

IF I WERE THE DEVIL

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. This morning I would like to take a moment and introduce a very famous person to you... Go ahead, look around yourself, see if you can figure out who it is I am talking about!
1. Most of us have known this person at some point & some of us may have been his close friends
 2. Still not sure who this is? Well, let me tell you a little bit about this person:
 - a. He is a murderer and is a well known liar! But sadly, you won't find his picture in the post office and you won't find America's Most Wanted doing a story on him!
 - b. Ever hear the saying, "Misery Loves Company" – This statement is certainly true about this individual... He gets thrills out of ruining the lives of others & making them miserable
 - c. Frankly, he is a low down dirty rotten scoundrel! He is personally responsible for the downfall of many good men and women and has even torn apart churches!
 3. If you haven't figured it out yet, this person I am describing, is none other than the devil himself!
 - a. When we think of the devil we usually think of a red creature, almost cartoonish in nature, with horns on top of his head, having a forked tongue, flaming eyes, and a pointed tail. He sometimes is sporting a goat-tee. He's usually pictured holding a pitchfork
 - b. I bet the devil LOVES this representation ... Why? It causes us to NOT take him seriously!
 - c. The devil is our enemy, our accuser, a slanderer, he is the prince of demons, the author of everything evil, & the greatest persecutor of good men... He must be taken seriously!
 - d. Bible descriptions of the devil (**Jn 8:44; Eph 2:2; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Jn 3:8; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:7-10**)
- B. Today I'd like for each of us to place ourselves in the devil's shoes and ask ourselves the question, "If I were the devil, what would I do to destroy my faith and corrupt my walk with God?"
1. Evidently the devil was once a good angel who overstepped his place and sinned against God, God cast him out of Heaven and has prepared Hell for him (**Matt 25:41**) → The devil doesn't want to go down alone, but wants to take us with him! Satan's goal is to destroy us spiritually!
 2. We've got to realize that this is a fight! It is a personal fight, a spiritual fight, and a fight with eternal consequences! We must be on guard against the tools Satan uses! (**2 Cor 2:6-11**)

I. IF I WERE THE DEVIL, I WOULD...

- A. If I were the devil, I'd convince Christians to wrap their hearts & minds up in temporary physical things:
1. If I were the devil I would start trying to get Christians to divide their devotion! (**Matt 5:19-24**)
 - a. I would not try to get a Christian to totally abandon God, most Christians would know better than to do this, so I would choose this as a more subtle and passive attack!
 - b. I would understand that I don't have to totally win them over – Just getting them to be partially devoted to God is just as effective as them totally abandoning God!
 2. I would try to fill their lives with activities and concerns that are not sinful, but would draw their minds and hearts away from spiritual things: (**Mark 4:7, 18-19**)
 - a. When it comes to the seed sown among thorns, there's obviously a little growth that takes place, but soon thorns start creeping in & choke out the plant until it dies (kudzu)
 - b. These thorns are cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches, desires for other things... They are things that may not seem too harmful on the surface but they render us fruitless!

- c. What is happening here? We spend our energy, time, and focus on pursuing all these other things and suddenly we don't have time to worship, pray, serve others, study, and grow individually... Soon are pulling away from the Lord and toward this world!
 - d. For some people these thorns are sports, some hobby, climbing the management ladder at work, constantly trying to get rich, recreation, education → It can be anything that we set our hearts and minds on in such a way that it interferes with our serving God!
3. If I were the devil I would work to instill a love for this world in the hearts and minds of Christians because I know this is a subtle but powerful invading attack! **(John 17:14-20; 1 John 2:14-17)**
 - a. Worldliness is when we desire to be like the world, when we allow the world's standards and focus to shape our lives, and when we take on the morals of the world
 - b. People use the phrase "They're a worldly Christian!" – Billy Sunday used to say, "Saying worldly Christian makes about as much sense as saying Heavenly devil!" That's right!
 - c. Christians are becoming more & more like the world in their aims, their dress, their language, and their attitudes... When we start making little compromises and letting the distinction between us and the world get blurred... Satan starts winning!
 - d. It's okay for the boat to be in water, but you had better not let the water get in the boat! It's okay to have the garden in the grass but you can't let grass in the garden!
 4. There are some specific schemes I'd employ to accomplish this if I were the devil: **(Eph 6:10-12)**
 - a. I'd try to get Christians to care more and more about the world's perception of them... I'd get them to be more concerned about being accepted & gaining popularity
 - b. I would consume their time with more hours on the job, so there is less time available to spend with their families, and that created even less time for spiritual things
 - c. I'd increase opportunities for recreation and sports, again, trying to steal up all their time
 - d. I'd whisper that there's plenty of time in the future for spiritual things... have fun now!

