we've lived in such a way that the maturity now we're able to lead the sheep, but still filling and fighting those same desires. But we've come from a point of victory.

Never, never. We're just one click away or one bad choice away from falling again. We live in that that that that constant struggle, just like everybody else.

So there has to be accountability in place. There has to be transparency and there has to be all those things because the enemy comes against us and he's he's you're the devil is not some nice little cute this or some guy with the red pitchfork just standing there. He is sent to kill, to steal and to destroy.

That's his mission. The marriage, he'll keep coming after my marriage and Morgan, he'll keep coming after that till the day we die. Why? To kill, to steal and to destroy.

And there are many of you who said, oh, Shane, come on, you believe that? I believe I walk around with a target right here and right here. He's got his sights on me everywhere I go, everywhere I go. It's right here.

That's why your decisions have to be in place now, not later. You see how that works? I walk around, there's a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Fortunately, though, the eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are loyal to him.

So as long as my heart stays loyal and broken and humble in seeking the Savior, he has he cannot do nothing. God and the devil are not equal forces. He's a created being that operates under the sovereignty of God.

So what he does, he entices us. That's why I've said before, I don't I'm not as worried as much about him as I am what's within. Because within dwells all ungodliness in the flesh, and it's a very interesting topic that you study, the flesh is just against God, it's enmity of God, it's at war with God, but the spirit filled life loves God and wants to do it.

So we have this this pulling of the forces. And Paul would say our choices are never free from this conflict for that which I want to do, I do not do. And those things I do not want to do.

I do. Oh, wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of sin and death? For with the mind, I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin.

So it's that's why I talked last few weeks on the spirit filled life. Once you're filled with the spirit of God, he has no grounds. But once you begin to empty yourself of the different things and open, basically become easy prey for the enemy.

If he goes about as a roaring lion in seeking whom he may devour and we remove the covering, we remove all the things that God has ordained and called us to, we open ourselves up for this. So anytime you see a Christian, what they call mess up or somebody in leadership fall, it just didn't happen overnight. It was a slow descent, one wrong choice at a time, one compromise at a time until they get to the bottom and say, how did I get here? So that's how the enemy works.

That's his marketing plan. He's going to come after those three areas. So the bait obviously is going to look good or we wouldn't take it.

The bait looks good. I'm going to take it. If it didn't look like it didn't look good, I would not take that bait.

So I want to. But before I get into Matthew, I want to set the stage. You have to remember something.

God tests. It's the devil who tempts. Might say, well, Shane, what about Jesus's prayer? Do not lead us into temptation, but delivers from evil.

I'm going to get there in a minute. But I want to make that point clear that God doesn't tempt us. He tests us.

And Jeremiah says 17:10, I, the Lord, search the heart. I test the mind to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds. At this point, I'm reminded who a person is when they are

tempted is who they really are.

See, because we can all come in here, myself included, and say, hey, how's it going? Good. Good to see you. Good to see you.

But who are we when we're tempted? Alone, that's who we really are. You want to measure how strong you are spiritually. How do you handle temptation when you're alone? That is a good gauge of that.

And it's been said reputation is who we are around others. Character is who we are when no one is around. So any time and I've done this before, you think you're doing great and well, aren't I great? Who am I when nobody's around? Well, it's just a spirit.

You know, convicting and challenging with the choices we make, that's who we really are. So God will test us. The devil will tempt us.

And this is actually from a later point, but I think it parallels now. Well, we're having a garage sale, getting rid of stuff. And I was thinking this way, testing, tempting.

What's he doing here? Well, I thought of this. There was a dollar bill in our garage. I'm just sitting there going, what about my son? Hmm, I'll just leave it there.

I didn't put it there. I didn't put a dollar bill with a cupcake next to it. And a little, you know, video thing to make it real enticing, I just left it there.

See, I'm testing, is he going to go down, look what I found, what should I do with it? Or is he going to you see the difference that God like he's testing? He's just he didn't he didn't put us in the situations to where we're going to blow it. The enemy comes in attempt and God uses it to test us or to check our hearts. So that's the difference here between tempting and testing.

And I'm also at this point reminded of this fact that spiritual muscle has to be developed. Okay, so when you're going through temptation, when you see a strong man or woman of God, let me tell you something. They've been through a lot of stuff.

They've overcome a lot of temptations. So God uses that to refine us and to shape us and to mold us. As when a vessel struck what's inside spills out, right? You remember seeing those big oil tankers? And it's an environmental disaster filled with a million gallons of oil.

They get they spring a leak and all that oil goes into the ocean. What came out, what was in. So when a vessel is struck, what's inside comes out.

And a lot of time God will use adversity to see what's in us. We think we're doing so great. We get a little adversity.

That's where all the anger comes out. The hostility, the yelling, the upset, the jealousy, the vessel struck. See, it's already in there.

