



A short story by Leo Schoof, Kelmscott, Western Australia

Engaged

An Engaged couple

Julian and Elizabeth got engaged last year and they were very, very happy together. Both were brought up in a loving and Christian family and had learned from an early age what the Lord requires from them. They knew very well that God expected clean, pure and holy living from them also in their relationship together as engaged couple. Each Sunday in church they heard God's commandments and they were faithful in their private devotions as well as in reading and praying together. That was a good habit they started early in their relationship. After spending an afternoon or a day together they always thanked the Lord for His wonderful blessings and they also asked the Lord not to lead them in temptation. They always avoided spending time away from the family or at least not for too long. They were blessed with faithful parents who encouraged them in their efforts to remain faithful to the Lord. If they came home from the Bible Study meeting and they sat in the car on the driveway of their parents' home too long then their parents would always switch the porch light on and off as a reminder that they ought not to spend too much time together in the car for that would only make it difficult for them. That meant that it was time to come inside. After all what was the benefit of praying "Lead us not into temptation" if we look for opportunities to lead ourselves in temptation?



Yes, they were a lovely couple, serious and dedicated to the service of the Lord. Both were actively involved in the Bible Study Club and other events of the church. The church and its activities were very important and central to their lives. Indeed the Lord and His service was



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what they lived for. What the Bible says in Psalm 19:11 “that in keeping God’s commandments there is great reward” was a reality in their lives.

The future looked rosy and they were both looking forward to the great day, their wedding day. They desired only one thing and that was to serve the Lord faithfully with a sincere heart and to live to His glory and honour. They knew that this could only be done by keeping their bodies holy and pure. They also realised that they were unable to do all that in their own strength and therefore they prayed each day to the Lord to help them in their struggles. For a struggle it was indeed. They knew very well that Satan would never give up. He is the deceiver and liar from the beginning. But in the strength of the Lord they would definitely succeed and overcome the temptations of the devil. Yes, the devil, but what about their own sinful flesh and their own wicked desires? Yes, they knew they were real too and they were both well aware of it. Satan is always on the lookout for the vulnerable spots in our Christian armour.

A night at the Beach

Then one day the Combined Youth Clubs, boys and girls, decided to spend a night on the beach not far from home. It was a well organised outing. The organisers had made some rules and everyone promised to faithfully abide by these rules. One of the rules was that they all stayed together as a group and they had to promise to do all things such as games together. They had a really lovely time together. Some of the boys had brought some fishing rods along and they even caught some lovely fish, plenty for a good meal. They played cricket on the beach as well as several other games. They finished the day with a lovely BBQ. They ate some of the fish they had caught after frying them over a little fire. After the meal one of the older boys led in prayer, Bible reading and devotions before everyone tucked themselves into their sleeping bags. After such a fun packed day everyone was very tired and it was not long before everyone was fast asleep.

Everyone?



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No, one of the boys, Jack was his name, in defiance of the accepted rules, had secretly agreed to meet his girlfriend, Caren, a little way from the camp and together they would have a lovely walk along the beach in the cool of the evening. It really was most enjoyable. Hand in hand they walked along the beach enjoying each other's company. Before they realised it they had walked a long way from the camp. And of course by now they were very tired and therefore they just settled down on the sand, just for a little while. A little while?

After a very long time they walked back to camp together. Now they were not as happy as on the way up. In fact they were rather subdued for they knew very well that they had sinned.

Without a sound they approached the camp and quietly crawled back into their sleeping bags. Nobody had even noticed that they had been away. The next morning they hardly dared to look at each other and the other boys and girls were wondering what had happened to them. Something had spoiled their relationship. That's for sure. It was quite obvious.

Three months later Julian and Elisabeth heard from some of their friends that Caren, Jack's girlfriend was pregnant. They were shocked and realised how easy it is to be tempted by the devil. But they were determined that this was not going to happen to them. After all they were faithful and in a way they looked down on that young couple. How could they do it? Didn't they know that this sort of behaviour was most displeasing to the Lord? It was dishonouring His name.

Holidays

Several months later the thought came up in Julian's mind to go out on holidays together with his fiancée. Surely nothing could be wrong with that. So he discussed it with his fiancée. She was absolutely horrified. "How could you ever suggest that", she said to Julian. "You just don't do that. I did not expect that from you", she said, and she was very angry with him. For a couple of weeks they did not touch this subject again but then one evening after Bible Study Julian brought this suggestion up again. He immediately realised that he



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had done the wrong thing by bringing this idea up again. It was therefore not surprising that Elizabeth became very angry with him again. So he dropped the subject. However, from that time on their relationship just wasn't the same any more. Elizabeth knew very well that by going on holidays together they would bring themselves into temptation. And she had expected that Julian would agree with that and that he would never bring the matter up again. However Satan knows how vulnerable we can be at times and he waited for the right moment.

