



The Devil Did It?

Most of us have heard people say, "The devil made me do it," often as a joke. We've also heard individuals say, "The devil sure tormented me this week," and it's not a joke. I have no problems with a personal devil or in evil forces at work in our world; I have problems with individuals who ascribe every failure to the devil. To blame the devil or anything else takes the easy way out of coping with our moral or ethical shortcomings. If we focus on outside forces as the cause, it makes us look better and soothes our guilt. Perhaps that's the problem: We don't want to face the pain of our failures. If we select another villain, we don't have to look deeply within ourselves, confess, or make any changes.

When things go wrong, it's natural for many of us in the church to point to the devil. We've been taught that he is *the* enemy. The Book of Job starts when Satan (another name for the devil) challenges God to step back and see what's inside Job when the man has no divine protection.

Most people know that, although the godly man loses everything, he holds on to his integrity. At the end, God gives Job additional children and more possessions than he had before. With that understanding, some of us have learned to cry out when temptations strike, "The devil is tormenting me."

But what if we're mistaken? What if the problem begins in our thoughts? What if we fail without any evil power taunting us? Instead, what if we round up the nearest suspects—ourselves? What if we asked, "What's going on inside me to push me to want to do that?" We're experts at pointing the blame away from ourselves because we had good teachers. Adam pointed to Eve and she pointed to the Serpent. We'll work hard to justify our innocence; however, I've learned that if I stay at it, I can usually ferret out the culprit. Perhaps I was jealous. Maybe I held a deeply hidden grudge. Possibly someone belittled my skills.

Instead of looking at every threat or failure as satanic forces bumping up against me, doesn't it make sense to start at home? If we want to bring in the devil, there's a place to do it: *After we've taken a step* in the wrong direction. That's when the evil influences spring into action. The devil works, but we have to provide the opportunity.

The apostle Paul urged the people at Corinth to forgive each other "in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11 TNIV). He warned that if they didn't look within and work out things among themselves, they were giving Satan an opportunity.

Here's an example that helped me understand how this works. More than twenty years ago I ghosted Velma Barfield's autobiography, *Woman on Death Row*. I documented at least 25 medical doctors who gave her prescription drugs during the time when she murdered five people. She never used the drugs (or the devil) as an excuse for her crime. "The drugs only brought out evil that was inside my heart," she said.

That's how I like to think of failures, sins, wrongdoings—anything we do that's contrary to what we know as moral behavior. It begins with an inner weakness and a leaning toward doing something we know is unethical. Satan can take advantage of that, as the apostle said, but if we become aware and pull back, the devil won't be able to make us do anything.

The next time I fail, I plan to say, "Cec made me do it." I think that would be more accurate.

Personal News

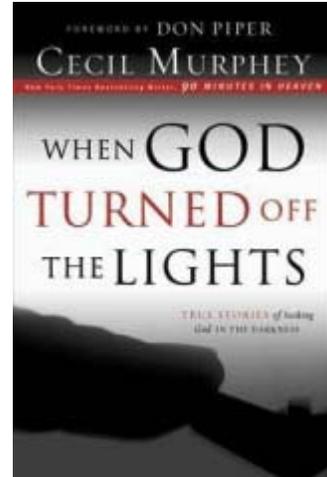
I spoke at a Celebrate Recovery group in Tucker, GA. Although only 6 months old, they sang and responded with powerful enthusiasm as if they had been together for years.

We leave for London September 10. I'll do a one-day writers conference, preach on Sunday, and spend a few days in Gloucester with our friends the Wheatleys from our days in Kenya.

I'll speak at the San Diego writers conference on September 26.

[*When God Turned Off the Lights*](#) has its official release later this month but the first printing is already sold out.

[*Christmas Miracles*](#) is set to release in October. The editor is excited enough to talk about an Easter book and another Christmas book for 2010.



When God Turned Off the Lights
Publisher: Regal Books
ISBN: 978-0-8307-5155-6
Retail: \$14.99



Cec and Twila

The Twila Zone

(words from my assistant, Twila Belk)

Cec will be in the Columbus, Ohio, area December 11-14 to preach and do a few book signings. If you live in the area and would like to invite Cec to speak to your group, let me know.

Have you read any of Cec's books? Did you enjoy

what you read? Did you learn anything valuable? If so, would you consider posting a review on <http://www.amazon.com/>, <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/>, and/or <http://www.cbd.com/>? Writing reviews is a great way to inform people about your favorite authors and books.

Do you use Twitter? I occasionally post updates and news about Cec. If you'd like to follow me, here's the address: <http://twitter.com/TwilaBelk>.

Does someone you love have cancer? [Click here for some practical things you can do to help those diagnosed with cancer.](#) You are welcome to print this document in your newsletter or church bulletin. Please keep the copyright information intact.

Cec's 2010 schedule is filling up fast. If you'd like to invite him to speak to your group(s) or preach at your church, let's get it scheduled. Some of his favorite topics are recovery, caregiving, male sexual abuse, prayer, writing, spiritual growth, and significant living. Contact me for more information: twilabelk@mchsi.com or 563-332-1622.