

Video - sound *“You know sometimes you ask God questions like, ‘God where are you in my life?’ And sometimes God doesn’t give you an answer. You might be tempted to give up on God all together. Well, let me tell you friends, that is just one of the five easy steps to wreck your life.”*

Satan’s How To #2 - Satan's how to lose your faith.

Think about this: Was there a time in your life when you were closer to God than you are today?

For example, maybe there was a time when you were a more passionate about the things of God. Maybe you spent more time in God’s Word and you’d read the Bible and you would think, “Wow! That was just for me!”

Or, maybe you were excited about church and you would come early because you didn’t want to miss anything. Or maybe you were thrilled about what Christ had done in your life and were excited about helping others meet Christ.

You would pray for them, and try to help them to know Christ. You would invite them to church, you would be praying for them. Maybe you were a person of prayer. You spent a lot more time praying than you do now.

And then somewhere along the way, that passion calmed. How many of you would say that there was a time in your life when you felt closer to God than you do today?

Like the wife who told her husband *“Remember when we use to sit close in the car when we were going somewhere?”* And her husband told her, **“I wasn’t the one who moved.”** If there was a time in your life that you were closer to God than you are today, God didn’t move.

Today, I want to talk to you about **5 easy steps to lose your faith**; to drift from God and it is rather easy to drift from God, because you are going to have help from someone who loves to wreck your life, your spiritual enemy, the great deceiver, named Satan.

Satan **wants** to destroy your faith; it is his specialty. His mission is to steal, kill and destroy. In the beginning God created **Adam and Eve**, and right away the evil one showed up in the form of a serpent, what did he say to Adam and Eve?

He said, “**Did God really say, “Not to...”** he got Adam & Eve to question and weaken the authority of God, because Satan loves to destroy our faith.

The Apostle Paul had a heartfelt concern for the Corinthian believers; and truthfully, I have the same concern for us. 2 Corinthians 11:3, “*But I am afraid just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, that your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*”

In Matthew 13: Jesus told the **Parable of the Sower**. It was about a guy going out on his land with a bag of seed and broadcasting it hoping some would land on a good place and lead to a good harvest.

Jesus said, “*A sower went out to sow some seeds and as he was throwing, some fell on a path and the birds came along and took the seed and it never took root. **Some** of the seeds fell on stony ground and they grew up quickly; but, because of the stones, the roots couldn’t go down deep enough and so the sun scorched the plant before it ever had a chance. **Other** seeds fell along a place where there were thorns, and again grew up quickly. But, the thorny plants came and choked the life out of these plants before they could grow and flourish.*”

But, there was a **fourth** group He said, “*This seed fell on good soil and because it fell on good soil it produced a return of 30, 60, or even 100 fold.*” (Vs 7). And the hearers were thinking, “**Okay yeah, I understand but why are you telling us this?**”

And Jesus said, “**You** are one of those 4 different types of people.” And, as you hear the explanation today, **you** may see yourself in one of these categories.

1. Group 1, Jesus explains it for us. Matthew 13:19; He said, “*When anyone hears the message about the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and he snatches away what was sown in his heart; this is the seed sown along the path.*”

Sadly, this may be some of you; because today I am like the sower. I am taking God’s Word and I am throwing it out, and some of you may think, “*Huh, Why didn’t he tell funny stories today, I like funny stories, where are the funny stories?*”

And, you are not going to understand it and it is going to land along the path and the birds are going to come and Satan is going to snatch it away and there will be no spiritual transformation in your life. **Tragic but true.**

2. Then He said, “**There is a second group**”; and again this will be some of you. Verse 20; “*The one who received the seed that fell on the rocky places is the man who hears the Word at once and receives it with joy.*” But, since he has no root, the Bible says, “He lasts only a short time.” When trouble or persecution comes, he quickly falls away.

Maybe this is you. A year ago, you heard a message, the Word was sown, and you went, “**Wow!** *That spoke to me! I’m going to change; I’m going to get right with God!*” And here you are weeks, months or years later and nothing is different.

3. Then, Jesus talked to a **third group**, Matthew 13:22; “*The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.*”

This, I am guessing, would be the largest percentage of us today. You say, “**Yes, I hear it, yes I understand it, yes I’m going to do this.**” But then you get sidetracked, life happens!

