

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: Detecting the Deceiver

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: In the movie *Jurassic Park*, Dr. Alien Grant and his team are digging for dinosaurs in the Badlands, near Snakewater, Montana. They set off a seismic charge, and the image of an ancient skeleton appears on the video screen. It's a velociraptor—one of the most cunning and deadly predators ever to walk the earth. But a young boy visiting the site isn't impressed. He says, "That doesn't look very scary—more like a six-foot turkey." Dr. Grant responds by describing how a velociraptor goes about an attack: "You stare at him, and he just stares right back. And that's when the attack comes—not from the front but from the *side*, from the other two raptors you didn't even know were there." In spiritual warfare the most dangerous attacks come unexpectedly. Christians often focus their attention on spiritual enemies that are obvious and plainly visible. While our attention is focused on these obvious forms of evil, suddenly the most lethal attacks come from the sides, from satanic influences we didn't even know were there. In other words, the greatest threats to our faith, our families and our church do not come from the demonic influences we *can* see but from those that we *cannot* see—the ones that are so cunning that they are virtually invisible.

What are some examples of the plainly visible evil we tend to focus on?

Why do we focus on these things?

What invisible enemies have you struggled with in the past?

We cannot fight an enemy we cannot see. So in this passage we will look at some of the disguises Satan wears, so that we can see behind his masks. We will look at some of the deceitful practices he uses, so that we won't be fooled. *Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.*

1. In this passage how does Paul compare himself to and contrast himself with the "false apostles" in Corinth (vv. 1-15)?
2. How are the dangers the Corinthians faced similar to those Eve faced when she first met the serpent (vv. 1-3)?
3. Why is it more effective for deceivers to distort the gospel than to it altogether, or to preach a different Jesus rather than no Jesus at all (v. 4)?
4. Evidently, false apostles had infiltrated the Corinthian church. In what ways did these "super-apostles" seem far superior to Paul (vv. 5-12; see also 10:1, 10)?
5. How does biblical knowledge (v. 6) protect you from eloquent speakers who are trying to deceive you?

6. In contrast to the false apostles, Paul didn't charge people for his ministry (w. 7-12). Why do you think the Corinthians viewed this practice as a weakness rather than a strength?

How does Paul defend himself in this matter?

7. How can we discern the difference between those who preach merely for money and prestige and those who have godly motives?

8. Why do you think Satan masquerades as an angel of light rather than appearing as a demon of darkness (v. 14)?

9. Why might Satan's servants also find it effective to masquerade as "ministers of righteousness" (v. 15)?

10. What are some of the pious disguises that Satan's servants use to deceive people today?

11. Throughout history the Christian "army" has been notorious for shooting its own soldiers. As we seek to unmask deceivers in our midst, how can we keep from falsely accusing true servants of righteousness?

12. Paul concludes this passage by saying, "Their end will be what their actions deserve." What types of actions might reveal that a "minister of righteousness" is really working for the enemy?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: Facing Temptation

TEXT: Mathew 4:1-11

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: In Stephen Vincent Benet's short story *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, a New Hampshire farmer named Jabez Stone is hit by a string of natural disasters and just plain bad luck. One day, after his two children come down with the measles, his horse begins to cough, his wife gets sick, and he breaks his plowshare on a rock, Jabez decides that's the last straw. In a moment of anger and temptation, he says, "I vow it's enough to make a man want to sell his soul to the devil! And I would, too, for two cents." Of course, the devil takes him up on his offer and grants him ten years of success and prosperity.

At the end of the ten years, when the devil comes to take possession of his "property," he is confronted by the great Dan'l Webster. Thus begins the greatest trial of all time, with the devil arguing for the prosecution and Daniel Webster arguing for the defense.

People often claim that everyone can be bought for a price. Do you think that's true or false?

In a moment of anger or frustration, when have done something you later regretted?

