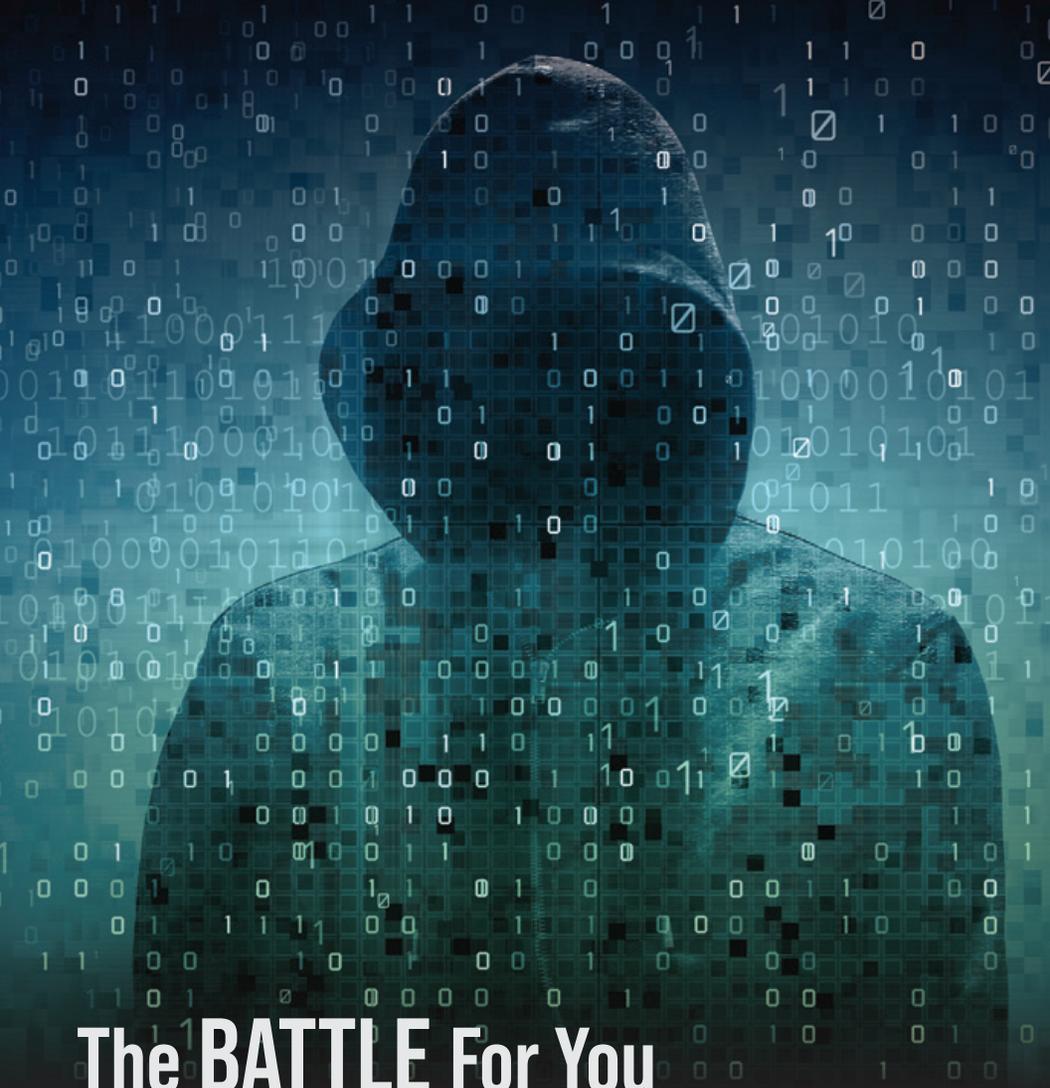




 **3ABN** BIBLE STUDY GUIDES
Looking Higher

THE BATTLE FOR YOU



The BATTLE For You

We have all heard stories of identity theft, and maybe you have experienced it yourself. Someone with a different face and a different character pretends to be you. Through sly deception, they gain access to your bank accounts and personal records. You may even be blamed for criminal acts someone else commits. Then it takes effort, time, and expertise to recover what was taken, repair your reputation, and prove that you really are “the real you.”

