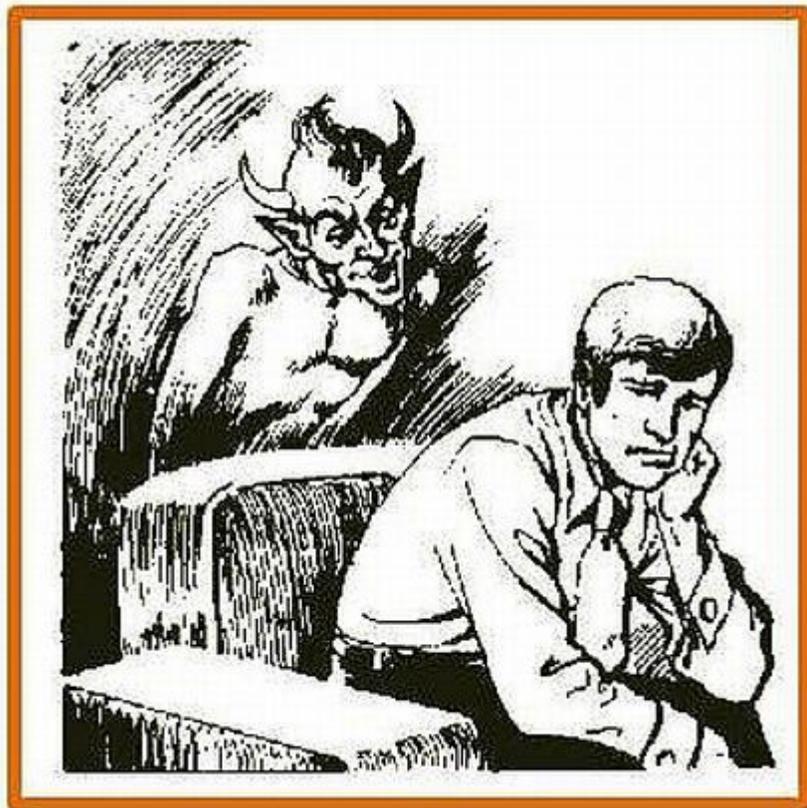


Christian Education

Sin 102: Temptation



A Discipleship Ministry of East Side Baptist Church¹

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Temptation is something all people have to deal with. One can be tempted by the thought of eating a second piece of cake, smoking a cigarette to join the crowd, or telling a lie to avoid an embarrassment. The list of temptations is almost endless. Temptation, simply put, is an enticement. Our English word



temptation comes from the Latin word *temptatio* which means an attack or a trial². Thus, a temptation is an attack upon the character of a person. The English word *entice* comes from the Old French word *enticier* which means to set afire or excite. The English word *tempt* comes from the Latin word *temptare* meaning to try the strength of. A temptation is an attack on a person's character and integrity with the goal of stirring the desires and emotions of the person in such a way that the person may give into something immoral and unethical, and thus, commit sin.

Other words related to temptation are common among fishermen. The goal of a fisherman is to catch fish. The purpose of catching fish is to have a good meal. So what does he do? He casts his fishing line into the water. At the end of that line is



a hook. Attached to the hook is a lure or bait. That is the temptation, not to the fisherman, but to the fish. The fisherman is not concerned about the well-being, the future, or even the family of the fish. His goal is to catch and eat. So the lure is his advertisement. He is saying, "Here little fishy. I have something good for you. You will like this. Come on little fishy. Try it and you will like it."

When the fish comes along and sees the fisherman's advertisement, his lure, his craftily disguised temptation, he has a choice to make: take the bait or swim on. Those that swim on live for another day. Those who take the bait, believing this is something good for them, are hooked potentially for the rest of their lives. And

the rest of their lives is nothing but a struggle for freedom. While a few escape and live for another day, most get hooked and reeled in by the fisherman. They are removed from the water which is necessary for life and die. The fisherman enjoys his meal and lives to fish again.

Oddly, fish continue to take the bait. They see their fish brothers and sisters get hooked, struggle to get free, and then removed from the waters never to be seen again. Why do they not understand that taking the bait, falling to temptation, will cost them their lives? Fish even live and travel together in “schools“. Why are the schools not educating them against the danger of such lures and falling to the temptation? Fish are not very smart.