But when it's struck with adversity, so he tests us and a lot of times he uses those things to refine us. The refiner's fire. You've heard that term before in the Bible.

It's like what they would do is they put gold in this in this fire and all the impurities would come out. But it doesn't come out until it's in the fire. And a lot of things, a lot of times when we're going through things, it's the fire that makes and shapes us and forms us into who we are.

Just think of God always held our hand, always moved obstacles, always. We would be so weak spiritually. We would fall at every every pass.

The enemy would just come and blow, just fall over because there's no spiritual muscle. You have you have to when you come against the enemy, you have to say, having done all stand like Moses, just stand there with your loins girded about with truth. God says, just stand.

I'll fight for you. Just stand. I'll come.

I'll come to your aid for the what's that scripture? Not by might, not by power, but my spirit sayeth the Lord. It's by God's spirit that he fights. We just have a standing position and a conquering.

We're already we've already conquered. God's already conquered. We have to just stand and hold that ground.

And remember, the ships are safest in the harbor, but they're not made for the harbor. Right, that's where it gets it gets it gets challenging out there in the ocean in our lives, the same thing. We're not made for this little nice safe harbor.

We're made we're made to go out and minister and to speak into people's lives. That's how God has created us. So with that said, here we go.

Before I get to Matthew, a few more things. Temptation, you have to realize, is not sin. That makes sense or no? Temptation is not sin.

Jesus was tempted and tested at all points as we are, yet he was without sin. The Bible says in Hebrews that Christ, we have a high priest who is tempted, who is tested like we are, but he was without sin. And you start to think, well, wait a minute, he wasn't tempted with.

Adultery, he wasn't married, he wasn't tempted with you fill in the blank or child abuse, or I mean, you fill in the blank. He wasn't. That's why it says in all points as we are, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life.

That's all the enemy ever uses. He'll come against us in those three areas. So Jesus was tempted, but he overcame those things, so temptation is not in and of itself sin.

Now, let me let me elaborate on this because it does need some elaboration. The devil presents the bait through our thoughts, our situations, our circumstances, whatever it is, even our own our own flesh. So how it works is we see something, we feel it, and then we indulge.

Right, that's how you see something, you feel it, you indulge. That's how temptation works, right? You don't just indulge, you have to feel it, you have to see it, it's that pull, and then we act upon that pull. What temptation is biblically, I see it, I feel it, that's not right, I'm turning.

See the difference? That one word indulging or turning, what did it, devil's, whatever it is, I'm tempted, I see that, I feel it, that flesh is pulling, but I'm turning from it. And now I can be filled with the spirit of God.

Now, because of obedience, God begins to fill me with this spirit, there's joy from that decision.

But what happens when we see, feel and indulge? I don't even want to go to church, I'm so depressed. This is this area of my life, I keep losing this battle. See how that works? It's a difference there.

Now, I do believe temptation can become a sin in this regard, when we continue to feed temptation. Like we know something's tempting, but we continue to feed it. And feed it a little bit, feed a little bit and kind of tempting ourself.

So temptation is not sin, if you recognize it, this feeling I'm feeling is wrong. Or this attitude I'm feeling is wrong, right, right before something's about ready to come out of your mouth. Or is it just me, you get upset, oh, this is not right.

And you turn from that, I'm avoiding that temptation, the less of the flesh, the less the eye, the pride of life. So we're all tempted, but it's what we do with that temptation. So the next point here, the door of temptation, the door of temptation swings both ways, you can enter or exit.

So when a person is tempted, most of us are tempted by the same thing, right? The whole big list out there, a lot of us struggle with the same things, different, you know, for some people it's this, for some people it's this. But the door of temptation swings both ways. So you can enter or you can exit.

That's the difference. That's a defining moment there. The spirit-filled life does not walk willingly into the enemy's camp.

Let me say that again. The spirit-filled believer does not walk willingly into the enemy's camp. Which is sometimes you say, let me just walk right in there and get shot, bam.

Well, how did that happen? I walk willingly into the enemy's camp, I just walk right into it. And that's why I make such a big deal, I know I bring this in sometimes, it's a good parallel. That's why I make such a big deal of a lot of what Christians are feeding their mind with.

All these movies and all these things that glorify witches and vampires and the occult and all this stuff. You're willingly walking into the enemy's camp on your thought life. You're on all these Facebook things where people are barely clothed, men are this, we're trying to, we're just, we're just willingly walking into the enemy's camp.

Just shoot me, here I come, here I, just shoot me. We walk right into it. We're feeding lusts that are ungodly, we know it, but we enjoy it.

We're watching things we shouldn't, but we enjoy it. The spirit doesn't enjoy it, the flesh does. There should be a pole there and say, this isn't right.

