

“A book about sin might not sound like much fun, but *Know Your Enemy* is packed full of hope and promise. It provides gospel-strategies to see beyond the destructive lies of sin and pathways towards joy-filled freedom. It’s not long, so I suggest you read it and then read it again in a year’s time. Or, better still, read it with someone else and challenge one another to apply it to specific temptations you each face.”

Tim Chester, faculty member of Crosslands Training and author of *You Can Change*

“What I found so helpful about this book is the insight it gives into the widely varying ways through which sin attacks my life in Christ. Forewarned really is forearmed for Christian believers. Graham very helpfully weaves in multiple practical examples that will help both disciples and disciple makers.”

Julian Hardyman, Senior Pastor, Eden Baptist Church Cambridge, author of *Jesus Lover of my Soul: fresh pathways to spiritual passion*.

“If you never struggle with sin, then don’t buy this book. But if, like me, you find yourself too easily tripped up by Satan’s schemes and too often taken in by the dodgy and deceitful tricks of sin, then *Know your enemy* is a book written for you. Graham Beynon goes deep into hostile territory to understand and expose the key tactics of our enemy. Through the lens of Scripture, we get to see not

only how he works (he certainly doesn't play fair!) but we discover some very practical answers as to how to do battle. Best of all, *Know your enemy* will give you growing confidence that, equipped by God's word and empowered by his Spirit, living for Jesus can be a life in which we really can learn to stand our ground."

Neil Powell, Director, The London Project

"Our enemy knows his business. He has studied you and has you mapped out in full 3D. He's ready to exploit your every vulnerability – lying, cheating and hitting below the belt. If we're to stand our ground in the face of his assaults, we need to know how and where he's coming at us. In this engaging and sharply written book, Graham Beynon draws on the insights of the greats, his own pastoral experience and – most importantly – the resources of Scripture to help us engage in the fight of our spiritual lives. Read it humbly and prayerfully and you will learn much about both yourself and your enemy – leaving you better armed and ready for combat!"

Orlando Saer, Senior Pastor, Christ Church Southampton, and Director of Reach South

"Every Christian wants to persevere to the end and to see Jesus face to face. To persevere, it is essential that you know your enemy. Our enemy Satan works by tempting Christians to sin, and these temptations will always be with us this side

of the new creation. This may sound overwhelming, but Graham Beynon helpfully shows us that right acceptance of this belief means we are less likely to say yes to sin as we will better know how our enemy works. A book about sin may seem like it would be depressing, but I found it to be encouraging and refreshing. This is because Beynon helps us consider God's great love for us and how his love is so much better than anything temptation offers. He also shows us the gift we have from God in the form of other Christians and how they can help us in our battle not to sin. As Christians we need to keep being reminded of our enemy, so reading *Know Your Enemy* will be well worth your while. It may also be the wake-up call you or a friend need at this time."

Jane Tooher, Lecturer in Ministry and Church History,
Moore College, Sydney

GRAHAM BEYNON

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YOUR
ENEMY**

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Introduction: The Art of War

The *Art of War* is a famous book on military strategy. It was written by Sun Tzu in China in the fifth century BC and has been influential ever since. One of the most famous lines is this:

If you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperilled in a hundred battles ... if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperilled in every single battle.

Know your enemy: know how he works, what tactics he employs, and what armoury he uses.

Know yourself: know where you are weak, how your enemy might attack you, and how you might lose.

It's a simple principle: know your enemy and yourself or you'll be vulnerable in battle and liable to be caught out.

Know Your Enemy

There is an ‘Art of War’ in the Christian life too. The apostle Paul says:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).

We’re fighting in a spiritual battle against the enemies of sin and Satan. Satan is our ultimate enemy and he works by tempting us to sin. But sin is also referred to as a power that tempts us and works against us. The Christian life involves fighting these enemies.

How well do we know our enemies? Do we know Satan’s strategy and how he fights? Do we know ourselves and where we are weak?

Peter says to Christian believers: ‘Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour’ (1 Peter 5:8). Satan, the devil, is looking for those he can catch. He wants to swallow you up.

Imagine being told, ‘There’s a lion on the loose nearby.’ How would you feel about going outside? What care would you take stepping round corners? You would be wary, alert, and on guard. That’s how Peter wants us to think and feel about Satan: he’s like a dangerous lion, and he’s out there waiting for you, so be alert and be ready.

Peter goes on, ‘Resist him, standing firm in the faith’ (verse 9). You don’t have to be devoured by Satan; you can

resist and stand against him. But you'd better be ready to fight, knowing your enemy.

God said something very similar to Cain way back in Genesis, soon after sin had entered the world: 'sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it' (Genesis 4:7). Sin is lurking like a predatory animal, ready to pounce; it desires to consume you. You can rule over it, but again, you need to be alert and ready to fight.

If we know what the fight against our enemy involves, then we'll be ready to resist the devil and rule over sin. But if we don't, then we're wide open, vulnerable to attack, and easy to take down.

And here's the thing: Satan doesn't play fair.

The great deceiver

Hundreds of years ago battles between two armies were slow and cumbersome. The troops would gradually arrive and get themselves into position. They could usually watch the other army setting up camp; everything was out in the open. They might even set a time for the battle to commence. While they'd each have their own tactics, they'd know roughly what the other would do; there were few surprises.

Satan doesn't fight like that. His method is more like today's cyber warfare; he gets through the defences and disarms you from within. He uses sin more like a double agent who passes on key intelligence, and then stabs you in the back when you're not expecting it.

Know Your Enemy

Satan is deceptive. He's the father of lies. He's the seller of half-truths and the master of smoke and mirrors. You don't see his deception coming.