Some of their friends were going on holidays and they asked them to come along as well.

Julian was quite excited about the idea and said to Elizabeth: "Surely there can't be anything wrong with this if we go in a group".

But Elizabeth still did not like it at all. In fact she was strongly opposed to it. However Julian continued to talk about it. And the more arguments he brought up the weaker Elizabeth's defence became. And when Julian reminded her that they were going with a big group and they would all keep an eye on one another she finally agreed against her better judgement.

At the dinner table that same evening Elizabeth gently dropped the news and the initial reaction of her parents was one of shock as she had expected.

"How can you come up with such an idea?" her Dad asked. "You ought to know better than that".

"But we are going in a big group and Julian said that we are all going to keep an eye on each other to make sure that we would all behave ourselves", Elizabeth responded and her voice started to shake a little.

After a long discussion Dad and Mum reluctantly agreed even though they were very concerned. They also told their daughter this in no uncertain terms.

"Don't worry, Dad", Elizabeth said. "Don't you trust us?"

"No, that is not the point", Dad answered his daughter.

"I know too well how cunning and sneaky the devil is. He is like a roaring lion waiting to jump on his victim", Dad added.

Then he and Mum both added: "We also know our own sinful heart and together with the cunning attacks of the devil that makes for a dangerous combination".

"Just trust us, Dad", Elizabeth said even though in her own heart she was not so convinced. But she didn't want to disappoint her fiancé either. Together and with much prayer they will be strong, or so she thought. But did she perhaps overestimate her own spiritual strength and underestimate the power of the evil one?



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Anyway, after many discussions and many tears her parents finally and reluctantly consented to them going on holidays together.



And the next morning Julian picked her up and they drove to their destination. It was a fairly long drive through the beautiful hills. The countryside was very picturesque and they both enjoyed the wonderful views. It was all very exciting and they praised God for His wonderful creation and for the beautiful wildflowers they saw on the side of the road.

After a long drive they arrived at their destination and looked for the place where they had agreed to meet as a group. It did not take long and they found this decent looking Motel. They recognised some of the cars of the other young people who had arrived earlier. They parked their car and went inside for the booking. Elizabeth was a little tired from the long journey and settled into a comfortable sofa in the foyer while Julian attended to the formalities. Then he picked up the luggage and said to Elizabeth:

“Come on, let’s go upstairs, we have Room 67”.

At that moment, probably because she was a little tired, Elizabeth had not even realised that Julian had only booked one room. She made a nice cup of coffee for both of them and after a while she asked quite innocently:

“Where is my room, Julian? Give me the key, please, and then I can put my stuff away”.

And this was exactly the moment the devil was waiting for. He was well aware of their vulnerability and this was his chance. The young engaged couple had underestimated how cunning the devil can be.



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Consequenses

After a few days amongst the beautiful wildflowers they all went home again. It was an excited group that returned home and they were thankful for God's care and protection on their long journey.

When they arrived home Dad and Mum asked if they had a good time.

"Yes, it was absolutely lovely", Elizabeth answered. "We all had such a good time. We enjoyed one another's company, played games at night and had some very nice bush walks and the wildflowers were absolutely stunning".

"It sounds like you had a good time", Dad remarked.

"We sure did", said Elizabeth.

After some weeks Dad said to Mum: "I don't think Elizabeth is her normal self lately".

"I hope you are not imagining anything", Mum reacted.

"I am more than a little worried", Dad continued. Ever since they went out on holidays together I have been worried about them".

"But they went with a whole group", Mum said.

"Yes, I know but we should never underestimate the power of the evil one", Dad answered his wife.

Some weeks later Elizabeth sat down with her parents and suddenly broke out in tears.

"Oh, Dad and Mum, I am pregnant, and I don't know what to do".



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So Dad's fears were confirmed and the engaged couple was now confronted with the consequences of their foolish actions. Now they realised the truth of the words: "Don't pray, lead us not into temptation when you yourself look for the temptation".

Naturally the elders of the church got involved and the young couple was confronted with their sin. They were both very sorry and confessed their sin before the two elders and before the Lord.

They never thought this would ever happen to them and therefore the elders reminded them of what the Apostle Paul wrote in the letter to the Corinthians:

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall".

But the elders were also able to give them the good news of the gospel. And that was that the Lord will put away their sin as far as east is from the west, if they were truly and sincerely repentant. Yes, He would even bury their sins in the deepest ocean.

How rich we are with such a wonderful gospel and such a generous God and Father Who is always willing to forgive repentant sinners, all because of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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He will again have compassion on us,
And will subdue our iniquities.
You will cast all our sins
Into the depths of the sea.

Micah 7:19 (New King James Version)