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DVD SESSION 1

God's Devil, Chapter 1: PUTTING THE DEVIL IN HIS PLACE

A Summary from the Book

This book is a modest attempt to put the devil in his place. When Lucifer (whose name means “light bearer”) rolled the dice, gambling that he could do better by being God’s enemy rather than God’s friend, he set in motion a moral catastrophe that would reverberate throughout the universe. You and I have been deeply affected by his decision made in the ages long ago.

Any power Lucifer would exercise would always be subject to God’s will and decree. Thus moment by moment he would suffer the humiliation of knowing that he could never be the ultimate cause of his existence and power.

We need to be reminded of Martin Luther’s words that

even the “devil is God’s devil.” We have forgotten that only when we know who God is can we know who the devil is. Blessed are those who are convinced that the prince of this world has become the slave of the Prince of Peace.

This book attempts to give an overview of the career of Satan and his interaction with the Almighty. It traces his fall from an exalted position to his defeat by Christ and to his demise in everlasting shame and contempt. It attempts to prove that Satan always loses even when he “wins.” Best of all, it shows that we who have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light are able to stand against him.

My first premise is that God has *absolute sovereignty in His universe*. That means that even evil is a part of the larger plan of God. Of course, I do not mean to imply that God either does evil or approves of it. However, I do mean that by virtue of His roles as Creator and sustainer of the universe, God is the ultimate (though not the immediate) cause of all that comes to pass.

My second premise is that God *uses our conflict with Satan to develop character*. These struggles give us the opportunity to have our faith tested. Our spiritual war is a classroom where we can learn about the deceitfulness of sin and the chastisement of God—along with His grace and power.

I am convinced that unless we grasp how the devil fits into God’s scheme of things, we will find it more difficult to stand against his conspiracy against us personally and his influence within our culture. How we perceive our enemy will largely determine how we fight against him.

ENGAGING THE TOPIC

Complete the statements below after reading the book and the above summary. Then, during your class or small-group meeting, watch the DVD, Session 1.

1. Satan was defeated the moment he chose to _____.
2. The portrait of Satan, which dominated much of medieval thinking, was not based on the Bible but on popular _____.
3. At the _____, Lucifer was defeated spiritually.
4. When Satan is thrown into the lake of fire, he will be defeated _____.
5. God uses our conflict with Satan to develop our _____.
6. The biblical portrait of Satan is that he indeed does have great power, but that it is always limited by the _____ and _____ of God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the author's statement that "God has absolute sovereignty in His universe." What does that tell us? How do we reconcile that with the evil we see in the world today?

2. Satan has already been defeated *strategically*. What was the decisive factor in his defeat? What prevailing conditions must Satan endure as a result of his defeat?

3. What ensured Satan's defeat *spiritually*? In what ways does his spiritual defeat impact him?

4. What will Satan's eternal punishment involve? (See Revelation 20:14.)

5. Dante's classic, *Inferno*, gives a portrait of Satan that dominated much of medieval thinking. Describe the details of his view of Satan. Why is Dante's view erroneous?

6. In his poems *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, how did Milton portray Lucifer? What helpful contributions did Milton make to his readers' general understanding of Satan? Where did Milton fall short in his portrayal?

7. Discuss Goethe's devil, Mephistopheles. How does Goethe distort scriptural teaching about the devil? In what ways can we see his devil fitting within the framework of contemporary America?

8. The author mentions a poll that indicates that at least 25 percent of Americans believe that the devil is only a symbol of man's inhumanity to man. Of those who believe in the devil, only a small percentage believe they have ever been tempted by him. What does that tell us about the "spiritual temperature" of our country? How do you respond to family, friends, and coworkers who share those beliefs?

9. One of Dr. Lutzer's premises in this chapter is that God uses our conflict with Satan to develop character. As believers, what do we gain from our conflict with such a powerful, evil being?

10. The theme of our study is spiritual warfare. Against Satan and his army, we are battling a powerful enemy. What makes us confident we are in a winnable war?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Scripture teaches us that Christ's sacrifice on the cross defeated Satan and his purpose of destroying the entire human race (John 12:31–34). Although Satan has great power, it is always limited by the purposes and plans of God. Believers are under constant attack by the enemy, as Satan is engaged in a great war with God for the souls of men and women. But we walk by faith victoriously, for it is the resurrected Christ who intercedes for us to the right hand of God (Romans 8:34). When we do sin, Satan will accuse us before God. But by God's grace, if we confess our sins, we are forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:9; 2:1;

Hebrews 13:20–21).

James 4:7 tells us, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” The key to resisting the devil is to first submit to God. The word “resist” in the Greek text here is the word *anthistemi*, which means “take a stand against.” When we stand against the devil and his underlings, we do so in the name and authority of Jesus Christ. To be effective, however, we must equip ourselves by putting on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11–18).

All God’s people experience personal struggles with the enemy. When we face temptation, let us remember that Jesus, when tempted by Satan, used Scripture to rebuke him. Read Matthew 4:1–10, where Satan tempted Jesus three times. In all three cases, Jesus used Scripture to resist Satan and defeat him. We too can defeat Satan by properly using the Word of God.

Take time to daily engage God’s Word:

- Spend time getting know God’s Word. Ask God to help you apply it to your life.
- Memorize God’s Word. “Store” God’s truth in your heart and mind.
- Meditate on God’s Word. Feed your soul with its truths (Psalm 1:2).
- Use God’s Word when facing temptation. The Holy Spirit will enable you to use God’s Word in your battles against the devil.

Always remember that the Holy Spirit within us helps teach the truth of God’s Word. “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach

you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

ENGAGING THE TOPIC answers:

1. sin
2. folklore
3. cross
4. eternally
5. character
6. purposes, plans