My dad has experienced something similar. He was rung up by someone from 'Microsoft Windows', who said they'd noticed his computer was running very slowly and suggested he'd spotted that too. He hadn't, but was glad of the help. They suggested giving them remote access to his computer for them to have a look, so he followed their instructions. Then a variety of alarming dialogue boxes came up on the screen, and he was told how many serious issues there were with his machine. But, they said, he could buy their new anti-virus software and disk clean-up program, which he did. He ended up £130 poorer, and was left wondering what was really wrong with his PC in the first place. He'd been deceived.

The con artist gets away with something not by being coercive or violent, but by being deceptive. He doesn't have to steal people's money because they give it to him willingly. He doesn't have to threaten people for information because they tell him their bank details without realising what they're doing. Only later do we realise the wool has been pulled over our eyes.

I'm gullible too. We all are. Eve articulated this first: '*The snake [Satan] deceived me*' (Genesis 3:13). However the apostle Paul applies it to everyone:

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Paul is worried because the serpent is cunning and we can be deceived.

The result is we can walk into sin without even realising. We also repeat the same sin, even when we don't want to do so. We then commit to trying harder to battle against sin, but don't know how to change. It's hard to fight sin when you can't see what's happening; it's hard to beat Satan when he's blindfolded you.

We need to know our enemy and how he works so that we are ready for his tactics.

The battle lines can move forward

This book tries to help us know our enemy. There's no silver bullet to fire and no magic wand to wave. Too often Christian books have offered the 'key' to victory over sin; this one doesn't. That's because the fight against sin will continue for the rest of our lives and will remain hard. I'm not going to overpromise here, but I am going to say that if we know our enemy, we'll be tripped up by him slightly less often. If we know how he works, we'll be able to win a few more fights. The battle will continue, but the battle lines can move forward.

That's been my experience in multiple areas of life. I continue to be amazed, and a little disheartened, at how I

continue to repeat the same sin. But I can see that the battles of today are not the battles of some years ago. While it's the same old battle against sin, the fight has moved on to new territory, whether it's selfishness, pride, grumpiness, or lust.

That's what I want you to expect and hope you will find – not a solution to the fight, nor an easier fight, but the same fight moving forward because you know your enemy.

How to read this book

Each chapter takes a slightly different look at sin. Specifically, it looks at how sin works. Each angle on sin has been prompted by other writers from down the centuries (I don't have any original ideas). So at some point in each chapter, I'll introduce you to these historical sin-battlers from whom I've learnt. The focus, though, is less on them and more on understanding sin itself, our enemy, and ourselves better, so as to be better able to fight.

There's some overlap between the chapters because they are different angles on the same theme. That's both inevitable and deliberate, and should achieve several goals. First, I hope hearing from different angles will help reinforce the same point so that we grasp it better. Second, different angles work better for different types of sin because not all sin works the same way. Third, different angles might resonate more with different people, so you might find one approach particularly helpful and that's fine.

At the end of each chapter is a brief prompt on how to

Introduction: The Art of War

fight sin better. It summarises the main points but angles them towards what you might now do. The aim here is not just to understand our enemy but to fight him more effectively.

That is my prayer for you.

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False Faith

Who should we believe? What should we believe?

In 2016 there was a referendum in the UK on whether to stay in or leave the European Union. Not surprisingly the campaigns for both leaving and staying revolved around the promise of benefits or the threat of calamities. ‘The economy will be much better off if we stay,’ said one side. ‘No, we’ll have more money for the health service if we leave,’ said the other. And so on.

It wasn’t so much a discussion of principles as of promises and counter-promises, threats and counter-threats. One side would give a figure for increased costs that would be incurred; the other would produce a different figure for increased savings that would be made.

But who to believe?

Belief lies behind our decisions and shapes our actions. It guides how you vote in a referendum. It determines why you do or don’t take the pills your doctor prescribed – do

you believe they will help? It's the reason why you buy a particular car instead of the alternatives – which do you believe will be reliable, good value, and economical? It's what decided your latest holiday – you believed it would be most relaxing, fun, or best for the family.

Your choices are all because of *what* you believe, but also *who* you believe. Do you trust your doctor and so take the pills? Do you believe the car reviewer and take the plunge? Do you accept the holiday brochure's glossy pictures and make the booking? Whose word do you accept and act on?

In the Bible this is the issue of *faith*. Faith is not a feeling or a step in the dark; nor is it a decision to 'have faith'. Faith is trust in something or someone; it's what you believe and who you believe.

The fight against sin is a fight of faith. At the heart of sin are misguided beliefs, and at the heart of the obedient Christian life are true ones. Fighting sin is fighting against false faith and for true faith. We see this most clearly in the very first moment sin occurred, which Genesis 3 in the Bible describes.

God's good world and true word

In the opening chapters of Genesis we read about how God creates the world and creates people. He gives people a special position in the world as his 'images', where they are to rule the world under him. Genesis 2 tells us specifically about a garden God creates and in which he places a man, Adam:

False Faith

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8–9).

The garden is a beautiful and abundant place for people to live. God gives this command to Adam:

And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die’ (verses 16–17).

There is a welcome invite – even a command – to eat from all the trees! See the freedom Adam is given. He may eat from any tree except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is about judging what is right and wrong. The tree is symbolic: eating its fruit doesn’t actually give you knowledge. Rather eating the fruit is a picture of deciding good and evil for yourself, making yourself the decision maker. God warns people not to do this; there will be drastic consequences if they do.

God then creates a woman, Eve, to be with Adam, and they are united in a perfect harmony: