LOVE THE LORD



Lesson Thirty-one - What footholds does Satan use to expand his territory in our lives?

August 2023

Summary of key points

- The Holy Spirit led Jesus to be tempted by Satan in the desert as a demonstration, to teach us how to stand against our enemy.
- Jesus used God's Word to defeat Satan in each of the devil's three attempts to tempt Jesus.
- Similarly, Satan and demons will target our legitimate needs, corrupt our spiritual gifts, and deceive us into worshipping idols, but they have no real power over believers (with four examples).
- Satan and demons can only succeed against us if we allow them to manipulate our hearts and minds (with five examples).
- We need to defeat Satan's deceptions by finishing the lies he deposits in our thoughts with the truth.
- All believers need to be aware of how Satan and demons target churches and corrupt our true worship and understanding of God.

Watch the lesson online

https://voutu.be/YvIUWXBTjcA

Transcript

Welcome to lesson 31 of Love the Lord. In today's lesson, we will look at footholds that Satan and his demons use to expand their territories in our hearts, souls, strength, and minds. It is helpful to prepare some writing material for this lesson and give yourself at least one hour to reflect.

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. What footholds does Satan use to expand his territory in our lives?

A good place to start would be to observe how Satan tried to tempt Jesus in the desert. Let us first remember that the Holy Spirit did not need to lead Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Satan has always been subject to his Creator. Our enemy was never going to triumph anyway.

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wildernessto be tempted there by the devil. (NIV)

Jesus went through the temptations in order to leave an example for us. Everything that Jesus has done on earth, He has lovingly done as a demonstration for us to follow. As disciples of Jesus, we are to observe our Saviour's life carefully and follow His ways, including the ways He stood up against Satan.

Mark 8:34 Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. (NLT)

Let's take a closer look at the ways Satan tried to tempt the Son of God. The devil probably chose to use his most effective tactics against his most supreme opponent.

Firstly, he patiently waited for 40 days until Jesus was hungry and weakened from fasting. The devil picks on times of physical weakness. Like a prowling lion that watches its prey for moments of weakness, Satan will choose to strike when his chances of success are higher.

Matthew 4:2-3 For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said to him... (NLT)

Satan then targeted a legitimate need that Jesus had, which was food. The devil tempted Jesus to meet His own needs by His own means without going to God the Father. Similarly, Satan will tempt us to choose worldly comforts, pleasures, and possessions apart from God. If he can get us hooked onto these, he will be able to manipulate us and make us hunger for more.

Matthew 4:3 During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." (NLT)

In his next step, Satan tempted Jesus to use God's spiritual powers to feed his own fleshly instincts, to feel significant and valuable. Similarly, Satan tempts us to use our spiritual gifts to feed our own fleshly instincts too. When we use our gifts according to the Holy Spirit's guidance, we will bring God glory. When we use them as directed by demonic spirits, they will use us to glorify Satan.

Matthew 4:5-6 Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.' (NLT)

In Satans' third attempt, the devil tried to get Jesus to bow before him, offering Jesus what already belonged to Him! Similarly, Satan will set up many disguises and tempt us to worship different gods and idols, offering to us what God has already prepared for us – peace, significance, purpose, love, provision, protection and so on — except that the credit would now go to Satan.

Matthew 4:8-9 Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me." (NLT)

Each time Jesus defeated Satan by quoting directly from God's Law.

In Satan's first temptation, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3.

Matthew 4:4 But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (NLT)

In Satan's second temptation, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16.

Matthew 4:7 Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, You must not test the Lord your God." (NLT)

In Satan's third temptation, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13.

Matthew 4:10 "Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him." (NLT)

To be clear, Satan has no real power over believers.

- The devil cannot force us to sin because we have the Holy Spirit in us. God is with us and will never forsake us, He will help us, and certainly, Satan is not greater than God. | 1 John 4:4 ... the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. (NLT)
- God will also not allow Satan to tempt us beyond what we can endure. God is faithful, wise, and true. | 1 Corinthians 10:13 The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. (NLT)
- Satan cannot touch us when we stop sinning and God holds us securely in His strong hand. | 1

 John 5:18-19 We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son

 holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them. We know that we are children of God

 and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one. (NLT)
- Satan has to flee when we submit to God. | *James 4:7 So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (NLT)*

The only way Satan can succeed against us is if we allow him to manipulate our hearts and minds.

For instance, Satan first targeted Jesus' legitimate need for food, manipulating Him to focus on His hunger, rather than God's all-important mission for Him. God does not train us to endure for no reason. Jesus was in the midst of preparing to begin His ministry on earth and had to build up great self-discipline in order to fulfil that mission.

Similarly, Satan will tempt and manipulate us into focusing only on our own desires and meeting our own needs and anxieties, using our own human understanding. But if we wait on God and endure, we too can experience God's comfort and provision in ways that we can never imagine, just as Jesus was attended to by angels afterward,

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)

Secondly, Satan and his demons are imposters. They will plant suggestions in the first person as "I" or "my" or "me" and manipulate us into thinking that that is what we want. This is why we need to test our thoughts, rather than blindly follow any idea that drops into our minds. The easiest ones to spot are those that are full of pride and that set us up as our own gods. We will hear ideas such as, "it's my life and I decide how I live it" or "other people should always listen to me."

Ezekiel 28:2 "Son of man, give the prince of Tyre this message from the Sovereign LORD: "In your great pride you claim, 'I am a god! I sit on a divine throne in the heart of the sea.' But you are only a man and not a god, though you boast that you are a god. (NLT)

Thirdly, Satan prefers to spring into action when we are under an onslaught of hot or bitter emotions. It could be that we were angry, sad, grieving or hurt. It could even be when we are fatigued, sleepy, or hungry. All these are natural feelings. Demons will try to stir up even more emotions, such as indignation, confusion, fear, rage, pride or hopelessness. This is the time we need to pray the most and ask the Holy Spirit to guide and protect our hearts and minds. He who is in us is greater than he who is in this world.

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)

Fourthly, the devil and his demons will come to accuse and condemn us, manipulating us to feel defeated also. Or he tempts us to judge and curse others so we take the side of the devil and condemn them. We will hear ideas such as, "there she goes against, always so pushy and loud," or "he will never listen to me, he is so pathetic," or "they deserve to die."

Revelation 12:10-11 ... the one who accuses them before our God day and night. And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. (NLT)

Demons will even tempt us to accuse God of withholding good things, just as Satan did to Eve. Satan will tempt us to think, "Did God really say I can't do this? Surely, a good God wants the things I want for myself. Surely, He wants me to be happy." Another typical entry point are questions that start with "what if...?" Some examples are, "What if God doesn't answer my prayer?" "What if He doesn't help me?" "What if this happened because God wants to make me suffer?"

Genesis 3:1 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" (NLT)

Can you spot it when Satan and his demons manipulate you through your thoughts and your desires? Please write down as many examples as you can identify and share them with your group later. You can click "pause" now and take as much time as you need.

Welcome back. How many examples were you able to come up with? The more demonic influences over our thoughts that we can identify, the more we are able to stand and resist the devil.

As followers of Jesus, we all need to mature in our ability to discern between good and evil. What thoughts are inspired by the Holy Spirit and what thoughts are inspired by Satan and his demons?

Hebrews 5:14 Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong. (NLT)

We all need practice and training in this area, so that we are no longer spiritually immature like children when our enemy tries to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

Ephesians 4:14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. (NLT)

Let us read from 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verses 3 to 5 together, "We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments... We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NLT)

As believers, we are called to stand firm on God's truths. This means that we literally need to stop our own thoughts from running wild and teach our own minds to obey Jesus, because Satan will always tempt us to fixate on our human perspectives rather than on God's truths. Here are some examples.

Satan will tempt us to fixate on the fact that we don't deserve God's love. This in reality, is a fact that leads to great celebration, because God's love doesn't depend on who we are or what we have done. God loves those who don't deserve His love because He is the embodiment of perfect love.

Therefore, when Satan and demons tempt us to think that "I don't feel worthyof God's love," we can finish that statement with, "I don't feel worthy of God's love. I praise God that He loves the unworthy and saves sinners like me!" (Romans 5:8)

Satan will also try to shame us by reminding us of all the mistakes and sins we have committed in the past. Here is where we need to practise self-discipline and not meditate on such thoughts. God is in the process of transforming us into living testimonies of His great mercy, love, patience and power, so that we can bring Him glory. Let us praise God for turning our sins into testimonies of His salvation.

Therefore, when Satan and demons tempt us to think that "I have made terrible mistakes in my life," we can finish that statement with, "I have made terrible mistakes in my life but as God transforms me, I'll testify of His mercy, love, power." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

One other tactic Satan frequently uses is self-pity. He will tempt us to think that no one loves us, no one understands us, no one cares for us, and so on. He will tempt us to fixate on what others have done, rather than what God has done and is continuing to do in our lives.

Therefore, when Satan and demons tempt us to think that "No one loves me or understands me," we can finish that statement with "No one loves me or understands me more than God does." (John 15:13)

From these examples, we can see how Satan tempts us to look at things from our own human understanding. The devil tries to blind us to God's perfect character and His presence in our lives. We all need to renew our minds based on God's truths.

Earlier, you wrote down a list of examples of how Satan tries to manipulate you through your thoughts and desires. Please refer to that list again. Can you identify God's truths for you? How do you need to renew your mind? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you with your answers.

Please click "pause" here and take as much time as you need.

Welcome back. Please bring your answers to your group discussion time, so that you can encourage each other and pray for one another.

We are now going to examine how Satan tempts us to misuse our spiritual gifts to gratify our fleshly instincts. Let's look at some examples.

The gift of mercy is one that allows us to sense, discern, and feel exactly how someone else is feeling. It is meant to be used with love and compassion to empathise with and help those who need God's comfort and our prayers. Our enemy, however, will tempt us to use this gift to read other people's thoughts and emotions, and manipulate them for our own benefit. We may act out of a self-entered desire to protect ourselves or to gain someone else's favour. This is the gift that psychics and mind-readers mis-use — except that they rely on demonic spirits, not the Holy Spirit.

The gift of discerning spirits is one that allows us to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit or demonic spirits in certain people or places. It is meant to help us discern when the Holy Spirit is at work and when Satan is at work, so that we can warn God's people of demonic influences and deception. Satan, on the other hand, will tempt us to use this gift to communicate with spirits directly. This is the gift that psychics, shamans, and mediums mis-use. If they do not repent and cast out the spirits they have communicated with in the past, then they may join churches and think they are now hearing from the Holy Spirit, if they don't repent and renounce their past. The reality is more likely they are still being manipulated by the same demonic spirits and not God's Spirit. Satan will use such people to lure other people into false teachings, false prophecies, and questionable Christian beliefs and activities. Instead of pointing people to God, they will lead people away from Him.

The gift of prophecy is one that allows us to receive a revelation from God that is meant to correct, build up, comfort, and encourage His people. Satan will tempt those with this gift to fall for spiritual pride and

exalt themselves as being special or superior, or the devil may tempt us to not use the gift at all out of a fear of rejection, persecution, and judgement.

The gift of miracles is one that allows us to demonstrate God's power in a way that is counter to the natural course of things and beyond mere human ability. It is meant to move observers to worship God. This is the gift that magicians and sorcerers mis-use through the enabling of demonic spirits. For example, you may see them levitate, move objects around, or make things disappear. These are acts that God has never sanctioned and will never bless.

