

LOVE THE LORD



Lesson Twenty-eight - How can I discern Satan's schemes?

August 2023

Summary of key points

- Satan and demons work hard at keeping us from fulfilling the First and Second Commandments, which are to "... love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27 NLT).
- Satan and demons manipulate our anxieties and worries, our desires, our emotions, our points of view, and our imaginations.
- They use similar strategies as scammers.
- They use different tactics to harden and corrupt our hearts (with 8 examples), to defile and kill the soul (with 6 examples), to cripple our strength (with 8 examples), and to hijack and torment the mind (with 6 examples).
- We need to commit to seeking the Holy Spirit for the wisdom we need to stand against Satan and his demons (with sample prayers).

Watch the lesson online

<https://youtu.be/j7AgIFa-qLs>

Transcript

Welcome to lesson 28 of Love the Lord where we dive a little deeper into how Satan works and how we can identify his wicked schemes.

We will begin by inviting God to speak to us personally through this study. Please follow along as we pray together. Click pause at any point if you need more time.

First, let's thank God for His perfect character and His perfect will for us.

Next, please tell Him about the things that have been stressful and ask for His help and guidance.

Let us put down our burdens of sin and confess the ways we have sinned against God and against others, and ask for His forgiveness.

Please also confess the ways others have sinned against us, and forgive them in Jesus' name.

Next, let us ask God to purify and open our hearts to receive His teaching.

Finally, please repeat these words, "In Jesus' name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen."

Let's begin the lesson for today. How can I discern Satan's schemes?

Satan is a spiritual being whom we cannot see. But even if that is the case, the Bible shows us how to recognise his schemes and tactics.

Satan's primary aim is to test our loyalty to God and stop us from fulfilling the first and most important commandment, which is to love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength, and with all our minds. When we love God this way, we will choose not to sin and cause God grief. We will begin to genuinely love other people because they are also God's creations.

Luke 10:27 ... "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind." And, "Love your neighbor as yourself." (NLT)

We will love the things that God loves and hate the evil things that God hates. This is a good insurance against Satan because God protects the lives of the godly.

Psalms 97:10 You who love the LORD, hate evil! He protects the lives of his godly people and rescues them from the power of the wicked. (NLT)

Jesus has already defeated Satan's power over us but the devil can still tempt us to keep on sinning and therefore give Satan a right over areas of our lives. The Bible shows us that if we go on sinning, we belong to the devil.

1 John 3:8 But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. (NLT)

The devil will try to corrupt our hearts with evil motives and unbelief. This unbelief, as we discussed in an earlier lesson, is the struggle to fully trust or believe in God's Word and His good and perfect character. Satan knows that if our souls doubt and take God's grace for granted, we will be tempted to continue to sin without true repentance. Therefore, Satan will constantly harass us and try to weaken our resolve and strength to be fully faithful to God, and blind, confuse, deceive and corrupt our minds with wicked ideas. Once we take the bait and act on these ideas, we essentially begin to act as children of the devil, rather than God's children.

Hebrews 3:12 Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. (NLT)

Ezekiel 18:20 The soul who sins shall die... (ESV)

1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 ... strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith, and to keep you from being shaken... (NLT)

Romans 8:6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death... (NLT)

See what Jesus had to say, “you don’t believe me because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me.”

John 10:26-28 But you don’t believe me because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me. (NLT)

Satan knows that he has no power to snatch us out of God’s hand, so he will try to manipulate us into leaving God’s protection in order to follow the devil.

Firstly, Satan will manipulate our worries. He will fill our minds with many anxious thoughts and tempt us to take control of our lives, when in reality, we cannot guarantee any outcome whatsoever. Only God knows the future and only He can devise the best plan. God is in control of everything. Satan will bombard us with anxious thoughts such as, “What if this happens or what if that happens?”

1 Peter 5:7-8 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil... (NLT)

Secondly, Satan will manipulate our desires, even our good ones. Satan will try to make us believe that God has forgotten us, that He is withholding good things from us, that He is not interested or too busy to help us, that He must be punishing us for the things we have done, and so on. Then Satan will fill us with ideas of how to take things into our own hands without God, and become our own god and master again.

James 1:14-15 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. (NLT)

Following Jesus means we give up all our desires, even the good ones, so that the Holy Spirit can transform our hearts and minds to desire the things of the Kingdom of God and to behave like Jesus. We will find that the desires God fills us will bring far greater peace, purpose, and joy. But if we don’t deny

ourselves, we can be sure that Satan will come and tempt us to fulfil our earthly desires using our own sinful nature. He will fill our hearts with many ideas of how to serve ourselves. We can gain everything we want but end up losing our souls.

Thirdly, Satan will manipulate our emotions. He will keep pressing on the sore points in our hearts and keep reminding us of our sins or other people's sins against us. He will fill us with thoughts about how unfair this world is, how we have been mistreated, how we have kept failing in certain areas, how badly we have behaved towards others, and so on. Satan's goal is to agitate us so much emotionally, that we lose self-control, lose faith, lose hope, and react badly.

Ephesians 4:26-27 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. (NLT)

We need to remember that our emotions may accurately convey how we feel about certain things, but they do not accurately show us how we should react. We can become angry, for example, but we will sin if we allow anger to control us and dictate our next action. Satan will tempt us to obey our emotions, rather than to obey God.

Fourthly, Satan will manipulate how we view or approach our circumstances, usually that is from a human perspective. Most of us have learnt to think independently from a young age. The challenge in following Jesus is that we need to give up that independent thinking in order to follow God. God's will is always good, pleasing, and perfect, His will will lead to the best outcome for eternity, whereas our human perspectives are short-term and self-focused.

Mark 8:33 Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." (NLT)

This is not to say that we will not get to experience the joys of this world if we obey God. God is the Giver of every good gift. What it does mean, however, is that we do not lean on our own human understanding but will seek God's viewpoint in every circumstance so that the way we see and think about things are fully aligned with God's views. But if we don't test our thoughts and ask the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom, Satan will slip in ideas that will lead us far away from God.

Fifthly, Satan will tempt us to mis-use our imaginations. Our God is the Creator of everything. Because we are made in His image, we have also been given creative minds and power.

Genesis 6:5-6 The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. (NLT)

When we allow the Holy Spirit to inspire us, we can create immense amounts of good. When we allow Satan to inspire our imaginations, we will end up conjuring evil things. These include conjuring up false teachings and idols to worship, imagining bad things happening to other people, imagining our own funerals and deaths, creating art that is blasphemous, imagining ways to take revenge, and so on. Our thoughts are never private only to us. The Holy Spirit knows everything that goes on in our hearts and thoughts, and our imaginations can grieve God very deeply.

Have you recognised any ways that Satan has been using to manipulate you? Remember, Satan is a scammer.

First, he will dangle seductive answers to our anxieties and desires in front of us as bait and try to sweet-talk us into listening to his deceptions. We start to imagine life as we want on our own terms. If possible, Satan will try to isolate us so we don't hear other voices, except his. Once we buy into his lies, we may slowly realise we have fallen into a trap. When we try to escape and turn to God, Satan will use shame, pain, and condemnation to keep us under his control. Over time, we can begin to feel as if there is no hope. This is one example of how Satan torments his victims. Just as we stay alert to online scams in the real world, we need to stay alert to Satan's tactics in the unseen.

The Bible depicts Satan as a prowling lion. Lions don't bother to hunt the strong, alert, and agile because they can't run as fast as their prey and they don't have as much stamina. They only pick on those that are weak or not paying attention. This is why God's Word tells us to stay alert, to watch out, to stand firm, and be strong in our faith. As long as we know how to protect ourselves, the devil cannot infiltrate our mental defences with his lies.

1 Peter 5:8-9 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. (NLT)

We will now take a pause here to give you time to reflect on how you might have given Satan and demons inroads in your thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs so as to tempt you away from God.

Please take your time to write down all the worries, desires, emotions, points of view, or imaginations that have made you easy prey for Satan to devour. This is an important exercise for you, so please don't be tempted to skip this step. So please click "pause" now and take the time to reflect.

Anxieties, worries _____

Desires _____

Emotions _____

Points of view _____

Imaginations _____

Welcome back. Were you able to list at least 10 different ways? The more self-aware we can become, the more we can stand firm and stay alert against Satan and his demons.

We have prepared a short prayer for you to re-dedicate your thought patterns to God. As we pray this prayer together, feel free to click pause at any point as you elaborate on the points. Let's begin.

“Father God, I confess that I have not fully trusted and believed in You. I have held on to worries about (...) and desires for (...). I have not fully sought Your will for my life, I have allowed Satan to fill me with thoughts that pull me away from following You. I have allowed emotions such as (...) to dictate my reactions and copied human customs of thinking. I have used my imagination in ungodly ways such as (...). Today, I repent and invite You to transform my ways of thinking. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

In the next part of our lesson, we will quickly go through the different tactics that Satan uses against us. These are categorised according to our hearts, souls, strength, and minds, so as to help us recall them a little more easily.

Firstly, Satan knows that when he can trap us into hardening our hearts, we will not experience God’s healing.

Acts 28:27 For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes— so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.’ (NLT)

When we have been hurt, Satan will tempt us to erect walls around our hearts in self defence. While this makes good sense from a human point of view, it will also make it much harder for us to trust God in all circumstances with our hearts, because we will be continuously tempted to self-protect, self-justify, and self-elevate. Essentially, a hardened heart leads us to set ourselves up to be our own saviour and judge.

Satan also tempts us to harden our hearts against God and against people, and corrupt our motivations by keeping us bitter. He will keep reminding us of all the ways that people have let us down and tell us that we can't forgive them until they acknowledge what they have done and say "sorry" to us.

We may begin to focus on all our grievances and unmet expectations. In our self-pity, we can become deaf to what God may be telling us and blinded to His help and love. Satan will fill our minds with thoughts that only reinforce our negative views and disappointment.

Satan will then tempt us to judge and condemn other people. As we fall for such temptations, we begin to slander, gossip and curse others, and forget that we are all under God's grace — we are not any better than those we accuse. In fact, by judging and cursing others, we fall deeper into sin. This only deepens Satan's grip on our hearts.

Satan will also tempt us to stuff down our emotions and suppress how we truly feel in order to survive difficult circumstances, rather than to go immediately to God for His counsel, His comfort, and His relief. We end up choking and silencing our own hearts and quenching the Holy Spirit. Our shame, pain, and grief do not get resolved. Rather, they get buried.

Those who tend to suppress their emotions will notice that they can't seem to walk in the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which includes God's overflowing joy. We seem to live in an emotional desert.

A more obvious way that Satan tries to corrupt our hearts is by tempting us to lust and chase after the things of this world, including physical and emotional comforts, fleshly pleasures, our reputation, our possessions, our health and our wealth — none of which we can take to heaven with us. When we spend our time on earth endlessly striving, Satan has succeeded in distracting us from loving God with all our hearts, souls, strength, and minds.

Satan will also try to weaken our conscience by telling us to cut corners, put our own interests first, and even deny that we know God. Satan doesn't corrupt our hearts overnight, he simply prods us to keep resisting the Holy Spirit's correction little by little, until we fall away from God completely.

The devil knows that if he can get us to despise human authority and correction, we will naturally resist God because it triggers similar emotions inside our hearts.

When we look at this list, we will notice that these all look like common patterns of this world. Satan is called the god of this world and he will tempt us to follow its patterns. Which of these tactics is Satan most likely to use to harden and corrupt your heart? Please take note and let us make a commitment not to follow the devil.

Next, we will talk about the tactics Satan uses to defile our souls.

God is constantly working on making our whole spirit, soul and body holy and blameless before Him. Satan, on other hand, is constantly opposing Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:22-23 Stay away from every kind of evil. Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. (NLT)

Satan knows that God will not tolerate two-timers, people who say they love God but who have not severed ties to old lovers. God calls the worship of idols and false gods, adultery, and it is enough to warrant a divorce. God spoke about His divorce from Israel and Judah in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 3, because of their persistent spiritual adultery with idols.

The Bible records four occasions where they were warned of the curses that would fall on their children, and their children's children, for up to four generations, as a result of their idol worship. Those who stay faithful to God, on the other hand, will be blessed for a thousand generations. Sadly, they did not take any of this seriously — and neither do we. These days, Satan disguises idol worship as cultural or family traditions that need to be honoured and preserved — and it is a lie we continue to propagate. Another lie is that God doesn't mind idol worship these days, because Jesus has paid for our sins. On the contrary, because Jesus has paid such a high price to save us from the consequences of idol worship, it is more likely that God looks at spiritual adultery even more severely.

This is why items used for idol worship or grievous sins are highly offensive to God. It is similar to us keeping souvenirs from ex-lovers after being married and expecting our spouses to not be offended. We cannot expect our holy God to tolerate the presence of objects that honour idols.

Satan may disguise witchcraft and sorcery as cute children waving wands in the air, women seeking good husbands by consulting the stars, or young men casting spells and incantations in electronic games. More than any of these, the Bible shows us that witchcraft is the act of turning away from God to any other power for prosperity, healing, or protection. One Samuel chapter 15 verse 23 calls it a form of rebellion.

We insult God's influence and sovereignty over our lives by seeking to manipulate it through some other unseen invisible force.

Witchcraft has infiltrated so much of our daily lives that most of us would not even know how to recognise it when it is right in front of us. One example is the common practice of inviting fortune tellers and astrologers to select baby names, instead of going directly to God and asking Him for the names.

Jesus came to give us eternal life. Satan, on the other hand, kills and destroys. We have to be very careful about who we agree with in our hearts. If we wish that we were never born, if we wish to die, or if we wish to have shorter lives, we are essentially agreeing with Satan's goal to kill and destroy us. This gives him a legitimate foothold to harm us. Some people with serious sicknesses may not realise that this could be the reason why they are stricken so badly.

Oaths and vows have the unintended effect of enslaving or yoking us to people and organisations. Matthew chapter 5 verses 34 to 37 shows us that Jesus has said that we should not make any vows. We bind our souls to the things of this world as a result. Remember that we are meant to be yoked to Jesus alone and our spirits joined to the Holy Spirit.