In this passage the devil tempts Jesus to sell his soul for "all the kingdoms of this world and their splendor." But this account also reveals three key ways the devil tempts us and how we can resist those temptations. *Read Matthew 4:1-11.*

1. Looking through these verses, what clues do you have as to what Jesus would have been thinking and feeling?
2. Verse 1 opens at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. Why do you think the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil?
3. If there's nothing wrong with being hungry, and there's nothing wrong with bread, then what was the temptation (w. 3-4)?
4. When we fail to trust God, how can we be tempted to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways?
5. In the second temptation (w. 5-6), was the devil misquoting Scripture, as people often claim? Explain.

6. Jesus responds in verse 7 by quoting Deut. 6:16. How does testing God differ from trusting God?

7. What is wrong with demanding "right now" that God prove his presence, power or care?

8. In the third temptation, the devil promises to give Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor" (w. 8-9). If Jesus would eventually receive all of these kingdoms anyway, then what was tempting about the devil's offer?

9. The devil offers us shortcuts in contrast to what Eugene Peterson, quoting a phrase from Friedrich Nietzsche, has called "a long obedience in the same direction." Why are these shortcuts really spiritual short-circuits? How do these shortcuts tempt us to bow the knee to Satan—even when that's not our intention?

10. Throughout this passage, Jesus demonstrates trust, obedience and true worship. How can we make these our ultimate weapons against the devil's temptations?

REFLECTION: Take time this week to reflect on some of your deepest needs. Have you been trying to meet some of those legitimate needs in illegitimate ways? If so, ask the Lord to deliver you from that temptation and to enable you to trust him to provide for you. Thank him for his love and care over every detail of your life.

Pray that God will grant you deeper trust, stronger obedience and more heartfelt worship as you seek to follow him.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: The Serpent's Strategy

TEXT: Genesis 3:1-6

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: One of C. S. Lewis's most popular books is entitled *The Screwtape Letters*. It is a collection of letters from a senior devil, Screwtape, to his young apprentice devil, Wormwood. Throughout their correspondence, Screwtape instructs his young pupil in the diabolical craft of leading a person into temptation and ruin. Their ultimate goal is to ensnare their victim eternally "in our Father's house below." Although the characters and conversations are somewhat fanciful, the book urges us to consider a sobering fact: Satan is a master at the art of temptation.

In many restaurants, at the end of the meal, the waiter brings an entire tray of luscious desserts, places them in front of you and describes them one by one. Why is this a more effective form of "temptation" than simply giving you a dessert menu?

What temptations have you faced that appeared harmless or even attractive on the surface?

Genesis 3 allows us to study Satan at his finest hour, at the dawn of the human race, when through one temptation the whole of humanity fell into destruction and death. The account reveals many of the same techniques Satan is using today with great success. *Read Genesis 3:1-6.*

1. Reflecting on this passage, what different thoughts and emotions do you think Eve had throughout?
2. In verse 1 the serpent asks Eve, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" How does Satan's version compare with what God really said (see 2:16-17)? From the way he worded this question, what do you think Satan hoped to accomplish?
3. Why do you think Satan appears to Eve in the form of a serpent (v. 1) instead of showing himself openly?
4. How does Eve's response reveal that Satan's venom is beginning to affect her thinking about God (vv. 2-3)?
5. How can doubting God's generosity make us targets for temptation and sin?
6. Satan's next tactic is to boldly declare, "You will not surely die" (v. 4). Why do you think he lies to Eve about the consequences of sin?
7. Why is it tempting to believe that sin has no consequences? (Give examples, if possible.)
8. In verse 5 Satan goes a step further: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." What does this statement imply about both God and sin?
9. What evidence do you see today that some people believe God is a "cosmic killjoy" and sin is really good for them?

10. In verse 6 the conversation between the serpent and the woman breaks off. How is Satan's tactic at this point similar to the one a waiter uses with the dessert tray (see group discussion question)?
11. The great reformer Martin Luther once said, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair." Why is it dangerous to toy with temptation or to fantasize about it?
12. Instead of toying or fantasizing, what should you do when you're tempted?

