

SATAN'S DEADLY TRAPS (#s 4,5,6)

4 The Monkey Trap In third world countries that have jungles, monkeys are a nuisance, but they are also a delicacy. One method of catching a monkey is to make a hole in a gourd just large enough for a monkey hand when empty. Put nuts or something a monkey eats inside the gourd and fasten the gourd in a tree. A monkey will come along, discover the food and reach in and grab a handful. When the hand is full it is too big around to pass through the hole in the gourd, and the monkey is determined not to let go of the food in its hand—not even fear of the hunter will cause the monkey to let go of the food and escape.

Selfishness and greed are deadly weapons Satan uses to entrap and destroy people. Greed is a terrible destroyer in the world, but sadly, even some believers are selfish and greedy to their own destruction. My pastor has a saying: “*some people get all they can, can all they get, and sit on the can.*” We are urged to learn from the ant that works in the summer preparing for the winter (**Prov. 6:6-11**)—and saving for a rainy day is a good idea—but not helping the poor and needy is a bad idea. **Prov. 3: 27, 28** warns us not to withhold from those who ask for our help when it is in our power to help; and **Prov. 19:17** says that God will pay us back for what we give to the poor and needy. **Psalms 41:1-3** promise that God will bless those who consider the poor (in their giving) and the Lord will deliver and sustain the giver on his sickbed.

The Bible says that we should love and help our neighbor (the good Samaritan—**Luke 10:36**); that God loves a liberal and cheerful giver (**2nd Cor. 9:7**) and that God will even give back to us good measure and overflowing (**Luke 6:38**). Who can turn down a plan with such great promises? Yet Satan continues to deceive people into believing his lies, and many fall into the **monkey trap** because of greed and self-interest. Conversely, Jesus used the story of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10**) to teach compassion and benevolence even to strangers. **The parable of the talent** illustrates the Kingdom principle of wisely using and multiplying that which God has given to us whether it be talent, time, money, or what ever. And the servant who buried his talent instead of investing it was the ultimate **loser**. He sat on the can instead of using what was in the can to further God’s purposes, which involves an unselfish, benevolent spirit. **Mighty Man**—this question of greed or helping others, including the work of the church, is one of the greatest decisions you must make; and by not doing anything you automatically fall into the camp of the greedy. Don’t let Satan lure you into the **the monkey trap**.

5 The Trivia Trap Most believers are sincere. They want to read the Bible, pray, study and become good and faithful servants of the Lord. Many start well, but somewhere along the way get side-tracked by what we may term: **trivia**. **Have you noticed** how easy it is to become distracted and either stop praying, reading the Bible, preparing study outlines—or never get started? **Maybe** it is hunger and you take a break for food and drink. **Maybe** the phone rings and the reason for the call takes you away from your prayer or study. **Maybe** a member of the family breaks in upon your study and meditation with an urgent need—**or perhaps** something that is exciting to them. You know what I am talking about. **Maybe** you classify some distractions as legitimate—those involving family, job or ministry—and some non-legitimate like hobbies, TV, radio, sports, you know—things you like to do. But they capture your interest and rob you of time you really wanted to spend pursuing relationship with the Lord. I have been guilty, even though I have made endless daily and weekly lists and marked my calendar with the day and time for prayer, study, projects and spiritual growth. Some times I did so-called “important” things before prayer and Bible reading and the day passed without getting back to the most important thing for a successful day—indeed life—**prayer and Bible reading**.

Trivial pursuits can lead to bad decisions, like reading exciting books or playing computer games, or stepping out of a church service occasionally during sports play-offs. People in church may not think anything of your absence for a little while; they may think you went to the rest room, or had some church duty to take care of, but God isn’t fooled and He keeps good records. Trivial things can fill our minds, waste time robbed from the spiritual routine God has for us—and ultimately slow or stop our growth altogether. Be aware of Satan’s traps and don’t let them side-track you or bring death to your achieving the goal God planned for you. I know as followers of Christ we all have responsibilities, and God will lead us on different pathways, but we need to work on keeping up with the pursuit of God and godliness—which requires **daily prayer and Bible reading**. Putting God first will really make our day, and set the course for becoming the **mighty man** we want to become. More importantly—we need to make sure we don’t let trivial distractions draw us into non-productive activities day after day. For in so doing **we risk becoming neutralized by Satan’s trivia trap**.

6 The Caterpillar Trap Caterpillars have one interesting feature that lends itself to our study. They will form a head to tail circle and go round and round. Caterpillars will never break this chain until the leader releases its

grip on the last one in the chain. You can place a pile of leaves in the middle of the circle and not one caterpillar will break rank and go for the tempting leaves. That is loyalty to leadership among caterpillars.

Following the Leader can be a good thing if the leader is a good shepherd obeying the Lord and keeping the care of his flock uppermost in his heart. The Apostle Paul told his followers to follow his example as long as it reflected Bible truth (**1 Cor. 11:1**); but blindly following a bad leader can have disastrous results as was the case with a well known evangelist who led his loyal followers to South America. If you don't know the story—everyone drank the cool aid and died. They died because they didn't know the Bible well enough, they didn't have the Holy Spirit active in their lives to warn them, and they were following a once trusted leader gone bad—and didn't discern the truth because our adversary had deceived them somewhere along the way.

In my early Christian years God unexpectedly moved me from a city or a church or a job—which I later realized to be stepping stones in my preparation for a life-long ministry career. If I had neglected God's leadership, I would have missed future divine opportunities. Another time I was led to a different church because I needed to be in a healthy environment for my children—and I received the bonus blessing of personal directive prophecy, and became a pillar in the church. After nearly ten years I realized the leader was becoming careless about some personal advice to needy folk; and also allowed situations that endangered the safety and welfare of young people. Some good ministry continued, but I could not endorse some things that members brought to my attention and didn't feel I could invite people to the church. I changed churches in a careful way because I didn't want to create division and I couldn't be dishonest with people who confronted me with these problems. I reminded them that the church (leadership included) had brought many blessings to them, and they should make sure the Lord was leading them to make a change.

Another time, after moving to a new area because of family concerns, I attended a number of churches and couldn't find a good fit. We finally attended a church that was financially supporting Israel and sponsoring public promotion of major Christian holidays. In these and other ways the pastor was challenging but the church kept the lid on Holy Spirit activity and I knew it was not a good place for me. One Sunday morning I woke up early with these strong words on my mind: *"you are running with the wrong crowd"* and I knew it was time to change churches. Keep in mind there are churches that attract different Christians. One may have good worship but poor follow up of new converts. A church may have a sincere but inadequately trained pastor. A church may have strong emphasis on soul-winning but weak discipleship. A church may have strong spiritual gift emphasis but poor guidance, which could lead to misuse of the gifts and/or it may drift into fleshly exercise drawing attention to individuals rather than honoring God and lasting good for all worshipers. As a Christian grows he/she may need to shift ministry emphasis which could lead to following a new leader. My personal examples illustrate reasons God may lead us away from one church, and may or may not indicate faulty doctrine; but if leadership is not led by the Holy Spirit, it is better to play safe and switch to a church founded on solid doctrine. I thank God I am in a church with great leadership, warm fellowship and biblical outreaches.

God has given every believer the Holy Spirit to guide and teach truth—to bear witness concerning what is true doctrine and practice—and what is not. To know truth a believer's **first loyalty** is to the Lord and the teaching of Scripture. **His second loyalty** is to a godly, faithful pastor or leader who has earned respect and trust. **Jesus said:** *"Beware of false prophets...you will know them by their fruits"* (**Matt. 7:16,17**). And **Paul wrote in Rom 16:** *"Note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine you have learned, and avoid them."* **Paul also wrote in Colossians:** *"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ"* (**Col. 2:8**).

Believers need to discern between the good and bad, lest they be like a caterpillar connected to a family of believers led by an erring leader where they can be led away from truth into the deadly **caterpillar trap**. This study adds emphasis to the importance of the previous lesson—which stressed the importance of having a regular time for Bible study and prayer. The Bereans in the **Book of Acts (17:11)** got it right—they searched the Scriptures to confirm what evangelists and teachers were telling them, and they avoided the **Caterpillar trap**. Watch for the next lesson, which concludes this series on **Satan's deadly traps**. Future lessons will teach how some people in the Bible became Mighty Men & Women, and I have a series on Faith, Spiritual Principles found in the Book of Romans, and Leadership Principles. Stay the course **Mighty Man** in the making.

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