

THE COMMONALITY OF TEMPTATION

All men are subject to temptation. 1 Cor 10:13 *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man."* Even Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Because you are a Christian, Satan desires to steal, kill and destroy your ministry through seducing temptations and sin. John 10:10 *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."* This lesson will show you how to respond to temptation with victory, like Jesus did.

TWO REASONS FOR TEMPTATION

One reason we face temptation is because, as you learn to deal with it, you change and grow stronger in your faith and relationship with God. Your right responses to temptation build up your spiritual muscles and bring you closer to God as you learn to depend on His strength, because our strength will not be enough to bring victory. James 1:12 *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."*

Another reason we as Christians face temptation is because we still have a human, fallen nature. James 1:13-15 *"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."* Our own evil desires are part of our old nature and these desires need to be killed off. This is what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 16:24 *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

HOW THE ENEMY BRINGS TEMPTATION

The Bible tells us clearly that we have an enemy. 1 Peter 5:8. *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* Satan has two allies working with him, the world and your flesh. These are your mortal enemies and seek to draw you away from God and the protection of abiding in His Word. If Satan and his allies win the war and draw you into sin, they will have successfully robbed you of a rich, full, and powerful life with God.

The world refers to the human and satanic systems found in society. Man's life according to this world system is corrupt, sinful, self-centred and unbelieving. Until you came in repentance to Jesus Christ you were drawn along by this world and all of its ungodly ways. We all were powerless to stand against it no matter how hard we might have tried. 1 John 5:19 *"We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."* Satan will use the world to entice your old nature to draw you into sin.

The flesh does not merely refer to your physical body, but to those desires in your mind and emotions that are not godly. These desires seek to be fulfilled in a wrong way and would draw you into wrong actions. In fighting the world, the flesh, and the devil you must remember that the battle is in your mind. The enemy will put wrong thoughts into your mind that will suggest you do something that you know is wrong. These wrong thoughts can be inspired by something you see, hear, read, say or do. These attacks often seem to come out of the blue, suddenly presenting themselves into your mind.

Our flesh desires to put these thoughts into action. The quick thought of doing something flashing through your mind is not sin, this is temptation. There is no need to feel condemned. How you respond to these thoughts determines whether or not you sin! Only if you ponder or cherish sin in your heart, or put these thoughts into action have you sinned.

VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

The first thing in gaining spiritual victory over temptation is deciding that God Himself is our captain. When you became a Christian you gave yourself to God and now are totally His. 1 Cor 3:23 *"and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God."* 1 Cor 6:19-20. *"Do you not know that your*

body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body." Through repentance and baptism you died and buried your old nature and took on God's new life. 2 Cor 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" The key to victory over sin is yielding ourselves to God and not the devil when temptation comes. Yielding ourselves to God brings life and victory. Yielding to the devil brings death. Romans 8:6 "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."

Since God is on your side, you can have total victory through him. 1 John 4:4 *"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."* You have God's promise that no temptation will ever come to you over which you can't have victory. 1 Cor 10:13 *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* This is because we wage war against the enemy from a position of victory that Jesus won on the cross at Calvary. John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

James 4:7 *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* When temptation comes, resist it. Not in your own strength but in God's strength. Philippians 4:13. *"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."* 11 Timothy 2:22 tells us; *"Flee the evil desires of youth."* So if you can leave, leave. Also it is important to be careful about the company you keep. Bad friends draw you into bad situations and it is sometimes very hard to say no. 1 Cor 15:33 *"Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character."* This is critically important as they will tend to draw you away from Christ.

Share your wrong thoughts with God! You won't shock Him! Don't resent these thoughts, instead, use them as an opportunity to ask God's help. He knows exactly what you need and will provide all the strength you require.

Meet the enemy head on with the Word of God. The Word is your sword. Hebrews 4:12 *"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* When Jesus was tempted He fought back using Scripture to combat the temptation. Read Matthew 4:1-11. Memorise as many scriptures as you can so that when the enemy comes you will be able to quote God's Word to it and overcome it.

By living a life of prayer and communion with God, you will be walking in the Holy Spirit overcoming the works of the flesh. Galatians 5:16 *"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."* Galatians 5:25 *"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*

Loving one another with a godly love will also keep you from falling into temptation. Galatians 5:13 *"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love"*. It is hard to sin against or cultivate bad thoughts about someone you love, because love does not want to harm anyone. When all other motivations in you to live rightly seem to fail, your love relationship with God will keep you. Psalm 73 is a wonderful Psalm about struggling with the temptation of sin, but then seeing the glory of God's sanctuary and how badly off sinners really are. Take time to read this during the next week.

1. Recognise wrong thoughts, don't resent them. **James 1:2-4**

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."



2. Ask God for His strength to help. **Rom 10:13** *"for, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*



3. Use God's word against them. **Hebrews 4:12** *"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*



4. **Put your mind on better things.** **Colossians 3:1-2** *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things".* **Philippians 4:8** *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent and praiseworthy – think about such things".*



Write out and memorise 1 Corinthians 10:13.

1. Who tempted Jesus? Luke 4:1-13
2. How did Jesus respond to temptation? Luke 4:4,8,12
3. What should I do to prevent myself from falling into the enemy's traps? 1 Peter 5:8-9.

4. In what ways am I tempted? 1 John 2:16

5. What good are trials to me? James 1:2-4

6. What can I be confident of when I am tempted? 1 Corinthians 10:13

7. From where does my strength come when under trial? Philippians 4:13

8. What should I do with the Word of God to help me when being tempted to sin? Psalm 119:11

9. What is it that causes me to give in to temptation? James 1:14-15

10. How can I avoid temptation? Matthew 26:41

11. Can Christians be troubled by evil spirits? 2 Corinthians 12:7

12. What weapons should I use to defeat the enemy? Ephesians 6:14-18

13. What kind of weapons do we as Christians fight with? 2 Corinthians 10:4

14. Whose name holds ALL the power and authority? Philippians 2:10, Colossians 2:13-15

15. The enemy is already defeated. Why? 1 John 4:4

What is the most important truth you have learnt from this lesson?

List any comments or questions you have about any area of interest you would like to discuss here.