

Know Your Enemy

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God At War Series

Genesis 3.1-5

There is an ancient Chinese military treatise written 2600 years ago called *The Art of War*, by a man named Sun Tzu. It is said to be one of the oldest books on military strategy in the world. And it has had huge influence on military planning not only in the East, but also in the West. In fact, *The Art of War's* influence has gone way beyond the military. It became mandatory reading for business managers in the 1980's and 1990's. I'm told that all Japanese top executives study *The Art of War* because it provides strategies for office politics and strategies for winning in a global market place.

One of the things that Sun Tzu said was this:

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You must know your enemy before going to battle. If you know your enemy and know yourself, you will come out of 100 battles with 100 victories. If you only know yourself, but not your opponent, you will win 1 battle and lose the next. If you do not know yourself or your enemy, you will always lose.

In this past year the Buckeye nation has suffered through two terrible losses in national championship games to the Florida Gators. We completed only four passes in a humiliating defeat at the Fiesta Bowl back in January. And it really appeared that Florida had come up with the perfect strategy for beating OSU. After studying game films, Florida knew that their defensive ends were much faster than our offensive tackles. So they set their ends up wide and beat our tackles around the corners time after time giving QB Troy Smith no time to throw. And then they also knew that Troy Smith was short and so every time they rushed, they had their hands up. They exploited our weaknesses to full advantage.

And they did the same thing in basketball. They said that OSU has one big man, Greg Oden, so we will send five big men against him rotating big guys off the bench to bang bodies with Greg. Those five guys have 25 fouls to give. We'll wear Greg down and make OSU shoot from the outside where they aren't very strong. And in that game we shot 4-23 from the 3-point line. They knew us. They had studied enough to know our weaknesses and they exploited those weaknesses to full advantage.

In big lawsuits and in important criminal cases attorneys will take days anticipating the other side's strategy, preparing their witnesses for the other

side's questions. "Here is what you are going to be asked. What will you say to this? What will you say to that?" Attorneys will study the weaknesses in their opponent's case and try to exploit those weaknesses.

One of the constant criticisms of our current foreign policy is that at the State Department and at the National Security Agency and in our Diplomatic Corps we have too few Arabic speakers and too few Persian speakers, and too few people who understand the history of the Middle East or Iran. Too few folks have a deep understanding of the current sentiment of people in the Middle East or Iran. The bottom line criticism of much of current American policy is that Americans don't know what they are dealing with in the Muslim world. We don't understand the motivations of people. We make generalizations without knowing the facts. Our political and military decisions have been made in the dark. We don't know the enemy in Iraq.

Last week I started a series on spiritual warfare, a series I've called "God At War." I said the most fundamental problem that we deal with in engaging in spiritual war against an enemy the Bible calls "Satan" or the "devil," is that we are utterly unaware that we are in a war. We are constantly surprised by being attacked. We are regularly caught off guard. We expect life to be easy. We think that so long as we are obedient to God, so long as we pray and read our Bibles, and attend church, keep ourselves morally clean, that our lives will proceed in a straight-forward line, ever upward.

But then we are body slammed to the turf. We are attacked physically or morally or spiritually. And we say: What's going on here?

Well, there is another team on the field. You have an enemy. There is a target on your chest. There is a target on the chests of your children. And there are few things more important when engaging in spiritual warfare than that you know your enemy.

Understand, friends, that Satan is a student of you. You have been fully explored and probed by a spiritual entity who hates you and wants to destroy your life. Your enemy knows your weaknesses. Your enemy knows how to enflame your lust. Your enemy knows how to sow doubt in your mind. Your enemy knows how to cultivate your sense of pride and how to stir your feelings of self-pity. Your enemy knows what tactics will work because he has observed you since you were born.

One of my favorite books on spiritual warfare is by C.S. Lewis, my favorite Christian author. It is titled *The Screwtape Letters*. It is a book of imaginary letters between a senior devil and a junior devil in which the senior devil instructs the junior devil in the art of temptation. In commenting on how well the enemy knows you, the senior devil makes this passing remark:

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When two humans have lived together for many years, it usually happens that each has tones of voice and expressions of face which are almost unendurably irritating to the other. Work on that. Bring fully into the consciousness of your patient that particular lift of his mother's eyebrows which he learned to dislike in the nursery, and let him think how much he dislikes it. Let him assume that she knows how annoying it is and does it to annoy – if you know your job he will not notice the immense improbability of the assumption. And, of course, never let him suspect that he has tones and looks which similarly annoy her. As he cannot see or hear himself, that is easily managed.

