

SEPTEMBER DEVOTIONAL: *Don't Be Fooled*

Most of us like to think we can spot a scam.

We've learned to be suspicious of the email announcing that we've won a prize we never entered to win. We know the person calling to say we must "act immediately" may not really be from the bank. And hopefully, we know by now that the nice stranger on the internet probably does not need our help transferring several million dollars into the United States!

Scams have become more sophisticated, but the basic strategy hasn't changed very much. A scammer wants us to believe something that isn't true so that we will do something we normally wouldn't do.

And if you think about it, that strategy is much older than telephones, computers, or the internet.

It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

God had given Adam and Eve everything they needed. He had also given them one clear instruction: they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then the serpent came along.

He didn't begin by forcing Eve to do anything. Instead, he caused her to question what God had said. He twisted the truth. He made disobedience sound attractive. And he convinced her that perhaps God was keeping something good from her.

Sound familiar?

The methods used by scammers today are surprisingly similar to the methods our enemy has used for generations.

He uses lies.

The serpent contradicted God's warning and told Eve, "You will not certainly die" (Genesis 3:4 NIV). Satan still wants us to question what God has said and believe something else instead.

That is why knowing God's truth matters. The better we know the truth, the easier it is to recognize a lie.

He uses temptation.

The forbidden fruit looked good. The serpent made it sound as though Eve would be gaining something wonderful by eating it.

Temptation often works that way. It focuses our attention on what we might gain while hiding what it may cost us. Something can look attractive in the moment and still lead us away from what God knows is best.

Scammers also know that strong emotions can keep us from thinking clearly. Fear, excitement, urgency, or even compassion can cause us to react before we stop and think.

The enemy can do the same thing. He knows our weaknesses. He knows where we are vulnerable. He would love for us to react based only on how we feel instead of stopping to seek God's wisdom.

So how do we keep from being fooled?

Whether we are dealing with a suspicious phone call or a spiritual decision, some of the same advice applies: Slow down. Ask questions. Know the truth. And seek wisdom before you act.

Scripture tells us: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

— 1 Peter 5:8 NIV

Notice that Scripture tells us to be alert, not afraid.

Yes, we have an enemy who deceives, but we have a God who speaks truth. We have an enemy who wants to confuse us, but we have the Holy Spirit to guide us. And we have an enemy who would like us to believe he has the upper hand—but he doesn’t.

The Bible gives us this wonderful assurance:

“The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

— 1 John 4:4 NIV

That doesn’t mean we should be careless. We still need to pay attention. We still need to recognize deception and make wise choices. But we don’t have to live in fear of being fooled by the enemy. The God who lives within us is greater than any lie Satan can tell, any temptation he can offer, or any fear he can use against us.

So be watchful. Be wise. Know the truth. Ask God for discernment.

And above all, remember Who is greater.

Closing Prayer: Father, thank You for loving us and for giving us Your truth. Help us to recognize deception and give us wisdom to make good decisions. Teach us to slow down, seek Your guidance, and not allow fear or emotion to control our choices. Help us to be alert, but not afraid. Remind us that the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. Help us to remember that truth and to walk confidently in the victory that is ours through Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.