But could someone ever steal the identity of a world leader? The truth is that someone has tried to steal the identity of Someone far greater—God Himself! What does God have to lose if someone were to take His place? He could lose who He values most—you! And what will it take to set the record straight? The thief must be unmasked, and God’s true identity must be broadcast to the world.

1 What is God really like?

1 John 4:8 “... God is love.”

Psalms 145:17 “The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works.”

Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.”

This is the starting place. The great truth you need to know is that God, who created the world, loves you. God is love. All real love exists only “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Everything that comes from God is motivated by perfect love. His thoughts, plans, and actions are all good; and His goodness extends to all people and even to animals (Psalm 145:9).

2 With a perfect and loving God, we might expect to see a perfect world that reflects what God is like. But what is the condition of life on Earth?

Job 14:1 “Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.”

Psalms 2:1 “... the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing.”

Ephesians 6:12 “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Although God created a perfect Earth in the beginning (Genesis 1:31), our lives show that this world is not controlled by perfect love today. Sickness and death are experienced by everyone. Conflict and war are all around us; and if we’re honest, they’re inside us as well, like a great spiritual wrestling match. This is true even while God is love. Life seems so full of trouble that “God is love” is sometimes hard to see.

3 Since we are living in a world marked by conflict, what is so vital that it is the special target of attack?

2 Corinthians 10:4–5 “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God...”

The conflict on this Earth revolves around the true knowledge of who God is. We must know “the only true God” and what He is like (John 17:3). If this truth is hidden or changed, we will have a distorted view of God that is devastating: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ...” (Hosea 4:6).

4 Who is the opponent attacking the truth about God?

2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 “... the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

The enemy is Satan, also called the devil (Revelation 12:9). He replaces the truth about God with a lie—an “unrighteous deception.” Accepting the lies of Satan is so serious that it leads people to “perish.”

5 Why does this conflict between God and Satan matter to me?

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

1 Timothy 2:3–4 “... God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

When Satan attacks the truth of God’s love, he is attacking each person whose life depends on God. You are a target of Satan’s deception. But God loves you and wants to “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

6 How could Satan’s lie about God arise in a perfect universe?

Ezekiel 28:14–15 “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.”

The lie about God did not originate in Him, because “it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18). God does not coerce or force loyalty, but has given all of us freedom to choose—even if that choice is “iniquity” rather than loyalty. Satan’s lie about God arose from within himself, by a choice in his own mind, even though he stood in God’s perfect Presence.

7 What choice did Satan make that challenged the character of God?

Ezekiel 28:17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor ...”

Isaiah 14:12–13 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ...’”

Satan, whose name means “adversary,” was formerly called Lucifer, which means “light-bearer,” describing what he was originally meant to be. He chose to focus on his own beauty that God had given to him. Choosing to be “drawn away by his own desires” (James 1:14), he became filled with selfishness and pride. The result is the greatest attempted “identity theft” of all time—to place himself on the throne of God! Through representatives who accept his lies and live by his principles, Satan “exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

8 What does the Bible call Satan’s choice to put himself in the place of God?

Ezekiel 28:16 “... you became filled with violence within, and you sinned ...”

1 John 3:4 “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”

Satan’s choice to exalt himself above God is called sin. By choosing to follow his own self-centered will, Satan rejected God’s authority and rebelled against His law. If disregarding the law is not dealt with fairly and with justice, it begins a chain reaction leading to anarchy and ending in chaos.

9 How did God respond to Satan’s rebellion of sin?

Revelation 12:7–8 “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.”

What began with selfish pride grew into an open revolt. This was not a war of physical weapons, but a war of ideas—the truth against a lie. Because God is love and gives freedom to choose, He did not destroy Satan. Instead He allowed him to demonstrate the result of rejecting God’s authority and His law, so that each person might make an informed choice, having seen and experienced the devastating effects of sin.



“... your adversary
the devil walks about
like a roaring lion ...”
1 Peter 5:8



“So the great dragon
was cast out ...”
Revelation 12:9

10 Where is Satan now, and what is he doing?

Revelation 12:9 “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

When Satan was cast out of Heaven, he made his home on this planet where you and I each have the same freedom he had to choose. The spiritual conflict on Earth is the direct result of Satan’s rebellion.

Satan’s cunning deception even convinced one third of the perfect angels to accept his lie and place themselves above God’s authority (Revelation 12:3–4). These angels are “demons,” spiritual beings who carry out the same work as Satan, deceiving and tempting you to sin. John 8:44 describes what the devil is like and what he does: “... He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” Satan stops at nothing to hurt God and is eager to kill those who God made and loves.

11 Who has Satan deceived?

Genesis 2:9 “And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Genesis 2:16–17 “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

Genesis 3:1–6 “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said,

“You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.” Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

The first people God created were given the same freedom to choose that He gave to His angels and to you. The choice to put God first is demonstrated by obedience to His instructions. Satan took the form of a serpent (he is called “the serpent of old” in Revelation 12:9) to tempt Eve, and through her Adam, with the same sin Satan had committed in heaven—to place themselves above God

Satan misrepresented God’s words by twisting what He had said about the trees they could freely eat from in the garden. Satan sowed seeds of doubt about God when Eve saw him in serpent form demonstrate that “the tree was good for food.” He had eaten the fruit and was not only alive, but appeared to have greater ability than other creatures, for this serpent could speak. Satan claimed that God’s law selfishly withheld something good from them, and that disobedience could give them something extra. And finally, Satan “exchanged the truth of God for the lie” (Romans 1:25) by saying outright that sin would not bring death, that disobedience would lead to eternal life.

Although God had already given every blessing, Adam and Eve followed Satan’s lie and disobeyed God’s command, putting their own desires and feelings first. From that very moment, they were guaranteed to receive the one thing God had never wanted for them—the curse of death that He had warned would come from sin. Only God has life within Himself to give, and their sin disconnected them from Him—the Source of life (1 Timothy 6:16).

“... And he said to
the woman, ‘Has God
indeed said, “You shall
not eat of every
tree of the garden?”’”
Genesis 3:1



12 Has anyone escaped Satan's deception?

Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way ..."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Sin has affected more than just Adam and Eve: "... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men ..." (Romans 5:12). Sin and selfishness became their natural inclination and tendency, and they passed both their sinful nature and the certainty of death on to each person who would be born, including you.

13 What is the lie about God's character that Satan has spread?

Genesis 3:9-10 "Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'"

When sin entered the world, sinners no longer saw the truth that God is love. Instead of coming to God, Adam hid from Him in fear. The work of Satan is to prevent us from seeing what God is really like (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan wants for us to blame all the results of sin (violence, sickness, and death) on God, so that we will be afraid of the very One who loves us, and count Him as our adversary. God does not desire anyone to experience the suffering and death from sin. So, God asks, "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, 'and not that he should turn from his ways and live?'" (Ezekiel 18:23).

14 There are two options to choose from in this Great Controversy. What are they?

James 3:14-17 "But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."



"When sin entered the world, sinners no longer saw the truth that God is love."



"The spiritual battle in this world is over you and your God-given freedom to choose ..."

The first option is "self-seeking," putting ourselves first. The second option is to follow God's example of love that Jesus demonstrated for us: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). We can either follow our own desires as Lucifer, Adam, and one third of the angels did, or we can willingly offer our obedience to God out of love; "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). Selfishness or obedience from love. There is no third option.

15 What do both God and Satan desire to gain in this battle?

Romans 6:16 "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"

Psalms 40:8 "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart."

The spiritual battle in this world is over you and your God-given freedom to choose, which is called your "will." You will choose to let your will be influenced either by God and His love, or by Satan and his lies. The result of this choice is to either obey God out of love (John 14:15) or follow your own desires, putting yourself in the place of God. Look at Jesus' example of submitting to the will of God: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38).

16 What are Satan's tactics and methods to gain control of your will?

2 Corinthians 2:11 "Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

1 Thessalonians 3:5 "... lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain."

While God works by freedom and honesty, Satan manipulates and deceives. We should not be ignorant of his methods. He works by temptation, subtly influencing our thoughts to follow selfish desires (James

1:13–15). He can deceive by working miracles (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10), by use of force and fear (Mark 9:17–22), and can even make himself appear to be a loyal angel of God (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). In other words, he makes what is evil appear good (Isaiah 5:20). We allow Satan and his angels to influence us when we choose to think of evil and disobey God's commands (Ephesians 4:26–27). Our choices can allow Satan or his angels to reside within us and gain control of our minds (Mark 5:1–10). By choosing to do what we selfishly want for ourselves, we are caught in the “snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26).

