

This past Thursday, I had a work meeting in Lexington with our organization. 28 Restaurant managers, a handful of supervisors, My Director of Operations and the Chief Restaurant Officer for our organization.

Around 2 1/2 hours into the meeting, something began to happen To one of the ladies In the room.

I saw a commotion Out of the corner Of my eye, and there were several people standing around one of the restaurant managers, holding onto her.

Soon after, they laid her on the floor, and I heard someone say "She's not breathing." Someone began doing CPR while another dialed 911.

In the moments that one of the ladies was doing CPR, until the ambulance arrived, It was only minutes. But, it seemed like an eternity.

That very day, standing in the meeting room of our home office, I witnessed the passing Of a young woman.

It was a moment that reminded me of our mortality and the short nature of our time on earth.

Life is a precious gift, yet it is incredibly fragile. Each breath we take is a blessing, and each moment we have is an opportunity to love, to learn, and to grow.

But as I witnessed This past Thursday, life can also end in an instant.

However, this should not lead us to fear, but rather to a greater appreciation of the time we have and the relationships That we hold dear.

Death is a part of our human experience. It's a reality we all must face. Yet, in the face of death, we are reminded of the importance of living a life of purpose and meaning.

We are reminded to make each day count, to live in a way that honors God, and to love others as Christ loved us.

In the Bible In the book of James Chapter 4 verse 14, James tells us **“For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”** We are not promised tomorrow. It is a gift from God, Each morning When we wake up.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 says “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die;

While death may seem like an end, for us as believers, It is just the beginning. It is the start of our eternal life with God.

The Bible tells us **in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”**

This is the hope we hold onto, the promise that gives us peace in the face of death.

In witnessing the end of a life, I was reminded In that moment, of the importance of the life we choose to live here on earth, the reality of our inevitable death, and the promise of eternal life through Christ.

Let us live each day in a way that honors God, loves others, and looks forward to the promise of eternity.

I ask that you pray For that woman, And for her family, That God would comfort them Through the grief, sadness, And heartache that I'm sure They are feeling.

Ephesians 6:11-12

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Title: The Devil: The Ultimate Bully

Introduction:

Spiritual warfare is a concept in Christianity that refers to the ongoing battle between the forces of good, represented by God and His followers, and the forces of evil, represented by Satan and his followers.

The Devil is described as a master of deception, tricks, and schemes.

His ultimate goal
is to keep people from accepting
the truth of the Gospel
and to keep believers
from spreading the message.

He uses a variety of tactics,
including deception, temptation, and lies.

One of Satan's strategies
is to present us
with a worst-case scenario
of our future
in order to arouse fear in us.

He also uses our minds
as his battlefield
to wage war against us.

He tells us lies
and they sound so convincing
that we hold them
for the truth.

In the same way that bows and arrows
Used in warfare centuries ago,
Are useless against today's
Highly sophisticated weapons,
The carnal weapons
That we try to use
In spiritual warfare
Against the devil,
Have no power against his schemes
And his fierce attacks.

However, as Christians,
we have the power and authority
to resist these attacks
and to overcome them
through faith in Christ.

The more we learn the truths
concerning spiritual warfare,
the more prepared we can be
to fight and to be victorious.

The Word of God is our light of truth
and we are the soldiers
who must know it
and live it out every day.

The greatest hindrance
To the devil's destructive efforts
Is standing strong
In the knowledge
And the reverence
Of the Lord.

The greatest roadblock
To the bullying from the devil
Is the christian who-
Above all else-
Lives for God,
Walks with integrity,
Is filled with the holy spirit,
And is obedient to God's truth.

Our greatest responsibility
In defeating the enemy's efforts
Is to be faithful in prayer,
Lovers of scripture,
And live clean, honest,
Humble, spirit-filled lives.

We have to depend on God
To guard us and to protect us
Morally, physically, and spiritually.
And we have to openly follow Him
In obedience
To His commands.
We must not be
Pawns of the devil,
But servants of christ.

