

# Temptation

## Dealing with the propensity to sin

Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

*How may we deal with temptation?*

### **Who is the High Priest referred to in Hebrews 4:15?**

Jesus Christ.

### **What is the significance of Jesus being tempted as we are?**

This better enables Him to identify with us and sympathize with our weakness and makes Him uniquely qualified to represent us before God, the Father.

### **Why is Jesus referred to as our High Priest?**

Priests both represent God to man and man to God.

### **Since Jesus is the High Priest, who are the priests?**

Believers...

Rev 1:5-6 - Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

### **How are believers priests?**

We are called to represent God to others in the Great Commission and we also make intercessory prayers on behalf of others

### **To whom are we to make intercessory prayers on behalf of?**

Other believers...

Eph 6:18 - praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--

We are to pray on behalf of all others including those who need salvation and especially for leaders...

1 Tim 2:1-2 - Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

Leaders in the church are to pray for the sick...

James 5:14 - Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

As Hebrew priests before the Lord came offered up sacrifices to God on behalf of others, we too should offer up the sacrifice of prayer for those in need.

1 Pet 2:5 - you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

### **Did Jesus ever commit a sin?**

No, this verse reinforces this.

### **If Jesus could not sin, how could He be tempted?**

Tempting has to do with being exposed to an opportunity to sin but this does not become sin until the person chooses to give in to the sin. Jesus never gave into the many opportunities to sin that was presented to Him.

### **How was Jesus presented with opportunities to sin?**

- His just being in this fallen world which has been corrupted by sin makes this inevitable.
- Satan certainly approached Jesus with opportunities to sin, particularly when He was weakest during His 40 - day fast in the desert.

### **Why did Jesus have to go through His period of temptation on the earth?**

- The 40 days in the desert specifically - this was to prepare Him for ministry or better yet in His case to prove that He was ready for ministry.
- This was necessary for Him to take our place at the cross.
- Jesus can assure us that we can make it through temptations because He can say: Been there, done that... Not that it is not a big deal, it was a very big deal for God.

### **What is a better way of looking at the temptation that Christ was exposed to?**

More of a period of testing or better yet, being proven. McGee: test the railroad bridge with two locomotives... would it fail? No it was to show others that it would not.

### **What kind of temptations do people have?**

- Every possible sin that the Bible mentions.

- The word temptation makes everyone think of something different, from ice cream sundaes to more serious problems with sin habits.
- Whatever you struggle with, you're not the only one who has a tough time making the right choices.

#### **Why is struggle over temptation such a problem?**

The source of this conflict, of course, is sin. You were born with the desire to do things your own way.

#### **What is the solution to struggling with temptation?**

The only real solution for a sin problem is in God's Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to pay the penalty for sin and to reconcile you to God. In Him, you have a new life and new spirit. (2 Corinthians 5:17) The Holy Spirit, who indwells you, enables you to choose obedience, but even so the pull from sin can be very strong at times.

#### **What can you do when you are tempted?**

The first step to winning the war within is to realize that you cannot pass the blame. It's easy to rationalize with statements such as, "The devil made me do it" (the Flip Wilson defense) or "My parents raised me this way, and I can't help myself." Satan and other personal factors often do play a role in temptation, but blaming your own choices on these influences is based in falsehood.

#### **Why is the excuse that "Satan made me do it" in error?**

No one, not even Satan, can make you do anything — his only powers are manipulation and deceit...

2 Corinthians 11:3 - But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Note that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44).

#### **Does God tempt us to sin?**

No, this is what Satan does...

Matt 4:3 - Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

James 1:13-14 says: *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil; and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust."*

#### **Why then did Jesus tell us we should pray that the Father "not lead us into temptation?" (Matthew 6:13)**

God is in control of all things so even though we are tempted by Satan or the world or our own sin nature, God allowed it to happen...

Luke 22:31 - And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.

Note that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to a place where He'd be tempted...

Matt 4:1 - Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

#### **Why does God allow us to be tempted?**

- He may allow you to be in a tempting situation in order to strengthen your faith.
- This is where the terms tested or proven is better to describe the type of temptation that God allows in our life.

#### **Why then should we pray that God not lead us into temptation that would strengthen our faith?**

- Our prayer that God not lead us into temptation is more an acknowledgment that we need God's help to avoid temptation.

This prayer is certainly also a request that the Lord not lead us into a temptation beyond our ability to withstand it...

1 Cor 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

It is also a prayer that God help us through the temptation so that we do not fail the test...

Mark 14:38 - "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

It would appear that the disciples did not pray this with enough conviction based on their actions that night.

All of us desire to have our faith strengthened and character built up but some paths are easier on us than others. God knows what is in our best interest and it may be that ultimately the hard road is just what we need.

