

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

10 Ways to Resist the Devil

by Tim Challies

It is one of the Bible's many sweet and powerful promises: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). The question is, though, how do we do this? In very practical ways, how do we resist the devil? In his book, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, Thomas Brooks offers a list of ten ways the Christian can resist Satan's temptations.

- 1. *Be Ruled by the Word.*** Make the Word of God your rule and authority and live in obedience to all it says. It will keep you walking straight and guard you from all manner of temptation. "When men throw off the Word, then God throws off them, and then Satan takes them by the hand, and leads them into snares at his pleasure."
- 2. *Beware of Grieving the Holy Spirit.*** It is the Holy Spirit that gives the Christian the ability to discern Satan's temptations and to see his hand in and behind life's circumstances. If you grieve the Spirit, you drive off the one whose ministry involves guarding you against Satan's attacks.
- 3. *Labor for Wisdom.*** There is a great difference between knowledge and wisdom, between accumulating facts and applying Scripture to those facts so they become wisdom. It is not the Christian with the most knowledge, but the Christian with the most wisdom, who is equipped to battle Satan's temptations.
- 4. *Resist the First Stirring of Temptation.*** It is safe to resist temptation and dangerous to dabble in it. "He that will play with Satan's bait, will quickly be taken with Satan's hook." God promises that we can resist *temptation*, not that we can resist *sin* once we have begun to dabble in that temptation.
- 5. *Labor to Be Filled With the Spirit.*** The Spirit is a Spirit of light and power. The Spirit's light shines bright against the darkness of sin and his power is sufficient to overcome all evil and temptation. When it comes to fighting Satan's temptations, it is better to have a heart filled with the Spirit than a head filled with facts.
- 6. *Keep Humble.*** A humble heart would rather lie in the dust than rise to prominence by sinful means; it would prefer to lose everything than to sin and be left with a guilty conscience. The humble person is neither drawn in by what Satan offers, nor terrified by his threats.
- 7. *Be Constantly on Guard.*** A secure soul is a soul in a position to be led astray and ensnared. "That soul that will not watch against temptations, will certainly fall before the power of temptations." Satan strengthens his assaults when the soul grows drowsy and careless. So be constantly on guard. "Watchfulness is nothing else but the soul running up and down, to and fro, busy everywhere; it is the heart busied and employed with diligent observation of what comes from within us, and of what comes from without us and into us."
- 8. *Continue Communing With God.*** It is as you join in communion with God that he gives you strength to resist Satan's attacks. "A soul high in communion with God may be tempted, but will not easily be conquered. Such a soul will fight it out to the death." Take full advantage of God's means of grace.
- 9. *Do Not Engage Satan In Your Own Strength.*** You need to draw the power, and even the desire, to resist sin from Jesus Christ and you need to do this every day. "Certainly that soul that engages against any old or new temptation without new strength, new influences from on high, will fall before the power of new temptation." Commune with God, be on guard, be humble—do all of these things! But do not rely on them in the battle; instead, rely on Christ.
- 10. *Pray Constantly.*** "Prayer is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God and a scourge to the devil." So pray and pray constantly. Tell God of your own inability to detect and respond to temptation; tell him that you are utterly dependent upon his grace; tell God that Christ's blood has been applied to you; tell God that you are his child; ask God to deliver you from temptation for the glory of his name.

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Church Is For Messy People

by Stephen Altrogge

We tend to get dressed up for church. Depending on your denomination, getting dressed up might look like wearing a suit and tie or a dress. Or, getting dressed up might look like wearing your best pair of jeans and a collared shirt. We clean up before going to church. We shower and we brush our hair. We want to, at the least, look like we have it together. For the most part, we don't go to church wearing yoga pants or sweatpants. We don't roll out of bed and go straight to church.

I distinctly remember one Sunday when a man said to me something like, “When I look around, I see all these people who have their lives together. Meanwhile, my life is a mess.” Church should be a place where messy people feel comfortable. When I say “messy people”, I don't mean people who are willfully engaging in unrepentant sin. I mean people who are seeking to follow Jesus, but who often find themselves struggling, and falling, and failing. I'm talking about the weak, weary, and worn out.

- *I'm talking about the couple who is seeking the Lord, and yet their daughter is not a Christian, and is living with her boyfriend.*
- *I'm talking about the young man who is following Jesus, yet also deals with deep depression and suicidal thoughts.*
- *I'm talking about the woman who loves Jesus, yet also finds herself regularly struggling with homosexual desires.*
- *I'm talking about the teenage boy who is trying to live for Jesus, yet also struggles with cutting himself.*
- *I'm talking about the woman who has followed Jesus for many years, yet can't come to church anymore because she is racked with arthritis and fibromyalgia.*
- *I'm talking about the older single man who is faithfully following Jesus, yet regularly struggles with despair because he isn't married.*
- *I'm talking about the woman who walks with Christ, yet can't seem to overcome her struggles with being overweight.*
- *I'm talking about the young woman who is new to following Christ, and isn't quite sure how to handle her struggle with bulimia.*

How can we serve “messy” people? How can we make “messy” people feel welcome in our churches? Several ways.

Don't act shocked when we see sin. Unfortunately, we tend to act shocked when certain sins or struggles come to light. We aren't surprised by pride or anger or impatience. But we are shocked when someone says they struggle with suicidal thoughts or homosexual desires or the desire to cut themselves. We are shocked when someone's child gets caught with drugs. But we shouldn't be shocked. Even as Christians, we still have a sinful nature. That sinful nature manifests itself in many different ways. We shouldn't be shocked when we see sin. If we are shocked, it means we haven't come face to face with the depravity that lurks in our own hearts.

Regularly acknowledge our own sins, failures, and weaknesses. The truth is, nobody has it all together. All of us are desperate sinners in need of a mighty Savior. All of us are sick patients in need of a wise physician. I don't struggle with an eating disorder, but I sure as heck have a whole lot of other struggles.

Regularly revel in the mighty power of Jesus. We should talk about our sins and struggles, but we can't stop there. We are weak and empty, but Jesus is mighty and full of grace. There is no struggle bigger than Jesus. There is no sin that cannot be conquered by the risen Savior. There is no failure that cannot be covered by the blood of Christ. We need to constantly remind ourselves that Jesus is bigger and better than we can imagine. The gospel is the power of God for salvation and sanctification.

Would “messy” people feel comfortable in your church? Or would they feel like there are certain struggles that they need to hide? The gospel allows us to openly confess our struggles. The gospel also gives us hope that our struggles will not define us. The gospel allows us to be “messy” and hopeful at the same time.