Today, I want to share
A personal story
with you all.

When I was a child,
There was a kid at school,
Who bullied me everyday.
If he wasn't after my lunch money,
If he wasn't after my lunch,
He was always doing something
To be mean to me.
Yes, as a child,
I was bullied.

It was a difficult time for me,
Because I was miserable,
And this went on
For months and months,
Until one day,
He finally stopped,
For whatever reason.

I don't know why
He chose
To pick on me,
And I don't know why
He stopped all of a sudden,
But I was relieved when he did.

As I said earlier,
It was a difficult time,

But it taught me
Valuable lessons.

I realize that this experience,
as painful as it was,
shaped me into
the person I am today.

Point 1: Understanding the Bully (The Devil)

The Bible says in **John 8:44** “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

The devil uses various tactics
to lead people
away from God’s truth
and into fear, deception, and submission.

Satan often uses fear
as a tool to paralyze us
and keep us from moving
forward in our faith.

Fear can make us
doubt God’s goodness
and love for us,
and it can make us feel
alone and powerless.

This is contrary
to what the Bible teaches
in **2 Timothy 1:7,**
**“For God has not given us
a spirit of fear,
but of power and of love
and of a sound mind.”**

He deceives us
by distorting the truth,
causing confusion,
and leading us
to believe things
that are not in line
with God’s Word.

He can make sin
look appealing
or convince us
that we’re unworthy
of God’s love.

Satan uses intimidation
to make us feel small,
insignificant, and incapable
of standing up against him.

He wants us to believe
that we're powerless
and that he's unbeatable.

But the Bible assures us
in **Romans 8:37**
that **“in all these things
we are more than conquerors
through Him who loved us.”**

The devil's tactics
are designed to distract us
from our relationship with God
and to create
a sense of hopelessness.

But as believers,
we have the power
to resist these tactics
through faith, prayer,
and the knowledge
of God's Word.

Ephesians 6:11 encourages us to “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

Point 2: Recognizing the Bully’s Tactics

The devil often uses temptation as a means to entice us into sin.

This can be seen in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where the serpent tempts Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, directly disobeying God’s command.

He often uses deception to mislead us and make us believe things that are not true. This can lead us away from God and His truth.

Revelation 12:10
refers to Satan
as the “accuser of our brethren.”
He constantly accuses us
before God,
trying to make us feel guilty
and unworthy
of God’s love and grace.

These tactics
are spiritual bullying.
Satan tries to intimidate,
deceive, and accuse us
to make us feel
weak and isolated.

However, the Bible assures us
that we can resist the devil,
and that God provides a way
out of every temptation.

It's important to stay rooted
in God's Word
and to rely on His strength
to stand against these tactics.
**"Greater is He that is in you,
than he that is in the world".**

After Jesus had fasted
for forty days and forty nights,
He was hungry.
The devil took this opportunity
to tempt Him,
suggesting that He turn stones
into bread.
But Jesus replied, **"Man shall not live
by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceedeth
out of the mouth of God"**

The devil also tempted Jesus
to jump off the pinnacle
of the temple,
saying that the angels
would save Him.
But Jesus responded,
“Thou shalt not tempt
the Lord thy God”.

Finally, the devil showed Jesus
all the kingdoms of the world
and their glory,
promising to give them to Jesus
if He would fall down
and worship him.

Jesus rebuked the devil,
saying, “Get thee hence, Satan:
for it is written,
Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,
and him only shalt thou serve”.

The Bible says after this,
the devil left Him,
and angels came
and ministered to Jesus.

In the Garden of Eden,
the devil, disguised as a serpent,
deceived Eve
by questioning God's command
not to eat from the tree
of the knowledge of good and evil.

The serpent twisted God's words
and convinced Eve
that eating the fruit
would make her like God,
knowing good and evil.

Unfortunately, Eve gave in
to the temptation,
ate the fruit,
and gave some to Adam,
who also ate it.