17 What help is promised to us in this spiritual battle, the Great Controversy?

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

James 4:7–8 “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...”

1 Corinthians 15:57 “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus said, “... the Father Himself loves you ...” (John 16:27). He will eagerly forgive your sins and welcome you as His friend when you ask, through honest confession. But even more, God's grace is strength to be victorious over every temptation: “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness ...’” (2 Corinthians 12:9). He has not abandoned you to fight the enemy alone.

18 Will the spiritual battle on Earth ever end?

1 John 3:8 “... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Philippians 2:10–11 “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Colossians 1:13 “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

God will not allow Satan and sin to destroy lives forever. Every person and every angel will clearly see the truth of God's love—and Satan's lie that we cannot trust God and should follow our own will. When the truth about God is fully displayed, everyone will acknowledge that God is love. God will destroy sin forever and “wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying” (Revelation 21:4).

19 What happens to those who surrender their will to God?

Ephesians 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

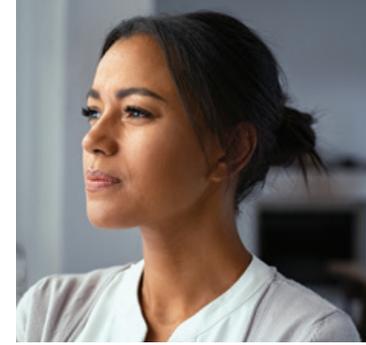
Matthew 25:34 “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

When we surrender our will to God and ask Him to direct our thoughts and actions, we are then able to experience blessing upon blessing that comes from His love. In the near future, we will be delivered from sin and death when Jesus returns to give “eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). This is God's desire for you, and it will be better than you could ever imagine! The battle with sin will be over, and you will be with your loving Heavenly Father forever.

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:57



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY LIFE TODAY?



1. In what ways have you seen evidence that God is love? You might think of the beauty and complexity of nature, or how you have witnessed God’s love through the lives of other people. You also might consider what trouble there could be without a loving God who holds back the full power of Satan.

2. Where do you see the temptation of pride and selfishness in your life? It shows up in big and small ways. We often see it in how we think about people, or how we treat them, especially in our own homes. Selfishness and pride show up in how we use our time and money, or in our honesty.

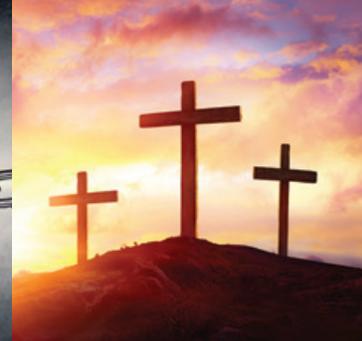
3. What decisions will you make this week where you can seek God’s will, rather than first considering what you want for yourself? Here is a prayer that can help you do this. It is part of what is called “The Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6:9–13, and says, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

4. The good news about God is this: “ ... Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you” (Jeremiah 31:3). Are you ready to accept this Good News and learn more about what God is like?

5. Who do you know that needs to hear what you have learned? “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth ...” (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Additional Notes:

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ME IN THE BATTLE WITH SIN?



1. **“The Lord your God loves you”** (Deuteronomy 23:5).

2. **There is more to the Bible than just bad news about sin.** In fact, the bad news prepares us for God’s Good News. “... In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

3. **Even the curse of sin does not change God’s love for you.** “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).

4. **God’s truth is given to you and can set you free.** “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

5. **The truth about God is available in God’s Word, the Bible.** “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me ...” (Psalm 43:3).

6. **God gives you power to resist temptation.** “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

7. **Surrendering your will to God is worth it.** “And I know that His command is everlasting life ...” (John 12:50).

LESSON SUMMARY

1. **God is the Heavenly Father** who loves and cares for you (Matthew 6:26).

2. **God’s character of love** has been misrepresented by Satan, the adversary and enemy.

3. **The lies and temptations** of Satan replace God’s love with selfishness.

4. **The pain, suffering, sorrow, and death** in the world are not caused by God, but by sin.

5. **Love provides freedom to choose**, so God allows us to see both sides of the Great Controversy.

6. **The most important issue** in life is to know the truth about God so we will love and trust Him.

7. **Experiencing God’s love** leads us to respond to Him with willing obedience.

Additional Notes:
