

Sermon Response Guide January 21, 2014
1 John 2:12-14 “Sources of Deception”
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Sermon Overview:

The scriptures teach us that here are forces that seek to disrupt our peace and deceive us, In the sermon, this week, we learn how we can better recognize and resist these forces.

If you are in a battle it is important to know what you are up against. Football players do this by watching film and studying the strategies of the team they are going up against. Effective militaries seek out intelligence on the strategies and movements of their enemies. Over 2500 years ago, the Chinese military leader, Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*, the famous advice, “Know thy enemy.”

This week I preach the text backwards. 1 John 2:15-17 to helps us recognize the enemies we are battling and 1 John 2:12-14 explore the strategies that enable us to resist these enemies.

Our passage today names three common enemies that show up regularly in scripture and in the history of Christian thought. Our passage names the evil one, the world, and the flesh.

1 John 2:14b-17

And you have overcome the evil one. ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; ¹⁶ for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world.

This trifacta of the deception shows up in Paul’s writings as well. We see this in Ephesians 2:1-2. The book of common prayer from 1549 states, “From all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, Lord deliver us.”

These three sources of evil work in tandem together. John Mark Comer summarizes these three enemies in a helpful way in his book *Live No Lies*. I highly recommend this book if you want to explore the themes of this message more deeply. He writes, “We battle deceptive ideas (the Devil) that play to our disordered desires (the Flesh) that are normalized in a sinful society (The World).”

1 John 2:12-14 shows us two of the means by which we can resist these sources of deception. 1 John 2 is very repetitive. This is a common literary device throughout this book. What this models for us is the practice of meditation. We talk back to the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil by meditating on what is true in scripture. In 1 John 2:12-14, the writer reminds the readers that they are forgiven, that they know God, and that they are victorious over the powers of evil.

Fourth Century Monk Evagrius Ponticus has written a helpful book called, *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combatting Demons* (Awesome title!). Contrary to what you might think, this book doesn’t have any weird ideas about practicing spiritual warfare. It simply suggests scriptures that we ought to memorize and use to combat regular temptations. He organizes his

book around seven common human temptations and suggests scriptures we can meditate on when we are tempted. He trains us to talk back to the lies.

The second way we resist the lies is to immerse ourselves in a community of faith. This epistle is not written to an individual but a community. John is addressing young and old alike. We are influenced by the relationships and the culture we inhabit. This can have devastating effects if we are immersed in bad influences. But the flip side of this is also true. When we surround ourselves by those who are wise, faithful, and seeking God, that will influence and impact us in a positive direction.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What stood out to you in the sermon / text today?
2. What are some common lies that are normalized, institutionalized, and promoted in our culture right now?
3. What are some lies that you find yourself buying into these days? Where do these lies originate from?
4. What are some specific scriptures that you might meditate on to combat the specific lies you are tripped up by? Consider writing your own “monastic handbook for combatting lies” this week.
5. Who are some people that have had or are currently having a positive influence in your life?