

Reclaim

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by
Jim Logan

he voice on the phone sounded desperate. "Dr. Logan, our family is falling apart. My son is into pornography on the Internet, my wife is talking about divorce, and I'm in bondage to secret sins. Can you help me? Do you really believe Christians today can walk in victory? What's gone wrong?"

This is typical of the over 6,000 calls received at our counseling center each year. What has gone wrong in the lives of so many Christians? We are in a spiritual battle, and so many are either not aware of the war or are fighting the wrong enemy. God's Word says we are not fighting people, but evil spirits (Eph. 6:12).

Identifying the Enemy

The purpose of spiritual attack, according to Hebrews 12:1-2, is to get our focus off of Christ and onto something else, such as people, circumstances or things. The goal of Satan's attacks is found in John 10:10: He wants to steal, kill, and destroy.

What can Satan steal from us? It could be a number of things, such as the peace that Jesus gives or the eternal significance of our lives. Satan cannot kill us directly, but he can give intruding thoughts of hopelessness and of ending it all. He seeks to destroy marriages, families and churches. When we see these things happening, we know there's enemy involvement.

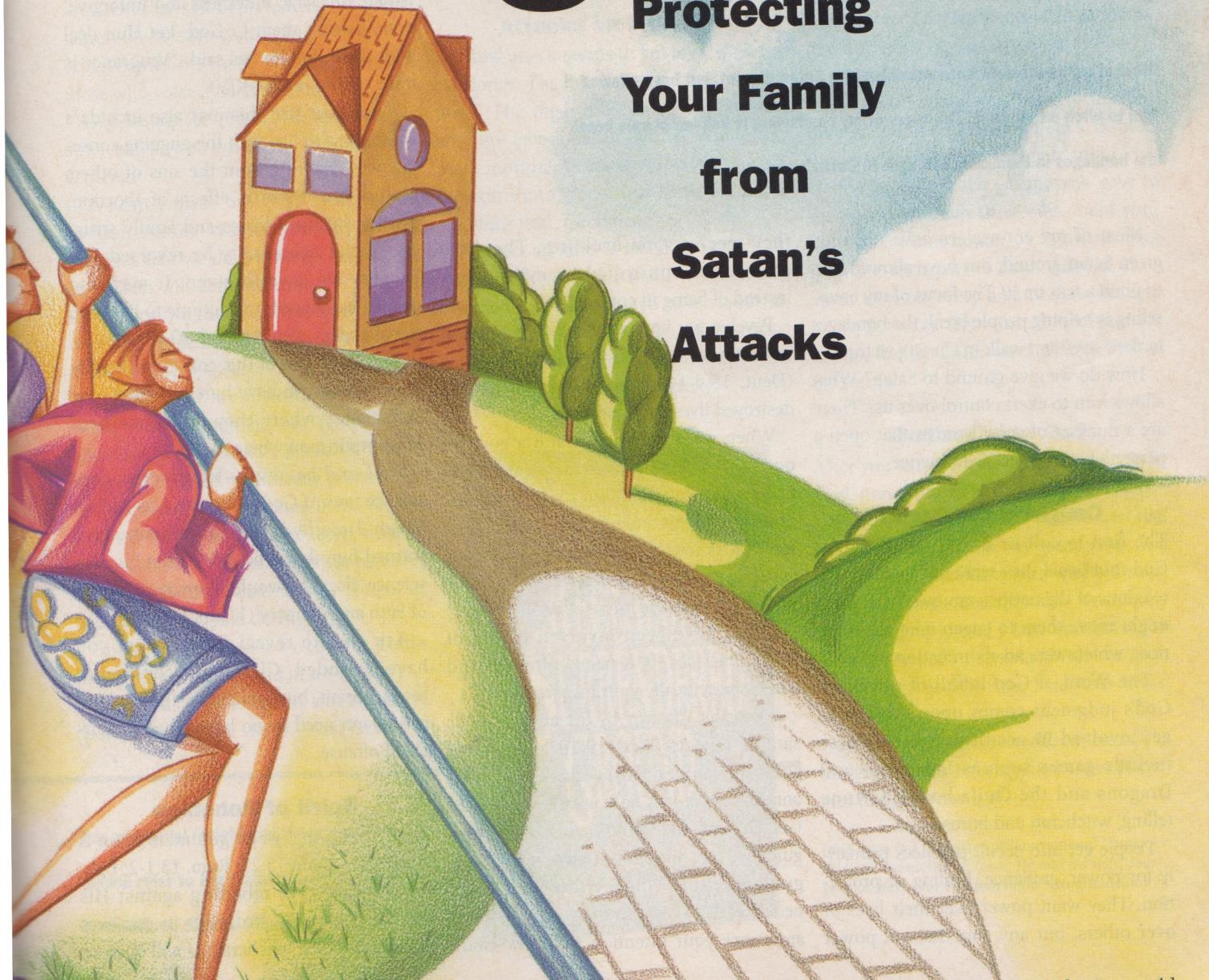
When Christians find themselves living defeated lives, they need to ask why. Have they given a "place to the devil"? Ephesians 4:27 (KJV) clearly states we are not to give a "place" to Satan. The Greek word for "place" is *topos*. In *Power of Darkness* (Intervarsity Press), Dr. Clinton Arnold says, "*Topos* is the Greek word that the New International Version (NIV) translates as 'footholds.' It could also be translated 'opportunity,' 'chance,' or 'loop-hole.' Thus this verse can be expressed, 'Do not give the devil a chance to exert his influence.' It is likely that any sinful activity that the believer does not deal with by the power of the Spirit can be exploited by the devil and turned into a means of control over a believer's life. Therefore, Christians need to resist. For Paul, there is no middle ground. There is no nominal Christianity. Believers either resist the influence of the evil one who works through the flesh and the world, or they relinquish control of their lives to the powers of darkness. Giving in to these temptations does not just confirm the weakness of the flesh, it opens up the lives of believers to the control of the devil and his powers. We need to recognize the supernatural nature of temptation and be prepared to face it."

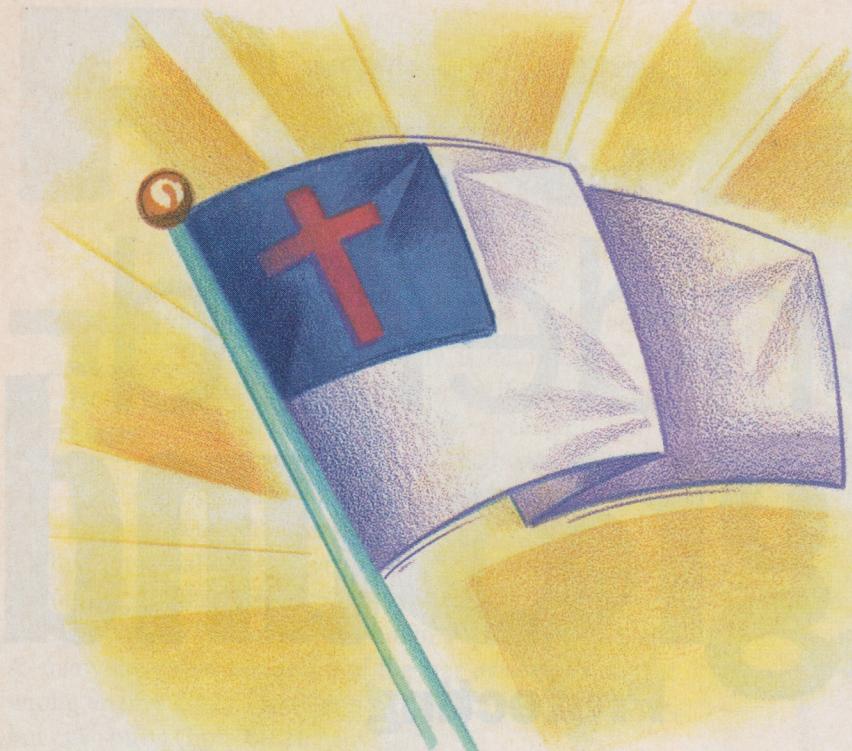


Illustration by Lori Bitter

ing surrendered ground

**Protecting
Your Family
from
Satan's
Attacks**





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How do we give ground to Satan? What allows him to exert control over us? There are a number of specific areas that open a person's life to demonic influence.

Caught in the Occult

The first is cult or occult involvement. God told Israel they were not to study the religions of the nations around them, for it might move them to pagan religious practices, which were an abomination to God.

The Word of God is full of warnings. God's judgment comes upon those who get involved in occult practices. These include games such as Dungeons and Dragons and the Ouija board, fortune telling, witchcraft and horoscopes.

People get into occult practices primarily for power, guidance, healing or protection. They want power over their lives or over others, but any supernatural power

they receive soon backfires. They find themselves controlled by evil powers instead of being in control.

Psychic hot lines are a multimillion dollar business, but God forbids this practice (Deut. 18:9-14). Predictive guidance has destroyed lives and marriages.

When we make good health a god, we open ourselves up to many strange and expensive health products and practices. Many believers have adopted New Age medical practices in ignorance. Charms, amulets, metals or crosses will not provide protection from the forces of darkness.

If you have been involved in any of these practices, you need to repent and confess specifically your involvements.

If possible, destroy by fire any occult or satanic objects (Acts 19:19). Renounce seeking power from darkness and announce that you only want the power of God in your life. Renounce seeking false guidance and announce that you will seek guidance from God's Word. Renounce occult or New Age healing practices and announce your intention to follow God's

instruction in illness. Renounce false methods of protection and announce you will seek only the protection of God. Ask God to take back all ground given Satan in these areas.

A Bitter Pill to Swallow

A second area common to those living defeated lives is bitterness. All of us have been hurt. The problem is what we do with those hurts.

Matthew 18:34 tells us unforgiveness opens us up to be tormented by Satan. Second Corinthians 2:10-11 tells us that unforgiveness gives Satan an advantage. Unforgiveness grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30-31).

We must fully forgive from the heart. Ask God to reveal to you those toward whom you have bitterness and unforgiveness. Release them to God. Let Him deal with them, for He has said, "Vengeance is mine" (Rom. 12:19, KJV).

Remember that this may also include a willingness to live with the ongoing consequences resulting from the sins of others against you. Divorce, effects of abortion, disease, business losses and family struggles won't necessarily be reversed just because we have forgiven. It may also mean a willingness to continue to live with the offenders even if they don't change.

The other side of this coin is to identify those whom you have hurt and clear your conscience where they are concerned. Make restitution where needed.

Paul said he always kept a clear conscience toward God and man (Acts 24:16). When Timothy began his ministry, Paul warned him that if he didn't keep his conscience clear, he would shipwreck his life of faith and ministry (1 Tim. 1:18-20).

Ask God to reveal those whom you have wounded. Clear your conscience toward them, but remember, the circle of confession need be no larger than the circle of offense.

Spirit of Rebellion

Another area that yields ground to Satan is rebellion (1 Sam. 15:23; Rom. 13:1-2; Eph. 6:1-3). God says rebelling against His ordained authority structures in our lives is like practicing witchcraft. It will open us

up to direct demonic influence and bring God's judgment upon our lives.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 Paul advised the church to release sinning members into the hands of Satan. If you are in rebellion, ask forgiveness of God and those you are in rebellion against. Place your life back under God's ordained authority. Take back this ground through prayer.

Dangerous Pride

The most devastating sin that gives ground to the enemy is pride. In eternity past, the great sin that removed Satan from heaven was pride.

Satan promotes a creature-centered philosophy. Those who buy into that philosophy will be ruled by him.

The Book of Proverbs reveals many consequences of self-centeredness or pride. James 4:6-10 says God's grace or empowering comes on those who are humble, those who voice a need of Him.

God resists the proud. He removes His spiritual power when we become self-centered.

We must place our lives under God's control. Warren Wiersbe says any area of our lives that we do not want God to control, Satan will control. From the place of submission we can resist the devil, and he will flee from us. When he leaves, the desire to sin leaves also.

Unfortunately, we often don't recognize Satan's involvement in our temptations until after we're defeated. James 1:14 states we are all tempted by the same process, but not necessarily in the same area. We are tempted in the area of our secret desires. The reason we do not recognize Satan in our temptations is that he only tempts us to do what we would do anyway.

Since pride causes us to lose God's power, how do we get rid of it? We can't.

Jesus was well aware of this when He spoke in Luke 9:23 (KJV): "And he said to

them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Paul mentioned being crucified with Christ in Galatians 2:20 and dying to self every day in 1 Corinthians 15:31.

If we want to live for Christ, we must first deny or say no to self. There is only one steering wheel in our lives. Who is at the wheel? We must take up His cross; die to our own desires, plans and agendas; and be completely open to God's will for our lives. One reason Paul was so used by God was that he died to self daily.

Identify the areas of self-centered control in your life. Confess this as sin. Ask God to reveal the ways you want life to revolve around you. Die to those things. Ask God to take back this ground.

Attacks on Morality

Spiritual attack seems to fall into two basic categories. The first is focused on the emotions. The most difficult defeats to deal with are emotional in nature. When normal emotions become a focus of Satan, they turn into worry, fear or panic. These emotions lead to actions.

The second kind of attack is focused on a solicitation to do evil that is accompanied by emotions. This is much easier to identify and deal with. Those who are practicing evil are the easiest to help because what they are doing is obviously wrong.

We give much ground because of immoral behavior. Immorality is on the rise in our culture because of the media, ready availability of pornographic materials and evil music. Our society has removed all godly heritage from our youth, and we are reaping the consequences — lives driven by lust. Too many men have given Satan entrance into their lives and families because of bondage to lust.

Romans 6 gives us direction on how to break Satan's grip if we are being defeated morally. God says sexual lust must not sit on the throne of our lives. When enthroned, it will send out strong desires. If we yield our bodies to act on these desires, they begin to dominate life, leading to slavery to sin. This in turn will cause us to go deeper and deeper into it.

What once bothered us doesn't bother us anymore. This leads to shame and spiritual deadness. Our fellowship with God is broken because of a sinful lifestyle.

Ask God to take you back to the first time you violated His moral laws. Confess each incident that He brings to mind. Ask God to take back the ground you gave to the enemy through these sins. Yield your body as an instrument of righteousness. Dedicate each part to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to enter every area of your life and bring it under His control, whether it's music, family, entertainment, friends or the future.

Dedicated to God

After you surrender all areas of your life to God, pray a prayer of dedication to God.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood, I take my stand with God against Satan and his wicked spirits. I reject and cancel any claim they may have in my life because of ground I have surrendered to them in the past. I command them to leave me now and go where the Lord Jesus Christ sends them.

New freedom has been the experience of thousands who have applied these principles to their lives. ■

Jim Logan is a counselor at International Center for Biblical Counseling of Iowa. He and his wife, Marguerite, have four children and seven grandchildren.

For additional insights on these concepts

please refer to Jim Logan's book *Reclaiming*

Surrendered Ground (Moody Press).

