

# The Devil Made Me Do It?

By Dr. Greg Wiens

If you are old enough to remember this phrase, you are not doing “twenty-something” ministry! For those of you who are too young to know, this phrase was used to explain actions which aren’t acceptable to others. It was kind of a cop-out that was used to excuse inappropriate behavior. The truth is that we will be held accountable for all of our actions. We cannot blame our parents, spouses, kids or even the devil for what we do.

Having said that, the New Testament tells us that the enemy does seek to influence the way we act through temptations or “footholds” that he may get in our lives. In Ephesians 4:27 (NIV) we are told that we need to deal with our anger appropriately (quickly) or it will cause something to rot in our lives and give Satan a foothold. My observation on this idea of a foothold is that, if you let anger fester in your life, you give Satan an opportunity to use that at a later date to disrupt relationships or Kingdom expansion. Often this foothold will sit latent until a critical time in your life or the life of the church; then the enemy will be the source of that latent anger, causing a quarrel in the marriage or in the church.

When a church is doing exciting things to reach lost people and produce disciples; inevitable Satan “pulls in” these footholds to ruin key relationships in the church. Marriages hit the rocks, friendships crash and normal relationships become tense and edgy. Often, the causes of these crises are footholds that the enemy had for a long time. But, he waits until a critical time to bring them to the forefront and they become an issue. I have seen this over and over in churches as they begin to invade the gates of hell (Matthew 16:18).

One of the ways Satan keeps churches unhealthy is by using the fact that people don’t speak the truth with love to each other quickly; they sit and stew on things. The New Testament also gives us at least four other ways that the enemy uses to immobilize the movement of a church.

**1 Corinthians 7:5** tells us that if a husband and wife are not meeting one another’s sexual needs, it sets up both for inappropriate behavior that could lead to the destruction of a leader and a church. How many leaders ministries have we seen inoculated from effective long-term ministry because of sexual sins?

**2 Corinthians 2:10-11** tell us that lack of forgiveness is another way we set up Satan to cause trouble in a growing church. Paul is speaking of forgiving a brother who caused a great deal of grief in the church. He simply challenges these leaders to forgive him and not allow Satan another foothold in the church.

**1 Timothy 5:13-14** identifies gossip as another mechanism that the enemy uses to thwart the health of a church. For me this is probably the single most destructive tactic of the enemy. He uses well-intentioned dragons to do his scheming, as they appear to just be “concerned” and so “share” with other concerned people. Though they may appear to have pure attitudes, they are just being used by Satan to disrupt God’s work.

In **James 4:1-7**, we are told that pride, arrogance and greed short circuit the work of God in the local church. Too often, leaders of churches that are growing find it easy to allow the enemy to use this tactic in their lives; though, they would never admit it. We feel that our gifts, skills or wisdom have

“caused” the church to increase in her effectiveness. The enemy nurtures these insidious attitudes until they cause a cancer, which eats the ministry up from the inside.

These five footholds can take a healthy growing church and cause it to lose effectiveness in the Kingdom. In each of these passages, God gives us clear antidotes to each of these impediments to church health. I know the one out of these five that I am most susceptible to; do you? Usually, as leaders, we are more susceptible to one than the others. My prayer is that each of us as leaders will honestly face the footholds that Satan may be using in our lives. I hope we sincerely apply the scriptural truths that God gives us so we can be found as good and faithful warriors for Christ.