This act of disobedience
led to the fall of mankind.

Daniel was a man
of great character and wisdom,
who served faithfully
in a foreign land.

However, he was targeted
by other officials
who were jealous
of his position and integrity.
They conspired
to trick King Darius
into passing a law
that would put Daniel
in danger for his faith.

He was thrown
Into a den of lions
For praying to God,
But God protected him
From the lions.

The prophet Elisha
was taunted
by a group of boys
who mocked him
for his baldness.
This can be seen
as a form of bullying.

King Saul, under the influence
of an evil spirit,
tried to kill David
out of jealousy and fear.
He hurled a spear at David
while he was playing the harp,
intending to pin him to the wall.

Naboth was a man
who owned a vineyard
next to the palace
of King Ahab of Samaria¹.

Ahab wanted this vineyard,
but Naboth refused to sell it
because it was his ancestral inheritance¹².

Disappointed and pouting,
Ahab shared his frustration
with his wife,
Queen Jezebel¹².
Jezebel, in response,
hatched a wicked plot
to seize Naboth's vineyard¹².

She wrote letters
in Ahab's name,
sealed them with his seal,
and sent them
to the elders and nobles
of the city¹².

In these letters,
she instructed them
to proclaim a fast,
seat Naboth with high honor
among the people,
and then bring two scoundrels
to falsely accuse Naboth
of blaspheming God
and the king¹².

Following these false accusations,
Naboth was taken
outside the city
and stoned to death¹²³.

After Naboth's death,
Ahab took possession
of Naboth's vineyard¹².

This story is a clear example of bullying,
where power and deceit
were used to oppress
an innocent person.

These examples show
how the devil uses cunning tactics
to lead people astray.

However, they also show
that with faith,
knowledge of God's word,
and the strength to resist temptation,
We can overcome the devil's tactics.

Point 3: Standing Up to the Bully

**In James 4:7 the Bible says "Submit yourselves therefore to God.
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."**

This verse is composed
of two main directives:
The first step
is the most crucial.

Submission to God
implies acknowledging His sovereignty,
seeking His will in all things,
and living in obedience
to His commandments.

It's about surrendering
our own desires and will
to God's superior wisdom and guidance.

The promise
that if you resist the devil
he will flee from you,
Is a promise
That is powerful.

The devil,
symbolizing all forms
of temptation and evil,
will flee from us
if we resist.

But how do we resist?
By standing firm
in our faith,
being vigilant against temptation,
and relying on God's strength
rather than our own.

The importance
of resisting the devil
is paramount in maintaining
our spiritual health and growth.

When we resist the devil,
we are actively fighting
against sin and temptation,
thereby allowing us to grow
in righteousness and holiness.
It's a proactive defense
against the forces
that seek to pull us
away from God.

The ability
to resist the devil
doesn't come from our own strength,
but from God.

As we submit to God
and draw near to Him,
He empowers us
to stand against
the devil's schemes.

This verse is a beautiful promise
of God's protection
and power for those
who seek Him a
and choose to live in His ways.

This verse encourages us
to stand firm in our faith and values,
resist negative influences,
and trust in God's protection and justice.

It reminds us
that when we align ourselves with God,
negative forces
lose their power over us.

In Ephesians Chapter 6,
Paul talks about putting on
the whole armor of God.
This metaphorical armor
represents the spiritual defenses we need
to stand firm
against the tactics of the devil.

Belt of Truth (Ephesians 6:14):

The belt of truth
involves honesty and integrity.

It's about living
a life of authenticity
where our actions
align with our beliefs.

By adhering to truth,
we can resist
the devil's lies and deceptions.

Breastplate of Righteousness (Ephesians 6:14):

This represents living
a righteous life.

By striving to do
what is right and just
in the eyes of God,
we protect our hearts
from the devil's attempts
to lead us into sin.

Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (Ephesians 6:15):

This signifies readiness
and eagerness
to spread the Gospel.
By being at peace
with God and others,
we can stand firm
against discord and conflict.

Shield of Faith (Ephesians 6:16):

Our faith in God
can protect us
from doubts and fears
that the devil tries to instill.
It's about trusting God's promises
and His plan for us.

Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17):

This represents our salvation
and the hope
we have in Christ.
It protects our minds
from doubts about our salvation
and helps us to focus
on our eternal security in Christ.

Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17):

This is the Word of God, the Bible.

It's our offensive weapon
against the devil.

By knowing and understanding the Scriptures,
we can counter the devil's attacks
with God's truth.

Prayer (Ephesians 6:18):

While not described
as a piece of armor,
prayer is crucial
in this spiritual battle.

Through prayer, we communicate with God,
seek His guidance,
and gain strength.

By putting on
the whole armor of God,
we can resist the devil
and stand firm
in our faith. This is a daily process
of living out our faith
and relying on God's strength,
not our own.

Recognizing the devil's tactics
and standing firm in faith
is crucial in spiritual warfare.
Here's why:

The devil is a deceiver
and a destroyer.
He seeks to lead people
away from God
and into sin.
Recognizing his tactics
helps us to be aware
of the spiritual battles
that are taking place around us.

Our faith in God
is our shield
against the devil's attacks.

It's through faith
that we can overcome
the devil's temptations and lies.

The Bible says in **Ephesians 6:16,**
"In addition to all this,
take up the shield of faith,
with which you can extinguish
all the flaming arrows
of the evil one."

Recognizing the devil's tactics
requires spiritual discernment,
which comes from reading
and understanding
the Word of God.

The Bible warns us in **1 Peter 5:8,**
“Be alert and of sober mind.
Your enemy the devil
prowls around
like a roaring lion
looking for someone to devour.”

Ephesians 6:10-18
describes the armor of God
that believers should put on
to stand against
the devil's schemes.
This includes truth, righteousness,
the gospel of peace,
faith, salvation,
and the Word of God.

Lastly, it's important
to remember that Jesus
has already won
the victory over the devil.

By recognizing the devil's tactics
and standing firm
in our faith,
we're not fighting for victory,
but from victory.

Remember, the devil may be powerful,
but God is all-powerful.
With God on our side,
We have nothing to fear.

Stand firm in your faith,
stay vigilant,
and keep trusting
in God's promises.

Closing

For those of you here with us
and joining us online,
I've preached my heart
to you today
about the ultimate bully, the devil,
who seeks
to sow seeds of doubt,
fear, and discord among us.

But we have also been reminded
of the greater power
that resides in us
Through Jesus Christ.

If you feel
that you've been bullied
by the devil,
if you're carrying
heavy burdens,

if you're in need
of God's strength and peace,
I want to invite you
To pray.

Whether you're here in person
Or wherever you may be,
you can make your home,
your room,

or wherever you are, an altar.

God's Word assures us
in James 4:7, 'Submit yourselves,
then, to God. Resist the devil,
and he will flee from you.'

Let's take a moment
to submit ourselves to God,
to seek His strength,
and to stand firm in His Word.

We can see
That Bullying has been around
For a very long time,
And its effects
Can be devastating.

It is in those times
That we need to pray
for strength and guidance.
In times of trouble,
The bible encourages us
To turn to God
In prayer.

Alone, we are incapable
Of fighting the devil.
But as James wrote,
We have to
Submit ourselves to God.

When we do that,
When we trust in God,
We can withstand
The attacks of the devil.

We can't lean into
Our own understanding
And just resist the devil,
Because that alone
Will not work.

We have to submit
ourselves to God,
And trust in Him
To help us through it.

I encourage you
To take this moment to pray,
to seek God's face,
and to resist the devil's bullying.

Remember, you are not alone.
You are part of a community
of believers,
a family that stands
together in faith.

We are here for you,
and most importantly,
God is here for you.