You are going to school and you have to study all of the time and so you put God aside for a while; you don’t mean to but you have to make good grades. Or, you buy a house and oh my, this takes a lot of work; and before you know it, you’ve put God aside.

Or, you get married and oh, wow, now I have to figure this out. Then you have a baby and it takes all your time, and you put God aside. Or, your kids are involved in a lot of activities. You didn’t mean to, but life happens.

Or, as Jesus calls it, “**The deceitfulness of wealth**” happens. You sold out to materialism. You have to make more, have more; and these attractive distractions choke the spiritual life right out of you. You didn’t plan on it, but it happened.

4. Then there is a **fourth group**, and I hope you are in this group. Verse 23; “*But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil, is the man who hears the Word and understands it, and he produces a crop yielding 100, 60, or 30 times what was sown.*”

In other words, God is going to do more spiritually in you than you ever imagined. Not only will you be changed, but the work of the spirit is going to be so profound in you that those around you are going to see it.

Your family will be different, your school or the people that you work with will be different. There will be generations to come that will be different because the seed of God has taken root in your heart, and there is going to be a tremendous return.

The sad thing is; that’s only a small percentage. The rest of us have good intentions... as we drift from God.

Have you ever taken you family to the beach, parked the car, and all of you are playing in the ocean swimming, floating on inter-tubes, etc. And you don't notice but the current is causing you to drift. And you look to shore and you don't see your car. And you're thinking "Where did it go, who took my car." You didn't realize it but you had drifted quite a ways.

Maybe you don't know it, but you have drifted a long way from God and here is what His Word says; Hebrews 2:2; *"We must pay careful attention therefore, to what we have heard so we do not drift away."*

But maybe you want to drift from God. If that is you I going to give you **5 easy steps to drift from God.**

Step 1: You must **neglect your time with God.** This is a very important principal. Psalm 63:1; David cried out, *"Oh God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you."*

Don't let that be for you! You have to neglect God. **Don't** you dare open up the bible! His Word is sharp, it is living! It will renew your mind. **Don't** worship either. Don't lose yourself in worship because when you meditate on God you have to worship Him, and so don't!

Don't you dare sing. And whatever you do, **don't** think about God. And don't lead your family in worship. **Don't** let worship be a part of your life. **Don't** look at creation and go, *"Wow, God! You are amazing!"* Just don't worship, because that means that you are getting to know God better.

Also, **don't** get involved in church. If you do come, come in late, leave early; **don't** listen! Reject what God is trying to say to you, and for goodness sakes, **Don't** give! **Don't** serve! **Don't** use your gifts! If you start to use your gifts, you are going to be spiritually fulfilled and you are going to want more.

Don't pray! Because when you pray and God hears your prayers and moves on your behalf and it starts building your faith and dangerous stuff like that and then you are going to want more. No, no; neglect God. Take Him for granted. Abuse His grace. Do life without Him.

2. The second way to drift from God is so powerful: **If you don't like your circumstances, blame God!** Proverbs 3:5 is an unrealistic little verse, it says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart."* How stupid is that? Don't trust in God with all your heart.

If you are going to trust Him, trust Him just a little bit. Then Bible says, “*And lean not on your own understanding.*” How stupid is that? You are the smartest one, actually you’re not, but just tell yourself that.

Tell yourself that you know best, don’t trust God, so that when things don’t go the way you want, that gives you the right to be angry at God. **If a Christian hurts you, this is really good**; stop going to church! Blame whatever a Christian does on God! This is a surefire way to drive a wedge between you and God.

Don’t buy into that stuff about you’ll have trouble. Jesus said in John 16:33, “*In this world you will have trouble.*” Instead, Believe that if you are a Christian, nothing should go wrong, **ever**, and when it does, blame God.

3. Hang around bad influences. 1 Corinthians 15:33; “*Do not be misled, bad company corrupts good character.*” This is exactly what you want! Don’t hang around strong Christians, they can be so **annoying**. They do stuff like encourage you in the Lord, they will pray for you, they’ll speak blessings over you and junk like that.

And especially, don’t hang around anyone who loves you enough to **confront** you when you are wrong. And, no matter what, always date or marry a nonbeliever. Neglect your time with Him, blame Him, hang around bad influences.