There's something there. We walk willingly into the enemy's camp, we wonder, how did I get hit? How did I get hit? And on this point, do you know that I'm going to say a term here that many people won't like? But it's, when we're talking about temptation, the spirit for life, it must be said. What the Bible referred to as a disciple of Jesus Christ, walking in the power and the spirit of God, now is considered extreme, and I believe in extreme Christianity.

I believe that we need to be, we're going to look a lot different like the world. If you're going to serve Christ, you're going to be filled with the spirit of God, you will not look like the world. We've got to remove things

that pull us down.

Jesus himself said, if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. What? Cut it off, cut your arm off, if it's causing, that's pretty dramatic. Now, do you think he was actually talking about plucking out your eye or cutting off your arm? Or is he saying, listen, whatever it takes, whatever is pulling you down, you need to cut it off and cut it off now.

That's extreme Christianity. If the world say, well, that's weird, that's a little awkward. Yeah, yeah, you're absolutely right, because there's an enemy sent out to kill, steal and destroy me.

I've talked to men before in this issue of pornography, get some accountability on your computer where every single website you go goes to somebody. Oh, brother, I don't want to do that. Why don't you want to do that? Why? Why not? Well, well, yeah, you don't want it bad enough.

It's extreme Christianity. Think about that, we're going to look different to the world. And I'll share a little bit more.

I don't know how transparent I should be, but I hope this helps. But a lot of times when I'm going to, I think in July, just go for a few days. There's a big pastors conference in Orange County and they've got some legal counsel coming in from Alliance Defense Fund, all these legal groups sharing on the direction of the church.

And what we're going to do with, you know, with with all these legal issues hitting. And I've been invited to this. And usually I go to hotels, I check in.

I say, listen, I know it's going to sound weird, but can you just I got a lot of work to do. Remove the TV and empty that refrigerator. I don't want to have adult programs one click away and 18 Heineken sitting right there.

Well, that way. No, I know what's in. I know it's in.

Precautions, he's he'd love I'm worried about the Snickers bars in there, too, you know. But just it looks a little weird, but I don't want that just to click away. I don't think my wife does either.

And somebody who used to drink a lot, I don't want six to 12 ice cold beer sitting right there. Just just hop out of the bed. I mean, you see what I'm talking about.

He presents the bait and say, I'm going to look a little weird. I don't care. I always tell the front desk, listen, I got to I'm right.

I'm working on a book or something. I need I need some time. I don't want any distraction.

Oh, no, sir. We understand. And, you know, you know, if they can't do that, I just unplug it and try to make it difficult.

And not that, you know, I don't people get the impression like, oh, this is bad. I just don't want those things that are that distracting that are right there. I mean, right there.

Aren't you self-disciplined? Yeah, I'm a very self-disciplined person. But the enemy likes his marketing plan. He's got a marketing plan.

Let me put all this eye candy right in this room. Let me pull this guy down. So that's what I mean by extreme Christianity.

Cut it off. I'm cutting it off. I'm cutting it off.

I've got guys here that hold me accountable. I tell them where I'm at. They know they got, you know, it works.

You know, it's OK to text your spouse, say, listen, I'm struggling right now. Can you pray for me? It's OK. You release that.

You release that. You're on the same team. So it's that transparency.

I've done, I've done this before with Morgan. I've been jogging before out in the desert. And I can tell there's pornography right there.

I'll just text her. Hey, just, I'm just going to keep jogging and found, boom, I'm off the hook. If I say, well, I don't know.

Should I pick it up and throw it away? In case somebody, I don't know, somebody might come across it. What do you, you know, you start going there with it. Your flesh just takes you down.

So you got to know what you're going to do right then. Hey, this is it. Boom, done.

So he's got all these strategies. See how he works. He'll just throw the bait out there.

You've got to know how you're going to respond to the bait. You don't contemplate sin. You already have a plan in place.

Joseph didn't say, oh, Potiphar's wife. I'm not sure what he said. I'm fleeing.

I'm getting out of here. How can I sin against my God? You have to have a plan in place. Somebody looks attractive.

You say I'm turning. You have to have a plan in place now. You can't just debate it later.

Because what happens is you're debating, you're contemplating basically what you're doing. Let's be honest, you're talking yourself into it. I'll start tomorrow.

I'll get back on track tomorrow. God seems a little distant anyway. I better just indulge.

And then we fall further and further and further into a life of depravity and depression and distance from God because we're not filling ourselves with the spirit of God. And see, I don't say I do these things because I'm so special. I do these things because of the depravity of man.

And he's got he's got his sights set on my head and on my heart every day. So when people say, well, that sounds a little weird. Yeah, it sure does.

Fifty years ago, you didn't have adult movies at a click away. You have a whole bunch of this. And, you know, with the society so much changing, you've got to have precautions in place.

I'm just being honest with you guys. You will look a little bit different. No, I don't want my kids watching all those movies.

Well, that's a little weird. I would call weird what you want. I'm not opening my house to the synagogue of Satan.

Casting spells and witches over little kids, I'm sorry, I'm just not going to go there. Call me extreme. Call me radical.

Call me this. But I call biblical Christianity, according to the scriptures. Whatever things are wholesome put in front of your eyes, our home should be a holy sanctuary, not a breeding ground for Satan.

Now, I know it can get legalistic and you can get too many rules on there. You know, I used to, you know, don't go to the movies or don't do this. You know, people, you can put all this stuff on there.

And some of those things are good to have in place. You know, if you don't, if something's going to make you stumble, cut it out. I don't need to answer to man.

I need to answer to God. And that's where you get legalistic if I start to attach my rules onto you. Can you have a Heineken? Of course, biblically speaking.

But if I were to share with you all the destruction, the alcohol is brought to families. That's why I lean in the other direction, say you should avoid these things at all costs, because it is destroying most child sexual offenses are done by somebody who's drunk. Most families enraged, most men sitting in prison did something while they were intoxicated.

So while we love our liberty, that liberty is destroying many families. So you better be careful. You see how that works? We don't want this liberty to become a cloak for vice.

And what I meant by extreme Christianity is a lot of people don't understand. The Bible talks volumes about dying to self crucifixion to the world, Paul says, because of that cross, I am dead to this world and the world is dead to me. But but so many Christians want to look just like the world, enjoy the same things.

There's no distinction. There's no difference. And that's why the enemy comes in and use that marketing plan.

And let's look at the marketing plan real quick. First, John 2, 16. I'm actually going to read from the NLT.

It's a new living translation. If you're real dogmatic on this issue, don't worry. I don't use this to study.

This is more of a paraphrase of the Bible. And I would encourage you to you guys to to not use paraphrases for studying, but only to amplify certain scriptures. First, John 2, 16, because this is exactly what if you look in the Greek language, the NLT is saying exactly what we would say in our modern vernacular.

For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see and the pride in our achievements and our possessions. These are not from the father. So the cravings there, so what the devil does, he markets through wants, desires and emotions to fuel an unhealthy lust.

So what we want, what we desire and see, this is why it's hard, because you can want desire certain things, right? I mean, single people, many of them want to get married, very healthy desire. But then where do you start to go to look for that spouse? And then what do you start to compromise? They don't know Christ yet, Shane, but I'm working on it. Bible says, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, especially in this area.

And see how what happens is our wants, what we should do is put it through this filter, our wants and desires, put it through the filter of God's word. And we know, we also know because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit, don't do that, wake up, do not do that, you guys have this, you know, when I'm about to do something wrong, it's not like, oh, I had no idea, I had no idea, oh, I had a lot of idea, somebody get that door, stop it, I want to be mad right now, I want to yell, I want to send out that mean email, stop that conviction of the Holy Spirit, we have that too. So the conviction of the Holy Spirit is saying, do not go there, do not do that, it will cost you something.

That's the marketing plan, and he also markets through the pleasure of sin, but he minimizes the outcome. Think about that, why do we, oh, I remember, I remember, oh, I don't remember the hundreds of hangovers. He won't show you that, oh, look at that craving again, look at that, but how did you even get home, the sleepless nights, he doesn't show you any of that.

Just take that pill, you'll get to sleep better, but then he doesn't show you the depression for two days later. A young couple that ends up having sex before marriage, and a little baby, and they decide to abort that baby, they don't show the couple the years of misery and regret, and they carry around this weight of taking a life, and oh, my Lord, they have to live with it from here on out. They don't show them that, Planned Parenthood just goes around, it's just nothing, it's nothing, just take care of it, don't let that infringe on your life.

They know nothing about how that affects people later on, why? Because he shows you the pleasure, or he shows you, in this case, you don't want that inconvenience. He doesn't show you that there's hell to pay later, that's how the enemy works. So always remember that, look, as a Christian, look far ahead, where is this decision going to take me? Not right now, because, oh, this looks good right now, but where is it going to take me, where is it going to lead in the future? Because the enemy, he's just out there throwing everything, lush of the flesh, lush of the eye, the pride of life, and how the pride of life comes in, here's how the pride of life comes in, right now.

You know, that guy's making some good points, there's some areas I need to work on, but, he doesn't know my background, he doesn't know what I have to deal with, he doesn't know who I have to live with, he's just a young preacher, wait until he gets to my age. And all this pride rises up, and then he goes, oh, now I love this guy, I've got him. And the very thing, I've noticed, this is why I'm careful, the very thing we are so judgmental at somebody else, oh, I've never, how could you, oh, here it comes, here comes the hammer of the enemy, it's not pretty.

Anytime we start to judge somebody, that same measure of judgment somehow comes back at us. We have to be very careful, the last thing the enemy does when he markets, is he focuses on what we want to hear, not on what we need to hear. All the time, it's always what you want to hear, right? Oh, tell me what I want to hear.

All these diet plans out there, just take this pill, just wear this belt, just eat this once a day, just do this five minutes a day, this is what I want to hear, easy, yes, easy, easy, that is so easy. I can eat whatever I want,

take that pill, no, no, no, no, no, it doesn't work that way. See, there's a whole diet industry, billions of dollars.

So when I used to work with weight loss clients, the first thing I would always tell them is, remove this whole concept of dieting, taking a little pill, it's going to be hard, it's going to be hell. You're going to have to get up early, you're going to have to do this, you're going to have to work out, you're going to have to run, you're going to have to do things, you're going to have to do activities, you're going to have to restructure your whole diet. How bad do you want it? That's how bad, that's the truth.

You've got to fight the flesh the whole way, it's not going to be easy. And even though you'll make a lot of fallings, you'll fall forward, and you'll eventually reach your goal because you're going in with realistic expectations. You're not going to lose 30 pounds in 30 days.

That's all it does, it sells, it sells. That's a whole marketing strategy. He will tell you what you want to hear, not what you need to hear.

And be very careful on this issue. I've seen this a lot in some of you. The enemy will actually use other people to tell you what you want to hear, and not what you need to hear.

I would say that ungodly counsel is probably one of the biggest obstacles to true biblical counseling. Well, my friend at work says, I should just leave him. Do you know what he did to me? My friend at work says this, my auntie said this, I shouldn't take it.

And they just hear all this other, oh, it's no big deal. They hear all this ungodly counsel because they're looking for people to tell me what I want to hear. They don't like what I have to say? Let me go find somebody else who tells me what I want to hear.

Oh, see, that's okay. And that's how the enemy works. He'll bring in those types of people.

So to be forewarned is to be forearmed. What I'm trying to do is forewarn you so you're forearmed. Because when you go against the enemy, as long as you're forewarned, you know what's coming, you can be forearmed.

So he's going to come after you in these areas. So with that said, rather long introduction, let's go to Matthew 4. Now you can understand this whole backdrop of temptation. Matthew 4, chapter 4, verse 1. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry. I would say so. Now when the tempter came to him, he said, If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. But I want to note something here. He had fasted forty days.

If you weren't here months ago, look up this message online. Fasting breaks enslavement. I think I talked about this in December.

We still are hearing from people how it's actually broke addictions. You name it, from sugar to caffeine to alcohol. How fasting, somehow there's something by fasting.

You're telling the flesh no. You're killing the flesh. You're not feeding it.

And out of that fasting, you come out stronger. Basically, you're being filled with the Spirit of God and telling your flesh no. It's very hard to do, but it's a very worthwhile thing.

So this is not an accident here, that Jesus just went into his temptation fasting. If you're going into major decisions, major things, I don't know quite how it works. But I do know when you fast, I don't want to use the word enlightenment.

I want to use the word spiritual depth. Or something happens to where you can say no to the flesh a lot easier. Things become clear.

God's will becomes clear because you're fasting. You're focusing on him. You've been praying.

So when you go into things, you don't have a big In-N-Out burger in your stomach. I'm not too sure. I'm kind of tired.

You're prayed up. You're ready. And you go into battle.

So fasting will break enslavement. If you've never done it, I encourage you to do it. There's good resources out there.

You might say, well, that sounds hard. Well, how bad do you want it? How bad do you want a living, vibrant relationship with God? Because I'm talking to people who want it badly. I'm not talking to people who just came in here and said, well, let me just get my church in for the week and check it off.

I'm talking to people who are spirit-filled and want to be spirit-filled and want to serve God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and how to draw closer to him. And somehow we have this perception that God, we can just draw closer to him by not doing anything. It's fighting.

It's travailing. It's praying. It's petitioning.

It's being not conformed to this world. It's all these things. To be closer to him, you have to fight those things.

And I think it's okay to let people know that. So fasting breaks enslavement. And then the next thing we pull from this, it's interesting.

Jesus was led by the spirit. Wait a minute. He was led by the spirit.

And that word led is pretty interesting. It's anago in the Greek, and it means to put out to sea. It's like you just take a ship and put it out to sea.

So Jesus was put out to sea. The spirit just led him out to sea. He's going to be tempted.

He leads him out there. James 1.3, Let no one say when he is tempted that I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But God does lead people into challenging situations.

You see how that works there? So God doesn't tempt us. He's not going to say, let me put this thing, this stumbling block right in your path. I'm going to do this, do this, so there's no way out.

I'm tempting you. You're done. You're toast.