Pray that God will make you more alert to Satan's tactics so that his venom won't affect your thinking or your behavior.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: The Armor of God

TEXT: Ephesians 6:10-20

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: How can we be protected from our enemies? For a Roman soldier, the answer was his armor. A bronze breastplate covered him from his neck to his thighs. A backpiece was commonly worn as well. A wide belt secured the breastplate and backpiece, and a loop on the belt held the scabbard and sword. A bronze helmet covered not only the soldier's head but also the sides and back of his neck. A leather chinstrap held it firmly in place during battle. The soldier's shield was made of two pieces of wood glued together, covered with linen and hide and then bound with iron. It was much larger than most warriors' shields and offered protection from the neck to the knees. Heavily soled sandals with metal studs on the bottom enabled Romans soldiers to march long distances and to stand firm against the enemy on uneven or slippery ground. Finally, the soldier's offensive weapon was a short, two-edged sword used for both cutting and thrusting.

What sort of protective "armor" have you worn while playing various sports or activities, and why?

Describe a time when you felt surrounded by God's protection.

In Ephesians 6 Paul introduces us to each piece of Roman armor and its spiritual counterpart. If we protect ourselves with the divine armor God provides, then we will have nothing to fear when the evil one attacks. *Read Ephesians 6:10-20.*

1. As you read this passage, what battlefield images come to mind?

2. Why must we rely on God's power if we are to be victorious against our spiritual enemies (vv. 10-11)?

3. Throughout Paul's life he was opposed, flogged, stoned and imprisoned by various human enemies. Why then does he claim that our struggle is "not against flesh and blood" (v. 12)?

4. Paul identifies our true enemies as "the devil" (v. 11) and the demonic rulers, authorities, powers and spiritual forces of this dark age (v. 12). What evidence do you see of these hostile forces in your life or the lives of Christians you know?

5. Why do you think Paul states three times that we must stand our ground, do everything to stand and stand firm (vv. 13-14)?

6. Why are both truth and righteousness essential components of our armor (v. 14; see also Isaiah 11:5 and 59:17)?

7. How can the gospel message that you have peace with God (v. 15) give you strength to stand against spiritual opponents?

8. Faith (v. 16) refers to both what we believe and who we believe in. How can our faith act like a shield against all of the evil one's flaming arrows?

9. What flaming arrows has the devil aimed at you recently? In what ways do you need to exercise faith in God's protection and promises?

10. The "sword of the Spirit" (v. 17) is our only offensive weapon. Why do we need both the Spirit of God and the Word of God to defeat the devil?

11. Although prayer (w. 18-20) isn't listed as one of the pieces of our armor, how is prayer a vital component of your spiritual warfare?

Take time now to pray for yourself, the members of your earthly family and the members of your spiritual family. Ask God to give you the strength to be victorious against the devil's attacks.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: The War Within

TEXT: James 4:1-10

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: In the book *The Great Divorce* C. S. Lewis describes hell as a vast city that stretches on and on for millions of miles. One day a visitor arrives in the city and mentions to his tour guide that most of the houses seem empty. So he asks whether there was once a much larger population. His companion replies: *Not at all. . . . The trouble is that they're so quarrelsome. As soon as anyone arrives he settles in some street. Before he's been there twenty-four hours he quarrels with his neighbor. Before the week is over he's quarreled so badly that he decides to move. Very likely he finds the next street empty because all the people there have quarreled with their neighbors—and moved. . . . But even if he stays . . . he's sure to have another quarrel pretty soon and then he'll move on again. Finally he'll move right out to the edge of the town.* It would be nice to think that quarrels were confined to hell or to those who don't know Jesus Christ. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Why do you think Christians spend so much time arguing among themselves?

What are some of the things that cause fights and quarrels in your family or at work?