Here is the truth about temptation. There is a tempter. He seeks to hook a man, a woman, a boy, or a girl. His method is crafty as he advertises something that sounds so good and so right. But that is nothing but a lie. For the end result of taking the bait, falling to temptation, is hardship and death.



What sounded so good and right was in fact so bad and wrong. What the tempter advertises is really the opposite of what God has said is good and right. Disobedience to God costs a person his life while the tempter lives to tempt again. You would think mankind would learn. We are all aware of actions and activities that are hurtful and have cost people their lives. Why do we think we can do the same thing and not suffer the same consequences? We are not very smart. Rather than learning from others' mistakes, and heeding God's word, we repeat them and suffer the same consequences.

Identify modern day advertisements, lures, enticements, temptations that promise something great but cannot deliver on that promise.

- (1) _____ (2) _____
(3) _____ (4) _____

Since temptation is an enticement to do something that will ultimately ruin one's character, we must seek to understand what is wrong and what is right. There has to be a set of standards that reveals all rights and all wrongs. We might call these absolutes or absolute truths. Truths that are so deep, they get to the root of every matter. Whereas on the surface, something might seem so good and right, but when all is said and done, the truth comes to pass revealing that that was in reality so bad and wrong.

In the beginning, God created (Genesis 1:1). And God gave to man His word on how life should be lived. With that, God gave man free will, the ability to make choices. We can choose to live life as God instructs us or we can choose to disobey God's instructions. Both choices have different results or consequences. To obey and follow God's word leads to a blessing in life. To disobey and not follow His word leads to a negative result in life.

Let's go back to the beginning. When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them a beautiful garden for a home. At first, life in the Garden of Eden was both sweet innocence and innocent adventure. There were so many varieties of plants and animals, Adam and Eve had to be in awe of God's creative work. The setting was truly picturesque with flowers and trees in bloom and filled with the sounds of birds and nearby rivers.



God gave Adam and Eve permission to eat from the plants and the trees in the garden (Genesis 1:29). However, there was one tree that God did not want Adam and Eve to eat from. Complete God's word to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, HCSB³:

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are _____ to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must _____ eat from the tree of the knowledge of _____ and _____, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly _____."

This one tree, of all the trees in the garden, is associated with the first temptation of man. The temptation that follows is very crafty and deceitful. And so is the one through whom comes the temptation. Complete Genesis 3:1, HCSB:

Now the _____ was the most _____ of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did _____ really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Before we address the question which the serpent asked the woman, we have to address the issue of a talking serpent. Did a serpent really talk in such a way that the woman understood? Yes. Later in the Bible we learn about a donkey who talked (Numbers 22:21-35). This serpent, like the donkey, was not acting alone. There is a personality in the serpent that is doing the talking. The link is made abundantly clear in Revelation 12:9, HCSB:

So the great _____ was thrown out--the ancient serpent, who is called the _____ and _____, the one who deceives the whole world.



Satan was in that serpent seeking to deceive the woman called Eve. Temptations are deceptions. They appear to be something they are not. They offer something they cannot deliver on. To be deceived is to be misled into believing what is not true. Satan's question about what God originally said is twisted. God said there was one tree from which not to eat. But Satan asks if God said all the trees were forbidden. Eve correctly told the serpent that there was only one tree from which they were not to eat. And she added, to do so would result in death (Genesis 3:2-3). With that, Satan cast out the first temptation:

Genesis 3:4-5, HCSB: *“No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman. “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

First, Satan questioned the wording of God’s command. Now, he is contradicting God and calling God a liar. God said the penalty for eating the forbidden fruit was death. Satan, however, not only claims no one will die, but that by eating the forbidden fruit one will actually become like God. Thus, he suggests the motive for God saying not to eat the fruit was so that no one would become like Him. In other words, Satan is saying that God knows you will enjoy this way too much; therefore, He is seeking to hinder one from the great experiences in life. That is a lie, a deception when believed. Jesus describes Satan this way: *“When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars”* (John 8:44, HCSB). Don’t believe a lie from the Devil.

