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When Should We Stand and When Should We Run?

**1 Timothy 6:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹*But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.*
¹²*Fight the good fight of faith...***



The Bible tells us to stand, fight and be courageous for our faith. It also sometimes tells us to run away from some things and some people. What is the difference? How do we know when to plant our feet solidly on the foundation of Christ and truth or when to lace up the "running shoes of righteousness" and run away? Is it always an obvious answer? Is there ever a time that we would do *both*? Wait...how would you do THAT?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5: Let us make no mistake - it is all about fighting a furious battle for our spiritual lives. It truly is all about the fight. There are times in this battle when we stand and fight and when running is part of the strategy of fighting. How do we tell the difference? From the Scriptures, of course!

Here is the general scriptural principle that determines when to stand and when to run:
Ephesians 6:13: STAND! We must be prepared to not give an inch to the enemy...AND...

1 John 2:16: (NASB) *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

...RUN! These are the three things we would naturally desire as human beings and any contradiction they bring to our spiritual stand should cause us to run from them - always - without exception! We run because we stand for something.

How do we firmly stand so we can run or fight? What did Jesus do with the three wilderness temptations? **Satan saw this as a glorious opportunity to derail the plan of God:** **Matthew 4:1,3-4:** Jesus was physically hungry and there is nothing wrong with feeding yourself when you are hungry. But this was a test of the desire of the flesh. Jesus stayed hungry on purpose in order to stay focused. **Jesus stood on the word of God!** He quoted Scripture to put Satan in his place.

All three of Jesus' scriptural answers were related to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt: **Deuteronomy 8:3:** That word gave him strength to walk away from the temptation (we should run!). This was a physical need he had but it contradicted what he was out in the wilderness for.

**Who can you think of in the Bible who literally ran away from temptation?
Joseph in Potiphar's house.**

But he first stood firm for righteousness based on God's influence: **Genesis 39:4-6:** By choosing God's way, Joseph stood and excelled in the most unusual circumstances. He stood

Genesis 39:7-10: As a young man, Joseph stood firm and clear. Notice he said it would be *a sin against God*, not just his master.

Genesis 39:11-12: He literally ran away! Lust of the flesh - time to run!!! **1 Corinthians 6:18:** Running away from immorality is not cowardice; it is standing for something. It is not because you are afraid; it is because you are strong.

Genesis 39:13-17: When we stand - and then appropriately run - we often will be falsely accused and slandered, as the standards that these actions express reveal the depths of sin that surround us. When you run away from what you should not be involved in, you expose the level of degradation of those involved.

Lies often repeated begin to sound like truth. In spite of this, we know that the only opinion and judgment that matters is that of God Himself.

All choices yield consequences, both intended and unintended. Living with sacred honor means accepting all consequences with grace and humility - even at the expense of our reputation and future. Joseph lived with sacred honor and it cost him dearly.

Genesis 39:19-20: Joseph was not punished for doing something wrong; he was punished for standing up for what was right.



How would you or I react being punished without cause? Would we begin to think that God had abandoned us or live our present circumstances based on truth and not be swayed by any biased perceptions of events? It is easy to want to lash out and seek justice. Sometimes that is not always the right course. Scriptural principle says we rise above that and stand - even if it is going to cost us dearly.

What about the pride of life - our potential accomplishments - shouldn't we celebrate these?

First, let's look at what happened to Joseph after being thrown into jail: Genesis 39:21-23: Any surprise here? God was with Joseph because Joseph stood with God! Even in prison, Joseph showed his faith in God's presence in his life where others would say God had abandoned him.

Let us go back to the temptations presented to Jesus. (Note in the book of Luke and Matthew, the temptations are listed in a different order.)

The pride of life is another area of personal standing and potential running: Luke 4:9-12: IF you are the Son of God - this highly charged language was designed to make Jesus react. The devious value of Satan's offer is for Jesus to prove his sonship. It had scripturally based support and would give the people a reason to follow him. Isn't that what he came here for? Sounds reasonable, right?

Jesus' reaction was to quote Scripture from Deuteronomy: Deuteronomy 6:16

The actual event: Exodus 17:6: Jesus was the son of God and did not have to prove it. He not only quoted Scripture but stood on the foundation of humility and the principle of God's will, way and time. He then walked away from the tempter's challenge.

Our next example is the standing of Paul and Barnabas.

Fight that which comes from without - run from that which is within. Acts 14:8-15: They ran away from the personal temptation of self-glory. Sometimes standing up means running away from temptation. It is not running out of cowardice but out of strength if we are first standing on what is right - whatever the consequences.