He allows things to happen. So a person is tempted and tested. And this is the point right here.

Jesus was hungry, was he not? Forty days. And this is where the lust of the flesh comes in. At lust of the flesh.

At this point, let me draw us back to 1 John 2.16. All that's in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the boastful pride of life is not of the Father. So the enemy used the first trick on Jesus. He's hungry, I'm going to come after his flesh.

And say, turn these stones to bread. Come on, if you're the Son of God, show off. Show off you're hungry.

So he used that opportunity. What did Jesus say? It is written. Now this is very interesting.

A lot of people have said, and this is true, that Jesus used the Word of God to come against Satan. Right? It is written. It is written.

But they stop there. And I think we forget. He not only used the Word of God, he obeyed it.

You know how I often say, the power is in the obedience. He didn't just quote scripture and then turn a rock into a piece of bread. No, no, no.

I quoted scripture. It is written. I'm going to obey it.

Many people, many Christians know what the Word of God says, but they don't obey it. And they are living in deception. Be doers of the Word, not hearers only.

Deceiving yourself. I mention that scripture a lot. I probably will.

Because it's absolutely vital to our relationship to God. Because I hear a lot of times, Jesus used the Word of God to get Satan out of the way. He used the Word of God.

He did. That's absolutely true. I've said that many times.

But he didn't just say it. He obeyed it. He said, it is written.

You cannot do these things and turn the stone into bread and eat it. He can't just quote it and then do it. And then it becomes null and void.

So the power is in the application. So then the devil comes back again. He says, ok, ok, ok.

Then, verse 5, the devil said, let me try something else here. Then the devil took him up into the holy city. Set him on the pinnacle of the temple, on the very top.

And said to him, if you are the son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written. See, the enemy is saying it.

For it is written, he shall give his angels charge over you. And in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. And Jesus said, it is written.

You shall not tempt the Lord your God. Well, who's right here? They're both saying it is written. So you can say it is written and get in trouble.

I've talked to many, many, many alcoholics who won't give it up with one scripture. You know the one they use? Paul. Timothy.

Take a little wine for your stomach. Oh brother, man, it says a little. I said, yeah, a little glass, not four bottles.

It is written. It is written. Wife, you need to submit to me.

The day I tell Morgan that is the day I need to resign from this pulpit. Well, it's written. You miss the whole spirit of the commandment.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Then for me submitting to Christ, she wants to submit to that. I want to submit to that kind of leadership.

I don't want to submit to somebody who's telling me what to do and telling me off. It is written. You submit to me.

That's dangerous. Try that sometime. Actually, don't try that sometime.

That's not a good thing to do. But it is written. It is written.

And this is where the enemy tried to get Jesus less of the flesh, right? That didn't work. Now what's he trying to do now? The boastful pride of life. If you are the son of God, show off.

And how many of us, the same thing. Get the last word in. Get the last email in.

You tell them off. You show off. Show them who you are.

You show them who you are. Don't you know who I am? Why am I going to be doing that? Show them. Show off at work.

Show off in your house. Don't you know I'm the man of this house? Don't you know I'm the pastor of this church? I might be picking up trash. Oh, yes, I am.

Whatever, Lord, you need me to do, I'm not going to show off. The flesh wants to. My spirit says no.

So he used the pride of life. The pride of life says I'm not wrong. Do you realize we could heal most marriages tonight? If they would both say, I've been wrong.

I've been wrong. We've both been wrong. It's a good thing to say.

It's called repentance. What gets in the way? The boastful pride of life. You've always done this.

You've always treated me this way. You're always this. You're always that.

You're always that. Could you imagine spouses say, I'm so sorry. I'm a jerk sometimes.

I love you. I need you. Can we make this work? Because I want it to work.

I'm sorry. I don't know what happens to me. I can become a jerk.

Then you know what the other person probably says? Me too. Me too. Let's pray together right now.

But they all just stand like this. Pride of life comes in. You can see it in marriage counseling appointments.

They're each turned the other way from each other. Pride of life. Pride of life.

And the funny thing is, nobody's perfect. The truth is usually right somewhere in the middle. What he said, she said.

Right in the middle, usually. Right there. I've been embarrassed at counseling appointments, where I would come and I'm going to tell this guy off.

I can't believe he's this kind of husband. Then you hear the husband's side. You're like, wow.

Yeah, I guess Proverbs is right. You better hear both sides before judging a matter. The pride of life.

Guys, I'm telling you, the reason some people are not filled with the Spirit of God is the pride of life. That's just too emotional. I don't want to truly worship.

I don't want to truly break. I don't want to truly humble myself. I don't want to truly repent.

Some people, they're one decision away from accepting Christ and living in attorney with God. But what's stopping them? The pride of life. I'm God of myself.

I'm the master of my own destiny. I'm the captain of my own ship. I don't need some God telling me what to do.

Oh, yes, you do. Oh, yes, you do, sir. Humility is a mark of somebody who's truly surrendered and seeking God.

So he'll use the lust of the flesh and then the pride of life. And it is interesting how they both said, the devil said, it is written. And what he said is true.

Let's see what he said. If you are the son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, this is true. He's quoting Psalms.

He will give his angels charge over you, and in their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. That's true. But then Jesus supersedes that and says, it is written again, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.

See, that supersedes the other scripture. And that's why many Christians get into problems. They don't see the totality of God's word.

They just pick a little verse out here. Let me give you an example. If Chris has it up, let me show you a lemon tree.

If we have it that quick, usually. Okay, now let me see an apple tree. Okay, so we have a lemon tree, an apple tree.

All right, take those away for a minute. What the devil will do is he'll use little bits of scripture. He knows God's word very well.

He'll use little things, like the whole prosperity gospel. It comes from, you're the head, not the tail. You're above and not beneath.

God owns a thousand cattle on a thousand hills, and you just want to bless your brother. Well, those are, come on. Micah, open up the storehouse, and God's going to pour out a blessing.

You won't have room enough to receive. Okay, God, I can't wait for it. So we use all these things, but you got to read these things in context and their entirety.

You've got to see the heart of God. The devil's saying, tempt God. Jesus is saying, you can't tempt God.

And what the devil does is put the trees back up, if you can. That's not a lemon tree. That's an orange tree.

And that's not an apple tree. Maybe that's a pomegranate tree. I just deceived this whole room.

Did I not? What happened? Did I trick you? How'd I trick you? I'm showing you an orange tree, I'm showing you a pomegranate tree. Because I used slight deceptions. Look at that.

And I planted the word lemon tree. It's an orange tree, and it's a pomegranate tree. That's how the enemy works with Scripture.

He'll use a little bit. It is written. It is written.

God doesn't like, I mean, there should be contentions in the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians. All these things.

I could spend a whole sermon on this. But be very careful here, because this is how the enemy works. He goes through the pride of life.

And the pride of life will still go around. No, that's still a lemon tree. That's still an apple tree.

I know it is. I don't care what those screens say. I don't care what you say.

That's still that. I'm not wrong. I can't be wrong.

I can't be wrong, can I? Yes, you can. Yes, you can. It's very healthy.

Get in the habit of, I'm sorry. I was wrong. I'm sorry.

Try to have that flow out tonight. It's hard, isn't it? Especially in marriage. I'm sorry.

I was wrong. No, you don't say it like that. You have to say it the right way.

So he came after Jesus with the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. Those didn't work. Now what's he going to do? Verse 8. Again, the devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

And he said to him, All these things will I give you if you fall down and worship me. The apple, the eye candy. Jesus can have all of this.

Right now he can't have all of this. Right now he's coming in the appearance of a man. He's humbling himself and he's going to die an embarrassing death on a cross.

He doesn't get any of this. He's going to go to the cross. So the devil's trying to take away from all this.

Listen, I'll give you all of this. You can rule and reign with me if you fall down and worship me. Then Jesus said to him, Away with you, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.

He tried to get him with the lust of the eye. All this you'll see. That works now, don't you? Our integrity is on the line very often because of the lust of the eye.

The enemy will present something that looks good to the eye. Well, that looks good. But is there wisdom behind it? See, of course it's going to look good.

If it didn't look good, we wouldn't take the bait. Do you ever wonder why you're in the area of sexual areas? Why you're tempted by somebody you're attracted to? Call me silly. It's somebody you're attracted to.

Why? That's the bait. That's the bait he uses. What's the other thing? Lust of the flesh.

I'm not craving broccoli and carrots right now. I'm just being honest. I'm not.

Panda Express? In-N-Out Burger? You know? And honestly, I'm not trying to be funny. I'm just saying, see how that works? It has to be that way. Now, can you go there tonight? Of course.

I'm not saying that. I'm trying to make practical examples here. But when I usually go there, I usually order way too much and I'm full and there's just gluttony all over it.

So, you see how that works? It's always what looks good. It looks good. The pride of life.

The pride of life. I know this is hard to believe, but some people, you know, they often challenge me sometimes. And, you know, pride of life says, well, I'm the pastor here.

Take it or leave it. Or, what's your concern? Let's talk about it. We could be missing something.

You see how that works? What wants to come up first? There's a door jack. You know? I'm just telling you. That's my flesh.

There's the door jack. Hit the road. You know this song? The flesh, see, it's always a constant battle.

And I don't like it. Because you have to submit to the will of God and the spirit-filled life. And that's why it's vitally important.

So, there's what the enemy is. He'll come after your flesh. He'll come after your eye candy.

