

# “Life Advice”... for the Next Generation

... It is “great advice” at ANY Age!

Per Dennis Prager (March 2024 Fireside Chat)

## You have to fight yourself.

- The greatest struggle in your life is NOT with society ... It is with yourself
- This idea -- taught by every great religion -- is **NOT taught much today** ...  
Instead we are taught that we have to battle society -- its sexism, racism, prejudices & other flaws. The overwhelming temptation is to see whatever problems you have as coming from society & **NOT from within yourself**. But in a free and decent society (such as ours) it is **our flawed human nature** -- NOT a flawed society -- that is our biggest problem. Judeo-Christian values are the REAL counterculture today -- taking the God of the Bible seriously! That enables us to say “NO” to the prevailing culture. When you know to whom you are accountable you will lead a more peaceful, happy & good life

In the Church of God ... it is certainly taught! ... **You have to fight yourself.**

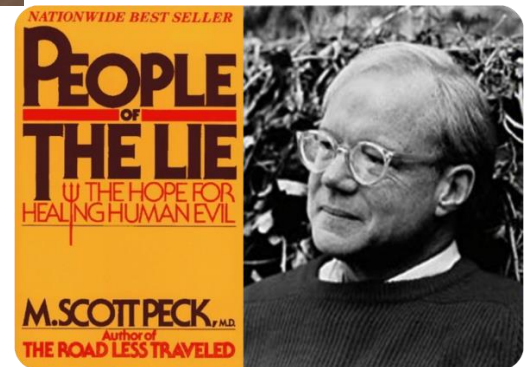


Over the years ... we all discover “favourite sermons” ... This is one of my favourites

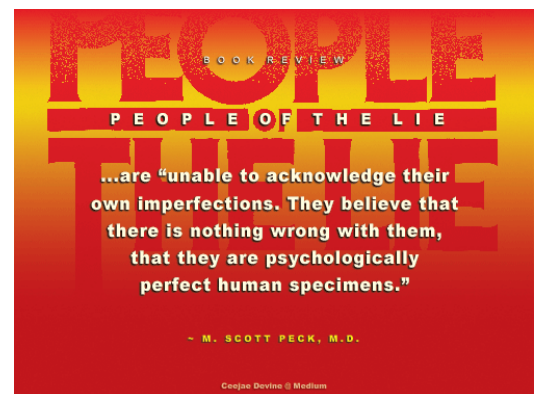
It makes such good sense ...

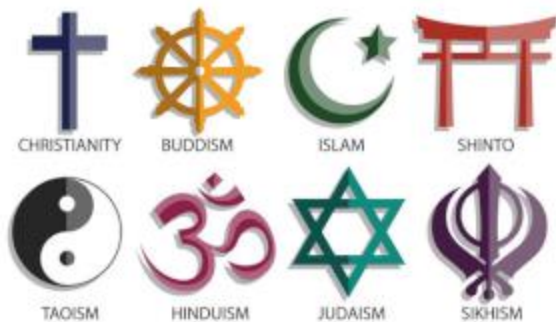
- You cannot grow if you lie to God & yourself!

- Bible provides some examples of people who were open & honest with God ... and those who thought they could fool God -- because they accepted lies themselves
- 2Pe 3:5 - speaks of some people who are “willingly ignorant” - there is obstinacy & perverseness about it
- “Back in the day” books like People of the Lie were



popular bestsellers - & even popular in the church as we (& society) had some interest in self-awareness & self-improvement.





The concept of "fighting oneself" or struggling with inner conflict is a recurring theme in many of the world's major religions. Here are some examples:

1. **Buddhism:** In Buddhism, the concept of "dukkha" (suffering) is central. It teaches that suffering arises from attachment and desire. This struggle often involves confronting one's own ego, cravings, and delusions.
2. **Islam:** In Islam, the concept of "jihad" is often misunderstood as solely external warfare. However, jihad also encompasses the internal struggle or striving (known as "greater jihad") to live a righteous life according to Islamic principles. This involves resisting one's own ego, base desires, and temptations, and striving for spiritual growth and self-improvement.
3. **Hinduism:** Hinduism teaches the concept of "dharma," which encompasses the duty or righteous path one must follow in life. This often involves overcoming inner obstacles such as desires, ignorance, and ego to fulfill one's dharma.
4. **Sikhism:** In Sikhism, the concept of "manmukh" (self-centeredness) versus "gurmukh" (God-centeredness) represents the inner struggle between the ego and the divine. Sikhs believe in overcoming the five vices (lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego) through disciplined living, meditation, and selfless service (seva) to others.
5. **Taoism:** Taoist philosophy teaches the importance of aligning oneself with the natural flow of the Tao (the Way). This involves transcending the ego and desires to attain harmony with the universe.
6. **Jainism:** Jainism teaches the concept of "samyak darshana" (right perception) and "samyak charitra" (right conduct), which involve overcoming ignorance, attachment, and aversion to attain spiritual purity.
7. **Shintoism:** In Shintoism, the idea of "makoto" (sincerity) is emphasized, which involves being true to oneself and living in harmony with nature and the kami (spirits). This requires overcoming selfish desires, ego, and negative emotions to cultivate a pure heart and mind.
8. **Bahá'í Faith:** In the Bahá'í Faith, the concept of "nafs" (self) is central to spiritual growth. Bahá'ís believe in the importance of overcoming the lower self, characterized by ego, selfish desires, and attachment to worldly things, in order to cultivate the higher self, which is aligned with spiritual virtues such as love, humility, and service to humanity. This inner struggle is seen as essential for spiritual development.
9. **Confucianism:** Confucianism emphasizes the cultivation of moral virtues and social harmony. Central to Confucian teachings is the concept of "ren" (benevolence) and "li" (ritual propriety), which involve cultivating inner virtues such as compassion, righteousness, and propriety.
10. **Judaism:** In Judaism, the struggle with the yetzer hara (evil inclination) is central. It represents the inner inclination toward selfishness, greed, and other negative traits that humans must overcome to live a righteous life according to God's commandments. Jewish teachings emphasize the importance of moral and ethical self-improvement through study, prayer, and observance of mitzvot (commandments).

These examples illustrate that *the struggle with oneself* is a universal aspect of religious and spiritual teachings, emphasizing the importance of:

- self-awareness,
- self-discipline,
- inner transformation in the pursuit of higher truths and spiritual enlightenment.  
(As Paul says ... Rom 12:2 & do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind)

In the Church of God, we normally “don’t care” what “*other* religions” teach -- but it is a bit comforting to see that inner struggle is almost common sense!

## Scriptures that highlight this inner struggle:

**Gen 1:31** Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.

**Gen 6:5-6** Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart...

**Gen 6:8** But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

**Jer 17:9-10** "The heart is deceitful above all things, & desperately wicked; Who can know it?

Jer 17:10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

**Rom 7:14-25** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Rom 7:15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Rom 7:16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good.

Rom 7:17 But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find.

Rom 7:19 For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice.

Rom 7:20 Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me

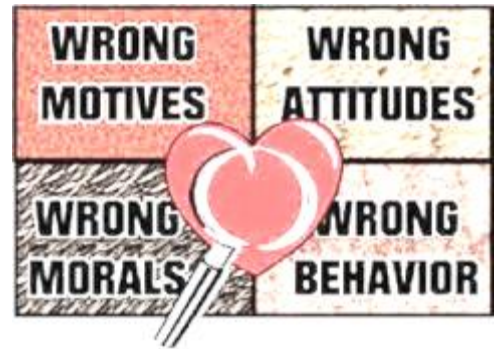
Rom 7:21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Rom 7:25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.



**Galatians 5:17** For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

**1 Corinthians 9:27** But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

**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."

**Corinthians 10:3-5** For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 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, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"

## Examples of some Bible Heroes & Villains

### Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness



**Mat 4:1** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

**Mat 4:2** And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

**Mat 4:3** Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

**Mat 4:4** But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.' "

**Mat 4:5** Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

**Mat 4:6** and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw

Yourself down. For it is written: 'HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER YOU,' and, IN THEIR HANDS THEY SHALL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.' "

**Mat 4:7** Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD.' "

**Mat 4:8** Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

**Mat 4:9** And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

**Mat 4:10** Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE.' "

**Mat 4:11** Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

## David's Prayer & Repentance

**Psa 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; & see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

**Psa 51:2-4** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

Psa 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin *is* always before me.