#### **So what does this tell us we should do when we're faced with temptation?**

- Look to the Lord for His strength to avoid succumbing to temptation rather than your own.

- You do not have to be caught in a seemingly endless cycle of defeat and discouragement.  
The next time you feel that old familiar urge, ask God to provide His way of escape and make it plain to you. Then reach out for it. God will not let you down.

#### **What can we do to avoid moments of weakness when we are tempted?**

- The first one is the most obvious: avoid sinful behavior. One sin begets another.
- Recognize that temptation is something everyone faces and identify it for what it is when it comes.
- Avoid certain places and actions that could stir up tempting thoughts. (Child in the kitchen looking at the cookie jar)
- Know your limitations and structure your life to avoid having to give in to your weaknesses.
- Ask God to reprogram your thinking.  
Before you were saved, you lived in darkness. But through the miracle of the new birth, you became a new creature in Christ. However, some of the old "tapes" that once played within your mind remain. By studying and memorizing God's Word, you can break old sinful thought patterns and actions. You can be set free from dark, debilitating thoughts. As you ask God to remove the old, He immediately brings new thoughts to your mind. Old urges disappear under His protective care.
- Avoid pridefulness and lustful thoughts.  
David sinned because he became lazy and idle. As a youth he trusted God for every detail; as a grown man he became self-sufficient. This is when he met with failure. (2 Sam. 11)

#### **Does God give people immediate relief from temptation when they ask Him?**

Sometimes but other times they seem to linger, buffeting our hearts and minds.

#### **Why does God allow temptations to linger?**

It is part of a test.

#### **What should you do when temptation lingers?**

This is when it is extremely important to walk closely with Christ. Tell Him all that you are feeling and trust Him for the victory.

#### **What should you do if you succumb to temptation and sin?**

Ask for forgiveness since God can and will forgive you...

I Jn 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

#### **Does this mean we have a license to sin if we are saved and can get God's forgiveness every time we ask?**

- This is not meant to be a license to sin, but a call of love to those who do fall.
- If you view the provision that God made for us as a license to sin, you need to re-evaluate your relationship with Him.

#### **How does sin usually begin?**

Having a thought about the sin then following through by putting the thought into action.

### **How To Handle Your Thought Life**

#### **What role does exposure to images, dialog, literature and music have on our thoughts?**

It affects what you think about.

### **What is the danger in being exposed to images, dialog, literature and music that does not glorify God?**

- The world's media has the power to shape a person's life in a direction far from what God has planned. The world is filled with temptation and evil desire. And if left unchecked, it will rob and steal one of the most precious things you have - your mind - which is the home and residence of God's holy truth.  
Matt 6:22-23 - "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"
- What we fail to acknowledge is that our minds and hearts are programmed by the material we listen to, read, and watch. One secular writer admits to his readers: "You are what you read."
- This is not a new concept. Romans 12:2 cautions us *"not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

### **What kind of rationale do people use to avoid censoring what you watch on TV?**

Thin excuses abound: "It's just a short program; it won't hurt them to watch it. Besides, it keeps them busy." "I know it's wrong, but it's funny and it portrays real life." "I get so tired of all that goodie, goodie Christian stuff. 'No one can be good all the time.'"

### **How are our minds like computers?**

Garbage in, garbage out... your results are only as good as the data and the programming.

Our minds operate like huge computers by gathering and taking in data. They are constantly arranging and storing facts and memories. We may think we forget certain events, names, and faces, but actually until something short-circuits our mental ability, all we experience is sorted and kept. Our ability to retrieve data may seem limited at times. However, each experience, thought, and event remains imprinted on our minds.

### **How may our minds be reprogrammed to remove bad thought patterns?**

Only God has the ability to remove those thoughts that are too painful or irrelevant to where we are today in our Christian walk.

### **Let's consider a biblical example... how did Solomon's thought patterns cause him to fall into idolatry?**

Solomon experienced consequences flowing from David's most glaring sins. His failures were centered on his giving in to sensual sins. He followed a pattern of sexual sins. His sensual love for foreign, beautiful women was legendary... As he grew older, these foreign women influenced Solomon to follow their idolatrous practices.

### **How did David set the pattern of temptation in Solomon's life?**

David helped to establish a pattern of thinking in the life of his family. He regretted his sin with Bathsheba and did not want it to be incorporated in his son's life. Once Solomon grew to be a man, the temptation to yield to this same sin became very great.

Num 14:18 - The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.

See also Exodus 20:4-6 (like father like son, the apples always fall close to the tree)

### **Does this mean that you can blame your parents for the bad decisions that you make?**

No... they may have been responsible for programming you with a propensity to make a certain bad decision but you are ultimately responsible for following through.

A better way to state this question is to substitute "blame" with "explain"

### **How can you break the pattern of generational sin?**

Seek God's help... He can reprogram you and help you break the pattern.