

Whose Whispering in Your Ear?

I Am Not Afraid series

by Bill Aumack

Okay, let's play a word association game. You guys familiar with these? I say words, you say what pops into your mind. Right. Let's start with something easy.

Black. White. Black and white go together. We have piano keys. We got black and white photographs. Some of us remember when it was black and white. TV even, right? Okay, let's do something a little harder.

Sweet. Sour. Sour. Somebody may say something sweet. Candy or whatever that reminds them of something sweet.

What about Sabbath? Rest? Sunset? Sabbath, going to church?

Okay, here's the hard one. The great controversy. [silence] Yeah, see, we got nothing. War. It's a great controversy. What is the great controversy? I was wondering if somebody was going to say book. Because we know there's a book called the Great Controversy. Right.

What is the great controversy? Well, the great controversy is just very simple. It's the war of good versus evil. It's God versus Satan, good versus bad, what? However you want to say it. And that's just all that the great controversy is. And if you've been around church at all, you're familiar with this war. And so I want to really, really briefly summarize. And if I spend too long on this summarization, we're going to be here till 2 o'clock. So I've got to be brief here.

Okay, so we're going to skip stuff, but somewhere way back in time, Lucifer, who we also refer to as the devil or Satan, was an angel of light. He lived in heaven. He was a created being. He was a being of some importance. He was a lead angel of some kind. And through the years, the decades, the centuries, I don't know how long it was, he began to think that maybe he

should be part of the Godhead and help them make decisions. Because he's important. Why shouldn't he be part of that? And, you know, he began to wonder, why can't I do that? Why can't I be part of that? Why shouldn't I? And this is the original sin. And some people call it pride. Some people call it arrogance. Some people call it wanting to be God. And I guess it's maybe kind of all those things, but what it really is is a rejection of God in his plan. I don't need God. I got it all.

And the devil was able to convince one third of the other angels that he was right and there was war in heaven. And boy, someday I'm going to ask God about war in heaven because I have a lot of questions about what war in heaven looks like. Did they use tanks and guns? That doesn't seem right. Did they use swords and shields? That still means angels are dying in battle. That doesn't seem right. So maybe it was just a big shoving match, I don't know. But there was war in heaven and the good angels expel the bad angels from heaven.

And then somewhere along the line the devil shows up and convinces Adam and Eve to disobey God. Right? And what was the way he used it? He said, hey, if you eat the fruit you'll be like God. It's the original sin again.

Unfortunately, they did it and the world starts becoming very, very evil very, very quickly. People had long lives, they had a lot of time to practice being evil. And eventually God says, I'm tired of this, I'm sorry ever made man. And he found Noah, made him build a boat and he washed everything away.

One family starts again. This time lifespans are limited to 120 years. But it doesn't take very long before everything's evil again. And then for the rest of the kind of the Old Testament, it follows one family, Abraham, which eventually leads into the Israelites. And we see the ups and the downs of this family and this nation of following God and things are good and falling away from God and then repenting and, you know, upset. It just seems like it's a roller coaster ride through the Old Testament.

Eventually baby Jesus is born. Now do you think the devil knew when baby Jesus was going to be born? We never talk about that at Christmas time. But I bet you when the angel shows up to talk to Mary, the devil's standing there

going, interesting. Does the devil know when the angels are singing to the shepherds and there's the star in the sky and the wise men start their journey? Yeah, he does. Yeah he does. In fact, he tries to use Herod to kill baby Jesus before it ever even starts. He's trying to kill baby Jesus and that always fascinates me because I don't know how does the devil win if he kills baby Jesus? He hasn't proven his way is better because Jesus never got a chance. That always boggles my mind. I don't know, there's, there's so many things I don't know, right?

And then Jesus, he grows and develops and remember he gets baptized by John the Baptist just before he enters his ministry. And we see God saying, this is my son in whom I'm well pleased. And the Holy Spirit comes down. We see the whole Godhead right there.

And right after that Jesus goes to the wilderness for 40 days to fast and be with God. And this is where I want to pick up the story. So open your Bibles with me to Matthew chapter 4. Matthew, chapter 4. This story is recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, and they're almost identical. There's two differences. One is the three temptations from the devil are in a different order. I can't find any significance in that. But there's one other difference. I want to read these first couple verses and see if you notice the difference. Okay, so let's start with Matthew 4. The first three verses. Give me an amen when you're there. Okay.

It says, then Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. Yeah, I guess... The tempter came to him and said, if you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Okay, we're familiar with this. Let's go to Luke chapter 4. So flip back through Matthew through Mark into Luke chapter four, verses one and two, and let's read the same story and see how it sounds different. You there?

It says, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them, he was very hungry.

Did you notice the difference? Matthew doesn't really seem to say that Jesus was tempted the whole 40 days. Now, language is a very imprecise way to convey ideas, which is why we invented numbers and math. Okay, you with me, Israel? We got the numbers and the math, right? It's a very precise way to talk. Language is a very imprecise way to talk. And so when you read Matthew, it doesn't say that the devil didn't tempt him, but it doesn't say he did. There's a way to read that where he was led into the wilderness to be tempted. And after fasting 40 days, 40 nights, he was hungry and the tempter came to him. So growing up as a kid, I always read that Jesus was in the wilderness for 39 days, and on day 40, the devil shows up with three temptations. Right. Luke definitely says where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil. Okay, now, I tend to think probably that one's a little more accurate. Matthew doesn't say that didn't happen. But you can read it the other way, because I can't imagine the devil say, well, Jesus has been fasting for 20 days, but I'm going to wait. You know, I'm thinking he's like, hey, he's weak. Let's, you know, full blitz. Let's attack. And he does that day after day after day after day for 40 days. And eventually we get to the last three temptations. So let's keep reading.

In Luke chapter 4, let's pick it up at verse 3. Let's see what these last three temptations were.

The devil said to him, you are the son of God. Tell these stones to become bread. And Jesus answered, answered, it is written, man shall not live on bread alone.

And the devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all of the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, I will give you all their authority and splendor. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours. And Jesus answered, it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

The devil led him to Jerusalem, and he had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here, for it is written. Now the devil's quoting the Bible here. He will command his angels concerning you and to guard you carefully, they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against the stone. And Jesus answered, do not put the Lord your God to the test.

All right, three temptations. We've heard them before. We're not going to dive real deep into them. But the first one, stones to bread. I always wondered, why was this a sin? Do stones care if they get turned to bread? Are you hurting anyone by turning stones to bread? Doesn't seem like it. So what's the problem? The problem is, can you turn stones to bread? No, I can't. Okay. And so if Jesus had done that, if Jesus had used his power for himself, he would have an advantage we didn't have and the devil would claim unfair. Right. Leslie can't turn stones to bread. Mark can't turn stones to bread. Tony can't turn stones to bread. Unfair.

Okay, the next one. Worship Satan. Now, we talked about this recently in our message that we had a few months ago of Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People? Right? So you can go back and watch that if you want to, but Lucifer is the prince of the world, and he has the authority to give this to Jesus if he wants to. And in Jesus weakened state, 40 days without food. Science says you can go about 90 days without food, and then you're all done. So 40 is getting right up there. Okay, so Jesus, you know, in his weakened state, that must have seemed like a good idea because the cross looked like a whole bunch of no fun. Right? And this would be an easy way out. But Jesus doesn't do that either.

And then the last one, throw himself off a high place, and the devil quotes scripture to him. He says, it's okay, you can do this. God will protect you. And Jesus doesn't do that either. And you know, if I was Jesus, I may be tempted to think God would take care of me. Right? I mean, dad's got my back, right? I mean, if it was me up there and the devil said that, I'd be worried God didn't love me that much. Okay? But I don't think Jesus has that fear. Okay, but again, he doesn't do it either.