4. Give in to temptation. James 1:14-15, “*But each one is tempted by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is full grown, it gives birth to death.*”

Here is what you do; whenever you are tempted just tell yourself, “**I can not** do all things through Christ who gives me strength,” and give into temptation. Tell yourself, “*This is just the way I am, I can’t overcome this.*”

5. Now this is important. **Love this world more than you love God.** Honestly, probably a lot of you already do this. 1 John 2:15, “*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*” Fall in love with the temporary pleasures of this world.

This is so easy. Lust after the things of this world, believe you are what you drive. Believe that you will not be happy until you have a better house. Go into debt. Borrow money to buy things you don’t need to impress people that you don’t like.

For goodness sakes, do not be generous! Don’t give to the church ever! Don’t make a difference and give to people who are in need.

And **finally**, If everything else fails, just pretend that you are living a Christian life when inwardly your heart is really far from God. Isaiah 29:13; *“These people, they come near to me with their mouth and they honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.”*

You may think, Bob, you are being really hard on us, actually I’m including myself. When I was in Bible College, I was on fire. Had a little weekly radio program, put out a Christian newsletter called **“The Pilot.”** Went door to door witnessing. Preached on Sundays.

And then, **things happened**, I grew up in the church, from the third grade; I planned on being a pastor. I believed everything I was told in church, I adored my church. Then when I was 18 I went off to Seminary and everything was going good. I met Barb, the love of my life.

But then, as part of my education I was required to take Greek, the language the New Testament was written in. And while I was translating the bible from the original Greek I found that some of what I had been taught all my life wasn’t true.

Some was simple stuff, like being taught that everywhere the bible said “wine” it actually meant “grape juice.” When you read it in the original that is impossible. But it was simple things like that, that led me to question the more serious items.

It didn’t help that it was a very legalistic group that never ever talked about grace. Everyone was wrong except us. Everyone who didn’t believe exactly like us were going to hell.

This included **Mother Teresa** and **Billy Graham**. Almost everyone, except us were going to hell. We were not allowed to go to movies or own a television, couldn’t dance, no mixed swimming and the girls couldn’t wear makeup or sleeveless blouses. If you drank or smoked you were going to hell for sure.

I reacted against the false stuff I had been taught and against the legalism and said **if this is religion and Christianity I don’t want anything to do with it**. And I left the Lord and the church and became an **agnostic** for 30 years.

One of the first things I did was go to a movie and I felt so guilty. **A 101 Dalmatians**, the original cartoon version.

About 20 years ago, God got a hold of me and convicted me of my need to get right with Him. I came to realize that if you get mixed up with the wrong group – you don’t give up on God, instead you give up on the group.

I started reading the Bible again and I went on my face on the floor and prayed. *"Lord, I want to know the truth. I don't care about what I was taught, I'm not trying to prove any preconceived doctrine. I just want to know the truth."*

I wasn't aware of it at the time but I was following what Jeremiah 29:13 said, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* I can testify that this works. If you are having trouble believing do what this verse says.

Read the Bible, pray for guidance. Pray that the Lord would open up the Scriptures for you.

There is an old saying that goes something like this: *The man working in the field that prays for understanding will understand the Bible better than the Bible College professor, the Dr. of Divinity who doesn't.*

Here is the thing that **breaks my heart**; some of you know that you have drifted from God and you don't care. You have become skilled at shaking off what the Holy Spirit is trying to say to you and so you can shake this message off and leave completely unchanged.

Maybe what Jesus said applies to you: "You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen, remember how intimate you used to be with Him?" And then He said, "Repent and do the things you did at first."

His Word says, **"You will find Him. If you seek Him with all your heart,"** what does that look like for you? I don't know. But if you are the good soil you will do whatever it takes. Maybe fasting and prayer, maybe reading the Bible and going on your face before Him.

Because, for those of you who choose to be good soil, and you truly repent, His Word will land in your heart, and there will be a 30, a 60, or a 100 fold return.

Prayer: Lord, we surrender to you today and ask that you would do a work with your Word that goes beyond our human ability to comprehend. I pray for those who need to get right with You, and I thank you for those who have drifted, who are coming back today. May you give them the courage to go public with their bold decision to live for you.