

Who is the Enemy?

Have you ever been in a tug of war? You know the game you play at company picnics, where you use a great big rope that fills your hands and is a challenge to grip. You are the person right up front, with a six-foot expanse of goo-ey, wet mud between you and the opponents on the other side of the rope. Instead of being on the side of Mr. Muscleman, you look behind you and see the all-time company wimp on your team. Losing means being dragged in. Wet, cold and dirty! Winning takes strength, determination and perseverance.



The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

-John 10:10

Yes, there is a tug of war. It takes place in our lives every day. Only in this tug of war, we are not holding on to a rope, we are holding on to our own decisions. In this tug of war we are not dragged through a mud puddle. We are dragged through a field of landmines; the explosions are the messy, painful experiences of life. Losing is still cold and dirty, often times fatal. Winning takes strength, determination and perseverance. Victory is sweet! The difference between your company picnic game and this tug of war is that you get to choose whose team you wish to be on.

Who is the thief? What does he do?

The thief... is Satan! Satan comes ONLY to steal, kill and destroy us. He comes to kill and destroy everything that is important to us. God wants us to realize that is Satan's sole purpose! He is not in our lives for our benefit, but to cause us harm. Satan hates us and he hates God. Looking at our lives, we see the evidence of Satan's work in our relationships and situations. We experience stolen joy and peace within our families and ourselves. We witness the death of countless marriages everyday. We see the destruction caused by addictions, depression and abuse. Identifying the destruction is easy. Only God's Word exposes Satan's tactics and tells how he works against us.

How does he do it?

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;

Only...

When you do something over and over again and it is the **only** thing you do, how good do you get at it? When the Word states that Satan comes "only" to steal, kill and destroy we need to pay attention. Satan has pursued the destruction of God's people for a very long time and he is good at what he does. We must not underestimate him. It is truly important that we learn about his weapons.

Most Christians know that the thief Jesus refers to is Satan. We know that he steals, kills and

destroys. However, simply knowing that does not prepare us, as soldiers of Jesus Christ, for the struggle we face against Satan. That we do not know is – how does he do it? If we don't know how he does it, how can we stop him? In Boot Camp we learn about Satan's weapons. We learn how he uses these weapons. We learn the strategy he uses against us. Most importantly, we will learn how to stop him.

The only weapons Satan owns are persuasion and deception. First, let's look at how he uses persuasion. He can not force us to do anything. Satan is defeated by Christ, yet still uses these weapons to bring about the destruction and devastation we see in the world today.

Persuasion...

First let's look at how he uses persuasion. In this illustration imagine you made a decision to do something and someone asks you later, "Why did you do what you did?"

Have you ever given one of these answers?

- I just **thought** that's what I should do; or
- I just **felt** that's what I should do; or
- I had to do it that way; because of the **circumstances** I had no other choice.

As civilians, those are the answers we naturally give. We base our decisions on the natural elements of thoughts, feelings and circumstances. Satan uses persuasion and these elements to destroy us. He tries to persuade us with our logic. He tries to persuade us through our feelings. He tries to convince us through circumstances to believe him, to see things his way, and therefore make a decision to handle things his way. Satan is pulling hard on his side of the rope! How many times have we done things his way? We based our decisions on our feelings, our logic or the circumstances and made the wrong choice, resulting in pain. What has he influenced in our lives in the past week?

We need to know what Satan's tactics look like in our lives. Let's go back to the example I gave in the previous chapter. My husband Steve walks in from work and says something I don't like. Satan uses this opportunity to persuade me to handle the situation his way. In essence, he plants a landmine in my path. He will appeal to my logic regarding the situation. For example, Steve is upset because I neglected to put my car in the garage, but left it parked in the driveway. My logic is used to persuade me, "You knew you were going to the store in ten minutes. That's why you left your car out. You should just tell him off!" Satan will appeal to my feelings, "Did you hear what he just said? Didn't that hurt your feelings?"

If I listen to these persuasions, what will I do? I will step on the landmine. How big will the explosion of this landmine be? It could easily set off a chain reaction that would destroy the evening. Instead, I need to ask God how to respond. There are only two ways of handling any decision, God's way or any other way!

- *What does Satan use to steal, kill and destroy the abundant life Jesus has to give you?*

- *What has Satan used that appealed to you in the past week? Your right to be right? How unfair a situation felt? Fear of the circumstances?*
- *What decisions have you made to do things his way rather than God's way?*

Abundant life...

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Jesus came to give us life – abundant life! Jesus says He wants us to have and enjoy life to the full, till it overflows. If you close your eyes for just a moment and imagine, what does an abundant life look like to you? What does it mean in your marriage, family or other relationships? I know that an abundant life means a truly intimate and fulfilling relationship with my husband, a loving and joy-filled relationship with my children and experiencing all the benefits of the Spirit-filled relationship with God that He intends for me. The abundant life Jesus wants us to experience is better than anything one might ever imagine.

There are no landmines on God's path. Link the promise of Jesus giving us abundant life with the revelation from Hosea 4:6 regarding destruction. God does not want to see his children destroyed and when we seek Him and then do things His way we will have an abundant life. Jesus, by His blood has given us that. That isn't to say there won't be trials in life. However, the destruction that we see so prevalent in our lives will not be there. Now, with our spiritual headset, we can decide to ask for direction around every landmine.

- *What does abundant, full life look like to you?*
- *How has Jesus tried to lead you around and past the landmines in your life in the past?*
- *How has the abundant life of Jesus touched and influenced your life?*

Tug of war...

In John 10:10 Jesus tries to persuade us to see things His way. As we respond to Jesus, we find hope in our situation. He wants us to seek His way of doing things, make our decisions based on Him and then do what He asks us to do. In the tug of war, Jesus is the biggest, strongest guy on the team. It is His strength, His determination, and His perseverance that assures us our side will win! The key to victory is to know you always have a choice! When we choose to be on the side of Christ the result is always Victory!

- *Can you see the tug of war going on in your life?*
- *Who is the prize both Satan and Jesus are trying to win?*
- *How has the tug of war been operating in your life?*
- *Who are you going to believe? What are you going to choose to do?*

Deception ~Who is the enemy?

Satan's tactics always include deception. Let's look at how he uses deception to bring about destruction in our lives. In any struggle in life there are two sides. Think of your last argument. Or, think of the situation that is causing great stress in your life right now. Who or what are you upset or angry with? At that moment...in the tug of war, while you pull your side of the rope with all your strength... whom do you view as the enemy? You have probably never consciously used the label "enemy" in referring to the person or situation you are struggling against. However, you must realize - Whom you are angry "at" indicates who you believe the enemy to be.

Many times it is our spouse or our boss or the circumstances that we focus upon as the enemy. How many times, in my own past, have I struggled with what someone said or did to me? I was angry and hurt, and wished that person would change! But Jesus says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." He is telling us that Satan is the enemy! If we are fighting other people - if we are fighting the circumstances - we are fighting the wrong enemy!

I see these tactics destroy our lives all the time! In counseling others, I realize that when we are hurting, depressed or anxious it is because we want our situation to change, but are unable to force that change upon the other people in our lives - wives struggle with their husbands, and husbands with their wives; parents anguish over their children's attitudes and behaviors; young people rile against life and situations they do not understand. Yet, while we fight other people - God states that Satan is the enemy. We are fighting the wrong enemy! If you are fighting the wrong enemy, how can you win? While you are fighting the wrong enemy who is fighting the real enemy?

The answer to these questions are "You can't!" and "No one!" If Satan has us convinced that someone else is the enemy we will be pulled and dragged into the mud of life! I know - I have been! We are the only one pulling our side of the rope. Satan is not going to help us win. He is going to take advantage of us being focused on the person or problem instead of focusing on Christ as the answer to the battle. Then it is impossible to win the battle. It is like the neighborhood kid who starts two kids fighting and then takes off scot-free once the trouble starts. Satan really does not need to do anything else.

Your own worst enemy...

What about the internal struggles that cause sleepless nights and days full of anxiety and depression? When we are in the midst of the battle we often mistake ourselves for the enemy. Have you ever been certain you were your own worst enemy? I know I have. The demands, pressures and expectations we put on others are often even more stringent when placed on ourselves. At that point, who do we determine is the enemy? Perhaps the most difficult principle for any of us to fully grasp, believe and implement into our lives is that Satan is always the enemy, and that means no one else is! Without a certain revelation of this principle, we lose the battle without ever engaging the correct enemy. Satan escapes, without a scratch.

- *Who do you view as the enemy in your life?*

- *Have you ever viewed yourself as your own worst enemy?*
- *How often have you been fighting the wrong enemy? Who is fighting the real enemy and how can you expect to win?*

Jesus gives life!

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Jesus came that we “may have life and enjoy life in abundance – to the full, till it overflows.” Winning the tug of war means enjoying the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control that are the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. Winning means

- recognizing the tug of war in our life,
- recognizing who the enemy really is,
- choosing to be on the side of Christ,
- pulling as hard as we can when Jesus says “pull!”

We pull with love!

We pull with forgiveness!

We pull with compassion!

Isn't it time we see Satan in the middle of the mud puddle?