God’s “No Trespassing” signs are given for good reason. He is not trying to hinder people from enjoying life. He is putting the word out that something is dangerous and costly. The wise heed His word, while the foolish commit folly and pay the



price. The truth is, we have all fallen to temptation. We have all taken the bait. And while for a moment, that bait may have tasted good, the end result was a sour taste and a type of death and destruction.



Read the rest of the story in Genesis 3:6-24 and Genesis 4:1-26. Check the box after reading the passages. Did you see death anywhere? Hardship? Difficulties? Is disregarding the word and ways of God worthwhile?

There was the death of Abel (4:8) as well as the death of an unnamed man and an unnamed boy (4:23). There was the death of an animal (3:21). There was also the death of innocence (3:6-7). And, there was the death of a trusting relationship

when Adam and Eve disbelieved God and chose to eat the fruit regardless of what God had said was wrong and what would come from it. The fact that Adam and Eve did not die physically on that day was completely an act of mercy and grace by God Himself. From what we know about the rest of the Bible, God took the life of an animal *in place of* Adam and Eve. And He used the skin of that animal to clothe them. That act of mercy and grace extends all the way to us. John the Baptist, when He saw Jesus, declared, *“Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29, HCSB). The question is, will you trust Him to save you from your sin? Paul wrote, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23, HCSB).



Temptation in the world may have started with Satan, but temptation does not always come directly from him. Flip Wilson, on the old *Laugh In* television series, tried making fun of sin and temptation by declaring with a loud and high pitched voice, “The Devil made me do it. The Devil made me do it.” But the truth is, the Devil introduced temptation into the world, but he is not guilty of every temptation a person faces. Find and complete the following from James 1:13-15:

No one undergoing a trial should say, “I am being tempted by _____.” For God is not tempted by _____, and He Himself doesn’t tempt anyone. But each person is _____ when he is drawn away and _____ by his own evil desires. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to _____, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to _____ (HCSB).

We can be our own worst enemy. We are a complicated people. When God created us, He made us *“a living being”* (Genesis 2:7, HCSB). The Hebrew word, *nephesh*, translated as *being* can also be translated as *soul, person, desire, passion, appetite, and emotion*⁴. Having desires is part of who we are. The issue: what kind of desire are we having, good or evil? When evil desires are not

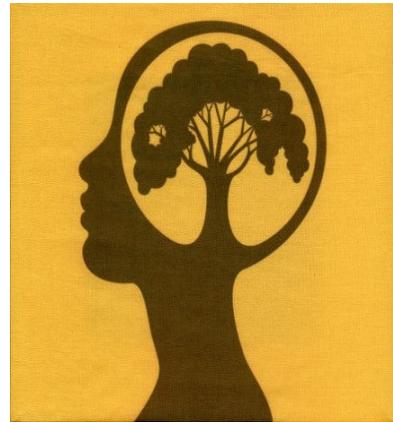
properly replaced with good desires, the evil desire takes hold and births sin. And in the end, that sin results in death. Consider this another way:

1 John 2:15-17, HCSB: *Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Because everything that belongs to the world--the _____ of the flesh, the _____ of the eyes, and the _____ in one's lifestyle-- is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God's will remains forever.*

This passage identifies three basic lures of temptation: (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride in one's lifestyle. Let's return to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. Complete the following verse:

Genesis 3:6, HCSB: *Then the _____ saw that the _____ was _____ for food and _____ to look at, and that it was _____ for obtaining wisdom....*

Consider the three basic lures of temptation. The lust of the flesh is seen in that the tree became *good for food*. The lust of the eyes is seen in that *the woman saw that the tree was...delightful to look at*. The pride in one's lifestyle is seen in that *the tree...was desirable for obtaining wisdom*. Keep in mind, this is all just the opposite of what God said. The fruit was forbidden. The tree did not take on such a delightful appearance until Satan twisted its appeal. Wisdom is not found in knowing good and evil but in choosing good and living accordingly. In this case, doing good is doing as God said, "...you must not eat from the tree..." (Genesis 2:17, HCSB).



Consider some of the temptations to disobey God's word you face regularly. Can you spot any of the three basic lures of temptation within those temptations?

The temptation to sin is common to all mankind. Temptation comes through the Devil, other people, or from within. All have fallen; all, that is, except One, Jesus!

Hebrews 4:18, HCSB: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus was tested, tried, and tempted. He alone, was able to live without falling to the lures of temptation. The important question for us is, "How did He do that?" Read the following passages and check the boxes when completed.

Matthew 4:1-11

Luke 4:1-13

Three significant temptations are shared with us. The order is not the same, but that is not a contradiction. The larger writing by Matthew was not as concerned about chronology of events as is the writing by Luke. Both had a little different approach. The point here is this: Jesus faced temptation as we do, but He was able to overcome temptation, whereas we have at times fallen to temptation.

Jesus was not guilty of lust and pride, but Satan appealed to His flesh, His eyes, and the position Jesus holds in life. One temptation related to hunger. One temptation related to the splendor of worldly kingdoms. And one temptation related to His position as Son of God. Satan even tried quoting the Scriptures out of context to trick Jesus into falling for the temptation. Jesus did not fall for that either! So how did Jesus overcome temptation?



As each temptation is presented, Jesus responds with these words, *"It is written."* Jesus is quoting Scripture. He is comparing the temptation to the word of God. And, obviously, following the word of God is always best. But, you say, what is wrong with food after 40 days of fasting and what is wrong with becoming a ruler over many kingdoms? Everything, when we consider who is making the offer. And don't think that you can enjoy the moment and quickly turn away before tough times come. With every decision there are consequences for which we are unprepared and unaware of what they will be. The only way we can be as successful as Jesus is to know the word of God and to prayerfully consult God and His word before making hasty decisions. In fact, just knowing the word of God will help us more easily identify a temptation that comes upon us.

Consider the following Scriptures:

Matthew 6:13, HCSB: *And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

Mark 14:38, HCSB: *Stay awake and pray so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

1 Corinthians 10:13, HCSB: *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so that you are able to bear it.*

Philippians 4:13, HCSB: *I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

Hebrews 4:16, HCSB: *Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time.*

God wants us to be victorious over Satan and his temptations. And He wants us to be successful in managing our desires and emotions. For when these are kept in check, we act more responsibly and wisely, with nothing to regret.

Consider some of the ways in which you have fallen to temptation, sinned, and experienced negative results. List what you could have done differently.

- (1) _____ (2) _____
 (3) _____ (4) _____
 (5) _____ (6) _____

Maybe your answers included: “I should have waited.” “I should have said ‘No.’” “I should have walked away.” “I should have listened before I spoke out.” “I should be more respectful.” “I should simply obey the law.” These and others are *the way of escape* Paul was writing about in 1 Corinthians 10:13 above. These positive choices become more real to us in a timely way when we are seeking God and reading His word on a regular basis.



Therefore, submit to God. But resist the Devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7, HCSB). My son, if sinners entice you, don't be persuaded (Proverbs 1:10, HCSB).

Paul the missionary despised the part of him that fell to temptation. He wrote, *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? I thank*



God through Jesus Christ our Lord!....Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 7:24--8:2, HCSB). Paul knew his only hope for victory in life was through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our only hope to escape the sly and crafty serpent of old. Is Jesus the Lord of your life? Have you asked Him to take control and to lead you in the way everlasting? You can. He wants to. This is why Jesus came into this world. He wants to forgive those who have fallen to temptation and strengthen them to do what is right and good. He wants to give you hope and a future. Believe in Him. Call on Him in prayer. You will be glad you did.

So now, little children, remain in Him, so that when He appears we may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know this as well: everyone who does what is right has been born of Him (1 John 2:28, HCSB).

To complete this study, read the following and checkmark as you complete them.

- Genesis 39
- (Optional: Deliverance and exaltation of Joseph: Genesis 40-41)
- Galatians 5:13-26
- Ephesians 6:10-20
- James 4:1-17
- 1 Peter 5:1-11

Foot Notes

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² All English word definitions and etymologies in this work come from *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. Fourth Edition. Cleveland, Ohio: Wiley Publishing, 2004.

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⁴ *Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*. Updated Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998.

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