He knows what irritates you, what gets under your skin, what throws you into a depression. So, if you are going to successfully battle the enemy, you must know him just as well. You must know his tactics, his strategies, and the way that he will approach you. I've called this second talk in this series on spiritual warfare, "Know Your Enemy." Let's pray.

SLIDE – Gen. 3:1-5

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Now in Genesis 3.1 we read:

SLIDE – Gen. 3:1

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

And we discover here at the beginning of the Bible and at the end of the Bible in Revelation 20:2,

SLIDE – Rev. 20:2

2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

...that Satan takes the guise of a serpent. We'll talk about why that is in a moment. What we do know from the Bible is that at some point after God created the heavens and the earth, the devil, who was originally created good, rebelled against God. We aren't given a great amount of information regarding what precipitated this rebellion. But from various passages in the Bible people

suggest that the issue was pride, a desire to take the place of God. But here the devil shows up in the guise of a serpent and we are told in v. 1,

SLIDE – Gen. 3:1

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

How are we going to defeat the enemy of God, the enemy of Christ, the enemy of everything that God desires? How are we going to defeat the enemy of our communities, the enemy of our families, the one who is the enemy of our souls, who is opposed to everything that is good? How are we going to defeat someone who is opposed to our freedom, who is opposed to love, who makes war on relationships and war against our bodies, and war against our church?

We need to, in Sun Tzu's words, "know our enemy." So, what I want to do is contrast two different strategies for dealing with the devil. One is a losing strategy and the other is a winning strategy.

We are told that the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. The losing strategy vs. the winning strategy.

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That we pay attention to the obvious vs. that we pay attention to the subtle.

Satan is portrayed in the Bible as subtle and crafty. He doesn't come to us directly or obviously. He doesn't announce his intentions with trumpets. We read in 2 Cor. 11:3 these words:

SLIDE – 2 Cor. 11:3

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

We are told that he uses the art of deceit and cunning. And in 2 Cor. 11:13-14 we read this:

SLIDE – 2 Cor. 11:13-14

13 For such persons are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

Again, he is deceitful. He masquerades. Jesus said in John 8:44,

SLIDE – Jn 8:44

44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there

is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan's stock and trade is lies and spin. He does not scream in the ear of Eve: "I am a horrible monster. I intend to ruin your paradise. I intend to destroy your relationship with God. I am going to wreck your marriage and your reputation." He doesn't come your way and say: "Look, I just want you to know right off the bat that I have a goal to completely destroy your life. I'm planning to give you AIDS, or a sexually transmitted disease that you will have for the rest of your life. I'm planning, too, to turn you into a drug addict so that you will steal from your own mother and father. I'm planning to give you hepatitis. You are going to lose your teeth, have your children taken from you, and end up utterly alone and miserable. I want to make your life so horrible that you will eventually try to take your own life. I just want you to know where I'm coming from. I'm planning to turn you into a devil-worshipping atheist."

See, friends, Christians are so consumed by their attention to the obvious. Some band comes to Central Ohio cursing and screaming into a microphone and Christians march in protest. Some New Age bookstore sells incantations. I will tell you 99.9% of the problem we face in life has nothing to do with witches gathering in some park in Columbus, or some devil-worshipping band. The devil almost never comes to you like he is portrayed in the horror movies – leaping out of the mouth of a skeleton that is hanging in your closet in the dark. Because if he came that way, almost everyone of us would run in fear of him. Instead, he is subtle. His stock and trade is lies and spin and misinterpretations.

He doesn't come to us and say: Let me teach you how to become an evil person. No one starts off wanting to become evil. Instead, he says to us: "There is a fantastic experience that you are missing. There is all this fun that you could be having, but your parents, or the religious authorities, or God himself, is keeping it from you. There is so much that you could enjoy, if only you opened the door to this. You don't want to miss out, do you?"

The devil is crafty. His stock and trade is lies. Most mornings in my own devotional life with God, I use the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*, which has been used for nearly 5 centuries by millions of people to develop people's personal relationships with God. And one of the prayers that the *Book of Common Prayer* has taught me to pray is:

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"From all blindness of heart, deliver me, O Lord."

God, help me to see. Help me to see, God, what is coming against me, towards me. Make me aware of the attack directed against me, the attack directed against Marlene and my family; the attack directed against the church, God. Pull

the curtains back and deliver me from all of the lies that I believe about myself – lies that I believe about you.

