

THE BELIEVER'S BATTLE WITH TEMPTATION

R. JAY WAGGONER



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

The Believer's Battle with Temptation

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Temptation to sin is inevitable. But does that mean we can't have victory over it? Although every believer is targeted by evil and confronted with temptation that comes in many ways, understanding the principles in God's Word (as to how we can resist it and triumph over it) will equip and encourage us in our Christian lives.

This course is a basic guide to spiritual self-defense. It is theologically sound, and intensely practical.

LESSONS YOU WILL STUDY

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

For Further Reflection

Although these questions are not part of the graded exam, they are particularly helpful. We recommend that you take the time to think through and discuss these questions.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on the Bible text.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.



THE ADVERSARY'S EXISTENCE

Shortly after we were married, my wife and I moved five hundred miles south, to the state of Tennessee. Soon after getting settled, we planted a vegetable garden. Since I had often helped in the garden as a youngster, I was confident that our first attempt at gardening would be successful. Everything went well until one morning when I went out to survey the garden. Nearly every one of our newly planted tomato plants had been cut off at ground level. It looked like somebody had deliberately cut them off with a knife! We had no idea what had happened.

When I consulted the elderly man who lived next door about our misfortune he said, “Oh, that’s cutworms.” Being new to that area, we had never heard of cutworms, but our neighbor told us what to do. He instructed us to tie a twig from a nearby tree to the stalk of each new plant that we set out. He explained that a cutworm had to wrap itself completely around the stalk of a plant in order to cut it off, but that it could not reach completely around both the stalk and the twig attached to it. Only after following his advice was the problem solved.

If we had known about cutworms and how to stop them from cutting our plants we would have taken the necessary measures beforehand to prevent the destruction. However, we were completely unaware of the enemy. We are always more vulnerable when we are unaware of an enemy’s presence. The apostle Peter had learned this truth well, for he (and the other disciples) had been “sifted” by the devil (Luke 22:31) and had succumbed to the enemy’s temptation. It is no wonder that he wrote so passionately about this same enemy in his first letter.

————— ❧ —————
**We are always more
vulnerable when we
are unaware of an
enemy’s presence.**
————— ❧ —————

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

In the verse that precedes the above two verses (1 Peter 5:7) Peter tells his readers to cast all their anxiety upon the Lord—to depend entirely on him. But, so that there would be no misconceptions, he shifts gears in verse 8 and reminds us that while we must depend on God, we still bear some responsibility. The Christian life is not a passive life. Not only do we have a part to play, but we also have an enemy—the devil—who would divert us from that responsibility. Therefore, every believer must be able to effectively deal with this common enemy.

————— ❧ —————
**The Christian life is
not a passive life.**
————— ❧ —————

In this modern-day world, it seems that most people consider it passé to believe in the existence of the devil. According to the Barna Research Group, 60 percent of adult Americans believe that the devil is simply a symbol of evil.¹ Sixty percent doesn't seem that alarming, considering the number of non-believing people in our nation. However, consider this alarming statistic: Barna also found that among those who profess to be born-again Christians, 43 percent said that the devil is not real, but is simply a symbol of evil. If, indeed, we are more vulnerable when we are unaware of an enemy's presence, then it is no wonder that the devil seeks to camouflage his existence, and it seems that he has done a good job.

————— ❧ —————
**We desire a
playground and
try to make life into
one. But life is a
battleground.**
————— ❧ —————

Going a step further, I wonder how many of those who *do* take the devil's existence seriously also acknowledge his activity. In other words, how serious are we about the spiritual battle with which they are confronted? Years ago A. W. Tozer said, "That this world is a playground instead of a battleground has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of . . . Christians."² Is this not the case, and even more so today? We desire a playground and try to make life into one. But, the reality of the Christian life is far different—it is a battleground.

Our enemy, Satan, rebelled against God in eternity past, tempted Adam and Eve, attempted to defeat Job, tried to persuade Jesus Christ to sin, induced Peter to deny knowing him, and inspired Judas to betray him. Repeatedly, the Bible confirms the reality of Satan and the danger that he poses to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a very real opponent. It is essential to our spiritual health that we recognize his opposition, and that we be engaged in the spiritual battle. Satan—the devil—stands opposed to everything that we believe. He will most certainly attempt to defeat us spiritually and rob us of our joy and our testimony. We must take the threat seriously. We must meet it. This is the solemn warning Peter gives to us in 1 Peter 5:8-9. As Christians, we have an enemy with whom we must reckon.

The fact that we have such an enemy and that we face his continual opposition confronts us with some sobering realizations, which Peter addresses.

WE ARE IN DANGER

First of all, we need to realize that we are in danger. By nature, the devil is a dangerous, wicked, and cruel adversary. In this regard, Peter compares him to a roaring lion that is intent on killing his prey and devouring its flesh. The devil harbors nothing but ill will toward Christians. He will devour every one of us that he can. Peter uses two descriptive terms and an illustration from the animal kingdom to characterize the danger we face.

An Adversary

Notice that Peter calls the devil “your enemy” (v. 8). The word “enemy” was used in ancient times to refer to an opponent in a lawsuit. He was the one who held the opposing position. Similarly, the devil is our adversary. He opposes all that is good, all that is right. He opposes God and all who follow God. He is the spiritual adversary of every believer. As Adrian Rodgers has said, “If you’re sinking in quicksand, Satan will gladly come along and pat you on the head.”

A Deceiver

Notice also that Satan is slanderous in his methodology. Peter indicates this when he uses the term “devil” (v. 8), which means “slanderer.” The Hebrew name *Satan* carries the same basic meaning. He is deceitful, and he is a liar. Jesus called him the father of lies (John 8:44). His slanderous nature has been evident from the very beginning. In Genesis 3:4 he contradicted the warning God gave to Adam concerning the forbidden fruit, saying to Eve, “You will not surely die.” He delights in twisting the truth. Given the opportunity, he will slander God’s word and deceive men. This is how he manipulates people into doing what otherwise they would not do.

Perhaps you have known someone who seemed to love the Lord, but one day did something that was diametrically opposed to all that they professed. As you observed the situation, perhaps you wondered, “Why did he do that?” Or maybe, “How did that happen?” Maybe you have experienced something similar in your own life. Probably at one time or another you have said to yourself, “Why did I do that?” or “How could I have said that?” Is it not because we listened to the deceitful lies of Satan? He slandered what God said and we listened. He told us God was being unfair with us and we listened. He provided us with an excuse as to why it was all right in our situation to do what we did. He told us it was all right to bend the rules a little bit. The mouthpieces he uses are many, but he is the mastermind behind every rationalization to sin. By the time we commit a sin, we have become convinced, if only for a moment, that it is justified.

A Malicious Foe

Behind all of Satan’s slanderous accusations is a malicious intent. A malicious person deliberately causes harm. Satan is out to deliberately harm believers. We see this in the comparison Peter uses. He says that our enemy “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

————— ❧ —————
**Satan is out to
deliberately
harm believers.**
————— ❧ —————

Many commentators and Bible students have taken Peter’s comparison to a roaring lion in the wrong way, thinking of the lions used in the arena. During times of persecution the Romans put Christians in the arena and let lions kill them for the entertainment of the crowd. And so it is assumed that

satanically inspired persecution is pictured in this verse. It is also assumed that since the book of 1 Peter has much to say about suffering, that particular form of suffering must be in view here. No doubt, times of persecution and suffering are satanically inspired. They can even be characterized as times when Satan “roared,” but that is not what is meant here.

Peter’s meaning becomes clear when we understand the nature of lions. A lion’s roar is one way he marks his territory. The dominant male lion in a pride roars to warn other male lions to stay out of his territory, and his roar can be heard up to nine miles away. Keeping in mind that lions were native to the Middle East in Bible times, we can assume that Peter’s original readers were familiar with a lion’s roar and what it meant. They would have often heard a lion roar and would have understood that a roaring lion was a dominant lion, the most powerful lion in the area. It is worth noting that Satan, a fallen angel, was not alone in the fall. Many other angels fell with him, but he was the instigator of the rebellion, the leader. So calling the devil “a roaring lion” was Peter’s way of saying that Satan is our most powerful foe.

