

A word of both encouragement and warning, from the heart of a shepherd who loves and prays for God's people... My friends, we need to be on the look-out for a few areas in which satan is launching focused attacks against God's people. We need to guard our own hearts in these areas, and pray for our brothers and sisters who are under attack as well.

Area #1. JOY: satan is out to steal your joy - he'll use the trials and tests before you, compounding them with discouragement and bad reports about the future, with the end goal of stealing your joy (and thus your strength). When you're under this attack, today seems bad and tomorrow seems worse. You find yourself looking for diversions (like Oprah, NFL Network, novels, video games, food...) things to distract the heart & mind from the lack of joy

SOLUTION: Go in the opposite spirit - put on the garments of praise, start thanking God for all the blessings you've known (start with the Cross), confess God's goodness, cast off all self-pity, shut the devil up in Jesus' name, and **start swinging your sword** by speaking out God's promises to you (*try Isaiah 54:17, Romans 8:28, James 4:7, 1 John 1:9, Romans 8:31, Romans 16:20, and Isaiah 41:10 to get you started*).

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH (Nehemiah 8:10) - satan didn't give us our joy, so why should we let him take it away? We've been given **AUTHORITY TO TRAMPLE** on snakes, scorpions, and over ALL the works of the devil - and nothing shall by any means harm us (Luke 10:19). Let's stand in our authority, swing our swords, and do some stomping! **This battle is about bringing glory to Jesus**; so let's praise Him amid the flame and flood.

Area #2. MARRIAGE: satan is attacking Christian marriages with extra intensity right now. If this doesn't apply to you, then say thank You Jesus. You can skip this entire section.

But many will testify that satan is dogging marriages, trying to sow seeds of division between spouses, stirring up tempers, and undermining trust and love. His goal is to attempt to make love grow cold (see Matthew 24:12).

The enemy's attack is **not** an excuse for our sin ("*my bad attitude isn't my fault – the devil made me do it*"); however, it does give us the awareness that we have an adversary who hates marriage because it is a covenant

God created and ordained. A healthy marriage brings glory to God; thus, satan is attacking Christians' marriages.

SOLUTION:

1. **REPENT** - humble yourself before God and yes, before your spouse; ask forgiveness, and turn away from the attitudes, words, and actions that have gotten your marriage to this place. NO REPENTANCE = NO POWER, for "**God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**" God's Spirit visits brokenness with His healing, help, and spiritual power. It's time to see God's power visit some hurting marriages.
2. **FORGIVE** - it's a decision, not a feeling. Jesus said we had to "**forgive... from the heart**" (*Matthew 18:35*), not because the person deserves or earns it. WE forgive because we've been FORGIVEN of so much. You and I deserve the eternal toaster oven - **the fact that we're forgiven, accepted, and loved by Jesus should make us the most forgiving people on the face of the earth.** Let it go, leave the past behind, pull up your tent pegs and break camp. It's time to move on in God's love and forgiveness, because 1) He told us to, and 2) He has a great future ahead for you (*Jeremiah 29:11*).
3. **STOP** looking at and focusing on your spouse's wrongs; this is a trap, and it leads to pride (because it's always easier to see someone else's faults than to see our own). *Start with yourself.* God will honor this step, and it will open a window through which God's grace can flow into your relationship.
4. **REMOVE** – For those of you who have been entertaining craziness in your heart or mind, the word of the Lord to you is **REMOVE** the word "DIVORCE" from your vocabulary – strike it from the realm of possibility. Specifically, **repent for even considering giving up;** you are not married to give up, to quit, to decide for God that things are too hard. **You are a child of God, and you're going to see His power move in your situation.** Anything worth having is worth fighting for, and you're going to make it. So dig in, humble yourself before the Lord, seek His face, repent of your own attitudes first, and start doing #5...
5. **START BLESSING.** That means to **PRAY** blessing over your spouse, **SPEAK** words of blessing (regardless of what he or she says back to you), **SHOW** blessing by honoring your spouse in front of your kids and others (and **refuse** to speak ill of your spouse, especially to your

friends); and **LOOK** for ways to bless your beloved. I realize many of us have had to tighten our budget lately, but blessing your spouse doesn't have to cost a lot of money. A card, a note, an email, an inexpensive gift, their favorite candy bar, etc. – there are plenty of ways to say "I love you, and you're a blessing" without spending much dough. *A little show of love can go a long way toward healing a hurting relationship...* and God will use your efforts like loaves & fishes, making them accomplish much more than humanly possible.

Area #3. COMPROMISE. Many of God's people are being unknowingly seduced by the spirit of the age, slowly transformed by the culture in which we find ourselves. Satan wants us to think like the world, because he knows that thoughts lead to attitudes and actions.

The main agents of influence are media, news, and entertainment. Satan finds access to our hearts and minds through what we watch, read, and listen to, for 1 John 5:19 tells us that "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." **We should not expect Satan's mouthpiece to bring God's report.**

This is **not** about legalism, not about me (or anyone else) telling you what to do or not do. This **is** about each of us asking the Holy Spirit to search our lives and homes, showing us what needs to be thrown out. *This is about returning to our first love for Christ in every way we've left or neglected it, about bringing Him glory in every area of our lives (including the ones that no one else sees), and about getting ready spiritually for the days ahead.*

SOLUTION:

1. Invite the Holy Spirit's guidance, help, and wisdom to know what's best for you.
2. Use the principles of God's Word: Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:1-2, and Romans 12:1-2
3. Spend time with Jesus every day; there is no substitute for the presence of God.

I say this from the loving heart of a pastor who only wants to see you **SUCCEED** in the future that God has for you and to see you bring Jesus great glory: **if you are filling your heart with this world's ideas while starving yourself of God's Word, you are setting yourself up for a fall.** There is a great battle ahead in our nation, and you can't get ready for a fight on a diet of junk food – it requires training, and it is high time for God's people to start training spiritually.

I pray that the Spirit of God ministers these words to your heart in any way that applies, and that He strengthens you in the joy, faith, and love of our Savior.

Many blessings to you,

Pastor Matthew Casey