Let me ask you a question, friend. When you think about Satan, when you think about his work in our community, his work in the world, does your mind go to the obvious? The Satanic? The devil-worshippers? The people dressed in black with upside down crucifixes? Or does your mind immediately go to the subtle, the crafty?

Let me share with you his most fundamental strategy that is behind all of his craftiness and all of his subtlety. It is to get you to begin to doubt the trustworthiness of God. Throughout this text in Genesis 3 is question after question, probe after probe. Satan is sowing doubts about God in the mind of Eve. Doubt about what God has said; doubt about God's intentions; doubt about God's goodness.

There was a psychoanalyst who lived in the last century named Erik Erikson. He was famous for describing 8 developmental stages through which healthy human beings pass from infancy to late adulthood. And any of you who were psychology majors, or studied child development, or were in social work or education, I'm sure you've come upon the name Erik Erikson and his 8 developmental stages.

Erikson said that from birth to age one the central issues in an infant's life is this: "is my environment trustworthy or not?"

Erikson taught that at the foundation of a person's life is this fundamental issue of trust. If a child receives care and lives in a predictable environment, a child learns to trust. But if this issue of trust is violated, if a child is abused, then they may find themselves unable to form healthy and long-lasting relationships with others. They may grow up hopeless, hiding from the outside world.

I would say the most fundamental question is not: Is my environment trustworthy. I would say the most fundamental question a person can ask or answer is the question: "is God trustworthy?"

That question is at the foundation of all spiritual and mental health. Can I trust God in this situation even when I can't see the outcome? Can I trust God as I go through this grief? Can I trust God even as I experience this loss? Can I trust God even when the future looks uncertain? Can I trust God in disappointment? Can I trust God in suffering? Can I trust God in my finances? Can I trust God with my marriage? Can I trust God in my singleness? Can I trust God with my kids?

If you want to know the strategy of the enemy, the issue always revolves around an attack on your capacity to trust God. Because the enemy knows that if you

begin to believe that God is not trustworthy, he will have driven a wedge between you and God. You may go through religious motions, but you will not give yourself to God. You will lose your intimacy with God. You will lose your spiritual vitality. Satan's attacks are subtle. They are designed to attack your trust in God. We read in v. 1 these words:

Gen. 3:1 "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Here is the enemy's second tactic:

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Forbidding God from speaking vs. welcoming God to speak

One of the major areas of spiritual attack these days concerns what God has said and what God has not said. We live in a time where virtually every single biblical text is subjected to multiple conflicting interpretations and where so much that seemed clear in the past is now dissolved into a sea of relativity and multiple subjective perspectives. Friends, I will tell you that politicians have nothing over some seminary professors and so-called biblical scholars in terms of spin. You read certain books or hear certain opinions by the experts on the Discovery Channel, or in Time Magazine and I always say, "WOW! How did they pull that out of this biblical text?"

You see what has always been regarded as sin by the historic church is not really sin? You mean heterosexual marriage really isn't the only context in which God blesses sexual expression despite the many seemingly obvious verses to the contrary? You can have God's blessing on your life even though you are engaging in premarital or extramarital sex, or homosexuality.

You mean God really doesn't hate divorce even though through Malachi the prophet God says that he does? You mean that you can continue to reject Jesus Christ openly and defiantly and you will not spend eternity in hell? You mean there is no real hell? It is just a metaphor?

The devil comes along and says: You know, things are so much more complicated than you thought. This business of sex, as I've often joked with you, who could possibly define when you are having sex and when you are not. I mean, I don't know about you, but I never know when I am having sex.

Slander is so hard to define, you just never know when you are gossiping. It is all so very muddy. It is all so confusing. It is all just a matter of perspective, isn't it?

Has God said this is all so very muddy, this issue that you are struggling with? It is hard to figure out. Maybe you need to read another three books on it? Well, let's approach this a little differently. Maybe the thought comes not along the lines of interpretation. What has God said? But the devil engages you in speculation. What would God say? Satan might alter the question a little bit in your particular case and not say, "Has God said you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" In your particular case you might hear a question that sounds like, "Would God say to you that you can't have the fruit of this particular tree?" Would God say that? It sounds so limiting and legalistic, so narrow. God certainly wouldn't want you to miss out on the best life has to offer. God is not a God who sets up a bunch of limits, a bunch of "thou shalt nots."

"You know who God is; he is the God of freedom. God is the God of liberty. God is the God of abundance. He is the God of enjoyment. Do you think that God," the devil says, "would ever allow you to have a feeling (a feeling of love, a feeling of passion, a feeling of sexual desire) and then tell you that you couldn't act on it? What kind of God would permit you to have a certain desire, a certain passion, a certain feeling, a drawing and then post a sign that says, "Off limits"? Can you possibly believe in a God who would deny you what is so natural to you?"

Whenever you hear yourself saying, "I just can't believe that God would say that" or "the God that I worship would never say this," you are simply succumbing to the original temptation in Genesis 3. Here is the question, friend. Would God ever tell you to live in a difficult situation? Would he? Would he ever say to you, "Persevere even though this is incredibly painful, persevere." Would he ever ask you not to quit or run away from your marriage, or give up on a ministry? Would God say that? Would God ever say to you, "Even though you feel this thing strongly, I am calling you to self-denial or self-sacrifice."? Can you imagine that God would ever say to you that you need to practice self-denial? Or that you have to crucify some utterly natural feeling that you have?

Or do you insist that your God is just a God of freedom, a God of abundance, a God who never sets limits on you? Are you a person who insists that your God always says "yes" to every one of your thoughts, feelings and desires and never says "no"? Does God just validate what you already feel and think or does God ever contradict you and oppose your passions?

Let me speak really frankly to you and say that one of the most fundamental tests of whether you have become a Christian is that you come to a place of rejecting your limits on what you permit God to say to you and what you say that God would never say. You can tell, friend, here is a great test, for telling whether or not you have ever become a real Christian. Here is a test for you. You can tell if you are a real Christian by asking yourself whether you simply allow God to be God and to say what he wants to say to you. Christians are people who say to God, "God, speak. Your servant is willing to hear You. Whatever you want to

say to me. You may say something I don't like. You may say something that causes me pain. You may say 'no' to my marital plans. You may say "no" to my dating this boyfriend or girlfriend. You may say 'no' to my intended move. You may say 'no' to my plans for school. You may say 'no' to my business prospects. You may call me to give something up that is precious to me. You may ask me to put to death something that I think is the source of my future happiness. You may contradict me. You may oppose me. I will even allow you to say something to me that I don't understand." I welcome all that you have to say to me, God, even if it is contrary to my desires.

A Christian is a person who says to the Lord, "You are God and I am not." It is that simple. You are God and I am not. Do you say that? Do you say, "Lord, I will let you set the rules for the way my life, other's lives, are going to unfold. I will let you set the rules." By definition, if you set the rules for what God is allowed to say and what He is not allowed to say to you, what He would say and what He wouldn't say to you – then you are claiming you are Lord of the universe. If you are a person who says, "I simply cannot accept what the Bible says about this or that or about what God seems to be saying to me about a plan of mine, a desire of mine, a feeling of mine. I simply can't accept it." Then you need to go back to square #1 and ask yourself if you are really a Christian. Is Jesus really your Lord?

Do you allow God to say everything that he wants to say to you without restriction? That is the second strategy of the enemy. We forbid God from speaking to us vs. welcoming God to say anything he wants.

Well, here is the third strategy:

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Asking the wrong question vs. asking the right question

You know, the very way that the enemy frames questions is designed to get us off on the wrong track. There is an art that the enemy has perfected of asking you questions, or at least asking you the wrong question, so that your thinking goes in the wrong direction. You see this all the time with Christian teenagers. Christian teenagers always ask the question: How far can I go sexually and not be sinning? Or how far can I go up to the line and still be OK? Christian single adults ask the same question. We don't say to ourselves, "You know, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God,' how can I have a pure heart?" We ask: How far can I go and still be on the right side of sin?

One of Satan's most frequently used strategies is to get you to ask yourself the wrong question. Let me share with you what I think is the most frequently asked wrong question in American Christianity today. The most frequently asked wrong question is: Can I deliberately sin against God and still be forgiven? The moment

you ask that question, you are on the enemy's ground. That is Satan's question. Can I deliberately sin against God and still be forgiven?

Do you know what you are really asking? You are really asking: How hellish a life can I live and still make it to heaven? How angry, how lustful, how irritable can I be and still get into heaven? Can I be gossipy? Can I fight constantly? Can I be supersensitive? Can I be self-centered and self-focused and greedy? Can I live an utterly hellish existence and still make heaven?

