

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE SERIES

STAYING

ALERT!



“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

Many times when we speak of the enemy at work, what we are looking at are the results of the enemy’s prowling exercise as the Bible tells us clearly that the enemy is always looking around for someone to devour. For him to be looking means not everyone is readily available to be devoured. Therefore, it would help us to understand the things that make people susceptible.

“When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.”
Luke 4:13 NLT

Remember the enemy is opportunistic and quite subtle, which means the areas of susceptibility may not be so obvious. What we’re dealing with is a methodically minded being who isn’t necessarily focused on a one-off event, but rather drives a process of steadily eating away at something until there are no defences or strength left to resist. This series we are looking at some of the critical things to watch out for in our lives so we don’t create opportunities to be taken advantage of by the enemy.

Day 1

Loosening the Grip of Fear

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail...” Peter said, “Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you.” But Jesus said, “Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.” Luke 22:31-34

“Peter swore, “A curse on me if I’m lying—I don’t know the man!” And immediately the rooster crowed.” Matthew 26:74

Peter didn’t believe he would ever deny Jesus until fear set in. At that point he didn’t want to even be associated with Jesus because he feared what would happen to him. Fear is one of the tools the enemy uses to gain a foothold as he knows that if he can get us in the grip of fear we will lose faith because faith and fear cannot co-exist in equal measure, one must always have the upper hand.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

The enemy’s objective for introducing fear is to reduce our faith levels. Fear is a spirit which can start off fairly innocuously but if we allow it to take hold, it becomes very oppressive and magnifies the object of the fear to the point where we start to feel overwhelmed. The enemy gains advantage when we become paralyzed by fear as it gives him room to introduce all kinds of negatives into our lives.

The Bible doesn’t say fear will never come, rather it tells us that we have the power to overcome it. It’s at the point of fear we must consciously decide to still move ahead. Many times we find that once we take a step of faith the very thing we were so afraid of begins to lose its hold on us. When we’re facing a situation that is leading us to be afraid, that’s the time to intentionally feed our spirits with scripture, messages, people who will speak faith and not fear into us.

Prayer: Lord I recognize that fear will show up, but I ask for grace to recognize and tackle it early by the power of Your word and grace to take a step of faith



Day 2

Watch the Foothold

'And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.' Ephesians 4:26-27

A foothold is a place where a person's foot can be lodged to support them securely and from there make further progress. Anger is a powerful emotion that needs to be kept in check otherwise it gives the enemy a foothold to open us up to a myriad of issues. Have you noticed that when something happens to upset you the more you focus on that thing the angrier you become? Anger itself is not a sin, but if we let it simmer then we create room for it to take control which then lead us to actions that may cause us to sin.

'Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who does not control his temper.' Proverbs 25:28

When the enemy wants to trip us up he can just cause us to increasingly get angry until we lose control. In the spirit realm a person whose anger takes control is likened to a city with broken walls – no security or boundaries. Where there are no boundaries, anything goes and we may end up saying and/doing things we will regret later. The more often we let anger rule, the more we give the enemy a stronger and stronger foothold until anger becomes part of our nature. How then do we take charge when we're in the heat of the moment?

'...be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man' Ephesians 3:16

As believers we have the power through the Holy Spirit to control our emotions. As we yield to the Holy Spirit and are built up in our spirits, we are able to keep in check things that used to control us such as anger. People and situations will always come up that will provoke us, however when we feel anger welling up inside us is when we must consciously ask the Holy Spirit to help us take charge of our emotions. The more we do this, the less room we give anger to take charge.

Prayer: Lord I want to be led by You, let your Holy Spirit please strengthen me in my inner man so I don't consistently give in to anger.

Day 3

The Weapon Called Offence – Staying Unoffended

'This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.' Acts 24:16

While anger often elicits an immediate response, offence does not necessarily erupt into a tempestuous response, but leads to grudges, bitterness, strife and other negative emotions that tend to simmer for a while, sometimes even years. Paul understood the power of offence and how important it is to strive to be unoffended with either God or people. Striving means that it involves a deliberate intent on our part not to hold grudges regardless of what people do to us.

'Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" Matthew 18:21-22

Staying offended is choosing to hold on to what was done to us by others, but Jesus makes it clear that this is not an option for believers. For Jesus to give this instruction means there is divine enablement to help us. This is critical considering how cruel people can be and how justified we might feel for staying offended.

'And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered... And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.' Matthew 11:2-6

John's question was very strange because John himself identified as the forerunner of Jesus and was the first to acknowledge Jesus's earthly ministry. Clearly something had transpired that caused John to be offended with Jesus. Could it be that having heard all the miracles Jesus was performing John wondered why he was still in prison and Jesus hadn't done anything about it? Could it also be that when we look around us and see what God seems to be doing in the lives of others we wonder why He seems to be taking so long with us and we start to get offended with Him?

Offenses will surely come, but we have a choice in staying offended or allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us to consistently release ourselves from the clutches of offence. Staying unoffended closes the door to many outcomes the enemy has in store for us that we may not even have considered.

Prayer: Lord give me the grace to stay consistently unoffended either with You or people.

Day 4 Distracted by Distractions

'Turn my eyes away from vanity [all those worldly, meaningless things that distract—let Your priorities be mine], and restore me [with renewed energy] in Your ways.' Psalms 119:37

In this context distractions are not necessarily bad things such as idling time away, etc. Rather it's getting us to focus on the things that are outside of God's plan for us at the time which will ultimately derail us. The enemy knows how powerful distractions are so he introduces many suggestions that seemingly make sense, but don't align with God's plan. He knows we may not always take the time to check with God that what we want to do is His plan – especially if it's something we really want.

'Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord... But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood.'" I Chronicles 28:2-3

David shared his plan to build a temple for God with Nathan the prophet and both agreed it was a good thing to do (2 Sam 7). However, this wasn't God's plan for David and had he gone ahead people may have applauded him, but he would have missed it as far as God was concerned. There are times we have seemingly good ideas about where to live/school/work; who to marry, etc. But not all good plans are God's plan for us.

'So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.' Colossians 1:9-10

The key to avoiding distractions is to pray specifically that God makes His perfect will known and grant the grace to do it. Living a life of alignment leads to honoring and pleasing God as well as fruitfulness in all we do. The other side of this is living a life that dishonours and displeases God and unfruitfulness in our lives. Not a good place to be.

Prayer: Lord give me complete knowledge of Your will, keep my eyes focused on aligning with You and grant me the grace to do all You expect of me.

Day 5 Staying Spiritually Hungry

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” 1 Corinthians 10:12

One of the easiest ways to become prey to the enemy is to feel we have “arrived” spiritually, meaning that we have come to some level of self-satisfaction and don’t push for more of God. This is something that is extremely easy to fall into, especially if we have been believers for some time. Feeling we have arrived also leads us to feeling spiritually superior to others, forgetting that we are all a work in progress.

The enemy will encourage us to feel we don’t necessarily have to push for more of God and to be satisfied with where we may be at the time. This opens us up to the risk of thinking we are beyond falling, forgetting that it’s not our strength that keeps us but the grace of God. The more we depend on ourselves and not the Holy Spirit, the less emphasis we place on a life of being led by Him. The less emphasis we place on the Holy Spirit, the more we start stagnating spiritually without realizing it.

'And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!” But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.' Judges 16:20

Samson made the mistake of thinking it was business as usual, but because he had disconnected from the Lord, he didn’t realize that he no longer had supernatural backing. The same way when we disconnect from the Lord we start falling into old habits and errors. We need to be alert because spiritual stagnation doesn’t happen overnight. Rather it’s the result of a period of not consistently investing in our spiritual development.

'Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!' Romans 11:33

No matter how far we think we have come with God, there are more depths and dimensions that we are yet to discover in Him. The more we pursue knowing Him, the more He reveals Himself to us and the more like Jesus we become which is what the enemy is fighting as it’s to his advantage that we remain at whatever level we currently are.

Prayer: Lord help me to stay hungry for more of You and as I seek You, reveal yourself to me so that I may have a deep, personal and intimate insight into the true knowledge of You.

Day 6 Giving Due Honour

'Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel, says...I will honor those who honor me, and I will despise those who think lightly of me.' 1 Samuel 2:30

Giving God the honour He is due is one of the protective mechanisms we cannot afford to take lightly. When we truly honour the Lord from our hearts, we place a premium on our relationship with Him and not doing so means we despise Him. In this context the word "despise" does not mean to hate but to attach little weight to.

Recall in the book of Daniel where Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall after using items from God's temple for his party (Daniel 5)? Daniel's translation shows us that the king was weighed and found to be wanting. This tells us that people are "weighed" in the spiritual realm and a measure of what determines our weight is the honour we give to the Lord.

'And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote.' Isaiah 29:13

'Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.' Matthew 6:33

Let's never forget that God's priority is our heart, not outward actions. It's not enough to say we honour Him with our lips and make a show of honouring Him, but in our hearts, we place greater value on other things. The enemy understands the power of honour which is why there always seems to be a constant barrage of (usually legitimate) things vying for our attention. The whole idea is to refocus our priorities and emphasis to these things. For as long as we are on the earth, we must constantly and intentionally place a greater weight on our relationship with the Lord and the things that draw us closer to Him. When we do so, the Lord Himself honours us beyond what we could imagine.

Prayer: Lord help me consistently honour You from my heart. Let seeking You be my greatest treasure and delight.

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