The gift of teaching is one that inspires us to humbly teach God's Word in a clear and loving manner. The result will be that our listeners will turn away from their sins and obey God alone. Satan will tempt us to examine God's Word based on our own human understanding and desires. Satan will try to convince us that there is no need to ask the Holy Spirit to show us God's point of view. So we choose to interpret the Bible in a way that sounds logical and appealing to our own ears. One Timothy chapter 4 says that "some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons."

What are your spiritual gifts? Do you know how you may be manipulated to mis-use your gifts in a way that glorifies Satan? Please list your gifts and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the answers. Click "pause" here and take as much time as you need.

Welcome back.

Now, let us look at the third major strategy of Satan's, which is to get people to worship and bow down to him and his demons, through the use of "any image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea." This is a direct rebellion against the very first of God's Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:1,3-5 Then God gave the people all these instructions: "You must not have any other god but me. "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them. (NLT)

Satan knows that if he can get a person to bow down and pay respect to any image or idol other than God, then he can trap that person's children and entire family for up to four generations.

This is what God says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands." (Exodus 20:5-6 NLT)

8

God loves us and guards us jealously against Satan and demons, who are our enemies. But when we worship them on our own accord, whether knowingly or unknowingly, we deprive our families of God's "lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations."

Hence, like any scammer, the enemy will take on any name or any form that will appeal the most to our desires. From examples in the Bible, we see that Satan has presented himself as:

- 1. a god of destruction (Abaddon / Apollyon)
- 2. a god of fertility (Baal)
- 3. a lord of flies (Beelzebub, prince of demons) and
- 4. a god of wickedness and worthlessness (Belial), and so on.

1) Job 28:22, Proverbs 27:20, Revelation 9:11 | 2) Numbers 25:3,5, Judges 2:11,13,3:7, Judges 6:25-31, 1 Samuel 12:10, Romans 11:4 | 3) Luke 11:15 | 4) 2 Corinthians 6:15

Satan and his demons will even take on the form of any

- 1. Mythical creature (dragon)
- 2. Animal (snake)
- 3. Mutant human being (Dagon; half fish, half man)
- 4. Female goddesses (Ashtoreth, goddess of fertility)

1) Isaiah 27:1, Revelation 12:9, Revelation 13:4, Revelation 20:2 | 2) Genesis 3:1, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Revelation 12:9, Revelation 20:2 | 3) Judges 16:23, 1 Samuel 5:2, 1 Chronicles 10:10 | 4) Judges 2:13, Judges 10:6, 1 Samuel 7:3

.. whatever will appeal the most to people at that point of time.

- To fishermen, for example, he will present himself as the god of the sea.
- To the military, he will present himself as a god of war and justice.
- To tradesmen, he will present himself as a god of prosperity and good luck.
- To women who want children, he will present himself as a goddess of fertility.
- To anxious mothers, he will present himself as a goddess who watches over children.

In every culture and generation, they have been variations of such false gods. For example, we see that the goddess of fertility mentioned in the Bible called Ashtoreth later morphed into Aphrodite, Diana, and Venus.

What about your culture? What variations of these gods do you encounter? Can you name them? What have you been told to believe and think about these idols? Please click the "pause" now and take as much time to reflect.

Welcome back.

The Bible rightfully points out that Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of unbelievers. Those who worship idols will testify that their minds feel clouded or are in a constant state of unrest. They have trouble focusing and thinking clearly when it comes to praying or thinking about Jesus. Impure images even appear in their minds.

2 Corinthians 4:4 Satan, who is the god of this world, has blindedthe minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (NLT)

They will usually find it hard to read the Bible or listen to God's Word with their hearts. They will quickly forget what they have studied. They may even experience aches and pains for no reason. In fact, this may have been some symptoms you have experienced as you have gone through this course. Satan gains large territories in our hearts, souls, strength and minds if we or our families have ever worshipped or bowed down to idols, starting from four generations before us.

Mark 4:14-15 The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. (NLT)

Idol worship is not just a harmless cultural or family tradition.

- The Bible shows us that we should flee from the worship of idols. | *1 Corinthians 10:14 So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols... (NLT)*
- These so-called gods do not exist. | Galatians 4:8 Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. (NLT)
- The sacrifices made to idols are actually made to demons and... | 1 Corinthians 10:14,20 So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.... these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want you to participate with demons. (NLT)
- we should not take part in demon worship. | 1 Corinthians 10:14,20 So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols... these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want you to participate with demons. (NLT)
- Demon worship leads many to be enslaved to Satan... | *Galatians 4:8 Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. (NLT)*
- and will lead to our downfall. | Psalm 106:36 They worshiped their idols, which led to their downfall. (NLT)

In upcoming lessons, we will go into each aspect of the worship of Satan and his demons in more detail and show you how to pray to repent and cut your ties with Satan.

In the meantime, we will use the rest of this lesson to talk about how Satan and demons gain footholds inside God's church to weaken and divide us. Jesus has warned that any kingdom or family that suffers from infighting will eventually fall apart.

Matthew 12:25 Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, "Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart. (NLT)

It is love that strengthens God's church and Satan will oppose any effort for us to love one another.

1 Corinthians 8:1 ... But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church. (NLT)

In addition, the god of this world will infiltrate churches and deceive many with false teachings. As we mentioned before, these are teachings that come from demons.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. (NLT)

In this instance, you will find church bodies that sound and act more and more like the world, rather than being set apart, made holy and cleansed through confession, repentance, and a healthy reverence for God, ready for Jesus' return.

Ephesians 5:25-27 ... Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. (NLT)

Let's look at some footholds that Satan uses.

For one, Satan and demons will tempt people to seek deeper truths outside of God's Word. This is the basis for spiritual pride, false teachings, and cults.

Revelation 2:24 "But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them—depths of Satan, actually)... (NLT)

Instead of seeking to understand the Bible from its Jewish roots, Satan may also tempt us to read God's Word according to our own desires and contemporary points of view, not God's original point of view.

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)

Thirdly, Satan will discourage us from addressing the issue of sin in each other's lives, in case we are seen as being intrusive, narrow minded, unloving, or not politically correct — when God's Word actually tells us to humbly help one another back onto the right path, away from sin.

Galatians 6:1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. (NLT)

Satan will also tempt us to condemn and look down on each other. We don't realise that when we accuse other believers of being hypocrites, for example, we are being hypocritical ourselves because we are being judgemental and condemning. As 1 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 1 teaches, we need to remember that it is love that strengthens the church.

Romans 14:10 So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. (NLT)

This is why Satan will provoke us to hate one another and to hold grudges and bitterness in our hearts.

1 John 2:11 But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness. (NLT)

Lastly and most detrimentally, Satan and demons will provoke us to doubt, question, resist, and even deny the Holy Spirit and to despise prophecies. They know that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who will bring us to greater revelation of God Himself. This is why they do everything they can to hinder the Holy Spirit's work in the church.

Acts 7:51-52 "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you! Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! ... (NLT)

Do you recognise any way you may have been a source of weakness or division in your own community? Here is an opportunity to repent and ask God for forgiveness.

Let's pray this prayer together.

"Heavenly Father, I confess I have grieved the Holy Spirit by condemning Your children. Please for give me. I invite You to work in my heart, to open my eyes to see what You see, and to unite us through the Holy Spirit. I set aside my own human understanding, reasoning, and opinions. Also, please alert me to false teachings so that I won't be misled and deceived. I commit to always seeking the Holy Spirit and the truth in the Bible. In Jesus' name, amen."

We have now come to the end of today's lesson. 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 has the enemy manipulated your thoughts?
- 2. How have you mis-used your spiritual gifts?

Watch the testimony for this lesson



Personal notes				