And then he'll try to deceive you with the pride of your heart. Now, you might say, what's a person to do? Because I crave certain things, and I like certain things. Right? But, you have to filter it through wisdom.

Is it wisdom? Is there wisdom there? Is it God's? Pray about it. Wait on the Lord. I will tell you right now, the enemy loves impulsive decisions.

And rushed. I'm rushed. I'm impulsive.

I've got to do this. I'm quick. No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

If you're going to make major decisions, or even big minor ones, take time. Relax. Relax.

You don't have to be impulsive on these things. So, the marketing plan. Let's review the marketing plan.

I'll get ready to close. The devil tries to gain an opening into our lives through our wants and desires. He markets the pleasure of sin, but minimizes the outcome.

And he focuses on what we want to hear, not on what we need to hear. Now, this is interesting. Here's where Matthew picks up at verse 11.

Then the devil left him. Jesus quoted scripture, obeyed it, fought the flesh, blessed the flesh, blessed the eye, all that, and the devil fled. Do you realize that the Bible says, resist the devil and he will flee? Let me encourage you.

There is victory at the end of the struggle. No temptation has overtaken you, but such is what is common to man. But God, who is faithful, will not allow you or I to be tempted beyond what we are able.

But with the temptation, will make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. See, there's no excuses. Christians have no excuses.

Oh, I was just so this and so. No, no, no, no, no. There is a way of escape that you may be able to bear it.

God's testing will not go on forever. There is a prize at the end of the waiting and seeking God. So be encouraged.

No matter what you're going through, there is a calm at the end of the storm. Jesus, the devil left him. The Bible says, if you resist the devil, he will flee.

If you resist him. And I see a lot of people, especially on this issue of addictions. I mean, you fill in the blank.

All the pills or this or alcohol, whatever it is. I see so many people minimizing our responsibility. Like we're helpless.

And we're just taken away by this disease or we just can't help ourselves. And I remember I went to an Alcoholics Anonymous class with a friend of mine. 1999, just to support him.

And it got this guy real upset because I said, you know, those are all good points and stuff. But I said, also self-discipline plays somewhat of a role. And you would have thought I just, man, I lit his car on fire.

How dare you say that? And he was bound to, because there's no discipline. You can't say no. Well, the Bible says resist, flee, do not be conformed, turn from, fight.

The Bible gives a lot of obedience words. So to say we can't do it, now I'm not minimizing these struggles of addictions. Absolutely not.

They're big struggles. But we can't have this where we, we're almost like this helpless puppet that unless something happens, we're bound to be addicted forever. The Bible says we can resist the enemy.

We can flee. We can do these things. He's given us the capacity.

No temptation has overtaken you. God will make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. Now either that's true or it's not.

That's what we have to come to grips with. Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him. I like what Luke 4, 13 says, and when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

I actually don't like that verse. Because that means he's coming back. Everybody knows the old Arnold Schwarzenegger movies, I'll be back.

Well, he says the same thing, I'll be back. And he's looking for those windows of opportunities that you and I present. You can have your guard up, and you can have the shield, you know, the spirit, the breastplate of righteousness, and the belt of truth, and all these things that help.

You can be guarded, but he's looking for cracks in the armor. He's looking for when you turn around, and now you're an easy target. That's how the enemy works.

It's almost like he's going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. It's just constant, it's constant. You've got to be constant on the watch.

I think sometimes we just let down our guard, and he just comes right in. And then verse 14, And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and there went out fame of Him throughout all the region. He went from obscurity to notoriety by being filled with the Spirit of God.

Think about that. He overcame every temptation, all these temptations, and when He came out of the wilderness experience, He was filled mightily with the Spirit of God, and then He began His earthly ministry. We don't hear of Jesus doing ministry before this time.

He sees John the Baptist, gets baptized, comes up out of the water, the Spirit on Him descends upon Him, Jesus being filled with the Spirit, was led into the wilderness, He overcomes these temptations, and then He leaves filled with the Spirit of God. So we should not be upset or worried about this word filled with the Spirit of God. As I've said before, this should be something, the heart cry of every true believer.

They should be desperate for more of God. They should want to be filled with His Spirit. So I'm going to go ahead and close in prayer, and I'll have that worship team come back up.

Lord, I pray, Lord, as we take communion tonight, that we would remember You, remember the cross. Lord, I do pray for the people here tonight. Lord, help us overcome temptation.

Lord, help these areas that people are struggling with tonight. Lord, all of us. Help these areas die at the foot of the cross.

Lord, show us how to overcome these areas. Show us how to fight our flesh and not continue to feed it. Lord, we pray for a strong desire for Your Word, a desire to serve You.

Lord, we want to honor You, but I do pray that You would begin to open eyes and ears and hearts tonight to what You're saying to all of us individually, Lord. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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