



Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

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Introduction:

This morning we are going to talk about temptation and how we can be successful in overcoming it. To begin, please consider these questions: Have you ever been tempted in any way? Were you successful in overcoming that temptation?

A recent survey of Discipleship Journal readers ranked areas of greatest spiritual challenge to them:

1. Materialism.
2. Pride.
3. Self-centeredness.
4. Laziness.
5. (Tie) Anger/Bitterness.
6. (Tie) Sexual Lust.
7. Envy.
8. Gluttony.
9. Lying.

Survey respondents noted temptations were more potent when they had neglected their time with God (81 percent) and when they were physically tired (57 percent). Resisting temptation was accomplished by prayer (84 percent), avoiding compromising situations (76 percent), Bible study (66 percent), and being accountable to someone (52 percent). Discipleship Journal, November / December, 1992.

OUR TEXT FOR TODAY IS: 1 Corinthians. 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.

I. Temptation is common

Temptation transcends age, gender, and economics. It is something that everyone will face multiple times in life. We need to know how to respond to temptation so we don't get sucked into it and yield to it.

II. God is faithful

Even in times when you are tempted, God is faithfully there, watching, loving, ready to help us. Our text says He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. When we look at the sources of temptation, we understand that coming to God for His help will bring us to the place

where we don't have to be overcome by the temptation, but we can overcome.

III. When you are tempted

It is a fact that all of us experience temptation at some time in our lives. However, God has promised that when it happens He will provide a way to escape, a way out of being trapped by the tempter so we can stand up under it.

God wants us to overcome. He wants us to win over temptation. He wants us to live in victory and not defeat. So look for the escape when you are tempted.

These are some misunderstandings regarding temptation:

- Temptation itself is sin.
- We fall into temptation.
- God is disappointed and displeased when we are tempted.
- To be strongly tempted means we are as guilty as if we had actually committed sin.

- We overcome temptation by separation from it.
- When I am spiritually mature, I will no longer be harassed by temptation.

* Charles Stanley, tape AU146, In Touch, June 1988, p. 13.

Let me address these misconceptions and talk about how you can strengthen yourself against giving in to temptation.

Temptation is not sin. God's Word tells us that Jesus was tempted just as we are, yet He was without sin. So the temptation is not sin. Sin happens when we yield to the temptation. In our text we read that temptation is a common thing. Understand that you are not the only person being tempted with whatever your struggle is. Other people have been tempted too.

Consider some of the men and women of old. David was tempted and even gave into temptation. Sampson, an Old Testament prophet, was tempted. Daniel was tempted not to pray after an edict had been issued that anyone caught praying to any god would be cast into the lion's den.

The apostle Paul said, "...the things I want to do, I don't do, and the things I don't want to do, those things I do – I'm wretched, and only God can deliver me from my plight."

Another misconception is that we fall into temptation. Listen friends, just as doing God's will is a choice, so sin is a choice. Yielding to sin has everything to do with who I surrender to and who I obey. In scripture we find that God clearly defines His will and desire before the temptation ever comes.

A further mistaken belief is that God is disappointed and displeased when we are tempted. God knows that we are but dust. He made us and understands what appeals to us. He is disappointed and displeased when we yield to temptation, but not when we face it.

Our reaction to temptation often is that we feel we are as guilty as if we had actually committed sin. This is not true. Consider the temptation of Jesus. He was strongly tempted by Satan after His baptism, yet we know He did not sin in the temptation. He resisted and overcame.

Another misunderstanding is that we overcome temptation by separation from it. I do believe that we can help ourselves overcome by separating ourselves from what we know is our weakness. Yet simply separating ourselves from the temptation does not mean we have overcome.

A short story about a toad and a frog illustrates this so well.

Toad baked some cookies. "These cookies smell very

good," said Toad. He ate one. "And they taste even better," he said. Toad ran to Frog's house.

"Frog, Frog," cried Toad, "taste these cookies that I have made."

Frog ate one of the cookies, "These are the best cookies I have ever eaten!" said Frog.

Frog and Toad ate many cookies, one after another. "You know, Toad," said Frog, with his mouth full, "I think we should stop eating. We will soon be sick."

"Yes," said Frog, reaching for a cookie, "we need willpower."

"What is willpower?" asked Toad.

"Willpower is trying hard not to do something you really want to do," said Frog.

"You mean like trying hard not to eat all these cookies?" asked Toad.

"Right," said Frog.

Frog put the cookies in a box. "There," he said. "Now we will not eat any more cookies."

"But we can open the box," said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog.

Frog tied some string around the box. "There," he said.

"Now we will not eat any more cookies."

"But we can cut the string and open the box." said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog. Frog got a ladder. He put the box up on a high shelf.

"There," said Frog. "Now we will not eat any more cookies."

"But we can climb the ladder and take the box down from the shelf and cut the string and open the box," said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog.

Frog climbed the ladder and took the box down from the shelf. He cut the string and opened the box. Frog took the box outside. He shouted in a loud voice. "Hey, birds, here are cookies!" Birds came from everywhere. They picked up all the cookies in their beaks and flew away.

"Now we have no more cookies to eat," said Toad sadly.

"Not even one."

"Yes," said Frog, "but we have lots and lots of willpower."

"You may keep it all, Frog," said Toad. "I am going home now to bake a cake."

*Ray & Anne Ortlund, Renewal, Navpress, 1989, p. 73-74.

How true that is. Often when we get will power in one area, then we find something else that tempts us to sin and we struggle with that.

It's best if you know you have a battle with cookies to keep them from your house. You can apply that to anything. It's best if you have problems with pornography, with drugs or alcohol, with money, with eating, with gossip to not put yourself in a position where that temptation is going to stare you in the face. You fill in the blank.

When we dissect temptation, we discover its source comes from our own desires.

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.

Satan surely played that up when he brought the initial temptation to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The account of it is recorded in Genesis 3. As he conversed with Eve, he questioned, "Didn't God say you couldn't eat fruit from all the trees?" Then he lied by saying, "If you eat of the tree in the middle of the garden, you will not surely die. Your eyes will be opened and you will be like God." The words of God were there; they just needed to be said to cause the serpent to back down. Which one wins out? Our desire or God's Word?

Where are you when you are most tempted? What is happening when you give in? Don't put yourself in those places. Avoid them. What might support your sin? What

Conclusion:

Steps to overcoming any temptation:

1. Resist the temptation by prayer.
2. Resist temptation by avoiding compromising situations.
3. Resist temptation by Bible study.
4. Resist temptation by being accountable to someone.

The first step is to acknowledge you have a problem. Confess it to God. Ask for His help. Then do everything you can to cooperate with God to resist the temptation by prayer, avoiding compromising situations, using the Word of God to strengthen your resolve and being accountable to someone.

I challenge you this morning to be an overcomer. Perhaps you are struggling and need someone to be your accountability partner. Perhaps you want prayer this morning. Maybe you have given into the temptation and you need forgiveness. God is ready, willing to meet you wherever you are....if you will only move toward Him.

might enhance your desire? Eliminate those things. What people are you usually with? Avoid them.

Remember, there were two responses in the survey that indicated when people were most tempted. The temptations were the strongest when people were tired and when they had neglected their time with God. There are two equally damning lies Satan wants us to believe: 1) Just once won't hurt. 2) Now that you have ruined your life, you are beyond God's use, and might as well enjoy sinning.

IV. Jesus overcame temptation; so can you.

How did Christ overcome the temptations directed toward Him while on earth?

1. He had prayed and fasted for days before His encounter with the tempter
2. He used the Word as the truth by which He functioned and operated and to which He submitted His life
3. He spoke the Word, "It is written..."