In James 4:1-10 the author does not just expose the existence of quarrels and fights but explains *why* they occur. James hopes that if we understand the cause of our quarrels, then we will be more open to the cure that God offers. *Read James 4:1-10.*

1. What words in this passage reflect tension and conflict?
2. If James asked most people, "What causes fights and quarrels among you?" they would respond, "It's the other person's fault!" How does James challenge that idea?
3. The meaning of verse 2 is seen most clearly in the following translation: "You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you quarrel and fight" (NRSV). Why would frustrated desires lead a person to be verbally or even physically violent?
4. James goes *on to* say, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (v. 2). When our desires are frustrated, why is prayer better than fighting?
5. Sometimes even God won't give us what we want (v. 3). Why is it important to examine our motives when we pray?
6. When we pray with worldly motives, in what sense are we asking God to help us commit spiritual adultery (w. 4-5)?

7. If you fight and argue a lot, or if you desire the wrong things for the wrong reasons, then James says you need God's grace (v. 6). What steps do we need to take to receive that grace (w. 6-10)?

Why do you think God requires such a radical response?

8. Even though James has stressed that our own evil desires and motives are the true source of quarrels, he says in verse 7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Why do you think the devil loves to see us fight and quarrel?

9. When we resist the devil in the ways that James suggests (w. 6-10), why will he flee from us?

10. Think of someone with whom you regularly fight and quarrel. How can James's insights and commands help you live in greater peace with that person?

REFLECTION: Take time to examine your heart. What impure motives might be hindering your prayers? How might those motives reveal an infatuation with the world? Come near to God by following the steps James outlines in this passage. Then ask the Lord to help you desire and pray for the things that are pleasing to him.

Ask God to make you the kind of Christian who is a true representative of the Prince of Peace.

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Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: Defeating the Destroyer

TEXT: Mark 5:1-20

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: In the movie *The Exorcist* a young girl named Regan (played by Linda Blair) becomes possessed by the devil. When conventional medical treatments fail, her mother calls on two priests to perform an exorcism. One of the priests is an older man whose beliefs are firm. The other priest is a younger, troubled man who has lost his faith. Together they try to confront the forces of darkness. The film is best known for its terrifying special effects, including a scene in which the girl's head spins completely around. Although I've never seen the film, it introduced millions of viewers to the concept of demon possession, which previously had been relegated by science and psychology to the realms of myth and medieval superstition.

With the advent of modern science and psychology, why do you think the idea of demon possession fell into disfavor?

Why do you think demon possession, which was common in Jesus' day, seems *so* rare in Western culture?

In Mark 5:1-20 we are introduced to a scene that is both terrible and tragic. Jesus confronts a demon-possessed man whose life has become a living nightmare. In this passage we discover Christ's power to defeat the destroyer. *Read Mark 5:1-20.*

1. What do we learn about the dark and destructive life of the man Jesus meets (vv. 1-5)?
2. What do the man's experiences teach us about the devil's desires for each one of us?
3. Why do you think the man speaks and acts as he does when he sees Jesus from a distance (w. 6-8)?
4. A Roman legion consisted of about six thousand soldiers. How does this help us to understand the pervasive nature of Satan's control over this man (w. 9-10)?
5. Although we know nothing about the man's life prior to his demon possession, what steps might lead an ordinary person to become increasingly controlled by evil?
6. The story of the pigs (w. 11-13) is one of the strangest in all of Scripture. Why do you think both Jesus and the demons acted as they did?
7. Describe the response of the people from the town when they see both the man and Jesus (w. 14-17). Why do they respond in fear rather than faith?

8. Frequently in Mark's Gospel Jesus tells people to follow him (see Mk 1:17; 2:14; 10:21). This man is eager to follow Jesus; why does Jesus send him home (w. 18-20)?

9. Who in your immediate or extended family does not know the Lord? What are you doing to help? What opportunities do you have to "tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (v. 19)? OR If someone should ask you what the Lord has done for you and how he has shown mercy to you, what would you say?

