

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

By Abri Brancken , 19th Feb 2017

You might feel alone and that you are the only one being tempted. The fact of the matter is that everyone is tempted. You are not alone. Even Jesus was tempted.

Where does temptation come from?

There are two avenues by which we are tempted:

1. Satan and the kingdom of darkness
2. Our own flesh

Temptation do not come from God.

James 1:13 ESV

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

We see in James 1:14 that temptation originates in us as well. We are tempted when we are "carried away and enticed by our own lust" (verse 14). We allow ourselves to think certain thoughts, allow ourselves to go places we should not go, and make decisions based on our lusts that lead us into further the temptation.

What is temptation?

The Greek word for temptation in the New Testament is "pi-ras-mos", meaning a putting to proof.

(πειρασμοϛ - peirasmos - pi-ras-mos')

Temptation is an invitation for you to partake in something that you are not supposed to.

It promises a reward or satisfaction for being disobedient.

Temptation is a disguised trap that the enemy set and its goal is to draw you into a fleshly, sinful and temporal focused existence rather than you having a spiritual Christ focus life.

It lures you in to substitute eternal rewards for the temporal pleasure.

Satan offers us alternatives to God's plan, compromises that would satisfy our natural desires.

Even Jesus was tempted

Luke 4:1-2

Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the desert, 2 where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days.

Luke 4:13

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Temptation has always been there

Gen 3:1

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Is it so that God has said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Is temptation sin?

Temptation is not of itself sinful. It becomes sin when we allow the temptation to become action, even in our minds. Lust, for example, is sin even though it may never be acted upon (Matthew 5:28). Covetousness, pride, greed, and envy are all sins of the heart; even though they may not be apparent to anyone else, they are still sin (Romans 1:29; Mark 7:21-22). When we give in to the temptation to entertain such thoughts, they take root in our hearts and defile us (Matthew 17:19). When we yield to temptation, we replace the fruit of the Spirit with the fruit of the flesh (Ephesians 5:9; Galatians 5:19-23). And, many times, what was first entertained as a thought becomes action (see James 1:15).

God always provides the way out

1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

How to overcome temptation

1. Follow Jesus' example

We must return to the example of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness by Satan in Matthew 4:1-11. Each of Satan's temptations was met with the same answer: "It is written," followed by Scripture. If the Son of God used the Word of God to effectively end the temptations—which we know works because after three failed efforts, "the Devil left him" (v. 11)—how much more do we need to use it to resist our own temptations? All our efforts to resist will be weak and ineffective unless they are powered by the Holy Spirit through the constant reading, studying, and meditating on the Word.

2. Keep watch and pray

"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

Matthew 6:13 states 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' The prayer is that God will not allow us to be led into temptation.

3. Renew your way of thinking

We need to renew our thinking as we are told in Romans 12:1-2. In this way, we will be "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). There is no other weapon against temptation except the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." If our minds are filled with the latest TV shows, music and all the rest the culture has to offer, we will be bombarded with messages and images that inevitably lead to sinful lusts. But if our minds are filled with the majesty and holiness of God, the love and

compassion of Christ, and the brilliance of both reflected in His perfect Word, we will find that our interest in the lusts of the world diminish and disappear.

4. Don't put yourself in a position to be tempted

Even though Christians already have the tools necessary for victory, we need to use our common sense and not place ourselves in situations that prey upon, or stimulate, our weaknesses.

The best defence against giving in to temptation is to flee at the first suggestion. Joseph is a great example of someone who did not allow temptation to become sin (Genesis 39:6-11). Although tempted to sin sexually, he did not give the temptation time to take root. He used the legs God gave him and physically fled. Rather than stay in a potentially dangerous situation and try to talk, reason, justify, explain, or otherwise weaken his resolve, Joseph took off. The temptation was not sin for him because he dealt with it in a God-honoring way. It could easily have become sin if Joseph had stayed around to try to match his wits and self-control against the power of the flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 ESV

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body

Illustration

We might illustrate Jesus' words "Lead us not into temptation" like this: a mother takes her young children grocery shopping with her and comes to the candy aisle. She knows that taking her children down that aisle will only stir up greediness in their hearts and lead to bouts of whining and pouting. In wisdom, she takes another route—whatever she may have needed down the candy aisle will have to wait for another day. In this way the mother averts unpleasantness and spares her children a trial.

5. When temptation comes, resist it

James 4:7 ESV

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. How – by focusing on Jesus.

Proverbs 4:14-15 tells us,

"Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not proceed in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not pass by; Turn away from it and pass on."

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Hebrews 4:15 ESV

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

6. Walk by the Spirit

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Conclusion

1 Peter 5:8-11 ESV

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.