We have briefly covered some areas of the occult in this list and will go into more detail in future lessons. We will have the opportunity to pray then and ask God for forgiveness for worshipping idols, just as many who have been through this course have done and found relief, healing, freedom, and peace.

Next, we will talk about how Satan will try to weaken our resolve to follow God.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Satan will do everything he can to rob us of the joy that comes from God.

Nehemiah 8:10 ... Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!" (NLT)

Satan and demons work hard to shake our faith by getting us to doubt God's power, goodness, and faithfulness to us. They will tempt us to think that God is good to others but not to us, that we are somehow unique and different.

The devil will also plant doubt over God's Word and introduce blasphemous ideas so that we will question, devalue, or even dismiss God's commandments. We can end up manipulating God's Word based on our human understanding, rather than go directly to the Holy Spirit for the answers.

Satan will not only try to turn us away from God, he will also try to turn us from one another. The devil will try to divide and confuse us, and tempt us to be easily offended by one another through misunderstandings, grudges, and debates. Jesus has plainly said that the world will recognise His

disciples by our love for one another. Satan will try his very best to make us poor testimonies of God's love.

The devil will use relentless accusations to shame us into submission so that we do not bring the dark things of our lives into the light and invite God for His healing. This is how Satan and demons keep many believers in cycles of sin.

Like any emotionally abusive manipulator, Satan and demons will try to isolate us so that we do not come together and strengthen one another. God's Word says that when two or more are gathered in Jesus' name, that He will be in Spirit amongst them. The devil does not want this to happen.

In times of hardship and pain, Satan will bombard us with questions about where God is and why He isn't helping us. Satan blinds us to Jesus' suffering for our sake and tempts us to turn against God, just as he himself has rebelled against his Creator. The truth is that there is no greater test of a relationship than the willingness to go through thick and thin for one another.

Satan and demons, on the other hand, will keep prompting us to take things into our own hands. They will agitate us to seize the day, instead of wait on God's perfect timing and salvation. These demons will fill our minds with many anxious thoughts, so that we find it hard to be still and seek God's will.

If Satan and demons can't pressurise us in this way into sinning against God, they may incite other people to question, attack, accuse, and bully us into submission. One of Satan's favourite tactics is emotional blackmail. They will provoke our peers or our families to apply guilt, shame, and fear to try to control us — but such tactics won't work when we stay faithful to God alone and humbly respond to them with love and forgiveness. God's love destroys the power of Satan's schemes.

Next, we will look at Satan's and demons' tactics to hijack and torment our minds.

The more we study God's Word and are led by His Spirit, we will literally begin to have the mind of Christ and think like Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:16 For, "Who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?" But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ. (NLT)

This is a sober mind that is sharp, clear-headed, sensible, quiet, and peaceful. On the other hand, minds that are oppressed by Satan and demons are filled with condemnation, fear, agitation, anger, death, and perverted images. There seems to be a cloud over our minds that blocks our ability to focus, think clearly, and remember things.

These demons will flood our brains with anxious, condemning, and shameful thoughts.

Our minds cannot rest and we find it hard to sleep or pray, because we are constantly bombarded with random thoughts and images.

We are distracted by different ideas and theories about the world and people.

We may even conjure up images of death, demons, violence, and immoral sex spontaneously.

We are tempted to compare ourselves with other people and feel bitter. Our thoughts are filled with envy, judgement, condemnation, and revenge.

In our guilt, we try to justify ourselves. We keep pointing out the faults of other people and present half-truths, in order to make ourselves feel better about our own sins without actually going to God in repentance. We need to realise that all these are just attacks on our minds but we don't have to agree or give in to them.

Just as anything worth protecting is guarded by a fence, a security system, or a firewall, we need to protect our minds too. When we stay sober-minded, Satan cannot force us to do anything. What he can do is to set up different promotional campaigns for certain sins that he tailors to suit our desires and fears. But just as no company can force us to buy their products, we do not need to buy into Satan's lies.

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (NLT)

Now that we have described some of Satan's tactics, in our next lesson, we will cover some of the most effective strategies to stand against our enemy.

We have come to the end of today's lesson. Let us close with a short prayer to commit to seeking the Holy Spirit for the wisdom we need to stand against Satan and his demons.

"Dear Holy Spirit, The Bible says that You are greater than any demon in this world and that You live in me. I am the temple in which You live in. Thank you for Your presence and that You are with me 24/7. I commit to asking You for wisdom in every area of my life so that I am no longer led astray by any other spirit. Please transform my heart, soul, strength and mind. In Jesus' name, amen!"

To close, here are the reflection questions for you to prepare answers to before your small group meeting as well as a testimony to watch. We pray that you will be blessed. See you next time.

Time for reflection

1. How have you been manipulated by Satan?
2. What steps will you take to stand against his manipulations, going forward?

Watch the testimony for this lesson



Personal notes