Take time to thank the Lord for the many ways he has delivered you from evil and has shown mercy to you. Pray for boldness and opportunities to talk with your family and friends about who Jesus is and what he has done.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: Overcoming Our Accuser

TEXT: Revelation 12:7-12

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: In Victor Hugo's book *Les Miserable*[^] a young man named Jean Valjean is sentenced to twenty years of hard labor for stealing a loaf of bread. After his release from prison, Valjean is shown such mercy and forgiveness by a priest that he is able to begin a new life. Yet throughout the book Valjean is pursued by a heartless police inspector named Javert, who believes criminals can never be reformed. With obsessive determination, Javert vows to expose Valjean's past and send him back to prison. In a similar way, the devil detests the mercy and forgiveness God has shown you in Christ. Throughout your life as a Christian, Satan has pursued you with demonic determination. He is obsessed with the goal of destroying your walk with God and sending you back to spiritual prison.

Think of a time when someone chased you—perhaps when you were a child. How did you feel, and what did you do to get away?

Why do you think accusation is such a powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal?

In Revelation 12 we discover how we can overcome the slander and accusations of the devil. *Read Revelation 12:7-12.*

1. Describe everything you can about the war that is fought in verses 7-9.
2. Notice the different titles used for Satan in verse 9. What can you learn about him and his tactics against you from each of these descriptions?
3. Verse 10 begins with a triumphant declaration of Satan's defeat. What words or phrases in verse 10 emphasize God's strength in contrast to Satan's?
4. On the one hand, the devil is described as "the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night" (v. 10). But in the next breath he is described as the one who "has been hurled down" from heaven. How does "the blood of the Lamb" overcome all of the devil's accusations against us (v. 11)?
5. When you have felt assaulted by guilt or shame, how has it helped to realize that Christ's blood was shed for you?
6. A second key to overcoming Satan is our "testimony" (v. 11). How can sharing our faith with others—even in the face of opposition—enable us to overcome the devil?
7. Verse 11 implies that if we love our lives too much, then we will be hesitant to testify about Christ in the face of opposition or threats. Why would this be true?

8. When Christians are martyred for their faith, it appears to the world that they have been defeated rather than victorious. (The same was true of the death of Jesus.) Yet how can their apparent defeat be seen as an ultimate victory?

9. Verse 12 concludes by saying that the devil "is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." Why should this statement keep us from being complacent about our struggle with Satan?

10. How can John's vision of the war in heaven encourage you in the midst of the spiritual battles you face?

Thank God for "the blood of the Lamb" that overcomes all of the devil's accusations. Pray for the grace to be faithful in testifying about the gospel—even in the face of opposition.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: Surviving Satan's Attacks

TEXT: Job Chapter 1 and 2

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: On the morning of April 18, 1906, the San Andreas fault settled violently, and San Francisco was shaken by a terrible earthquake. Huge cracks opened up in the earth, buildings shuddered and collapsed, and fire swept through the city, leaving it virtually destroyed. Thousands who went to bed peacefully the night before awoke to a world that had fallen apart around them.

In what ways are personal suffering or tragedies like earthquakes?

Think of a time in your life when your world seemed to fall apart. What were some of the thoughts and feelings you experienced?

If the Richter scale could measure personal tragedy, Job's "earthquake" would have measured 8.5. In one day he lost everything he owned and almost everything he held dear. Because of what Job endured and the way he endured it, his name has become synonymous with suffering and patience. Yet even though Job's suffering was extreme, it was by no means unique. In one form or another, his story is reenacted every day in a broken and fallen world. *Read Job 1.*