Peter further describes the roaring lion as one that is prowling around. A lion that is prowling around is stalking his prey. Lions typically sleep and rest nineteen to twenty hours every day and will spend four to five hours hunting for food. A lion kills, eats, sleeps, and then repeats the process. Lions are at the top of the food chain. They have no natural enemies. Male lions weigh up to five hundred pounds, stand four feet high at the shoulder, and stretch nine feet from nose to tail. They are powerful enough to pounce on full-grown water buffaloes and zebras, pull them to the ground, and quickly kill them.

Lions are killing machines. They live to eat, consuming up to seventy-five pounds of meat at a time. And when Peter says the devil is like a roaring lion that prowls around stalking his prey he is painting the fiercest picture possible of the enemy that we face, and that enemy is bent on our destruction. He prowls around, “looking for someone to devour.” The Greek word translated “devour” means “to drink down.” The picture is a gruesome one, but if you have ever seen lions caught on film eating their catch, you know what it looks like. The feeding lions are covered with the blood of the animal they are consuming as if they had been drinking its blood and spilled it all over themselves. This is the image we have here of our enemy’s intent! He is as eager to destroy men’s lives spiritually as a lion is to devour the flesh of its prey. He is a malicious destroyer.

Understanding the danger that faces us is imperative. We have to take our enemy seriously or we will become easy prey. We must acknowledge his adversarial stance, his slanderous methodology, and his malicious intent if we hope to defend ourselves from his attacks.

WE NEED TO DEFEND OURSELVES

The second realization flows from the first, and it is obvious: we need to effectively defend ourselves against this dangerous foe. So Peter sets forth the basics of spiritual self-defense in three admonitions.

Avoid Distraction

The word translated “self-controlled” means to be sober, the opposite of being inebriated, or drunk. Peter is using a figure of speech. By telling his readers to be sober, he means that they should not be intoxicated with worldly pursuits—distracted and preoccupied to the point of being unaware

of an enemy. It is all too easy to be focused on the practical necessities of daily life to the point of spiritual distraction, like a grazing antelope that is so focused on his next morsel that he is unaware of an approaching lion.

————— ❧ —————
It is all too easy to
be focused on the
practical necessities
of daily life to the
point of spiritual
distraction.
————— ❧ —————

Be Alert

Peter goes on to say that we also need to be “alert.” It is not so much physical as spiritual alertness that is in view. Being spiritually alert begins with an active prayer life. Jesus taught his disciples to pray about the matter of temptation, saying, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13). When he admonished Peter, James, and John in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion (the night Peter denied him and the others forsook him) he said, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matt. 26:41). Therefore, being alert requires anticipating temptation and making it a matter of prayer.

In addition to prayer, believers must be ever watchful over their lives. The only real defense that the prey of a lion has is its own watchfulness. Almost everything that a lion kills can outrun him over a long distance. So the lion’s method of catching its prey is to silently stalk its victim. Lions

hunt at night. Their eyes are suited for seeing in the dark. Much like a house cat stalks a mouse or a bird, crouched low and moving in slow motion, a lion creeps through the tall grass in the darkness to within fifty feet or so of its intended victim. Then, with a burst of speed reaching thirty-five miles per hour and ending with a final pounce of up to thirty-five feet, the lion quickly captures its prey before the victim can accelerate to full speed and escape. By the time a lion reveals himself to his prey it is too late. The only defense that an antelope or a zebra has against such tactics is to be alert enough to catch a glimpse of the lion before he attacks.

The same is true in our struggle against the devil. *Our* defense also depends upon being alert. Now, we cannot see Satan, because he is a spirit being, but we can certainly identify temptation when it occurs. Therefore watchfulness must be geared to the situation or the circumstances at hand. If we know that certain situations often lead to temptation in our life, then we need to avoid those situations. If there is a place where we are often tempted, then we need to stay away from that place. If there are certain people that cause us to be tempted, then we need to separate ourselves from those people. Practically speaking, this is how to be watchful.

Take a Stand

In addition to being self-controlled and alert, there is another requirement for effective self-defense. In regard to the enemy, Peter says that we need to be “standing firm in the faith.” James says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Paul makes a similar statement: “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:11).

The Scriptures are clear. It is up to us to take a stand against the enemy in order to withstand Satan’s temptations. How is this done? Peter does not leave us guessing. He says that we must resist by standing firm in the faith. The word translated “standing firm” means “rock-solid,” like the foundation of a building that is unmovable. In other words, believers need to be on firm ground. God’s truth is that firm footing. Notice also that our firm resistance should be “in the faith.” We do not resist *with* our faith, but “in the faith”—that is, by means of the Word of God.