Psa 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done *this* evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, *And* blameless when You judge.

**Psa 51:9-11** Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

Psa 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psa 51:11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, & do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

**Psa 51:16-17** For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.

## I Sam 13:14 & Acts 13:22 ... David was a man “after God's own heart”

... *it means simply a man who would not be rebellious and disobedient as Saul was, but would do the will of God and keep his commandments.*

## Saul's failure to fight himself

**1Sa 15:16-23** Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on."

1Sa 15:17 So Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?"

1Sa 15:18 Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'

1Sa 15:19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"

1Sa 15:20 And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

1Sa 15:21 But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

1Sa 15:22 So Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."

Because of his

- disobedience,
- arrogance,
- lack of faith, and
- refusal to trust in the Lord, Saul was rejected

**Others???** Jonah, Peter, Paul, EVERYONE!



## Categories of vices that are part of everybody's inner struggle

### 1. Moral Vices:

- These include behaviours or attitudes that deviate from moral principles or ethical standards, such as lying, cheating, or stealing.

### 2. Emotional Vices:

- These encompass negative emotions or attitudes that can hinder personal growth and well-being, such as anger, jealousy, or resentment.

### 3. Behavioural Vices:

- These involve actions or habits that are harmful to oneself or others, such as procrastination, addiction, or aggression.

### 4. Cognitive Vices:

- These involve patterns of thought or belief that are detrimental, such as close-mindedness, irrationality, or self-deception.

### 5. Social Vices:

- These pertain to behaviours or attitudes that disrupt or damage interpersonal relationships, such as gossiping, manipulation, or betrayal.

### 6. Spiritual Vices:

- These relate to attitudes or behaviours that hinder spiritual growth or connection, such as pride, selfishness, or spiritual apathy.

### 7. Self-Defeating Vices:

- These are behaviours or attitudes that sabotage one's own success or well-being, such as self-sabotage, perfectionism, or fear of failure.

### 9. Temporal Vices:

- These involve behaviours or attitudes that prioritize short-term gratification over long-term well-being, such as impulsivity, hedonism, or instant gratification.

### 10. Cultural Vices:

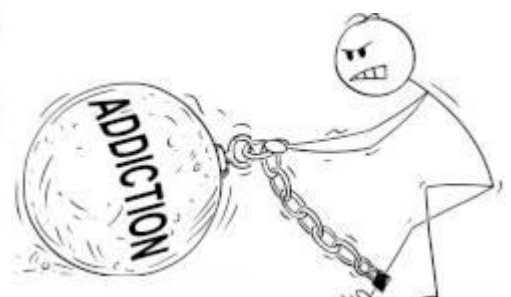
- These involve behaviours or attitudes that are influenced by societal norms or cultural values and may perpetuate harmful practices, such as conformity, discrimination, or cultural relativism.

### 11. Health-related Vices:

- These encompass behaviours or attitudes that undermine physical or mental health, such as poor dietary habits, sedentary lifestyle, or substance abuse.

### 12. Financial Vices:

- These involve behaviours or attitudes that lead to financial irresponsibility or instability, such as overspending, not tithing or gambling.





YOU  
DON'T REALIZE  
HOW STRONG  
YOU ARE  
UNTIL YOU'RE  
FIGHTING  
YOURSELF.



## Some tools to help us “fight ourselves”

**Ephesians 6:11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

**James 4:7** Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

**Psalms 119:11** Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

**1 Peter 5:8-9** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

**Psalms 1:1-3** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

**1 Timothy 6:11-12** But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

**James 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

## "Wise sayings"

- "In the end, we answer not to others, but to the **person we see in the mirror.**"
- "You can't control every outcome, but **you can control how you respond.**"
- "The **greatest battle** you'll ever face is the one against yourself."
- "To conquer the world, you must first **conquer the enemy within.**"
- "In **the war within**, victory is not in defeating others, but in mastering oneself."
- "The **toughest adversary** you'll ever face stares back at you in the mirror."
- "Your greatest **opponent & ally** reside within; **choose** wisely which one you empower."
- "Your most formidable opponent is the version of yourself you know **you can become.**"