1. In Greek tragedy the greatness of the main character emphasizes the heights from which he falls. In a similar way, how do verses 1-5 set the stage for the tragedy that follows?
2. At the outset of the story, why do you think we are allowed to overhear the conversation between God and Satan (vv. 6-12)—a conversation that was never revealed to Job and his friends?
3. The name *Satan* means "accuser." What is the essence of Satan's accusation against Job (w. 8-12)? How does his accusation lead to Job's disaster?
4. Try to put yourself in Job's place. How might you have felt as wave after wave of disaster struck (w. 13-19)?
5. Have you ever wanted to bang on the gates of heaven, demanding an explanation for the pain you were experiencing? Why is this desire so strong within us?
6. What is astounding about Job's response (w. 20-22)? Why do you think he is still able to worship and praise the Lord?
7. Read Job 2. The scene in heaven repeats itself with a new twist. Why is Satan still unsatisfied with Job's character (2:1-5)?
8. How would Job's new affliction intensify the pain he already felt (2:7-8; see also 7:5, 13-14; 30:17, 30)?

9. Those who cursed God (2:9) were to be stoned to death (see Lev 24:10-16). How does Job respond to his wife's "solution" to his suffering?
10. Based on this passage, how does Satan use suffering and tragedy to tempt us to sin?
11. How can we follow Job's example when suffering strikes?

Throughout the book, Job expresses his strong desire to talk with God and find out why all this has happened: "If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say" (23:3-5). Yet when God does finally speak, he never tells Job the reason for his suffering. Read Job 38—42 and then briefly summarize God's message to Job and Job's response. How can these chapters increase your trust in God when life doesn't make sense?

Bring to the Lord any pain you are currently experiencing. Ask him for strength to endure that pain without giving in to Satan's temptations.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Interactive Sunday school Outline

TOPIC: Standing Firm

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: For centuries people have speculated about the identity of the antichrist. The long list of candidates includes Napoleon Bonaparte, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Khrushchev, Mikhail Gorbachev (the birthmark on his forehead being the mark of the beast), Anwar Sadat, the Ayatollah Khomeini, Yasser Arafat, Saddam Hussein, Henry Kissinger, and former president Ronald Wilson Reagan (six letters in each name = 666 [see Rev. 13:18]).

Why do you think Christians are inclined to imagine that someone in their own generation is the antichrist?

Do you think it is wise to speculate about the possible identity of the antichrist? Why or why not?

In 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul describes a time of demonic deception that is unparalleled in human history. Although he doesn't reveal the identity of the Antichrist, Paul does tell us how we can stand firm against Satan's schemes. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17.

1. According to this passage, what false information caused the Thessalonians to be "unsettled or alarmed"?
2. Even today some groups claim Jesus Christ has already come. How does Paul know for sure that Jesus has not yet come (w. 3-5)?
3. Paul says that before the Lord returns the "man of lawlessness" will be revealed (v. 3). In what ways will this man be a counterfeit Christ (w. 4-11)?
4. Paul says, "The secret power of lawlessness is already at work" (v. 7), the kind of power that will reach its climax with the Antichrist. In what ways do you see the power of lawlessness at work in the world around you? What world leaders, either in the present or in the past, seem to have been driven by the secret power of lawlessness?
5. What outward and inward reasons will cause people to be deceived by "the lawless one" (w. 9-12)?
6. According to verses 10-12, how do our values and lifestyle influence our ability to perceive spiritual truth?
7. According to this passage, what is the ultimate fate of the man of lawlessness and those who follow the power of lawlessness?
8. What has God already done, and what does Paul ask him to do, to make our lives different both now and in the future. How can we cooperate with God in this process?
9. Think of a spiritual conflict you are facing. How can you "stand firm" and hold to biblical truth (v.15) in this situation?

Paul wants us to be strengthened "in every good deed and word" (v. 17). What good deeds could you do this week in your family, with your neighbors, at work or in your church? What helpful or encouraging words might you speak in these contexts? Ask God to give you strength and wisdom in these tasks.

Take Paul's prayer and personalize it, saying it either aloud or in your heart: "May my Lord Jesus Christ himself and God my Father, who loved me and by his grace gave me eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage my heart and strengthen me in every good deed and word."