B. I would work to get Christians to minimize sin and its consequences:

1. If I were Satan I would understand that sin is what separates men from God, that it destroys their fellowship with God, so I would work to get Christians to keep on sinning! **(Isaiah 59:1-2)**
2. If I were Satan I would use this because I would remember how it worked against Eve and has worked against mankind time and time again in the same way! **(Genesis 3:1-6)**
 - a. First Satan gets Eve to start questioning what God commanded → Before this she had no doubt what God's command was & its meaning, but the devil starts planting a seed
 - b. The notice how the devil works to start convincing her that the penalty and consequences God said would happen if she did break His command would never happen to her
 - c. Finally, he convinces her she'd be missing out on something good if she didn't eat of the fruit of the tree... That God was holding her back from real life & real experiences!
 - d. In all of this what has Satan done? He has rationalized away God's commands, he has minimized sin as no big deal, & created doubt in what God has said would happen
3. If I were the devil I would work hard to get Christians to rationalize away their sins **(1 John 1:6, 8)**
 - a. I'd get you to look at the sins of other people and have you think your sins & shortcomings are nothing in comparison to them! You aren't near the sinner as others are, right?
 - b. I'd want you to view some sin in your life as "your only vice" – I'd want you to think that sin was normal and that everyone is doing something wrong... It's just one sin, right?
 - c. As you start thinking along these lines you would convince yourself that even though you are continuing in sin, somehow you would escape the judgment of God! **(Rom 2:3-5)**

4. If I were the devil I'd want Christians to reason away the laws of God: **(Ps 119:102-104, 127-128)**
 - a. I would want Christians to start playing word games with God's commands and I would want them to start debating amongst themselves about what God really meant
 - b. I'd start bringing up far-fetched circumstances or highly emotional circumstances to make people question what the scriptures teach. I'd whisper, "There has to be a loophole"
 - c. Suddenly, what's so clear & plain now seems so complicated! As people start questioning the specific application, it won't be long until start doubting the rule! Now I've won!
 - d. Satan has been quite effective at doing this with divorce & remarriage, gambling, modesty, instrumental music, church support of secular concerns & recreation, and more!
5. **Illustration:** The way Satan attacks us with temptation (and worldliness for that matter) is much like the monkey traps they used to use in Africa → Until our desire for God is greater than our desire for this world or sin, we are just sitting there like stupid monkeys stuck in a trap!

C. I would work hard to keep you discouraged in physical things as well as spiritual things:

1. When we think about the schemes and devices of the devil we usually think about how he tempts us to commit some sin... Discouragement is an equally powerful tool! **(2 Thess 3:10-13; Gal 6:9)**
 - a. Discouragement as a state – "The feeling of despair in the face of obstacles; disheartened"
 - b. Discouragement as an action – "The expression of opposition and disapproval; to deprive of courage or confidence, to attempt to dissuade from doing something"
 - c. Discouragement is powerful because it makes us grow tired of consistently doing right, it causes us to lose touch of reality, it robs us of our joy, it keeps us from being active
 - d. It's idea is captured in a Hebrew term **(Is 42:3-4)** → It means, "To shatter in pieces, break, bruise, crush, discourage" – Satan wants you spiritually and emotionally shattered
2. I would use discouragement because I understand how it impacts the stronger people of God!
 - a. Elijah – He just had a great spiritual victory at Mt Carmel & saw God's power... But started focusing on Jezebel's threats & the number of enemies. He soon lost touch with reality, thinking he was the only one doing right, and wanted to die **(1 Kings 19:3-5)**
 - b. Discouragement often hits those who are stronger, those who are doing great work in God's kingdom, and those who are standing firm and fighting for truth and morality
 - c. Paul recognized this, and so he encouraged those who were spiritual, who knew the word, and who were actively doing good not to grow wear and lose heart! **(Gal 6:1, 6, 9)**
 - d. Discouragement is often caused by fatigue, frustration, failure, and fear! All of these are things that can easily impact those who are working, building, and striving to grow
3. As I use discouragement against you, I would likely bring it from one of the most difficult of sources... Your own brethren! **(Deuteronomy 1:26-29)**
 - a. It may be that some of your most discouraging and trying times may come at the hands of your own brethren – Those who we'd least expect to pull us down can pull us down!
 - b. It may be a harsh or unkind word spoken, some social thing or even a spiritual work you're left out of, some way they act toward you, or they may just let you down in general
 - c. While Peter was well intentioned, he spoke words to Jesus that were discouraging as Jesus was drawing close to the cross. Earlier when Satan tempted Jesus he was trying to get Jesus to take a way around the cross, now Peter is doing the same! **(Mt 16:21-23)**
4. Consider some specific ways I might employ to make you, or keep you, discouraged: **(Hab 1)**
 - a. I'd get you to focus on how it seems so few people were doing right, that the vast majority don't care, and in time it would seem to you that you're the only one who cares!