❧

**Believers need to
be on firm ground.
God’s truth is
that firm footing.**

❧

Remember, the devil is a deceiver, a liar, and a slanderer. He tempts us by causing us to doubt what God has said. He attempts to twist things around so that truth and error become confused. When he is successful, he is able to induce God's people to do what is contrary to God's will.

The simple fact is that we resist the devil by dedicating ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people are far too concerned about the devil. They frequently talk about him—about what he is doing and about how he is tempting them. The fact is, we do not need to focus on the devil in our daily lives. In fact, for all practical purposes, we do not know for sure what the devil does or does not do. Every one of us contends with multiple enemies, including our own lustful desires and the pressures of the world. Most temptations occur without Satan's personal involvement.

On the other hand, Satan is a master at camouflaging his activity and we might be surprised by how much he or his emissaries have to do with the temptations we face. However, we do not know for sure when he is involved or not, and it is not necessary to pinpoint direct satanic influence. What is important is to recognize temptation when it occurs and to deal with it. If we concentrate on being a dedicated Christian, one that battles against temptation, one that seeks to live in accord with God's Word, we are, most certainly, directly or indirectly, resisting the devil.

CONCLUSION

The apostle's message in 1 Peter 5:8-9 is simply this: we have an enemy. The first step in reckoning with him is to realize that we are in danger. The second step is to implement an effective defense. We simply must not be caught with our spiritual defenses down, unaware and unprepared.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Why is knowledge of an enemy so important?
2. How do we know that Satan is real?
3. How do we act as if the world is a playground rather than a battleground?
4. What is it about his character that makes Satan such a threat to us?
5. In general, what must we do to protect ourselves against satanic attack?

THE BELIEVER'S BATTLE WITH TEMPTATION

EXAM BOOKLET AK '14 (2 UNITS) BBWT

STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmas Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THESE EXAM PAGES

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NOW I HAVE A QUESTION . . .

As you complete the exams, you may have additional questions about the course material that have not been answered. On the lines below, you may ask any question you have related to the chapters you have studied. Your instructor will respond to your questions as best as he or she can.

(Leave the below area empty so that your instructor can respond to your questions.)

CHAPTER 1 EXAM

THE ADVERSARY'S EXISTENCE

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. The time we are most vulnerable to an enemy is when
 - A. we're a lot weaker than he is
 - B. we think we can beat him
 - C. we are unaware of his presence
 - D. we are all alone in our fight_____

2. The Bible teaches that the Christian life is

A. a battleground	C. a merry-go-round
B. a playground	D. a fairground

3. The term *devil* means

A. liar	C. enemy
B. slanderer	D. tempter

4. In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter compares our enemy the devil to

A. a fire-breathing dragon	C. a hissing snake
B. a violent storm	D. a roaring lion

5. Peter's descriptive phrase of Satan conveys that
 - A. his plan is to cut short our physical life
 - B. he is very angry with us
 - C. he is trying to frighten us
 - D. he is the most powerful enemy we have_____

6. One way to defend ourselves against the Evil One is to
 - A. hide from him
 - B. focus our attention on other things
 - C. not get distracted and preoccupied by worldly pursuits
 - D. ignore him_____

7. _____ is a primary way to defend ourselves spiritually.
 - A. Having an active prayer life
 - B. Maintaining our joy
 - C. Self-improvement
 - D. Knowing all there is to know about the spirit world _____

8. Anticipating temptation includes
 - A. being constantly on the lookout for Satan's attacks
 - B. strengthening your spiritual muscles so you can overpower him
 - C. relying on friends to tell you if you're going astray
 - D. avoiding situations, places, and people where you are easily tempted _____

9. "Satan tempts us by causing us to _____."
 - A. question whether we're truly saved
 - B. doubt what God has said
 - C. rely more on ourselves
 - D. stop meeting with other Christians _____

10. Temptation to sin comes from

A. Satan alone	C. only our own sinful desires
B. just the world	D. multiple sources _____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

How has your personally acknowledging that Satan is real affected your own battles with temptation?
