

WEEKEND
JUNE 7-8
1 JOHN 1:9



LEGAL WRANGLING

by Joyce K. Ellis

Asked and Answered

I've always loved legal wrangling. Growing up, watching TV shows such as *Perry Mason*, I quickly learned legal-battle terminology, such as district attorney Hamilton Burger's objections on the basis that questions were "incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial."

I also enjoy reading legal thrillers, getting caught up in the drama between good and evil. Unlike many people, I've jumped at my two opportunities for jury duty and, as foreperson, have read the verdict for my fellow jurors in a few cases. Something within me identifies with the tension of a courtroom battle and the struggle for justice. All these things have equipped me for spiritual battles.

It seemed a little thing at the time, and I was only a child. But I took something that didn't belong to me, knowing it was wrong. The details aren't important because I've come to this type of battle often with other sins as well. At first I tried to rationalize it. But already having declared my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior, I became angry with myself for giving in to temptation. Under the Holy Spirit's prompting, I confessed my sin to God and claimed His promise that He is "faithful and just and will forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9).

I believe that's when the legal wrangling in the heavenly realms stepped up its intensity. Again and again my thoughts returned to what I did. How could I, a believer—even a child-believer—well taught in the Scriptures, do such a thing? Circumstances prevented making restitution, but I asked God again and again to forgive me and take away the painful memory.

Amazingly, the guilt followed me into adulthood and resurfaced often as I tried to follow the Lord's calling on my life. The Enemy, like a prosecuting attorney, accused me of being "incompetent" to serve God. I often "re-claimed" the blood of Christ in His death on the cross as the basis for my forgiveness, but the battle raged on.

Then one day, a courtroom phrase came to mind. Sometimes, when an attorney is questioning a witness and receives an answer, the attorney will come at the same question from another angle, trying to trip up the witness. At that point, the opposing counsel typically jumps up and says, "I object, Your Honor. Asked and answered."

That was it—my answer for Satan—the one Revelation calls "the accuser of our brothers" (12:10), the one whose very name means *accuser* in Hebrew.

I would no longer listen to Satan's accusations. The apostle John says that in this world, we will sin. "If we claim we have not sinned," he continues, "we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). We all have things in our past—maybe in our present, too—that the Enemy loves to use to accuse us and make us feel—even believe—we are "incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial."

But "we have an advocate [a defense attorney] with the Father—," John reminds us, "Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2, brackets added).

Satan can accuse me all he wants in the courts of heaven, but Jesus, my Advocate, gives me the authority to say, "I object! Asked and answered."

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