



Talk 12 – How Can I Resist Evil?

Duration 43 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

Key:

Personal Story / Testimony that Nicky Gumbel tells in the classic Alpha talk. These may be replaced with a live speaker's personal story or the speaker may tell the story about Nicky in the same way Nicky tells stories about others.

Story that Nicky tells about someone else (about a friend or a story he heard or read about).

Quotes are key to the talk to emphasise a point and to enable guests to engage and relate to a point made. There is now a way that people can seek permission to omit or replace quotes used in the original talks. A quote should be replaced with something equally effective to maintain the balance of teaching, story, and references to other information sources.

Key Quotes will need approval to change (these will be identified by a comment in the left column). Please email publications@alpha.org with your request.

Key Bible Passages are identified and you may wish to display these visually for your guests.

Red type identifies a part of the key teaching text that may be removed or altered for contextualisation.

Text left untouched is the standard key message content of the Alpha talk.

NOTE: Key elements of this script are: personal stories, humour and reference to media / popular culture to draw the guests in to engage with the talk.

Parts of the talk may need to be contextualised for other contexts or cultures but make sure you maintain the key elements of humour and personal testimony. Notice how quotes, and stories are used throughout to add emphasis to the main points of the talk (theology and testimony).

What is evil? What is temptation?

Oscar Wilde said, 'I can resist everything except temptation.'

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Alexander Woolcott said this: 'All the things I really like to do are either immoral or illegal or fattening.'

Where does temptation come from? What about addictions — where do they come from? Can we be set free? What about all the bad stuff **we read about in our newspapers** [Or, 'hear about'] every day? Do we just accept it — is that how life is? Or is there anything we can do to make a difference?

Would you like to turn to Romans chapter 12, verse 21? St Paul writes this:

'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

How is that possible? I don't know whether you've ever noticed, but if you add one letter to the word *God* you get *good*. If you add one letter to the word *evil* you get *devil*. The claim of the New Testament is that, just as behind goodness lies God himself, behind the evil in the world lies the devil.

[You may delete or reword this according to your context.]

I remember when I first became a Christian I had had great difficulty coming to believe that there could be a God. And then somebody said, you know, that there's a devil that exists. And I thought, 'Oh my goodness! Surely you don't expect me to believe that! I mean, it's enough believing in God, but that really is stretching my imagination.'

But interestingly, for some people it's the other way round: they find it easier to believe in the devil than they do to believe in God.

William Peter Blatty, who wrote and produced *The Exorcist*, said this: 'As far as God goes, I'm a non-believer. But when it comes to the devil — well, that's something else. The devil keeps advertising; the devil does lots of commercials.'

[You may adapt this description according to your context]

But I think for most people the idea of spiritual evil, spiritual forces of evil, is a very hard

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one. Particularly, I think, most people find it very hard to believe that there's a devil. And this is probably to do with false images. Just as many people have a false image of God — a kind of old man with a big white beard, up in the sky, sitting on the clouds, which is absurd and unbelievable — so many people have a false image of the Devil. They have a picture of a Devil with horns, with cloven hooves, with a forked tail; and that's equally unbelievable — and, actually, unbiblical.

What does the Bible say? Would you like to turn to Ephesians chapter 6, verses 11–12?

St. Paul writes this:

'Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.'

[You may choose to remove or replace this with your own example if necessary.]

In other words, he says this spiritual warfare is against forces that are cunning and powerful and evil. Warfare, of course, generally is not a pleasant business.

I heard something that happened to Field Marshal Montgomery, you know, Earl Almain — 'Monty' as he was known — one of the Commanders of the Allied Forces during World War II. Apparently one time he was driving a Jeep up a hill. And he went past a schoolboy who was carrying a huge great satchel full of heavy books. And he had pity on him, and he offered him a lift. And the boy got into the car, and apparently he turned out to be quite a talkative and precocious boy, and he said to Field Marshall Montgomery: 'What do you do?' And Monty replied, 'I'm a Field Marshal.' And the boy said, 'Oh, how interesting! My father works in a field. He's a farmer. What do you do in the field?' And Monty said, 'I kill people.' And the boy said, 'May I get out now, please, sir?'

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Talk Point 1

WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEVIL?

So why should we believe in spiritual forces of evil? Well, the first reason is that it makes sense of the world — reason, if you like. Looking around at our world, we see evil regimes, institutional torture and violence, mass murders, brutal rapes, terrorist atrocities on a scale unimaginable a few years ago. Sexual and physical abuse of children. **These things litter our newspapers daily.**

[You might replace this with a local example.]

Some of you may remember an incident that took place on 13 March 1996: Thomas Hamilton, aged 43, entered the primary school gym in Dunblane and opened fire on a class of five- and six-year-olds. Sixteen children and their teacher were killed; seventeen other children and teachers were wounded. The head teacher said this: ‘Evil has visited our school.’

Any kind of theology or worldview which ignores the existence of spiritual forces of evil has a great deal to explain.

And then there’s Christian experience — if you like, church tradition. I know in talking to some of you that you’ve become aware in recent weeks of a struggle against temptation that perhaps you hadn’t experienced before. It’s as if before we were Christians we were going with the flow, and now we find ourselves moving against the flow.

[You may use this joke or replace it with your own humours analogy. Adapt the text in red to fit the analogy you choose]

People around us seem to be going in one direction, and we seem to be going in the opposite direction.

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I heard of a man called Herman in the United States. He was driving down the motorway — or highway, I guess they'd call it — and his carphone rang. And answering it, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him. She said, 'Herman, I've just heard the news — there's a car going the wrong way down Highway 280. Please be careful!' And Herman replied, 'It's not just one car, there are hundreds of them!'

And I think it's easy for us to feel like a bit of a Herman — you know, we're the only one going in that direction; everybody else seems to be going in a different direction. And I think particularly if we've had an experience of the Holy Spirit, we begin to become a little bit more aware of the opposition.

Third reason — and the most important reason — is because of the Bible. The apostle Paul, as we see here, believed in the existence of these forces, and Jesus himself was tempted by the devil. He believed in the existence of the devil. Some people say, 'Well, of course Jesus believed in the existence of the devil — everybody in his day believed in this kind of thing.' No, that's not true. And Jesus taught his disciples to pray 'deliver us from the evil one'.

So Scripture, tradition and reason all point to the existence of the devil. But that doesn't mean that we should become kind of obsessed by this subject.

C. S. Lewis said this: 'There are two equal and opposite errors into which we can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence; the other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors.'

[You may reword according to you culture / context.]

And today in our society there's a whole new interest in the demonic — in occult powers, witchcraft, spiritualism, palm-reading, ouija boards, channelling, consulting the dead, astrology, horoscopes — and all this stuff is expressly forbidden in the Bible.

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Of course, many of us may have been involved in the past in these things. And certainly I dabbled in one or two of these things before I was a Christian — I just didn't know there was any harm in sort of 'playing around with ouija boards' — it was just a bit of fun.

And I think a lot of people today also explore these kind of things because they're on a sort of spiritual search and they don't know quite where to look. So thankfully these are not 'unforgivable sins' to be involved in; of course forgiveness is possible. What we need to do is to repent — say sorry, to turn away from it and to get rid of any stuff associated with these kind of activities — and to keep the focus not on that sort of stuff but on God.



Talk Point 2

WHAT ARE THE DEVIL'S TACTICS?

So second main question is: how do these evil forces work? What are the devil's tactics?

His ultimate aim, Jesus told us, is actually to destroy us. He said, 'The thief comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy.' But, he said, he wants the opposite: 'I came that you might have life and life in all its fullness.'

And right in the beginning of the Bible we have an exposé of how the devil works. Would you like to turn to Genesis chapter 3? Here we see an exposé of the way in which the enemy works. The devil here appears in the form of a serpent. And we see that his initial tactic is to raise doubt.

Genesis 3, verse 1: 'He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

Very similar way when he was tempting Jesus. He came to Jesus and he said, 'If you are the Son of God ...' casting doubt. And the way in which he comes to us is he says, 'If you're a Christian' — because if you're not, it doesn't really matter if you do that, does it?

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It's the precursor to the main attack. And the background to Genesis 3 is Genesis 2. If you look back a few verses, Genesis 2 verses 16–17: we see there first of all that God gave a wide-ranging permission — verse 16:

[Genesis 2:16-17]

'And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden"; — and secondly he gave one prohibition – "but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" — and then thirdly there was a penalty – "for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Now, the prohibition was because there are things we don't need to know about or experience. God didn't want us to know evil; he wanted us to know only good. And he warns us that there is a penalty if we disobey: 'when you eat of it you will surely die.'

Now, watch the way in which evil operates. The first thing that happens is that the demonic power ignores the permission — chapter 3, verse 1:

'Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?'

He ignores the permission and concentrates on the prohibition, which he distorts and exaggerates. And his tactics have not changed. Today when he tempts us he ignores the permission. God has said that he's given us 'all things richly to enjoy.' That's the generosity of God.

But Satan ignores that. He doesn't tell people who are not Christians about all the wonderful things it's possible to enjoy as Christians — the amazing privilege of a relationship with God, the transformation in relationships, the enriching of our lives, as well as all the wonderful things that God gives everybody — relationships, families, the whole of creation, the beauty, the stunning beauty of our world. If you stand on the top of a mountain, go into the countryside; or just the whole area of art or music or literature or sport or food and drink or leisure or sleep or ... These amazing guiltless pleasures. And God has given us 'all things richly to enjoy'.

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But the devil ignores that. And he concentrates on a tiny and unimaginative list of prohibitions: ‘If you become a Christian — oh, life is no fun at all! You can’t take drugs, you can’t be promiscuous. Oh, you know, you’ll have no fun at all! It’ll be absolutely miserable.’ And actually, of course, it’s a relatively small list and there are very good reasons — if God doesn’t want us to do something, it’s because it does us harm.

And then he denies the penalty — verses 2–5:

[Genesis 3:2-5]

‘The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you’ll be like God, knowing good and evil.”’

In other words, he says, ‘Don’t you think you should try for yourselves? There might be something more. It won’t do you any harm. God’s a spoilsport. Don’t miss out!’

And of course it was Adam and Eve actually who missed out on all the wonderful things that God had for them. And we see the consequences. Because it broke the relationship of trust — verse 6:

[Genesis 3:6-7]

‘When the woman saw the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some of it and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.’

And we see in the verses that follow the consequences of breaking trust. First of all, we see shame and embarrassment — verse 7:

[Genesis 3:7]

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'Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.'

Shame and embarrassment.

Mark Twain said: 'Human beings are the only animals that blush, and the only animals that need to.'

And most of us have things in our life of which we are ashamed, embarrassed; we wouldn't want everybody to know about it.

Sometimes people say, 'Oh, my life is an open book. I'm happy for people to know everything about me.' I wonder. Certainly that's not true of me — I wouldn't want you to know everything about me!

Supposing we were to do a little experiment — we were to announce that next week on the screen here was going to come up a list of all the things, all the worst things, you've ever done, you or I have ever done — all the worst things that we've said, and all the worst things that we've thought — and gathered here would be the people we've done them to or said them to or thought them about. Well, I would not be here next week! I don't know about you.

[You may delete or replace this story if it is not applicable to your context.]

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who's the creator of Sherlock Holmes, once played a practical joke. Knowing that even the most respectable people have things that they are embarrassed and ashamed about, he sent a telegram to twelve highly respectable and respected men. And all it said on the telegram was this: 'FLEE AT ONCE — ALL IS DISCOVERED.' And within 24 hours every single one of them had left the country!

And because there are things that we are embarrassed about, we cover up — we put up barriers to protect ourselves. And that's what Adam and Eve did with the fig leaves.

Then the relationship, the friendship with God was broken — verse 8:

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[Genesis 3:8]

'Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees in the garden.'

[Genesis 3:10]

And in verse 10, the man says, 'I was afraid.'

It's fascinating to me how this operates.

I know it in my own life, that when I feel bad about something, I don't want to be anywhere where, you know, I think the presence of God might be. I don't want to be in church.

'They were afraid, so they hid.' And God immediately starts to try and draw them back — verse 9:

'But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"'

That's the agonised cry of a parent whose child has gone astray and is lost.

And then we see that something also went wrong with human relationships — verses 11–12.

Verse 10, Adam says: 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.'

And God says, 'Who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?'

So God says, 'Have you done what I told you not to do?' And what does this big, brave, courageous man do? He blames his wife! He says:

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[Genesis 3:9-13]

'The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

'And then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is it that you've done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."'

As someone once put it: Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and the serpent didn't have a leg to stand on! That is a really bad one!

But what we see here is a breakdown in human relationships; a breakdown between Adam and Eve — they start fighting each other, and we see down in history the breakdown of relationships, the breakdown of marriages, the breakdown in homes, the breakdown in relationships at work. We see it in countries — civil wars between nations. It all starts here.

And then we see judgment — verse 14: 'The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you've done this ..."'

And there's a penalty that follows. There are consequences. It wasn't true. 'It won't do you any harm — you will not surely die' was a lie. So the devil's tactics are to destroy us, he raises doubts, he tempts. Also he's an accuser. And the Hebrew word satan means 'accuser' or 'slanderer'. And in Verse 5 we see how he accuses God — he says, basically, 'God is not on your side, God is a spoilsport'; but he also accuses us to God.

The book of Revelation tells us that 'the accuser of the brothers and sisters accuses them before our God day and night'. And one of the tactics of the enemy is to condemn us.

If it's the Holy Spirit pointing out something that's wrong in our lives, he will be very specific. We'll know what it is, and we can repent about it and deal with it. If it's condemnation, it's a nebulous feeling of guilt we don't know quite what we're feeling — that's the accuser. Because St Paul writes: 'There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

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Also it's important to make this distinction between temptation and sin. Temptation is not sin. Jesus was tempted — we're told he was tempted in every way, just as we are. And the way that we're tempted is a thought is put in our mind — something that is an evil thought. And we have a choice whether to accept it or reject it. Jesus always rejected it.

[You may reword this for your context.]

But one of the tactics — **certainly I think this in my experience, and many people speak of this** — of the enemy is to put a thought in our **mind and then whip round the other side and condemn us for it! To say, 'Look at you — you've had that thought! You've fallen, you've blown it! Now it doesn't matter what you do, because you've blown it already.'** And it's a way to drag us down.

And we need to make this distinction between temptation and sin. It's only sin if we adopt that thought for ourselves and dwell on it.

So the aim is to destroy us. That's where he's leading us to. And he never shows us at the beginning where the end will take us.

[You may replace this with your own story.]

Let me use a really trivial, silly example. When I was at university, sharing rooms with Nicky Lee, Nicky Lee's mother used to cook us these amazing fruitcakes. She's an amazing cook. And one weekend, Friday night, Nicky came back with this fantastic fruitcake. And he was going to go off for the weekend, and we had some friends up. And as I looked at this fruitcake I noticed something about it — it was not completely rectangular; it was just slightly out of balance. And I thought we could do him a favour by straightening it up on one side — which I did. But then I noticed that it wasn't totally rectangular the other way, so I cut another slice off there. And then I noticed that it looked a bit odd, because two sides were cut but the other two weren't. So I thought it would look tidier if I cut all four sides exactly the same.

And then when I'd done that, I noticed it had become not rectangular again. So I straightened it up that way. And during the weekend, gradually we kept 'straightening it up'

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— until there was about that much of it left. And then we thought it would be kinder to Nicky — you know, ‘out of sight, out of mind’! So we finished it off.

Now, as we explained to Nicky when he arrived, we didn’t intend to do that! That wasn’t what we set out to do.

You know, the person who injects heroin doesn’t intend to end up a heroin addict. Every time we embark on a course of sin we don’t realise that the aim is to lead us on a path that leads to destruction.



Talk Point 3

WHAT IS OUR POSITION?

What is our position? Would you like to turn to Colossians 1, verse 13?

St Paul writes this:

‘For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.’

Or, as the RSV translates it:

‘he has transferred us from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of the Son he loves.’

Jesus has set us free from the addictions, habits, patterns of the past. And that means that we don’t have to do the things we used to do. We’re free. We have been transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of light, the kingdom of Jesus, where Jesus rules. In the dominion of darkness, Satan is in charge, the devil’s in charge. In the kingdom of light, Jesus is in charge.

[You may wish to reword or replace this with your own example for your context.]

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Again, let me use a trivial example, if I may — or I don't know how trivial it is, but let me use an example anyway. David Beckham used to play, as you know, for Manchester United and his manager there was Alex Ferguson. He was transferred to R al Madrid. Now, supposing Alex Ferguson rings him up and says, 'Why weren't you at the practice last week?' What's he going to say? He's going to say, 'I'm so sorry, but actually now I work for another club' — or words to that effect!

Please don't misunderstand me: if any of you are Manchester United supporters, this is purely an analogy — I'm not suggesting that Manchester United is the kingdom of darkness!

But the point is that we have been set free by Jesus Christ. And on the cross the powers of evil were disarmed. If you look across the page at chapter 2, verse 15:

'And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.'

[You may use this story or replace it with a different but equally powerful testimony of transformation from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.]

And that's why the name of Jesus has such power.

Gram Seed is a giant of a man — he must be about six-foot-five, weigh about eighteen stone. And he said this:

'I spent nearly all my life in jail. I was a skinhead, I was a football hooligan, I was in the rave scene, I was charged with murder. But I was searching for love all my life and I couldn't find it. My mother gave up on me when I was twenty-one. She said I was "the son of Satan". She said I was evil like my father, who I'd never seen. He used to rape and beat my mum up, and he went to prison. She said, "You're more evil than your dad, and I don't want nought to do with you. You're dead as far as I'm concerned."

'I grew up with my nana and my granddad. My nana was drinking and taking drugs all the time. I lived in the roughest part of Teesside. I didn't have hope. I didn't know what it was,

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but I was always trying to fill this hole inside me with things — drugs and alcohol and sex and violence. It went round and round and round. It was a vicious cycle of prison and outside, prison and outside. Then I ended up in a coma in 1996 and it looked as if my life was over. My mother was summoned to the hospital by the authorities to sign the papers to switch the ventilator machine off that was keeping me breathing.'

'And she turned up at the point when these lads who'd been trying to tell me about Jesus on the streets turned up at the hospital. That was August 1996. They said to my mother, "Can we pray for your son?" and she said, "Yes, but you know they've given up on him." And they said, "We know someone who loves him and wants to help him." So they came into this room in intensive care and prayed for me. They said: "In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, give this man new life." And I woke up and started breathing, myself.'

'Four days later, my mother told me about them praying to Jesus, and I said, "What does Jesus want to know about a scumbag like me for?" So I heard all these stories about Jesus. When I came out of hospital I wanted to look into it, so I went along to Alpha at the church, I attended on the third night and I remember being there and swearing. I had four front teeth missing and I was a right rebel! I hated myself, and I remember saying, "Jesus, if you're real, come into my life. These people tell me you can change me and give me hope and set me free. On this course they've told me something about it, and if you are real come and show me." And I had my hands out like this. And I fell back and started crying.'

'From that day on I was totally transformed. I had a desire to tell people about Jesus. I said to Jesus that day, "You've given me hope. Help me to give other people hope." Three years later I started a ministry in our church called Emmanuel Prison Ministry. I was asked to go into the prison that I was released from in 1995. I spent ten years of my life in jail trying to get out, and now every day I'm trying to get in!'

'Ever since I was a kid I've always wanted a family. When I met Jesus and I had a future and a hope, I started praying for a wife. And three years later in London I met this girl called Natasha, who was a dream come true, really. Two years and two months ago I became the proud owner of a boy, and he was born eleven pounds, two ounces, and two

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foot long. The consultant held him up to me and said, “Do you know what, Gram, this isn’t a baby — it’s a toddler!”

‘I’ve run Alpha now back-to-back in seven prisons in the North-East.’

[Use or reword text in red depending on the story you tell above.]

He’s got a new boss. He’s been transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of Jesus.

The battle is not over yet. On the cross, Satan, the devil, was defeated, demoralised. The cross and the resurrection are the decisive moment in history. But the devil was not destroyed. There will come a moment when he is destroyed, when Jesus returns. **If you like, it’s a bit like the difference between D-Day and VE Day. D-Day was the decisive moment of the Second World War, 6 June 1944. That determined the outcome of the war. There was no real doubt about the future of it, but it wasn’t over — the mopping-up operations continued until VE Day on 8 May 1945, when the war in Europe was over. And in a sense we live between D–Day and VE Day.**

We live at a time when Satan is a conquered foe, but he’s still around. And if your experience is anything like mine, I found that when I came to Christ there were some things I was set free from almost immediately. There are other things that I still struggle with. And it’s a process, and it won’t be complete until Jesus returns.

But one day he will return and there will be no more evil. And actually, this is the amazing grace and love of God — do you know, we’ll be better off then than they were in the Garden of Eden?

As Thomas Aquinas said, ‘God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good.’

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Talk Point 4

HOW DO WE DEFEND OURSELVES?

So how do we defend ourselves? Given that there's still a battle going on, we're all vulnerable, how do we defend ourselves? Would you like to turn to Ephesians chapter 6? Sometimes people say, 'the secret of the Christian life is this'. But I don't personally believe there is one secret of the Christian life — there are lots of things. And in this passage we can see, among other things, six practical tips for defending ourselves against the evil forces, the spiritual forces of evil. The first one is to focus on Jesus — verse 13:

[Ephesians 6:13-17]

'Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist ...'

Instead of the lies of the enemy — Satan is described as 'a liar and the father of lies' by Jesus — Jesus is the truth. And the focus of our lives and our thoughts should be Jesus. The writer of Hebrews says: 'Fix your eyes on Jesus.'

Second practical tip: keep your relationships right.

'Put on the breastplate of righteousness' — verse 14.

One definition of righteousness is 'right relationships with God and with other people'. First of all, with God: keep short accounts with God. We all, certainly I do, sin from time to time, or quite often, and we need to get up quickly. Forgiveness is possible, but try and close the gap between the time we sin and the time we repent, so that we keep in that right relationship with God.

And with others. We need one another. And one of the things that I think really helps —

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because we all have areas with which we struggle — is to be able to talk about those things. We don't need to broadcast them, but it's good to have somebody that we can talk to and say 'Will you pray for me? Will you help me?'

Third practical tip: get involved in service — verse 15:

[Ephesians 6:15]

'... and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.'

And I think that means, first of all, being willing to declare ourselves as a Christian. I know that's hard sometimes, **and we'll talk a lot more about this on the next couple of weeks — how we can actively get involved in service.**

Fourth practical tip: keep trusting God in difficult times — verse 16:

[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.'

There are times in our lives where everything seems to go wrong. We come under fierce attack — fierce temptation. You know, it just seems that our prayers are not being answered. And in those times we need to keep faith. Faith means keeping on trusting, even when times are hard.

Fifth practical tip is: win the battle of the mind. He says,

'Put on the helmet of salvation.'

Salvation — the best modern word to translate salvation would be 'freedom'. But the battle is won or lost in our minds.

Sixth practical tip is: know your Bible — verse 17:

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'Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'

Jesus used the Bible when he was tempted, and it's so good to study it and even learn verses from this book.



How do we attack? It's fascinating to me that there is no piece of armour for the back. We're most vulnerable when we're running away. St Paul said, 'Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.' How do we do that? First of all, by prayer — verse 18:

[Ephesians 6:18]

'And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.'

As the hymn puts it: 'Satan trembles when he sees / The weakest Christian on their knees.'

And then action. Jesus proclaimed the good news, he transformed the society around him — and that's what we're going to look at in the next couple of weeks. It's so exciting. You know, in this subject it's so important to remember the greatness of God and the relative smallness, powerlessness, of evil. These powers have been defeated by Jesus through the cross and resurrection, and they will be destroyed when Jesus returns.

And in the meantime, just as Jesus went around doing good and removing evil wherever he found it, he invites us to follow and do the same: to overcome evil with good — in our lives, in our families, in our workplaces and in our society.

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Inspired by the example of Jesus, Shaftesbury in the nineteenth century changed the whole social condition of England. Wilberforce led the campaign to abolish slavery. Martin Luther King brought an end to segregation between black and white in North America.

And all of us are called to overcome evil with good in our own way — some maybe in quite small ways, and some in big ways.

'Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

May we pray.

Father, we thank you again for the victory of Jesus Christ over all the spiritual forces of evil through the cross and resurrection. And help each one of us to experience that victory more and more in our own lives, not to be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. In Jesus' name, amen.

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Talk 11 – How Can I Resist Evil?

Duration 43 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

The Alpha Transcripts are taken from The Alpha DVD 2007–2008 edition and are based on *Questions of Life* by Nicky Gumbel.

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