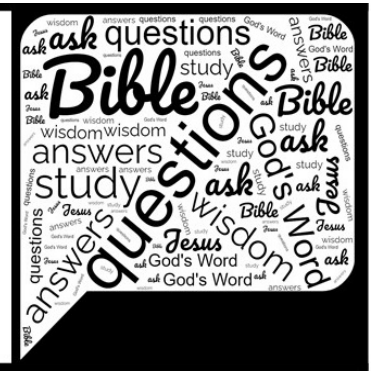


Questions & Answers From the Bible

What Is the Appropriate, Biblical Way to Rebuke the Devil?



In answering this question, we must begin with the premise that we have a real enemy with which we must contend. First Peter 5:8 speaks of "your adversary the devil" (or "your opponent, the enemy"; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*). His purpose is revealed in this verse: "seeking whom he may devour." His desire and goal is to "devour" our experience of salvation and thus conquer and ultimately seize our soul in the end. The Apostle Peter admonished in verse 9, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith." The original Greek word for "resist" is *anthistemi*, and it means "to stand against, oppose, withstand." These are all action verbs, just as the English word "resist" indicates action. When we have an approach of the enemy, we must personally take decided action. Ephesians 4:27 instructs, "Neither give place to the devil." This verse reveals at least two truths: 1) the devil does not have any place but what we "give" to him; and 2) we must take the personal initiative to not "give place" to him.

How do we "resist" and "neither give place" to him when he works to intimidate and overwhelm? First Peter 5:8 says he comes "as a roaring lion." A lion's roar is to intimidate and strike fear in the heart of his prey, hoping to immobilize the prey with fear, giving the lion time to pounce and devour the prey. We must never allow this fear to immobilize us. Second Timothy 1:7 proclaims, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Psalm 61:2 reads, "When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." This provides insight how we engage in rebuking the devil.

James 4:7 instructs: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The first step in the process is to "submit yourselves therefore to God," or go "to the rock that is higher than I." Simply put, we must engage in prayer. This does not mean that we must engage in a lengthy season of prayer at the time, but rather a momentary approach to invoke the Divine for strength and aid. The patriarch Job exclaimed in Job 23:6 that "he would put strength in me." Once we have approached the Lord and submitted the matter, the

next step is to "resist the devil." We must ever remember our position as disciples of Christ: "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Jesus said in Luke 10:19 that we have "power . . . over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

Therefore, how do we "resist the devil"? There are a couple of scriptural approaches. One is exemplified by our Lord (our "example" in all things; 1 Peter 2:21) during His temptation. Isaiah 59:19 tells us, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." The "standard" He raises is the Word of God. In the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness, He met each temptation with, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). After the third approach, Jesus commanded him, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written." When the Spirit so directs, there are occasions to meet the enemy with the Word of God.

There is the second approach that is more direct and severe, and many times is warranted. In Zechariah 3:2 and Jude 9, we see a direct, "The Lord rebuke thee." This is very comparable to a declaration of "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus" for us today. Just as in prayer, our access to power is through Christ. However, we must recognize that "whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). Several renderings offer this verse as "whatever you might bind on the earth shall have been bound in heaven."

Remember, Luke 10:19 proclaims, "Behold, I give unto you power." Therefore, if we have submitted it in the heat of the moment to God, through Christ, we have the "power" to rebuke the devil. When Paul was confronted with "Elymas the sorcerer" (Acts 13:8) and the "damsel possessed with a spirit of divination" (Acts 16:16), we see where he was empowered to deal with each case (Acts 13:9-11; 16:16-18). We do not see where Paul invoked the Lord to rebuke them, but he exercised the power entrusted to him. He acted in the Lord's stead as one entrusted with full authority to do so.

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