And how does Jesus answer all of these temptations? He quotes scripture. Right. **The best way to face temptation is to quote scripture.** Right? Jesus is our example. This is what he did. He quoted scripture. Even when the devil quoted, misquoted scripture to him. Sorry to twist it. Jesus quotes scripture back to him.

Now, if we're going to quote scripture, what does that imply? **You better know the Bible.** You can't quote something you don't know.

Confession. I don't think I've ever read a single book by William Shakespeare. Just was not my thing. Kind of hard to quote anything by William Shakespeare, right? I mean, I know Romeo and Juliet and they die and that's it. That's how much I know about William Shakespeare. Right. Can't quote it. If you haven't read the Bible, how are you going to quote it? How are you going to quote it?

Now, when I said that, some of you groaned because, you know, reading the Bible, it's hard. I don't understand it. I'm not a good reader and there's so many excuses, but you can listen to the Bible for free. All kinds of apps and websites where you can listen for free. All kinds of different versions, all kinds of different translations, all kinds of different languages. Hey, you're trying to learn a second language. Listen to a chapter in your native tongue and then listen to it in the language you're trying to learn. Kill two birds with one stone. Okay. I don't know. There's a lot of ways you can do that.

And some of us say, well, it's hard to memorize. I don't memorize stuff very good. I bet you we each have a movie or we could quote nearly every line from the movie, right? At our house, there's a favorite Christmas movie, It's a Wonderful Life. And there's a certain family member who will remain anonymous. That's not me. That can quote every line of the whole movie. That's good, right? There's nothing wrong with that. But we can memorize stuff. And I bet you if I turned on the hit songs when you were in high school, you still know every word of those songs, right? I was actually making a playlist this week for my teenage years on Spotify, picking all the hit songs, making a list. Came across a couple songs I haven't heard in years. I still knew every word of those songs. Right? And I get it. It's easier with the music and everything. But we can memorize stuff if we want to, if we're motivated enough.

And if you really just are struggling and you can't do it, there's always the last option. **Speak Jesus.**

This is the song we've been singing, right? I'm gonna speak the name of Jesus the name of Jesus has power. It's the name that heals it's the name that cast

out demons. It's the name that saves. And if you're facing a temptation and you say, Jesus, I need your help. I'm losing the battle. And you are earnest about that. I believe with all my heart. That's a prayer Jesus will answer.

All right, so this is the great controversy. It's the story of good and evil. It's the battle between God and Satan. The war has been won, but the battles aren't all over. And if you've studied World War I and World War II and probably other wars, you know this happens. There comes a point where everybody knows the war is over, but the peace agreement hasn't been signed yet. And so the battles continue. And that's where we find ourselves right now. And the devil's trying to act as a spoiler and keep as many people from going to heaven as he can, even though the war has been lost. And that's where we are. And we're playing our part in that story, that great controversy. The battle rages.

And have you ever.... All right, how many of you grew up watching Looney Tunes? Anybody besides me? Nearly this whole side. And not too many of you over here. You guys missed out in your childhood. Few of us over here, right? And remember when Bugs Bunny or Daffy Duck or somebody would get in predicament, and then the little shoulder angels show up, right? Do it, don't do it. Do it, don't do it. Right? I did some research on how that all started. And in fine art, in some of paintings and stuff, it started out showing this battle and there was angels grabbing a person and pulling them. The good angel's got his arm and pulling him this way. And the bad angel's got him by the collar and he's pulling. And it's a war for this person's soul.

And somewhere along the line, it becomes an angel of light and an angel in red. Right? And then it switches from being an angel to being the character. Right. If it's Bugs Bunny, Bugs Bunny has a halo and Bugs Bunny has horns. And then if you go a little bit farther, it's just the character. For any of you Pirates of the Caribbean fans, remember in, I don't know if it was three or four, Johnny Depp gets into something and he's got little Captain Jack Sparrows whispering in his ear. And they don't have horns or halos.

It's no longer good and evil. It's just two different options. And we've gone from a battle for your soul to, hey, you can do A, you can do B. Whatever, man, it's cool. That's not good, that's not good. That's not good. And there's been times in my life when I felt like there was two angels on my shoulder and

I could hear the two voices. And there's been times in my life where I chose the violence and did the other thing right. We've all been there.

Probably your brother is just driving you to no end. And today we chose violence. But it's an epic battle. It's an epic battle and it will continue until the end of time.

And some of you may be wondering, Bill, we're doing a series on fear, and you haven't talked about fear yet. I know. This was just the prequel. Now the sermon starts, so buckle up. We're gonna be out of here about 2 o'clock. Just kidding. Just kidding. All right.

But there are two things I wanna say about fear.

Number one, there's something that we don't fear enough that we probably should fear more. I've heard Christians say and not here, you know, other Christians, you know, from that church down the road, you know, is questionable. And they say things like, Satan can't touch me. I've got Jesus on my side. The devil can't bother me. The Devil can't get to me. You know, Jesus will protect me.

O contraire. And I get why we say that Jesus is on our side and Jesus is powerful, but that doesn't mean the devil can't touch you. The devil killed Jesus. The Devil killed all the disciples. The Devil has killed hundreds of thousands of Christians through the centuries. Martyrs. He can get to you.

What the devil can't do is take your salvation. Jesus gave it to you, and he can't take it. Only you can put it down and walk away from it. So from that point of view, he can't touch you. But he can touch you. And we need to have the proper amount of fear and respect for the devil. You don't want to underestimate your foe. You ever gone into a sports game of some kind? I mean, maybe it's badminton. And you think, man, they can't play. Look at them. They're old and slow. Those old slow guys are good because they've been playing a long time, right? And they know all the tricks. So you don't want to underestimate your foe.

And then the second part of the thing of fear I want to talk about is fears, is the end times. Because when we get to the end times, it can be a fearful topic. I mean, right? We're talking about persecution. And, you know, the Bible talks

about wars and rumors of wars and natural disasters and on and on and on, and things get worse before Jesus comes, right? And it's scary. Who wants to sign up for that? You know, I don't want to sign up for persecution. That's no fun. And we have anxiousness or fear about that.

When I was in third grade, our teacher used to read to us after lunch recess. And as I think back about it, it's crazy. Whose idea was it to stuff a bunch of food into kids and then send them outside to run around? It's no wonder we didn't puke every lunchtime. I don't know, right? It's like eat as fast as you can eat outside, you go run around. But when we come back in, the teacher would read to us, probably to try and calm us down. And I don't remember any books she read to us, except one. But I remember that I liked it when she read to us because I had erasers. Remember those erasers that were kind of rectangular and they sloped this way and this way? You know, if you draw wheels on those and a little engine on the top and a little guy driving, you've got one wickedly cool race car. And you know, Lord, forgive me, but I used to go home and lie to my mother that I lost my eraser. I needed another one. So I had a collection of race cars. And I would play with my race cars while the teacher was reading to me. And to this day, I love to do something with my hands while I'm listening. I listen best when I'm doodling or spinning a pencil or doing something. And we would listen to the teacher read.

And she read this one book. And this book was a Christian fiction book of what the end times might look like. And it was written by a younger female who wrote a story from her point of view of running to the wilderness and being chased by the authorities and being captured and being tortured and all these things that could happen. The teacher might as well have been reading to us from Stephen King. I was terrified, right? I mean, the craziest thing we watched at my house was Lassie, right? This was terrifying, okay? And for years, I didn't want anything to do with end times. Jesus coming, you know, I want Jesus to come, and I want to go to heaven, but hopefully that happens after I die, because I don't want to deal with that, right?

Don't raise your hands, but have you been there, felt that maybe just a little bit? I mean, that's just like a whole bunch of no fun. I didn't want to deal with that. And Pastor gave us the key for dealing with that last week.

Fall in love with Jesus.

Now, I'm not talking about some Hallmark movie where we all go back to our town we grew up in and fall in love with our high school sweetheart. I'm talking about, guys, your best friend, when he calls you up and says, I need your help. And you hang up the phone and head out the door and realize you've got to call him back because you don't know what you need to bring. Do I need to bring tools? Do I need to bring weapons? Do I need duct tape and a tarp and a shovel? Some of you will get that joke later, right? Because I'm there. What are we doing, right?

Ladies, I'm talking about your bestie, who you have shared all of your life's deepest secrets with. And she's been there for you, and you've been there for her. And she calls you up and says, you won't believe what happened. And you say, I'm on my way. And you yell at your husband to yell, pizza for dinner. To get pizza for dinner as you leave, right? I'll be home late.

That's what I'm talking about. That kind of love. Love is a verb. Amen. It's an action, okay? And we have this kind of love where we're going to do something. That's the kind of love Jesus had for us. He showed his love by coming and dying on the cross, right? And so we show our love for him. And when you realize that you have that kind of love for Jesus, everything changes. And I mean EVERYTHING. All capital letters. The whole world looks different, including the things you're scared of. That doesn't mean everything's good. Everything's rosy, peaches and cream, unicorns and rainbows. Everything's not perfect, but everything looks manageable. All of a sudden, everything looks like we got this. We can handle this. We'll make it through this.

Open your Bibles with me real quick to Psalms 116. Your homework this afternoon is to read this whole chapter. It's 19 verses. You can do it. Okay, but we're only gonna look at the first seven today. But I want you this afternoon to read all whopping 19 verses, okay? Give me an amen when you get there. The people with the digital units get there before the people with the books, all right? Psalms 116:1-7.

I love the Lord, for He heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me.

I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave came over me. I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord.

Lord, save me. He speaks Jesus. The Lord is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the unwary.

And when I was brought low, he saved me.

Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

When you feel like you're not going to make it. When you feel like you're afraid. The devil can take my life, but he cannot take my salvation. And that's good news. So reflection, maybe. Reflection. Alex, help me with the reflection. There we go.

Are you afraid for the future? Do you love Jesus?

Some of you say, yeah, I love Jesus. I'm here in church, aren't I? Being in church and loving Jesus aren't the same thing. I can be in church and not love Jesus, right?

And you can fool me. You can fool a person sitting next to you. You can fool Pastor. But there's two people you can't fool. You and God.

Right? If you are not in love with Jesus, fall in love with Jesus. Fall in love with Jesus.

And our challenge is to **make sure Jesus is your buddy, your bestie, your ride or die friend, whatever you want to call it. And if he's not, make sure you get that right quick.**

Make sure you get that relationship going right quick, okay? Jesus is anxious to have it with you. He's not hiding. God's not playing some game of hide and seek. He's trying to stay away from you. He wants to have a relationship with you. It's up to you to do it. Okay? And we don't have to be afraid. I see so many people in our society that are afraid and anxious for the future. And we don't have to be anxious for the future.

One thing I want to say about our views here of the future. You know, Adventists, we have a very distinct eschatology. That's a big word, right? We believe certain things will happen. We've worked out some prophecies and maybe it'll happen exactly like that. I don't know. But leave room in case it doesn't. Okay? Because I want to tell you, humans have a 100% failure rate of

predicting prophecy and what it means before it happens. After it happens, we go, oh. Beforehand, we have 100% failure rate. And it might happen the way we think it's going to happen, but it might be different. And don't let that get you, okay? And when you have a relationship with Jesus and you're in love with Jesus, it doesn't matter because I'm not worried about events. I'm worried about a relationship and everything is different.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the things that you're telling us and teaching us. Thank you so much that we have the opportunities to study this. Thank you so much that we have the opportunity to have a relationship with you and we don't have to fear the future. It may be hard, it may be difficult, there may be issues, but my soul can rest because the Lord has been good to me. Be with us now. In Jesus name, amen.