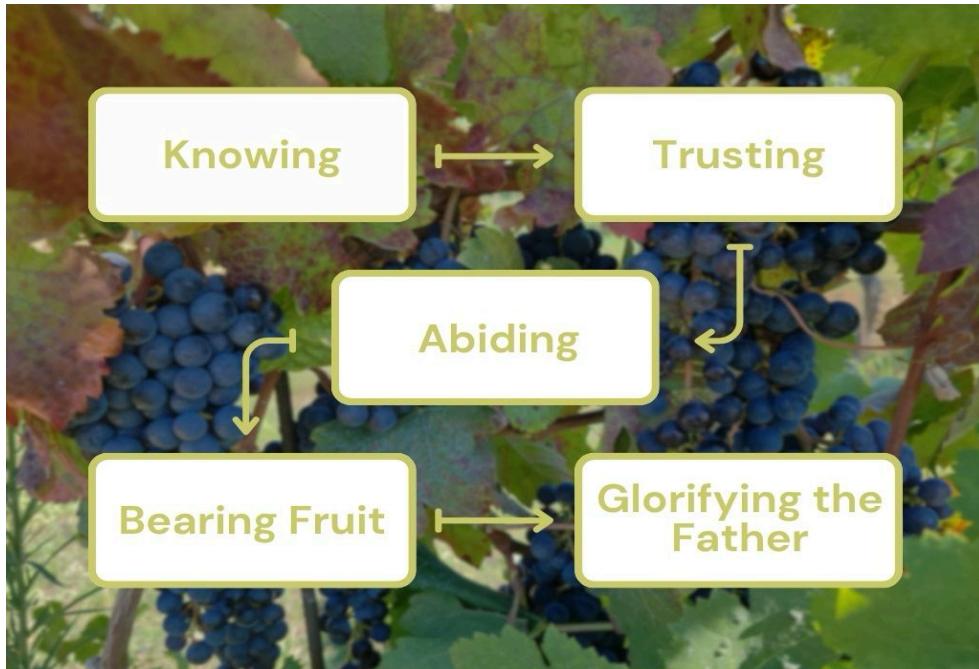


## Weekly Reflection: Opposition to our trust in God



If knowing leads to trusting; trusting leads to abiding; abiding leads to bearing fruit; and bearing fruit leads to glorifying God; what is the enemy's strategy going to be? I believe Satan's main focus will be to keep us from knowing and trusting God. If the enemy can cause us not to trust God, keep us doubting, then he keeps us from abiding, bearing fruit, and glorifying God.

### Satan is a liar and deceiver.

Now, the main reality to keep in mind in all this is that Satan is a deceiver, a liar, a murderer.

- *"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." Revelation 12:9 ESV*
- *"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." John 8:44 ESV*

### Can Satan actually influence our thoughts and actions?

In Genesis 3:1-7 we read how right from the beginning Satan shows up to influence Adam and Eve to stop trusting God. We might think, as we go back to the very beginning of the Bible, that the deception of Eve in the garden of Eden was not like the way Satan works today, because it was by means of an actual conversation between the devil and Eve. But Paul said that Christians must be on guard against a similar assault just like in the garden of Eden. He said, *"But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3 ESV)* Satan's work in our minds is called leading us astray, corrupting our thoughts. We

don't know how Satan does it, but there it is; he does it. He attempts to ruin and distort and mislead our thoughts and turn them into thoughts against Christ and for sin.

Another example is how Satan moved King David to take a census in Israel against God's will. **"Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel."** (1 Chronicles 21:1 ESV) He put the thought in David's mind, and he made the thought look like military wisdom when it was, in fact, distrust in God. And eventually, he had to repent of that lack of trust.

**"During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,"** (John 13:2 ESV) The thought, the intention, the desire was there in Judas. Satan, John says, "put it" there.

In Acts 5:3, where Ananias and Sapphira decide to lie to the apostles and keep back part of their pledge. **"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?'"** (Acts 5:3 ESV) Ananias and his wife had the thought, "Ah, let's make a little extra money for ourselves by lying about how much we sold our land for." And the thought became a plan, and the plan became a deed, and Peter describes that whole process as "Satan filled your hearts."

**"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.''"** Luke 4:1-4 ESV

This does not mean that Satan had complete control in any of these situations. This does not mean that Satan can have complete control over your thoughts and actions. When we sin we can't say, "Well Satan made me." There's no clear fine line between the influence that Satan has and our own sinful desires. We don't know exactly how Satan interacts with our own sinful nature to do his ugly work. But it is fair to say that our own sinfulness is like an invitation, like a welcome mat and an open door to Satan. That's what Paul says in **Ephesians 4:26-27, "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."** In other words, sinfully holding a grudge is like a welcome mat put out for Satan, it gives him opportunity to influence. **2 Corinthians 2:10-11, Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.** I like how the King James Version words verse 11, **"lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."** The word for "get an advantage" is the word *pleonekteo* and is the idea of cheating someone out of something that belongs to them. Their failure to show love to the repentant man could be used as a strategy of Satan. It could give an advantage to the enemy. When we are ignorant of Satan's strategies, he is able to take advantage of things that belong to us in Jesus, things like peace, joy, fellowship, a sense of forgiveness, and victory.

### Weapon of truth.

If satan is a liar and deceiver than this means that the central weapon against him is truth, faith in the truth, knowledge of the truth. We've probably all heard that the way banks train their employees to detect counterfeit money is by knowing what real, true, money looks like. That's exactly what we get in Ephesians 6:10-18. **"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."** Then seven pieces of armor are mentioned: belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the Gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, and prayer. I think it's an easy argument to make that all the armor has to do with truth. Our protection and weapon against the lies, deceit, schemes of the devil is truth. Jesus said,

***"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32) John 14:6 says, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."***

If we want to be people who are bearing fruit and glorifying God, than we must be people who are abiding in Jesus, living dependent on Jesus, remaining reliant on Jesus for everything; and if we are going to be abiding people than we must trust God, trust who He is, trust what He has done, and trust what He has promised to do; and if we are going to be a people who trust God we must be a people who know God. The enemy is and will do everything he can to keep us from knowing God and trusting God; and the way we fight against and protect against the lies and schemes of the devil is by knowing truth, knowing the character of God, knowing what God has done and has promised to do.

### **Knowing Truth**

Yes, Satan can influence the thoughts in our minds, but God has given us everything we need to recognize them and renounce them. Here are a few things you can do to fight against and protect against the lies and schemes of the devil:

1. **Start by asking some questions.** Ask, does this thought line up with the truth found in God's written Word? Ask, does this thought or action give glory to God? Ask, will this thought or action allow me to love others?
2. **Spend time in the truth.** Make a plan to be in the written Word of God everyday, and preferably some time at the start of your day. Meditate, chew on, the Word of God, hack it up and chew on it, let the truth get deep inside of you. Memorize the truth.
3. **Spend time with the truth.** Jesus is the truth, are you spending anytime with Him? Is there any space in your day that you are alone, silent, still, just to be with Jesus? With no agenda, no list of things you want or need; just to be with Him. And please don't say you're too busy, actually you are too busy not to make time to be with Jesus.
4. **Be in and with the body of Christ, the local church.** Make time to be with other believers talking about the Word of God (don't rely completely on Sunday morning). We need to be around each other because we will help each other get to know Jesus in ways that we cold not without each other. You will help me get to know Jesus in ways that I cannot without you.