Back to the final temptation of Jesus in the wilderness...**The first challenges were the desires of the flesh and pride - now onto the desires of the eye: Luke 4:5-8:** Here is the temptation of the lust (desire) of the eyes! Satan technically was correct in that he had authority over the kingdoms of this world and was willing to give them to Jesus as long as Satan could remain as "prince" of this world. Jesus stood on the worship of God and only God! Jesus would not fall into the idea of bowing down to another.

Another text Jesus quoted to thwart temptation: Deuteronomy 6:12-14: By only seeing God as his focus of worship, Jesus rejected the "easy way" that Satan offered. Jesus came to save the nations of the world - Satan was essentially saying, why work so hard? We can work together on this! I can just give them to you! (Just bow down to me!) First Jesus stood and then he walked away!

Lust of the eyes - this next text, again about Israel's deliverance, begins and ends with idolatry: 1 Corinthians 10:7-14: The Apostle goes through many examples for us to know what *not* to do. Once we stand for worshipping God only, we have the tools to run from idolatry. Today idolatry is a huge trap in society, because we idolize almost everything. Idolatry puts the created above the Creator. It is an easy way for us to get off track.

How did Peter handle the potential profitability of the Gospel?

Acts 8:14-16,17-25: (NRSV) ¹⁴Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit....

Notice the continual working together. This is an important part of standing for righteousness - build one another up, protect one another, check one another's attitude and have a backup! Standing for the sake of battle is always best done in the company of others who are standing for the same thing. We can be stronger when we pool our resources together.



¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

This was a subtle but defining moment in the development of Christianity. It could have become a money making machine (!), but what was Peter's response?

²⁰But Peter said to him, may your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness.

There is no wavering in Peter's answer - he emphatically stands and states that greed has no part in the Gospel message. He does not entertain the thought - he shuts it down. He labels its desire as sin and wickedness.

Unfortunately today in many areas, the Gospel has become a money-making machine. That is scripturally wrong.

²⁴Simon answered, pray for me to the Lord that nothing of what you have said may happen to me. ²⁵Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.

Again, those who co-labor in the work of the Gospel encourage repentance and humility. This stand shows us a remarkable consistency with all that we have seen from Jesus' own example.

Even though we can be exercised in spiritual things, it does not mean we are always on target. Be alert! We can still make mistakes.

Here is one of Peter's mistakes: Galatians 2:11-14: Previously Peter stood so firm in doing what was right, but in this example, he messed up. The Apostle Paul had to call him out on this error of judgment. The new Gentile Christians did not have to live according to Jewish tradition. So, to stand is to be humble *and* direct at the same time. How do we do this? Follow the example of Jesus - stand on the word, humility and worship.

Stand firm in the word - combat the desire of the flesh! Matthew 5:43-45: (NASB) *⁴³You have heard that it was said; You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. (The Law never said this - this is what the Pharisees were quoting incorrectly - they added this thinking to the text.) ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

Praying for our enemies (and really meaning it!) is HARD! But this is the Word...stand on it!

Stand firm in humility - combat the pride of life like the Apostle Paul: Romans 7:15-19: There is an internal struggle in trying to stand firm. We are all walking contradictions who should stand firm on humility and run from our desires of the flesh and pride of life. That is what our flesh wants, but do not give it even a moment's worth of consideration. That does not mean the desire will go away, but perhaps next time it will not be so powerful against you. Or, it may be even more powerful and you will need to reset your feet again.

Stand firm in worship - combat the desire of the eye! Jesus did only the will of the Father: Matthew 22:34-40: Pure godly worship is all consuming and keeps our eye truly focused. It helps us look past all of the temptations that dangle in front of our faces. Technology today can bring temptations into your house that were previously unheard of! Focus on worshipping God to stay on track.

2 Timothy 2:20-22: (NASB) *²⁰Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. ²¹Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from **these things**, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. ²²Now flee from youthful lusts (RUN!) and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

What things are **these things** to be cleansed of?



Worldly entanglements: The lust of the flesh

2 Timothy 2:4: (NASB) *No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*

Cheating for the sake of the prize: The lust of the eyes

2 Timothy 2:5: (NASB) *Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.*

Useless, damaging arguments about words: The pride of life

2 Timothy 2:14: (NASB) *Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.*

Stand - always stand - run when necessary, but always stand! Stand on the gospel, worshipping God only and stand in humility to do the right things. When it is appropriate to run, run hard, fast and fully. Be armed with the armor of God.

*So, when should we stand and when should we run?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*