- b. I'd want you to think by your timetable, not God's... So you'd think God has forgotten you & ignored your prayers... When God really would answer in His time, the right time!
- c. I would constantly be bringing up all the times you failed, no matter how long ago they were, & I'd work to push your successes into the background. I'd want you to focus on how you failed at something and have you ignore the fact that you actually tried
- d. I'd understand that success, any success, would give you encouragement, so I'd try to keep you from doing small but good things and keep you busy with exhaustive big things
- e. I would multiply the people who would oppose you, multiply the people who'd speak discouraging words to you, and multiply people who would refuse to help you

D. I would work to get you to quit growing spiritually:

1. As the devil, I would understand that I don't need to win you over totally to my side, I just want to get you to grow spiritually complacent and satisfied: **(Rev 3:15-18; Heb 2:1)**
 - a. I would want you to think that you are doing good in your walk with God! I would want you to focus on your past, how far you've already come,
 - b. I would want you to compare yourself to others... I would want you to see that you know more than some people, that you have better morals, that your prayers sound stronger, that your attendance is better, that you do more in serving God & others
 - c. I would want to convince you that its okay to just be a spectator... to come and simple fill a pew and do little more... I'd tell you that's enough and others will get the work done!
 - d. Satan is doing very good with this! He has many Christians devoted to mediocrity! In fact, you might can say many Christians are guilty of zealous mediocrity! They are so insistent on doing the least possible amount they are devoted to this! Satan has you!
2. I want you to stop striving to grow spiritually because I understand that when you do that you will sin more and more frequently and you will miss out on heaven! **(2 Peter 1:5-11)**
 - a. What's the difference between a post and a tree? One is dead & one is alive! Sadly, there are many Christians who are posts, and what's even more sad is many don't care!
 - b. As your diligence and zeal wanes, you will be both spiritually ineffective and unfruitful
 - c. A failure to grow renders you spiritually blind! You won't be able to see spiritual things because you'll be fixated on worldly things. You'll be blind to yourself as well... unable to see your faults and forgetful of how Christ has cleansed your past
 - d. As you stop striving to grow, your salvation becomes more and more in doubt! As this happens you will sin more and more, ultimately costing you your goal of Heaven!
3. I would want you to quit growing spiritually because I know that by doing that, in time, you would quit trying to serve God altogether! **(Heb 10:32-36)**
 - a. Spiritual growth fills our lives with joy and fulfillment... God designed us and He designed Christianity to be this way! If we are not striving to grow we aren't functioning right!
 - b. When our life isn't functioning right, we're not happy, right? How can you expect then to feel the joy and happiness God intended if you aren't striving to grow and bear fruit!
 - c. You need to know that the day you stop enjoying being a Christian will be the day you start to stop being a Christian! None of us can afford to allow Satan to rob us of our joy!
4. If I were the devil I would work to get you to stop growing, slowly but surely, because I understand that this will separate you from Christ! **(John 15:1-5)**