Do you think that is the good news of the gospel – live a miserable, joyless, insignificant, utterly purposeless life, but Jesus will still get you into heaven. That is not the good news of the gospel, friend. Let me tell you the question God wants you to ask. God wants you to ask the right question. The right question is: How can I enjoy the life of the kingdom right now?

In other words, how can I enjoy and experience the life that Jesus died to give me right now? If you ask that question, friend, it will always drive you in the right direction. The good news is that Jesus came to introduce us to the life of the kingdom – now and for eternity. It is not how can I live a hellish existence and still make heaven. It is how can I right now begin to experience the life of kindness towards others that Jesus calls me to? How can I become the really good person that Jesus wants me to be? How can I have relationships of the quality that Jesus desires? How can I find self-respect, or community, the love that Jesus promises? How can I find freedom or peace inside? Will this activity, if I engage in it, give me more of the life of the kingdom, or less of the life of the kingdom? That is the right question.

Will it increase my freedom, or increase my addiction? Will it make me a more joyful person, a healthier person, or a more miserable, more unhappy person?

Friend, if you start asking yourself the question: How can I enjoy and experience the life of the kingdom right now, you will be regularly preaching the gospel to yourself.

In knowing your enemy, here is the fourth strategy:

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Opening the door for conversation with Satan vs. slamming the door on conversation with Satan.

Eve made her first and biggest mistake when she decided to engage Satan in conversation. The wisdom of the saints throughout the ages is that in order to defeat temptation you must simply refuse to engage in conversation with the devil. So Thomas a Kempis pointed out in *The Imitation of Christ*:

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The only time to stop temptation is at the first point of recognition. If one begins to argue and engage in a hand-to-hand combat, temptation almost always wins the day.

We resist the devil by refusing to argue with him and by refusing to reason with him. There is one thing you have to do with the devil and that is to have nothing to do with him. Slam the door in his face. If you decide to engage in argument and reasoning around a tempting thought you will be defeated every time. Think about it. Adam and Eve were perfect, but the devil defeated them through argument. Who are you that you would be better arguers than they were? Don't argue; don't converse; don't reason; stop the conversation at the beginning.

You say: I have nothing to say to you. I am not going to listen to anything you have to say. You are a liar and a deceiver. Even if scripture is quoted, you simply say: I am not engaging in this conversation. Remember, Satan knows the Bible better than you do. And so if he offers you a thought, or if he offers you a scripture, and you say: Well, let me take a look at that; let me wrestle with that – you are being very foolish. Don't argue; don't reason; slam the door.

And I think this is particularly important for all of us who deal with lust in our life at some point or other. Lust, by the way, is not the same thing as sexual desire. Every human being, including Jesus, felt sexual desire. Lust occurs when we decide to take our sexual desire and apply it to fantasies, or memories, or specific images. Here is the deal: almost always at the very instant when you have a sexual thought, you are presented with a choice of either entertaining that thought, or rejecting it. You have, I believe, no matter how far gone you are in sexual addiction, if you trace the links back to the beginnings of your thought processes, at the beginning, a choice. You always have a choice to slam the door on that thought, or to entertain it.

And this is the critical point regarding lust. If you say: Well, I am just going to pursue it; I'm going to invite this thought in and follow this line of thinking for a little while, Satan is now in the house. And once we invite lust in, it is extremely difficult to get rid of. But at other times, if you say: No! I am just not going there. I am not going there with my thoughts; I'm not going there with my fantasies; I'm not going there with my look – you will find it really easy to deal with. The power is stopped at the front door.

Know that the enemy is much smarter than you. He understands your weaknesses, and so you slam the door on conversation.

Here is the fifth thing. The serpent suggests that God is interested in many, many points of obedience.

Genesis 3:1

...“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

Here is the woman’s response in vv. 2-3, foolishly engaging Satan:

Genesis 3:2-3

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”

In terms of the enemy’s strategy,

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God is seeking many things from you vs. God is seeking one thing from you.

There is always in your life one tree, one piece of fruit, one point that is currently forming the hinge of your relationship with God. Remember, God put at humanity’s disposal everything in creation. All of the animals were at our service. All the plants were available for us to eat. The whole garden was there for our cultivation and use. There was only one spot in the entire universe that was off limits. One thing that God said, “this is taboo; you can’t go here.” And this is the focus of the enemy’s attack – this one tree.

“Come on, Eve, this one little tree, and one piece of fruit can’t matter that much. What is this one piece of fruit compared with all of the oranges and grapefruits and melons that God allows you to eat? Eve, if you conform to God’s will regarding 999 other things, God is not going to be that concerned about this one little area, this one piece of fruit on one tree! It is such a paltry little thing. This one issue in a thousand is not going to upset your relationship with God.”

Isn’t that the way it is in your life and in my life? We say to God, “God, we will let you into every area of our life except this one point.” The point may be your sexuality to which you are determined to let your lust run riot no matter what happens to you, or what it costs. The point may be your career ambitions in which you are determined to drive your career at any price. God can have everything except this one thing. God, I will serve you. God I minister. But this one thing; you are asking me to reconnect with my father or my mother, who hurt me. Anything but that. God, I will go on a missions trip; God I will share my faith; but, don’t ask me to break up with my boyfriend or girlfriend. Anything, but this one thing...

The one thing in your life, friend, may be giving a full tithe to God. For you, giving a full tithe, a 10% of your income, is huge. For other people it is no big deal. But for you, in breaking the grip of fear in your life regarding money, in breaking your rationalizations that only when you pay off all of your debts will you tithe, in causing you to learn to trust God, tithing is huge. It is the one point that God is asking about.

And here is the thing that you will discover about God. If you want to grow in your relationship with God, if you want to see a massive infusion, of fresh life, then you need to obey him in the one point that the Spirit of God is putting his finger on. You say to God, "God, come into my life in all these other ways. Come into my life through the front door. Come into my life through the windows. Come into my life through the chimney." And God says, "I want to come into your life in the one area, through the one door that you have walled up and bricked over."

And we say: "God, won't you come in some other way? Look at all these open spaces." And God says, "No, it is this one point; this one area of obedience." And he will keep knocking on that one point until you choose to open up.

And finally, regarding the enemy's strategy, we read these words in vv. 4-5,

Genesis 3:4-5

4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

And here is the strategy:

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Living life without limits vs. living life with limits.

The lie is that you can live life without God's limits. You will not die. There are no consequences for disobedience to God. You can do whatever want and get away with it. Despite what God says, there are no limits.

Is that not 21st century America? People just plunging headlong into the gratification of our desires. Just run up your credit card bill, you won't have to pay. You can always go bankrupt. Someone else will pay. Use drugs, use alcohol, use internet pornography, you won't be addicted. Whether we are talking about eating disorders – bulimia, anorexia, gambling, shopping, work – we 21st century Americans are out of control. We resist all boundaries, especially God's boundaries and God's limits. We think any limitation on us is a bad thing. We experience God's "no" as a curse rather than a blessing.

But the Bible says that it is our lack of limits that actually enslaves us. Proverbs 25:28 says this: "Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control."

You know, if biblical times a city without walls was an impossibility. To build a city without walls invited destruction. Any band of robbers or a neighboring country could take the city at will. Only strong walls could bring a peaceful

night's sleep. When we live without God's boundaries, we are like defenseless cities with demonic hordes going in and out of our lives at will.

Here is the way we rationalize away our crossing of God's limits, our rebellion against God's will. We say: "I want God's will, but I want it only if it is easy and doesn't take much personal effort. I want God's will, but not at the cost of saying no to something I want more than God's will. I want God's will, but I want it tomorrow, not today. I want God's will, but first God is going to have to take the craving for this other thing out of my life. I want God's will, but I want it in part."

Friend, we've got to come to the place of saying: I want God's will for my life – period. I'm tired of trafficking with the devil. I hate the destruction he's worked in my life. I hate the fact that I let him rob me of my joy. I hate the fact that I've let him rob me of my freedom. I hate the fact that I've let him rob me of a warm relationship with God. I want God's will and I want it for my whole life – period!"

Let's pray.

Know Your Enemy

Rich Nathan
May 26-27, 2007
God At War
Genesis 3.1-5

I. The Art of War

II. The Strategies of the Enemy

- A. Paying Attention to the Obvious vs. Paying Attention to the Subtle
(Gen. 3.1; 2 Cor. 11.3, 13, 14)
- B. Forbidding God from Speaking vs. Welcoming God to Speak (Gen. 3.1, 4, 5)
- C. Asking the Wrong Question vs. Asking the Right Question (Gen. 3.1, 4, 5)
- D. Opening the Door for Conversation with Satan vs. Slamming the Door on Conversation with Satan (Gen. 3.2, 3)
- E. God is Seeking Many Things from You vs. God is Seeking One Thing from You (Gen. 3.1-3)
- F. Living Life Without Limits vs. Living Life With Limits
(Gen. 3.4, 5)