

I don’t know if the devil actually has a handbook from which he teaches novice demons their trade.

C.S. Lewis wrote a fascinating book on this theme, called “The Screwtape Letters.” The book purports to be a collection of letters, written by Screwtape, the senior demon, to his apprentice, Wormwood, instructing him in the finer points of demonic deception and temptation. The book is an insightful examination of the characteristic vulnerabilities of human beings and our susceptibility to sin.

But if there is such a book, I imagine these might be the Top 12 Suggestions the devil would make to vulnerable humans in order to lead them astray.

The first lying theme to consider is:

**Anonymity**

The deceiver’s suggestions include:

1. No one is looking.

2. No one will ever find out.

3. No one knows you’re here.

4. Nobody else cares.

The second theme of deception to consider is:

**Self-satisfaction**

That liar will tell you:

5. You can have just one.

6. You deserve it.

7. Quick, make a decision.

8. Okay, just one more.

The final fraudulent theme to consider is:

**License** (root of the word “licentiousness”)

“You’re entitled,” he whispers:

9. You can start tomorrow.

10. Jesus forgives. (Used as license to presume on the grace of God)

11. It won’t make any difference.

12. Other people do it all the time.

There can be no question that the devil is persistent! He’s been active in every generation of humankind since the beginning, because our vulnerabilities provide him ample opportunity.

**Genesis 3:1-6**

***Genesis******3:1****Now the serpent was more shrewd than any of the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “****Is it really true*** *that God said, ‘You must not eat from any tree of the orchard’?”* ***3:2****The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the orchard;* ***3:3****but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard God said, ‘You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or else you will die.’ ”* ***3:4****The serpent said to the woman, “****Surely you will not*** *die,* ***3:5****for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil.”*

***3:6****When the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, was attractive to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.*

Casting aspersions on the character of Almighty God, the serpent suggested, “Is it really true…?”

When Eve boldly quoted what she had been told, the serpent objected, “What you believe is surely untrue. God has ulterior motives; He wants to keep you in the dark, under His thumb.”

In the end, she succumbed. And that defines human vulnerability to a T. Predictably, we eventually cave to the pressure of temptation. That’s why those 12 suggestions are so painfully familiar to us. This is what set Jesus apart: He never caved.

Consider the record of Luke 4:1-13, when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness during a 40-day fast. The devil pushed Him three times during His desert fast, and three times Jesus responded with a quote from the Word of God that strengthened and guided and sustained Him.

***Hebrews 4:12****For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart.*

One edge of God’s Word cuts us, like a surgeon’s scalpel, to remove the cancer of sin. The other edge, cuts off the hand of the evil one, so that he cannot touch us in any lasting manner.

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

**Testing Produces a Testimony**

Opportunity plus Temptation develops Character.

*1 Peter 1:6So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*

**The Lie We Believe**

Sometimes we hide behind the lie we believe most often: that’s just who I am. We’re so familiar with our weaknesses, that we believe the devil’s lie that they are inescapable and unconquerable. They are real, but we are not their slaves—not any more.

Someone wisely said, “If you take a dysfunction and call it your personality you have created a safe place for dysfunction to live.” (Bill Johnson)

“Personality” is NOT the sum of your strengths and weaknesses, nor the product of life’s experiences. Personality is who God made you to be. Your moral strengths are part of your personality, as are the flip-sides of your moral weaknesses. Personality is the sum of your best you, *plus* your best potential.

How you behave is just that; it is not who you are. That’s why we say that your greatest value is in who you are, not in what you do. And that’s why God can still love you (the real you) even when you misbehave.

[That is not a license to misbehave; it is a promise of restoration.)

**The Truth God Declares**

Stop listening to the devil’s lies. That’s all he ever has to say—LIES.

Jesus said, *“[The devil] has never stood by the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he is speaking in character; because he is a liar—indeed, the inventor of the lie!”* (John 8:44).

Instead... Try to get God’s perspective. Because God has a playbook. He has a roadmap for your victory. Let the Bible tell you who you are.

***2 Corinthians 5:17****Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

You are a NEW creation; the old has passed away. It’s now *a choice you make* to go back to the old. It now *requires a choice* by you to return to your old ways.

Which means, on the other hand, you now have a choice NOT to go back, but to move ahead in Christ.

To do so, you must follow Paul’s instruction (Romans 6:11):

*“Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Or, as Eugene Peterson translated it:

*“From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That’s what Jesus did.”*

“Reckon” is a word that describes a reasoning process, an intentional consideration, a way of seeing yourself—from God’s point of view. And what is His perspective of you? I believe it is revealed in fifteen declarations God has made about you in the Bible.

**God’s Care**

1. God sees you.

2. God loves you.

3. God is with you.

4. God calls you righteous.

5. God is building the best version of yourself.

**Your Identity**

6. You have been made in the image of God.

7. You are now a new creation in Christ.

8. Your citizenship is in Heaven.

9. You have been washed clean, sanctified, and justified.

10. You are God’s masterpiece in the making.

**Your Destiny**

11. You may not be yet what you shall be, but you are not what you once were.

12. You can do everything God asks of you with the strength Jesus gives.

13. Your life is a seed; plant it carefully.

14. You are more than a conqueror.

15. You are blessed and highly favored.

Recently, a call for prayer went out to all points of the world on behalf of Lois Evans, the wife of Pastor Tony Evans. She was battling a serious cancer. Although thousands of prayers were lifted for her, she died. At her memorial service, her son, Jonathan Evans, shared a stirring testimony of his own regarding that struggle. You really should hear it!

Here’s a link to the 8-minute video clip of his message that I shared at the end of this message:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/8sn8u7pd7xqyuup/Jonathan%20Evans%20Testimony.mp4?dl=0>

Getting God’s perspective makes a world of difference!