



HOW CAN I RESIST EVIL?

The Alpha Course week 8

Where does evil come from? The Triple Alliance

World - the enemy around | **Flesh** - the enemy within | **Devil** - the enemy above

1. WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE THAT THE DEVIL EXISTS?

(Romans 12:21)

- **Scripture:** The Bible presents a personal, spiritual being in rebellion against God
 - Old Testament (*Isaiah 14; Job 1; 1 Chronicles 21:1*)
 - Jesus (*Luke 10:17-20*)
 - Peter (*1 Peter 5:8-11*)
 - Paul (*Ephesians 6:11-12*)
- **Tradition:** Christians down through the ages have believed.
- **Reason:** It makes sense of the world we see around us: why do bad things happen?

Avoid two extremes: Disbelief vs unhealthy, excessive interest

2. WHAT ARE THE DEVIL'S TACTICS? (Genesis 3)

- The devil wants to destroy our lives. (*John 10:10*)
 - Doubt (*Genesis 3:1, Matthew 4:3*)
 - Temptation (*Genesis 2:16-17*)
 - Deception (*Genesis 3:4*)
 - Condemnation Creates doubt

But "there is... no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (*Romans 8:1*)

3. WHAT IS OUR POSITION? (Colossians 1:13)

- We are transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of Jesus.
- We experience God's love.
- It's a process - we won't be complete until Jesus returns.

4. HOW DO WE DEFEND OURSELVES? – see table (Ephesians 6)

"Be strong in the Lord.... Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (*Ephesians 6:10-11*)

5. HOW DO WE ATTACK?

- Prayer: "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions...." (*Ephesians 6:18*)
- Action: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (*Romans 12:21*)

THE ARMOUR OF GOD - EPHESIANS 6

1 Focus on Jesus

belt of truth (v14)

- "I am the Truth." (*John 14:6*)
- Authenticity, integrity, openness in your life

2 Keep your relationships right

breastplate of righteousness (v14)

- Keep short accounts with God
- Ask forgiveness from God and others

3 Get Involved in service

boots of the gospel of peace (v15)

- The readiness to speak of Christ (*Isaiah 52:7-10*)

4 Trust God in Difficult times

shield of faith (v16)

- The devil will challenge us with doubt, fear, anxiety, lust...
- Keep trusting, don't give up on your faith

5 Keep the battle of the mind

helmet of salvation (v17)

- Salvation = freedom
- Protect your mind: temptation starts with a thought, which leads to action

6 Know your Bible

sword of the Spirit (v17)

- Soak yourself in the Word of God
- The only offensive piece of armour (*Hebrews 4:12*)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION IN GROUPS

1. Why do you think bad things happen? Do you believe that there is a Devil? What evidence is there?
2. Where does temptation come from?
3. How do you resist temptation? Have you found helpful ways to hold firm when it would be easy to give in? Have you put on the armour of God?
4. What aspects of today's presentation did you find convincing/ not convincing?



WHY DOES JAMES HAVE CONFIDENCE WE CAN RESIST EVIL?

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.
James 4:7-8 (NRSV)

Every time we switch on the TV news, we see evil inflicting pain and suffering around the world. Large-scale wars in Ukraine, Syria and Sudan, sadistic abuse of children, criminal gangs profiting from inflicting drug abuse, youths tragically killed through gang stabbings – we can't deny our world is in a mess.

It would be easy to think that evil - and an 'evil one' - only impacts others. But the Bible makes it clear that Satan is very real and aims to destroy all that is good. And that includes our lives. How can we resist his temptations?

Like so much in life, we must be intentional. This is why James writes with such confidence. When we focus on God, asking him to lead us and to strengthen us to live good lives, we can be sure that he will help us. And in doing so, we are able to stand firm against the temptations that the Devil will throw at us.

Of course, so much starts in our minds. We can choose to start a virtuous journey with God, or to simply let temptations become reality. We choose to either become more like Jesus, loving others and resisting temptation, or to allow evil thoughts to take hold and to damage ourselves and others.

This is why Paul's famous writing in his letter to the Ephesian church, the armour of God, is so important. When we take hold of the protection that God has given us, not only do we resist the Devil but we become better able to see how he trying to damage us. And in doing so, we can bring good – and God – to others.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

C. S. Lewis

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Jesus (John 10 v10)



Watch this week's video at
<https://vimeo.com/250771966>

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How can we be sure that the Devil is real? What does the Bible tell us about God's power to defeat evil?
2. Have you known times of temptation? How did you respond? Have you found ways of resisting the Devil and then found him flee from you?
3. Resisting evil also means we must bring good to those around us. How does God help us do so? What can you do each day to make a difference for good?
4. Has your understanding of how we can resist evil changed following this week's Alpha? If so how, and what impact might this have on your life?

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. **Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.** For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.*

You might like to read....

The Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis

Café Theology by Michael Lloyd

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