E. I would slowly pull Christians away from their interaction with other Christians:

F. I would push humanism in the minds and lives of Christians:

1. There may be many here who do not know what humanism is, and that's not surprising since humanism is presented and promoted in very subtle and disguised ways: **(Rom 1:28, 25)**
 - a. "A philosophy that rejects supernaturalism, regards man as a natural object, and asserts the essential dignity and worth of man and his capacity to achieve self-realization through the use of reason and scientific method – called also naturalistic humanism, scientific humanism. A religion subscribing to these beliefs; religious humanism."
 - b. Humanists basic points: (1) Atheism (2) Evolution (3) Relative Truth (4) Autonomous man
 - c. Protagoras (484-415 BC) said, "Man is measure of all things; of all things that are, that they are; and all things that are not they are not" → Elevates man to the position of God!
 - d. Humanists openly work to destroy people's faith in God & remove the acknowledgement of God from the public arena → They actually view faith as holding men back!
 - 1) Remember the "Scopes Trial" –Darrow, a defense attorney, was one of the ACLU founders (started by humanists) which devised the trial from start to finish!
 - 2) They have orchestrated efforts to remove God from the pledge, prayer from schools, God's name from our money, and any other public recognition
 - 3) "At some point in our historical development humans became intelligent enough to ask deep questions about the world, such as: How did we get here? Who made this place? Why does the sun rise, and why does lightning strike? What happens to us when we die? These are big questions that can only be asked by an animal with remarkable intelligence. Interestingly, though the human animal became smart enough to ask such deep questions, it wasn't smart enough to answer them accurately. And that's where theology came in. Lacking true scientific knowledge to answer these deep questions, humans instead speculated, inventing myths, superstitions, and tribal doctrines to provide answers. In doing so, they left the pre-theological stage and entered the theological stage of their development." (www.thehumanist.org)
2. If I were the devil, humanism would be my general vehicle of operation, because it brings people to see all truth as being relative: **(John 17:17; 3 John 1:1-4)**
 - a. "Humanists find nothing they are able to call an objective, absolute truth or even an absolute moral value... We find ourselves confined within this world of uncertainty"
 - b. Has this influenced people today? Sure it has! People say, "You have your truth & have my truth" or "What's right & wrong for you may not be right & wrong for me"
 - c. The prominence of situation ethics is also the result of this – Right & wrong is determined by the situation you may find yourself in. Truth & right is constantly changing!
 - d. As a result people, even Christians, justify sinful living. People have grown content with denominationalism, even to the point of seeing it as necessary. The days of open discussion of our beliefs is long past! But God's word stay steadfast & unchanging!
3. If I were the devil, I would use humanism because it would elevate the thoughts and ideas of humans over that of God: **(1 Cor 3:18-21)**
 - a. "It has always been something of a mystery to me that intelligent, educated men and women--as well as the uneducated--can "have faith" in an invisible and nonexistent God. Why, instead, is humanism not the preeminent belief of humankind? Why don't humans place their faith in reason and in the strategies of skepticism and doubt, and refuse to concede to "traditional" customs, religious convictions, and superstitions?" (Joyce Carol Oates – www.thehumanist.org)

- b. Satan uses this to keep people away from Christ → Evolution is used to appeal to people's sense of education, baptism doesn't make sense to some so its rejected, etc...
- c. The devil uses this quite well against Christians → How often do we find ourselves having to pass God's commands through our minds before we accept it? It's done with modesty issues, MDR, drinking, anger, and any other practice we want to hang on to
- 4. If I were the devil, I would use humanism because of its pervasive impact on churches:
 - a. Humanist Lloyd Morain says that humanists "believe that the established churches will continue to become more humanistic. They point with pleasure to growing concern about social conditions (as opposed to pure gospel preaching) within leading churches throughout the world" (Humanism: Devotion To Man, FC Lectures 1985)
 - b. Due to humanism more and more churches are refusing to draw the line in the sand on issues of truth and morality. Many do not feel its "Christian" to tell anyone they are wrong on anything. Churches are more concerned about numbers than what's right!
 - c. It also shifts the focus – As humanism impacts people it also impacts churches. Many have gotten carried away with curing all social ills, entertainment, and recreation and have lost sight of the gospel, truly saving souls, and working at building strong Christians
- 5. If I were the devil, I would push humanism because it causes people to lose their morality:
 - a. "From where does God get his (or her) moral values?" ...If they originate with God, then God's morals are made up and hence arbitrary... If God makes morals up "out of the blue," God is being just as arbitrary as are human beings who do the same thing. As a result, we gain no advantage and hence are no more compelled philosophically to obey God's arbitrary morals than we are to obey the morals established by our best friend or even our worst enemy." (www.thehumanist.org)
 - b. Thus, people are increasingly doing whatever feels right and good to them. As a popular song goes, "If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad" – This is how many think!
- 6. Some of what secular humanists are trying to achieve, is actually found through following Christ! There is a "humanism" that is found in being a child of God and serving the Lord! **(Psalm 8)**
 - a. In Christ, there is true dignity, self worth, meaning, and identity. We are made in the image of God! We're His children! God sent His Son to save us out of His love for us!
 - b. In fact, in Christ one can even find himself attaining to an exalted state – But it's not through pride or self-promotion, but by humility & self-sacrifice! **(Matt 23:11-12)**
 - c. But, Satan wants us to think the only way these things are achieved is through a denial of God, a rejection of God's authority in our lives, and the over-elevation of mans ways!

G. I would get you to grow complacent in your attempts to reach those who are lost:

II. WHAT CAN WE DO TO RESIST SATAN'S ATTACKS?

A.

B.

Conclusion: