

He was about to make... the biggest sales pitch of his life.
He entered the client's office with an air of confidence.
Thorough preparation... spectacular pricing... an urgent need...
The administrative assistant was cordial... but professional
He entered the spacious corner office... nervous... optimistic.

The buyer was making notes on a file.
Then the administrative assistant rapped lightly on the door...
stepped around the large desk... and whispered to the buyer...

I apologize... I have to take care of something.
I'll just be a minute.
Would you mind waiting?

Now alone in this elegant office...
He took a closer look at the furnishings
Floor to ceiling windows... a magnificent view...
Ornate mahogany bookcases... Photos in silver frames...
A real fountain pen on a leather blotter...
And... *a proposal!*
At the top... the logo of his biggest business rival

There it was... his whole pitch... but the bottom line...
Was covered... by a can...
Some kind of an energy drink

If he moved the can... He'd know what his competitor bid
What harm could there be? Just reading the top page...
After all... it's right there in plain sight...

Should I look? Or not?
He finally decided to uncover the critical numbers

He lifted... the can...

There wasn't any liquid in the can!

It didn't even have a bottom!

And...

It was filled with shiny new metal... **BBs!**

They spewed out in every direction

Covered the desk... and clattered onto the hardwood floor.

Busted!

No matter how good the devil makes things look...

There is ***always***... a down side.

And you won't see it until it's too late...

And even if you do see something...

You may not believe it...

A young native American was preparing for manhood.

He hiked a beautiful valley, surrounded by lush greens

And thousands of flowers.

He fasted... He prayed...

On the third day...

he looked at the surrounding mountains

and noticed one tall and rugged peak... capped with snow.

He decided to test himself and climb the peak.

He put on a buckskin shirt... wrapped in a blanket... and set out.

When he reached the top he gazed over the world... far below.

Then a rustling sound... and a snake... who spoke to him...

*I am about to die. It's too cold for me up here. I am freezing.
There is little food and I am starving.
Please put me under your shirt where I will be warm
and take me down the mountain.*

The young man protested...
*No. I have been warned about your kind.
You are a rattlesnake.
If I pick you up you will bite me and I might die.*

*Not so. I will treat you differently.
If you do this for me... you will be special to me,
I won't harm you... and you will receive whatever you want.*

The young man resisted... but this was a very persuasive snake...
with beautiful diamond markings.

He tucked the snake under his shirt and carried it down the mountain.
Back in the valley... he gently placed the snake on the ground.
Suddenly... the snake coiled, rattled, and bit the young man on the leg.
You promised me!

And the snake replied
You knew what I was when you picked me up.

The devil we face is crafty... even devious
He promises wonderful things... but he lies.
His way is a road to agony and torment... **never** a shortcut to joy.

Everyone has perfect hindsight.

We reflect on our past... and we know *exactly* where we slipped

We know exactly how it hurt us... and how it hurt people we love.

Resisting temptation... *that's...* the *real* challenge.

How do we fight back... against such a devious devil?

I heard about a guy who learned a great lesson about this...

From his dog

He'd put a biscuit on the floor and say to the dog

Don't eat that!

The dog would run over, eat it and get punished

He did it over and over and over.

After a while, the dog got the message

Eat the biscuit... get punished...

Then he noticed... the dog... didn't even *look* at the treat

He kept his eyes on his master

if the dog even *looked* at the biscuit...

the temptation would be too great...

so he looked only... into his master's face

never took his eyes off him... and he was not tempted.

If we keep our eyes on Jesus

If we build our lives... on him... his Holy Word...

...then there *is* hope. Real hope. Not *false* hope. *Real* hope.

Jesus himself relied on God's Holy Word

when he came face to face with Satan

When the devil tempted Jesus,
by taking God's word out of context,
Jesus answered him directly from Holy Scripture
When the devil said,
***If you are the Son of God,
command these stones to become loaves of bread.***

Jesus answered...
***One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.***

Right out of the Book of Deuteronomy...

**GOD HUMBLLED YOU BY LETTING YOU HUNGER,
THEN BY FEEDING YOU WITH MANNA,
IN ORDER TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND
THAT ONE DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE,
BUT BY EVERY WORD
THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF THE LORD.**

This Manna, this food that came directly from God
was given to the people of Israel to make a point.
We cannot live by bread alone. ***We need God.***

When the devil said
If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down... for it is written...

**He will command his angels concerning you,
On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.**

And Jesus rebuked him...

Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Words taken directly from the book of Deuteronomy,

**DO NOT FOLLOW OTHER GODS,
BECAUSE THE LORD YOUR GOD,
WHO IS PRESENT WITH YOU,
IS A JEALOUS GOD.**

**THE ANGER OF THE LORD YOUR GOD
WOULD BE KINDLED AGAINST YOU
AND HE WOULD DESTROY YOU
FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.**

DO NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.

And finally, when the devil offered

All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.

Jesus said to him,

*Away with you, Satan! For it is written,
Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.*

Directly from the book of Deuteronomy

**THE LORD YOUR GOD YOU SHALL FEAR;
HIM YOU SHALL SERVE,
AND BY HIS NAME ALONE YOU SHALL SWEAR.**

Our bible is powerful!

it contains everything we need for salvation... for eternal life...
...everything we need.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians
He told them **how** to resist temptation...

Put on the whole armor of God
The belt of truth
The breastplate of righteousness
The shoes of peace
The shield of faith
The helmet of Salvation
And the sword of truth

The Armor of God
The belt... breastplate... shoes... shield... and helmet...
Are defensive tools... for protection...
Only one piece of armor is used to strike back...
The Sword... of Truth...

And... the sword of truth... is God's Holy Word

Of all the resources we have to resist temptation
Only one can perform ***temptation-ectomies***
The word of God is powerful and just and righteous...
We... are not. We... are sinners...
And in spite of it... we are entrusted with God's Holy Word...
To be used...
Not for our purposes...
But for God's purposes...

As we begin our Lenten journey together
Let us all sharpen our swords...
Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest... God's Holy Word
And defeat temptation...
Amen.