

ASK ANYTHING

Part 8 “Did the devil make me do it?”

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

Delivered during the COVID-19 crisis via Livestream at Central Baptist Church on
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by Pastor Steven Edelman

(SLIDE 1) Good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us! We are so glad you are with us. Just like last week, we are asking parents with kids up to Grade 6 to use discretion because of the content of the sermon. We want to encourage them to watch the kid's lesson, which you can find on our website.

Today, we are on Part 8 of the series “**Ask Anything?**” “**Did the devil make me do it?**” Let’s jump in.

INTRODUCTION: What is temptation? (SLIDE 2) Is it just a red button, as seen in this Family Guy picture? The picture reads, “**Temptation, do you really want to spend the rest of your life, wondering?**” We can easily laugh about it, but there is a part of ourselves that longs to push the button.

(SLIDE 3) Rock star Mick Jagger says, “**It’s all right letting yourself go, as long as you can get yourself back.**” That sounds so playful and appealing! Temptation in our culture has become a motto for selling chocolate and personal hygiene products. Some of the slogans include, “**Can you resist?**” “**Do you dare?**” and “**Forever, share the fantasy!**” It looks good at first. But it promises something it can’t deliver.

But, something deep down believes you will be satisfied if you give into for a minute. You may think that you will be satisfied if you look at a picture or website. You may believe you will be satisfied if you can get into bed with someone else. You may believe you will be satisfied if you twist the truth to make yourself look better than you are. You may believe that you will be satisfied if you just have another bite. Or another drink.

What you are going to see is that sin is more like a morpheein. It feels good for a moment, and then it leaves you numb towards God and others.

Today, I want to show you that the problem is not temptation. An enticement or desire in itself isn't wrong. The problem is taking the bait and buying into an immediate, pleasurable urge or impulse that fractures an individual's relationship with God.

This is why we have so many problems in the world.

Here is a summary of the questions that you submitted: (SLIDE 4)

1. **HOW DO WE DECIPHER WHAT IS SATAN AND WHAT IS OUR SINFUL NATURE?**
2. **HOW DO WE FIGHT SIN?**
3. **HOW DO WE PRACTICALLY CHANGE IMPURE THOUGHTS?**

First, **HOW DO WE DECIPHER WHAT IS SATAN?** I am going to reframe the question just a bit to: **did the devil make me do it?**

(SLIDE 5)

1. **DID THE DEVIL MAKE ME DO IT?**

(SLIDE 6) Let's start with the question: **WHAT IS SIN?** We need to start with the beginning. The Bible talks about a **beginning** (God created everything good), a **middle** (Man rebelled against God), and an **end** (Jesus will fix all that is broken).

At the core of sin is a rebellion of God that pushes Him away. We all reject God as our ruler by trying to run life our own way without him. Let's look at how this began. It all started with **started with Adam and Eve who had a desire to be like God and take his place as king. Here is the thing. Adam and Eve were not just violating some simple rule, "Don't eat the fruit." They were doing something much more significant and much more severe. **They were rejecting God's authority over them and declaring their independence from him. Sin is loving or wanting something more than God.****

We see this being played out all over the place. Our culture says, "follow your heart!" Do whatever feels good. Live in the moment. Be free. Just like Adam and Eve, we will discover that the exact opposite is true. When you live like this you become a slave to your own fleshly desires, which will destroy your relationship with God and others.

At the core of sin is a desire to fulfill an earthly desire over what God wants for us.

Back to the question, did the devil make me do it?

(SLIDE 7) Look with me at Matthew 4:1, which says, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”

The Greek word for “tempted” is better translated as “tested.” The Spirit led Jesus to the desert to be tested so that His real character and identity would be seen.

Notice that Satan is testing Jesus.

(SLIDE 8) WHO IS SATAN? First, Satan is not a guy in a red suit with a pitchfork that you see in cartoons. He is also not just an impersonal force, or general concept. He is a person spiritual being. Jesus Himself, at every point, treats Satan like a personal being. Jesus called him by name repeatedly, spoke directly to him, and taught about his works and strategies.

It doesn't say that Jesus was being forced or controlled by Satan. How Jesus responds answers many questions for us like: Is Jesus really who he says he is? Can we follow his example? Can we trust him?

What does Satan do? The Bible says, (SLIDE 9) He lies (John 8:44). **(SLIDE 10) He works** behind the scenes (1 John 3:8). **(SLIDE 11) He contends** (fights) with God's angels (Jude 1: 9). **(SLIDE 12) He prowls** (1 Peter 5:8). **(SLIDE 13) He schemes** to outwit believers (2 Corinthians 2:11). **(SLIDE 14) He blinds unbelievers** (2 Corinthians 4:4). **(SLIDE 15) He deceives** (Revelation 20:2-3). **(SLIDE 16) He tempts** (1 Corinthians 7:5). **(SLIDE 17) He confuses** (Genesis 3:1).

Okay, can the devil make us sin?

HERE IS PART OF THE ANSWER: (SLIDE 18) “Satan does encourage God's people to sin through all these different means.” He entices people into sin by playing to their natural weakness, self-importance, and sinful cravings. He tempts people with things like pornography, sex, money, and power. Throughout the Bible, it's from Adam and Eve to David with Bathsheba and the problems in the Corinthian Church. Satan is using many different means to lure God's people to sin.

Is there a point in which Satan goes beyond encouraging us to sin? That is the question. For example, can a Christian be possessed by a demon and sin as a result? To be honest, this question has come up many times over the years. What do

we mean by “demon possession?” **Do we mean that someone is being controlled by a demon so that they are unable to obey God’s commands and follow Jesus with their behaviour?**

THE ANSWER IS “NO.” Scripture says plainly that the entrance of God’s salvation into a believer’s life will prevent that kind of satanic control.

(SLIDE 19) Look with me at 1 John 4:4 says, “**The Spirit of God, who lives in believers, is stronger than the devil.** Colossians 1:13 says, “**Believers are no longer citizens of the domain of darkness but are citizens of Jesus’ kingdom.**”

The Bible rejects the idea that a Christian can be possessed, controlled, or dominated by a demon. Jesus has bound Satan and set God’s people free from his dominion (Matthew 12:29).

But, if we leave aside the word “possession” and think instead in terms of demonic “influence” or “attack,” then we have a clearer sense of how demons relate to God’s people.

(SLIDE 20) The second part of the question is: **HOW DO WE KNOW IT’S OUR SINFUL NATURE?**

(SLIDE 21) Look with me at Ephesians 2:1-3, which says, “**¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind....”**

How do you know if it’s the result of our sinful nature? Our sinful nature involves going against God in our thoughts and behaviours.

The Greek word for flesh is ‘sarx’ and is translated as "the sinful nature," "self-indulgence," and "sinful self-interest." **Any time you follow or give into the “prince of power” (Satan), it’s your ‘sarx’ giving in. Some may say that they are following their heart. Any decision that you make that is outside of God’s standard is a result of your sinful nature.**

For example, it’s because of our sinful nature within us that we may daydream or fantasize about how successful we will be. Or why we covet or long for what we do not have? Or why some women envy other women’s beauty or skills. This is why a man

finds himself undressing a woman who is not his wife or going beyond that. It's because we too have bought into the lie that you will be happy and free if you satisfy your desires. As soon as we choose to feed our fleshly appetites outside of God's boundaries, we sin.

ILLUSTRATION: Here is what happens. You get caught in the moment. One thing leads to another. It was the movie. It was the songs. She seduced me. Suddenly, you are waist deep into to sin. Who is responsible?

To answer the question, **did the devil make me do it?**

(SLIDE 22) THE ANSWER: Demons can tempt, influence, and attack God's people but do not control or "possess" Christians. Therefore, we are responsible for all our sins.

As you can see, the devil did not directly make you sin.

Next, how do we fight sin?

(SLIDE 23)

2. HOW DO WE FIGHT SIN?

First, we need to fight with a weapon. What would happen if you were to go into battle with no weapon? The answer is obvious, and the defeat would come quickly. Jesus knew the Words of his Father so well he could use them as a weapon against the lies of the devil.

Notice that Jesus overcame all three temptations with the Word of God.

(SLIDE 24) TEMPTATION #1: FLESHLY DESIRE (Mt 4:2-4)

(SLIDE 25) Look with me at Matthew 4:2-4, which says, **"2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.**

- Jesus was **let by the Spirit** and he wasn't alone. Satan wants us to think that we are alone.
- Jesus was also **dependent** on the power of the Spirit.
- Jesus **prepared** to fight temptation.

Satan is appealing to the lust of the flesh. Notice how subtle these temptations are. Having fasted for forty days, Jesus was naturally hungry. Satan plays to His

hunger: "**command that these stones become bread,**" and Jesus responds with Scripture. Jesus I know you want to satisfy your flesh.

Matthew 4:4 Says, ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus quotes **Deut 8:3**, "Man shall not live by bread alone..."

(SLIDE 26) TEMPTATION #2: POWER (Mt 4:5-7)

(SLIDE 27) Look with me at Matthew 4:5-6, which says, "Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, " 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and " 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' "

Satan attacks his identity and appeals to the longing for power. Satan sets Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple, tells Him to "**throw Yourself down**" and let the angels save you. If you are a man of faith and power, prove it! to get his way and tries to manipulate him by quoting Psalm 91:11,12. Satan is manipulating and twisting Scripture (truth) to get Jesus to **misuse his authority to show his status and power.** **A partial truth is very dangerous.**

Why is Satan trying to do here? He is trying to get Jesus to take the shortcut to end his suffering or the easy way out, so he didn't have to die on the cross. **Think of Lance Armstrong, who was stripped of all his titles for taking performance drugs. Many Olympic winners have lost their gold medals because they took a shortcut.** Satan wanted to stop what Jesus was going to do on the cross.

How often do we give in to the easy thing? Would you take a short cut to gain status or power by cheating? Do you easily get pulled off the course that God has for you? **Jesus responds with Scripture. Matthew 4:7, which says,** "Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

(SLIDE 28) TEMPTATION #3: WEALTH (Mt 4:8-10)

(SLIDE 29) Look with me at Matthew 4:8-10, which says, "⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

Satan appeals to **our desire for materialism and riches**. Satan takes Jesus to a High Mountain and shows Him the kingdoms of the world. He is offering to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He worships Satan. Again, Jesus responds with Scripture, and in verse 10, he says, **“Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’ ”**

Notice what happened next. **“¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”** **When we use truth to fight Satan, we defeat him. The tempter leaves when defeated with the truth.**

As you can see, Jesus uses the Word of God as an offensive weapon. Ephesians 6:17 says, **“Take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”** Three times Satan tempted the Lord Jesus, and three times Jesus answered him with the Word of God. Satan throws everything he has at Jesus, and he is defeated with the truth. This is the moment of victory!

ILLUSTRATION: Wear the temptation hat with all the dangling temptations.

It’s this what life is really like? Everywhere we look there are temptations. Satan is trying to get you to take the bait. **He will use everything He can to entice you out of your relationship with God. Temptations are always going to be dangled in front of us.** Satan draws your attention to the fleshly desires that lure you into his trap, and he gets a stronghold in your life. Many are stuck on a hook and don’t know how to get free.

We all are assaulted daily by images, thoughts, and desires that are outside the will of God. This includes temptations such as sex outside of marriage, pornography, gossip, anger, addictions, jealousy and coveting. Thoughts like you’re a failure or not good enough. Or idolizing people’s opinions. How are you responding to temptation? Once we know the enemy’s strategy to defeat us, we can an offensive plan to fight back.

APPLICATION:

(SLIDE 30) THIS IS HOW YOU CAN RESIST TEMPTATION LIKE JESUS:

- 1. Prepare** - by committing portions of scripture to memory.
- 2. Meditate** - on the verses each day to renew your mind (Rom 12:1-2).
- 3. Quote** - the verse out loud when tempted.

4. Repeat.

Do you have the Word of God committed to memory so you can use it when faced with temptation? Do the words swim in your head as much as the lyrics to our favourite song? **This is how Jesus defeated Satan. He knew the Word of God, and He knew how to use it.**

This is what we need to do when we feel weak, and fleshly desires are leading us down the wrong path. In those moments, you need to read, quote, and even sing the Word of God. The more we learn to use resources that God has given us, the more we will grow in our ability to fight the temptations.

(SLIDE 31) John Piper says, “**Hold the promise and the pleasure of Christ firmly in your mind until it pushes the other images out. Fix your eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). Many fail because they give in too soon. They say, “I tried to push it out, and it didn’t work.” I ask, “How long did you try? How hard did you exert your mind?” The mind is a muscle. You can flex it and strengthen it. Be brutal. Hold the promise of Christ before your eyes. Hold it. Hold it! Don’t let it go! Keep holding it! How long? As long as it takes. Fight! For Christ’s sake, fight till you win!**”

Here is some hope: **(SLIDE 32)** 1 Corinthians 10:13, which says, “**No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.**” What can you do to help remind yourself that God is going to provide a “way out” for you?

As you can see, we can fight sin by fighting with Scripture.

(SLIDE 33)

3. HOW DO WE PRACTICALLY CHANGE IMPURE THOUGHTS?

First, what do we mean by impure thoughts? Impure thoughts are lustful thoughts that are not consistent with what God has said is right. **As a side note, desires can be both good and bad.** For example, have you read the book in the Bible called Song of Solomon? When a man and woman desire each other in the context of marriage it’s good. It’s also what bonds a husband and wife together.

Here is the challenge, our culture says, “It’s just sex!” This was the slogan that started Playboy and the sexual revolution in the 1960s, which is still the motto of today. Sex is all over our TV screens, literature and infused into the rhythms of culture. **It’s just simply a transaction between people, like shaking hands.** What is the big deal? However, many in our culture are realizing the pain and consequences of this.

Well, when sex is pursued outside the boundaries God clearly defined, it causes brokenness. Think of fire and the need for a boundary or it becomes uncontrollable and causes damage.

For example, when someone sits and quietly fixes their eyes and heart upon a man or a woman (whether it be on a computer, television, photo, in person, or in their imagination) and then begins to desire him or her sexually, this is sinful lust. The man or woman has lustfully craved sexual satisfaction apart from what God has called good. **The problem is that it rewires your brain, it causes unrealistic expectations (that no one can live up to), and woman are treated like objects.**

A 2018 study published by Psychology Today says, **“Pornography increases loneliness, and causes relationship distress, and disrupts attachment. Overall, the chance of divorce doubled for both men and women who started using porn after getting married.”**¹

Also, Porn is supporting and funding sex trafficking of young girls across the globe. And we wonder why our culture has so many problems. However, the statistics are out and married couples who work on their marriage have better and more sex.

Okay, so back to the question. How do we battle impure thoughts? I am going to give you six things that will help you win.

First, I am going to call realization #1.

(SLIDE 34) REALIZATION #1 – Realize you need to take the impure thought captive

The principle is really quite simple, but the practice is not. In order to overcome impure thoughts, we must take control of our thought life.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/experimentations/201803/4-ways-porn-use-causes-problems>

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” When sinful and impure thoughts enter our minds, quickly “crucify” them and turn from the sin. We can do this by replacing a thought with prayer and Scripture that counters that thought. An example is the impure thought of lust. Replace it quickly with a thought of “that person is made in the image of God.” That person is is not an object for my pleasure. **That is or will be someone else’s spouse. God help me delight in the good gifts that you have given me.** Your thought life reveals what you worship; it controls your passions and tells what you love the most (Matt. 22:37–40). If you keep feeding the lustful thoughts in your mind, they grow and turn into my actions. Those actions lead to more problems and brokenness. This is why you need to take every thought captive.

(SLIDE 35) REALIZATION #2 – Realize that you need to remove the things that are defeating you

This would include books or magazines, sensual music, sensual pictures, ungodly friendships, apps, devices, or sinful activities. As you remove these sources of temptation from your life, you can avoid entering the path of evil.

(SLIDE 36) REALIZATION #3 – Realize you need to tell someone you trust

“Ask them to keep you accountable. Tell a few people who are strong in this area. Ask people how they quit. Ask for help. Consider counselling. If you’re married, tell your spouse, but not just your spouse. Be honest about your struggle. James 5:16 tells us that Confession leads to healing (James 5:16).

(SLIDE 37) REALIZATION #4 - Realize that you are not alone

To borrow from another Pastor, “Your shame wants you to think you are the one person with an outlandish, abnormal, desire for sex. That way, you’ll keep this to yourself. Don’t believe it for a second. Punch your shame in the face. It’s not true. At all. I was a Jesus-loving, Bible-reading, high school chaplain, pastor’s kid who felt the same way. Then, I found out that 64% of Christian men and 33% of Christian women admit they use porn. Keyword: admit.”

(SLIDE 38) REALIZATION #5 – Realize you need some tools

Quitting your porn addiction, or fighting any addiction, is like tearing down a house and building a new one in its place. Would you want to live in that house if it

were built without the right, tested, powerful tools? Get some accountability software like [Covenant Eyes](#). Turn on safe search. Delete certain apps from your phone. If you're a man, read books like [Every Man's Battle](#). If you're a woman, read books like [Every Woman's Battle](#).

(SLIDE 39) REALIZATION #6 – Realize you need a changed heart

Why can't you just stop looking at porn or lusting? The problem is that there is a root reason behind our sin that you can't simply change with will power. Can you defeat this with more will power? **No, your heart affections need to change.**

Another Pastor named Erik Raymond says, **"Each one of us, whether a Christian or not, are governed by our hearts. It's been rightly said that our hearts are the control tower of the person. It is the seat of our emotions and what governs our actions."** Our heart wants what our heart wants! **The problems is that our hearts have a natural bent to the wrong things. "We naturally fasten our lust upon that which seems to provide us with immediate pleasure, comfort, happiness, or honor. The shiny hooks of the enemy dangle before us in the form of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Our hearts are lured after what we want and think we need."**

Our heart shows its ability to deceive and trick. **We need more than good intentions and will power.** You need God to transform the desires of your heart.

From a biblical perspective, the heart is the core of who you are. It is the control center of your life. Your heart directs everything you think and do.

Whatever your heart worships will ultimately determine your entire life. It's connected to your plans, all your intentions, all your cravings. **The ultimate way for believers to battle against the evil one is to resolve in our hearts and minds that we will trust God's goodness and wisdom in all circumstances.** Solomon warns, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23).

(SLIDE 40) HOW DOES GOD CHANGE OUR HEART DESIRES?

1 John 1:9 says, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** **God changes our hearts when we turn away from our sins and back to Him. In this process, we learn to learn that God is good,**

and He is who says he is. In this, we learn to enjoy God's good gifts and find healing for our souls.

(SLIDE 41) I also want you to notice in Matthew 4:1-11 which says, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Nowhere in the text does it say the Spirit left Jesus alone. Satan wants us to think that we can handle temptation on our own. In reliance on yourself rather than the Spirit, he seduces you. This is one of his strategies to defeat you!

The beautiful truth is that those who belong to Christ have the Spirit (Romans 8:9.) Paul says it perfectly in Galatians 5:16, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." What does it mean to walk by the Spirit? **To walk by the Spirit means to listen and act according to the instructions given so we may not fall.**

IN CLOSING (CALL WORSHIP TEAM):

The author and Bible teacher A.W. Pink said, **(SLIDE 42): "The Christian who has stopped repenting has stopped growing."**

The first step in becoming a good repenter is recognizing the lie about repentance! We tell ourselves that we need to sit in our shame and guilt and in this defeated state before going to God. This is exactly what Satan wants. No wonder, so many Christians are defeated. I want to say that we don't go to the good news fast enough. **Repentance isn't shameful; it's smart.** It means that you are letting the truth change your thinking, again and again, so we're continuously turning back to God and trusting him once more. We forget that we are all in process.

I want to give you a moment to talk God about whatever is going on in your heart. To listen and act to whatever God is saying to you. Maybe this is the first time and you need to give your life to Christ because you realize you need God's help. For others, you realize that your secret sin needs to be exposed. Repent now. Let the light expose what has been enslaving you in the darkness. In secret. You realize that you need to put some things in place so you can have some victory in your life. You are not fighting on your own strength for victory. Victory has already been won for you. You need to start fighting from a place strength because victory is already yours through Christ. Run to the good news. Flee temptation. You don't have to be stuck and miserable in living in sin. Embrace God's love.