



Lifestyle Design: Purposeful Living

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)

The Eskimos have an interesting way of killing wolves. They take a sharp knife, dip in in seal fat, and plant the blade up in the snow. A hungry wolf will smell the seal fat, which he loves, find the knife, and begin to lick it. As soon as he licks it, he tastes blood—his own blood. But he loves the taste of blood, so he licks more and more, until he finally kills himself. What he thought at first was really living was actually killing him.

Gorging yourself on the world and its sinful pleasures is like that. At first it tastes good, but it is really destroying you. Only Jesus ultimately satisfies the soul. Only Jesus can reconcile you to God and give you real life, purposeful life, that begins now and continues through all eternity. There are only two ways to live your life: You can pursue this world for satisfaction, or you can seek after God to satisfy. The world, under the dominion of Satan, will rob, kill, and destroy your soul. Jesus offers life, and that more abundantly.

Few things would be more traumatic than to have a thief enter your home. Thankfully, most of us will go through life without ever having to have such an experience. Yet everyday there is a thief who is trying to invade our lives and to take away from us God's blessings. His name is Satan and Jesus said that his intent is to STEAL and KILL and DESTROY!

Satan not only wants to enter our lives occasionally; he wants to come in and to establish what many call a 'stronghold.' A spiritual stronghold is an area of our life where the devil is able to

control us and dominate much of our thinking. There are many ways Satan can establish a stronghold in our lives. He can do so through bitterness and anger, as well as lust, greed, and even fear.

Perhaps some of us think that such domination and control of Satan is only for the most vile and wicked. Yet we read in scripture how the devil tried to control even the Lord Jesus. On one occasion, Jesus revealed to His disciples that He would be arrested and killed and on the third day, be raised from the dead. Simon Peter, hearing these words, replied to the Lord, "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!" (Mt 16:22) Peter's intention was to protect Jesus, yet the Lord said to him, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." (Mt 16:23) Peter was not Satan, yet Satan was influencing his thinking and through his suggestions, Satan was trying to enter the mind of Jesus and keep Him from doing His Father's will.

I am sure that Jesus' reply must have stunned Peter; yet this would not be his last encounter with the devil. On one occasion Jesus said to him, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So, when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers." (Lk 22:31-32) Satan did indeed sift Simon Peter. Satan planted the seed of fear in his heart and caused him to deny that he had ever known the one he called his Master.

Simon Peter, more than any other disciple, understood how the thief can enter a man's life and rob him of his spiritual joy. Peter also understood the importance of protecting our hearts and minds through prayer. Throughout the rest of his life

he thought about Christ's instruction on fighting spiritual warfare – "Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak." (Mk 14:38) How do I know Peter kept these words in mind? Consider what he later wrote, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith." (1 Pet 5:8-9)

Every Christian fights a spiritual battle. Though believers cannot be possessed by demons, they can be harassed by them and actually give them territory in their lives. **Ephesians 4:27** warns us to not **'give place to the devil.'** The words Paul uses here indicates that Christians can allow Satan to heavily influence their lives. Some call this satanic influence a 'spiritual stronghold'. A stronghold is something like a fortress or a castle. Paul gives us one example of how Satan can set up a stronghold in a believer's life. **"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." (Eph 4:26-27 NKJV)** Bitterness and anger are two of Satan's favourite castles. Other strongholds include things such as: lust, greed, deception, laziness, pride, gossip and slander.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). God wants you to have a rich and satisfying life. This does not mean that your life will be problem free, but it does mean that Jesus will be there to walk with you through the problems. This verse also shows us that trouble does not come from God. Things that steal and destroy are from the devil. Jesus does not send those types of things to you.

"The greatest fear that human beings experience is not death, that is inevitable, but consideration of the distinct possibility of living a worthless life." So today, if you are in the middle of a difficult situation, be encouraged. Jesus came to give us a rich and purposeful life. He is there to walk with you in the midst of difficulty and will be with you wherever you go in tough times. So, decide to get closer to God in tough times and let Him show you how rich and purposeful life in Him can be. SHALOM!

