

## Biblical Discipleship

### Lesson 15 – Dealing with Temptation

It does not take long for the battle against temptation and sin to begin in a new believer in Jesus Christ. Things that previously did not bother you will now become a problem as the Spirit of God heightens your awareness and intensifies your conscience. Sinful habits from your past life will now cause great pain if you do not work at removing them from your life.

As believers, we need to understand how to deal effectively with temptation and sin if we are ever going to become a mature Christlike Christian.

Temptation is the initial urge a person feels to commit sin. In itself, temptation is not sin and does NOT come from God. However, if not dealt with correctly, temptation can quickly become sin with devastating consequences. James 1:13-15 says, *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.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that there is no temptation that is peculiar to us alone, and that God always provides a way of escape so that we can stand firm without sinning during the temptation.

### **Some consequences of sin**

|                                 |                |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| ~ It grieves God                | Genesis 6:5-7  |
| ~ It brings guilt               | Psalms 32:5    |
| ~ It brings separation from God | Isaiah 59:1-2  |
| ~ It brings judgement           | Romans 2:5     |
| ~ It enslaves                   | Romans 6:17    |
| ~ It causes spiritual death     | Ephesians 2:1  |
| ~ It brings lack of hope        | Ephesians 2:12 |
| ~ It corrupts                   | Titus 1:15     |
| ~ It condemns                   | James 5:12     |

### **1) Sources of temptation**

The Bible teaches that temptation to sin comes from 3 sources:

- a) **SATAN** is shown in Scripture as a source of temptation to sin (Matthew 4:3-11; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Peter 5:8).

- b) **THE FLESH** is a source of temptation. That is, our mortal (physical) bodies, along with the inherent principle/compulsion for sin that is built into every human. You could say that the flesh is simply our 'humanness'. The flesh is that part of our beings that instinctively gravitates down to the lowest level of sin available at the time.

Sin wants to dominate us through our appetites and habits. Our natural desires and instincts are not all bad, but they can become excessive if sin can take control, turning desires into lusts that are dominated by sin (Romans 6:12-13; James 1:14-15).

- c) **THE WORLD** is a source of temptation that involves the often-subtle attempts to conform a Christian to the attitudes and atmosphere of his environment (Romans 12:2). Such as seeking security in possessions or accomplishments; viewing life as liveable apart from a relationship with God, along with other ideas that come from a fallen humanistic society (Titus 2:12; 1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 4:4; Luke 12:15).

## 2) **Conditions for victory over temptation**

- a) **Be Alert.** Many Christians are defeated because they are not alert to the possibility of temptation, feeling immune to being tempted or they think that the temptation will be easy to overcome. We can fall into a false sense of security and self-confidence if we trust our own strength (1 Corinthians 16:13-14; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).
  
- b) **Be Filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit.** A Christian can never defeat temptation in their own strength, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit. This means living according to the principles of Scripture (Matthew 4:4; Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 5:18; Philippians 4:13).
  
- c) **Know Biblical Escapes.** The Bible's method of escape is to have Scripture memorised so that you can use it when facing temptation (Psalm 119:11). Matthew 4:1-11 shows how Jesus used Scripture to escape from satanic attacks.
  
- d) **Obey by Faith.** Do as the Bible says whether you feel like it or not. Don't rely on your feelings or

motives. Faithfully trust and obey God's Word (Proverbs 3:5-7; 1 John 5:3).

- e) **Be Totally Committed:** Half-hearted Christians can only make half-hearted attempts at resisting temptation. Be totally committed to Christ, to His Word, and to His Body the Church (Mark 12:30-31; Revelation 3:15; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:24-25).

### 3) **How to avoid unnecessary temptation**

- a) **Avoid wicked company** - So often believers fall into temptation for the simple reason that they spend too much time with bad company. A lot of time spent with a worldly non-Christian friend will gradually cause problems if you aren't making a consistent stand for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:33). Often a non-Christian will step back from a friendship once they realise that you are serious about living for the Lord.

Likewise, spending a lot of time with a worldly living person who claims to a Christian will wear you down to their level of godless thinking and behaviour.

Proverbs 4:14 *Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.*

The Lord wants His children to keep good company. This will help you to grow stronger in Christ. However, this doesn't mean that we should avoid unbelievers altogether, otherwise we would never have opportunities to witness or help those in need. Total separation would damage our testimony for Jesus.

Psalms 1:1 *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.*

This is NOT an excuse to isolate yourself from non-Christians. It is good and beneficial to have non-Christian friends. However, you should choose to be the greater influence with the higher values, living out the character and gospel of Jesus Christ. Never give in to sin or lower standards.

- b) **Keep your mind clean** - One of the quickest ways to bring temptation upon yourself is to feed your mind on impure thoughts. What we look at, listen to,

and think about has a direct connection with our vulnerability to sin.

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 or praiseworthy - think about such things.*

- c) **Remove yourself from the place of temptation** - Many times when tempted we stay in the place of temptation, often in our own strength. By moving we could easily get away from the temptation. Better still, try not to allow yourself to get into a place of known temptation (Psalm 1:1).
- d) **Consciously submit to God** - this is your greatest act of resisting the devil. Also, instruct Satan to get away from you. James 4:7 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

Matthew 4:10 *Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

- e) **Stand firm** - Stubbornly, yet graciously, refuse to give in to temptation. Stand your ground.

1 Corinthians 15:58 *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Memorise conditions for victory, James 4:7 and Psalm 119:11.

**NOTE:**

Sin will take you further than you want to go; it will keep you there longer than you want to stay; and you will pay a higher price than you want to pay.