

How to Handle Temptations

James 1:13-18

A temptation is an opportunity to accomplish a good thing in a bad way, out of the will of God. For example: Is it wrong to want to pass an examination? Of course not, but if you cheated to pass it then you have sinned. The temptation to cheat is an opportunity to accomplish a good thing (passing the examination) in a bad way. It's not wrong to want to eat, but if you consider stealing the food, you are tempting yourself.

- When our circumstances are difficult, we may find ourselves complaining against God, questioning his love, and resisting his will. At this point, Satan provides us with opportunity to escape the difficulty. This opportunity is called temptation.
- God doesn't want us to yield to temptation but shield us from it either. If we are going to mature we will have to face testing and temptation.
- We think of sin as a single act, but God sees it as a process. Adam committed one act of sin, and yet one act brought sin, death, and judgment on the whole human race. James describes this process of sin in four stages.

1. Desire (vs.14) "But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires, he is dragged away and enticed." The word lust means any kind of desire, not necessarily sexual passions. The normal desires of life were given to us by God and, of themselves, are not sinful. Without these desires, we could not function.

- Unless we felt hunger or thirst, we would never eat and drink, and we would die. Without fatigue, the body would never rest. Sex is a normal desire: without it the human race would not continue.
- It's when we want to try to satisfy these desires in ways outside God's will that we get into trouble. Eating is normal; gluttony is a sin. Sleep is normal; laziness is sin.
- Some people try to become "spiritual" by denying these normal desires, but this only makes them less human.
- These desires must be our servants and not our masters, and this we can do through Jesus Christ!!!!

2. The second in the process of sin is, **Deception (vs. 16)** don't be deceived my brothers." No temptation appears as temptation; it always seems more alluring than it really is.

- No animal will deliberately step into a trap and no fish will knowingly bite at a bare hook. The idea is to hide the trap and the hook.
- Temptation always carries with it some bait that appeals to our natural desires. The bait not only attracts us, but it also hides the fact that yielding to the desires will eventually bring sorrow and punishment.
- The bait is the exciting thing: Lot would not have moved toward Sodom had he not seen the "well watered plains of Jordan." When David looked on his neighbor's wife, he would never have committed adultery had he seen the tragic consequences: The death of a baby (Bathsheba's son), the murder of

a brave soldier (Uriah), the violation of a daughter (Tamar). The bait keeps us from seeing the consequences of sin.

- When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He always dealt with the temptation on the basis of the Word of God. Three times He said “It is written.”
 - When you know the Bible, you can detect the bait and deal with it decisively. That’s why the Bible says, ‘A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.’ It’s easy to be decisive when we haven’t got our mind made up about what is right and wrong.

3. Disobedience (vs. 15) “Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death.” we have moved from the emotion (desire) and the intellect (Deception) to the will. Desire conceives a method for taking the bait. The will approves and acts, and the result is sin.

- Christian living is a matter of the will, not the feelings!!!!!! Children operate on the basis of feeling, but adults operate on the basis of will. They act because it is right, no matter how they feel.
- This explains why immature Christians easily fall into temptation: They let their feelings make the decision.
- Phil. 2:13 “For it is God who works in you to will and act according to His good purpose.”
- The more you exercise your will in saying a decisive NO! To temptation, the more God will take control of your life.

4. Lastly, in process of sin is **Death (vs. 15)** Disobedience gives birth to death, not life. It may take years for sin to mature, but when it does the results will be death.

- IF we would only believe God's Word and see the final tragedy, it would encourage us not to yield to temptation. God has given us barriers because he loves us. Ezekiel 18:23 "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?"
- The person who dies without Jesus Christ will experience eternal death, the lake of fire according to Rev. 20:11-15.
- Whenever you are faced with temptation, get your eyes off the bait and look ahead to see the consequences of sin: the judgment of God. Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."