

## How to Expose the Schemes of the Enemy (and 6 Ways to Protect Yourself)

***Ephesians 6:10-12 (NIV)***

***<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.***

***<sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.***

***<sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

In all that swirls around us today, from top headline news stories to the day to day struggles, I'm aware, more than ever - we're in a battle in this life. We face an active enemy every single day that we're here breathing air. We may not see it, we might forget, it's easy to lose focus, and get distracted on all that really doesn't matter.

But the truth is, spiritual forces are still at work.

Every wise soldier knows he must do one thing. To get him through the battle. To take him into tomorrow. Know who the enemy is.

Unless we know who the real enemy is and how he operates, chances are, we will not win. We must know his schemes, understand his battle tactics, know his weaknesses and his strengths. We must know what he looks like, and how he disguises himself. We must live aware.

The same is true in life. Yet sometimes we forget. Often in the day to day of life routines, we lose sight of who the enemy really is. And we start fighting one another, even turning against our own team. Divided families, separated friendships, split churches – we lose power and effectiveness when we fight against ourselves. And nothing could make the Satan happier than to see us at war with each other.

Other times, we assume we're fighting the right battles, against opposing forces, but our focus gets blurred. We wrestle and struggle with those that disagree with our beliefs, values, or what we stand for. We spin our wheels, wearying ourselves with critical words and judgmental tones. And in it all, with energy zapped, and more anger than love, we miss it.

God's Word reminds us, ***“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).***

There's one who lurks around us today. He's real. He's alive. He's deceptive. He's crafty. And his primary goal is to strike you down, along with as many others he can drag down with you. He waits. He searches. He watches. Looking for the best time to attack, at your weakest, most vulnerable moment.

Satan is the real foe we face. And he's not just some guy in a red suit, pitchfork in hand. Don't be fooled. He's far more deceptive.

He wants you to fail; he wants you to quit; he wants to render you completely ineffective. His main goal is to steal, kill, and destroy.

He seeks to gain ground today in as many lives as he can, and in every corner of our world, for he knows his time is limited.

But we don't have to let him win.

God has much to say about his devious schemes. And though he tells us not to be afraid, he also tells us to be on guard and to live aware.

In **2 Corinthians 2:10-11**, Paul reminds believers to forgive those who have wronged them, ***"in order that Satan might not outwit (take advantage of) us. For we are not unaware (ignorant, uninformed) of his schemes (evil purpose, thoughts, plans)."***

God has a plan for our lives. The enemy has a plan for us too. We have to determine which voice we're going to listen to, and who we will choose to follow.

### **What the enemy looks like and how he works – 10 things:**

1. He is a liar. A twister of the Truth. From the beginning of time, he has hissed lies our way, twisting God's word to bring doubt and disbelief. (John 8:44, Genesis 3:1)
2. He is a deceiver. He will seek to bring confusion and lead many astray, he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. (Revelation 12:9; Matthew 7:15)
3. He is a thief. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He will rob us of joy, peace, security and purpose. He will try to destroy our families, lives, and all that we hold dear. (John 10:10)
4. He is the accuser. His voice condemns and accuses bringing shame and fear. (Revelation 12:10)
5. He is our adversary. He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking who he can devour. His attacks are ruthless. He searches for the weakest, most vulnerable victims to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)
6. He disguises himself as an angel of light, he is deceptively cunning and can make himself appear beautiful and alluring. He attempts to make sin look good and evil enticing. (2 Corinthians 11:14)
7. He is the tempter. He will do anything to try to lure you away from Truth, away from God. He knows your weaknesses, don't be fooled. He lures, he tempts, with sex, money, power, greed, and lust. (Matthew 4:3)
8. He is Beelzebub. Known as the lord of the flies, the prince of demons. Like flies gravitate to decay and death, he lords over what brings death. (Matthew 12:23-24)
9. He is crafty. He is a schemer. He is cunning and evil. He can never be trusted. He is a master manipulator, don't fall for his schemes. (Genesis 3:1-5, Ephesians 6:11-12)
10. He is one who hinders. He is a stumbling block. He will do anything to prevent the Name of Jesus Christ from being proclaimed and Truth from being shared. He will try every trick possible to throw roadblocks in our path and to stop us from being fruitful (1 Thessalonians 2:18, Matthew 16:23)

### **Times you can know he will attack:**

- 1) When you're already down. Satan never fights fair. He's cruel. He will try to kick you while you're down, and attack when you already struggling, and at your weakest, most vulnerable moments.
- 2) When you don't expect it. Often when life is great and things seem happy, we let our guard down. We forget he's still there, waiting for one unexpected moment when he can come in with a brutal blow. Even when days are good, and we are strong, live aware that dark forces fight against us, in the spiritual realm where we cannot see.
- 3) When you think you can handle it. We must live aware, understanding our weakness and find strength in God alone, never in our own flesh. Do not be fooled to think you can't be tempted.
- 4) When you're making a difference for God's purposes. If you are a force for God's kingdom, and living like salt and light in this world, know that you will be attacked. You will. No doubt. Stay aware, do not be surprised, opposing forces will try to stop your influence for Christ. But they do not have to win. And we need not be afraid, for the Lord our God fights for us. He is on our side.

### **Protecting yourself from his schemes:**

- 1) Be aware. Stay alert. (1 Peter 5:8)
- 2) Submit to God's authority. Be ruthless with sin, which is an open door for the enemy to work. Resist him and he has to flee. (James 4:7)
- 3) Know that in Christ, we are forgiven. You are set free. You have His mighty power working within you. You are more than a conqueror through Christ. (Romans 8:37)
- 4) Put on the armor. Daily. Pray. Take up the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, which is our only offensive weapon. (Ephesians 6:11)
- 5) Know that He is for you. He is with you. And the enemy does not have the final say over your life. God fights for you, even in times you're unaware. He's always working on your behalf, often behind the scenes where you cannot see. And the enemy's plans will be crushed. (Romans 16:20)
- 6) Keep living aware. Keep standing strong. You are never alone.

***“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (Ephesians 6:10).***

***“Greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).***