



Created to Be Like Christ

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Chapters 26 & 27

Notes: This Bible Study is intended to be a companion to “The Purpose Driven Life” by Rick Warren. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

Chapter 26: Growing Through Temptation

Should we see temptations as opportunities to do the wrong thing?

No, we should see temptations as opportunities to do the right thing. Every time we do good rather than succumb to temptation, we grow in the character of Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit is a concise description of the character of Christ. How does the Holy Spirit produce the nine characteristics of Galatians 5:22-23 in us?

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. We do not come by the fruit of the Spirit over night. Fruit takes time to mature. Rick Warren said this is the most important truths we will ever learn: “God develops the fruit of the Spirit in your life by allowing you to experience circumstances in which you’re tempted to express the exact opposite quality!”

How does God teach us to love?

By bringing unlovely people into our lives.

How does God teach us real joy?

By bringing circumstances that bring us sorrow.

How does God develop real peace within us?

By bringing chaos and confusion into our lives.

How does God teach us to be longsuffering?

By bringing circumstances that force us to wait.

How does God teach us to be kind?

By bringing unkind people into our lives.

How does God teach us to be good?

By bringing opportunities to be bad into our lives.

How does God teach us to be faithful?

By bringing us opportunities to be unfaithful.

How does God teach us to be gentle?

By showing us harshness.

How does God teach us to self-control?

By presenting us with opportunities to lose self-control.

Why does Satan want us to sin?

Satan is opposed to God in everything and the more he can get us to sin, the more we join Satan in acting against God.

How do we know how Satan uses temptation to entice us to sin?

The Bible reveals the pattern that Satan uses to tempt us to sin, it is the same pattern that he used at the beginning in the garden with Adam and Eve. As Paul said about Satan, “*for we are not ignorant of his devices*” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

What is the four step process of temptation?

The four step process of temptation is desire, doubt, deception, and disobedience.

Where does temptation begin, from outside us or from within?

Satan can not tempt us unless we have a desire that may be exploited. So temptation always begins from within...

Mark 7:21-23 - For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.

For temptation to begin, does Satan have to utilize a sinful desire with in us?

Satan often uses a sinful desire that we have but is not limited to this. He can also use an otherwise normal, good desire but tempt us to fulfill it in the wrong way or at the wrong time. We should beware of shortcuts! The end does not justify the means!

James 4:1 - Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

God gave us a desire for pleasure, this is a good thing but a good thing can become bad if taken to an extreme or pursued at the wrong time or in the wrong way.

Is Satan involved in every temptation that we have?

We often talk like Satan is involved in every temptation but this would make him omnipresent like God. Every temptation aids and abets Satan, it plays into his plan, but neither he nor one of his underling demons is involved in every temptation. Satan can count on our fallen condition to pick up the slack for him. I believe this is one of the reasons why Satan is bound during the Millennial Reign of Christ, to prove to us that we can not blame the devil for our sinful condition. Left on their own, people will still sin and need a Savior.

What kinds of doubts tempt us to sin?

Questions like: Is it really wrong? Did God really say not to do it? Isn't God's prohibition for someone else or for some other time? Doesn't God want me to be happy? The Scripture warns us...

Hebrews 3:12 - Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God

What reinforces doubts in the process of temptation?

We are vulnerable to deception when we have doubts and so deception serves as confirmation that our doubts are justified. Satan is a master of deception and the personification of it. Concerning Satan, Jesus said:

John 8:44 - there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

At what point does a temptation become a sin?

Certainly an evil desire can be a sin but we said we can be tempted with a good desire. Even doubts can be healthy if they cause us to grow closer to God. Deception may be external so it is possible to pass through the first three steps in the process of temptation without sinning. But the fourth step will certainly be sin: disobedience.

James 1:14-15 - But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin

It has been rightly said that we are what we think. Our thoughts are very powerful and usually result in action on our part to bring them to fruition. That is why it is important to keep the mind on things of God rather than things of the world.

Colossians 3:1-2 - If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Can you ever reach a point in this life where you will no longer be tempted?

No, if your temptation is precipitated by a demon, you should consider this a complement because Satan does not need to tempt those already aligned with him. Temptation is

also a normal part of being human in a fallen world. Even Jesus was tempted, but He did not 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.

Can you keep evil thoughts from coming into your head?

No, but you can keep from dwelling on them. For example, there is a difference between sexual arousal and lust... sexual arousal is a normal, spontaneous, God-given response to physical beauty; lust is dwelling on it to commit in your mind what you'd like to do with your body. Attraction alone should not be considered lust so you should not feel ashamed and condemned by this.

1 Peter 5:8 says that demons look for opportunities to subject us to temptation...

1 Peter 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

How may we minimize the opportunities that demons have to tempt us?

We should recognize patterns that make us more vulnerable to temptations and change them. It may be a certain time of the week or day, or at a certain place, or with certain people or some other specific circumstance that makes us more susceptible to temptation. Ephesians 4:27 says we should not "*give place to the devil.*" Wise planning reduces temptation:

Proverbs 4:26-27 - Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil.

When you face temptation, what should we do?

Once temptation materializes, we should call on God for help because this is not something we can be successful in overcoming on our own...

Psalms 50:15 - Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

How does Hebrews 4:15-16 show us that God will answer our call for help in the face of temptation?

Hebrews 4:15-16 - 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. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. God is sympathetic with our weaknesses and is merciful and full of grace. He wants us to call on him in these matters.

If God is waiting for us to call on Him in the face of temptation, why don't we take more advantage of this?

Sometimes we don't want to be helped. Sin is fun before the consequences have to be paid, sin sacrifices the future

for the moment. Thinking sin is not serious is a worldly perspective that even Christians fall victim to.

How can temptations be a good thing?

If we make it a practice to seek God's help with our temptations, this will contribute to our being more dependant on God. Every time you stand up to a temptation, you become more like Jesus...

James 1:12 - Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

What Christ-like character can I develop to by defeating the most common temptation I face?

I can demonstrate self control by not giving in to the temptation of eating to may high-carbohydrate foods.

Can anyone share some of the changes they have seen in their lives since they became a believer? What have others noticed?

I started reading the Bible then later started studying it, going to church, giving, returning excess change and stopped exposing myself to media that advocated immoral activities.

Chapter 27: Defeating Temptation

Are we ever subject to a temptation that is impossible for us to avoid falling victim to?

If we feel we have a temptation that is too much to bear, that is a lie from the devil. God has promised never to allow you to have a temptation that is too much for you to handle...

1 Corinthians 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.

Rick Warren points out four biblical strategies for defeating temptation, what are they?

1. Refocus your attention on something else.
2. Reveal your struggle to a godly friend or support group.
3. Resist the devil.
4. Realize your vulnerability.

Is it possible to resist a temptation by repressing a thought?

No, the harder we try to avoid a thought, the more the thought is intensified in our mind. Trying to resist a thought actually reinforces it in your mind. The more you fight a feeling, the more it strengthens and controls you. This is

why the Bible never says we should resist temptation, we should resist the devil but this is different as we'll see.

Why are our thoughts so important when it comes to falling victim to temptation?

As we discussed earlier, all temptations begin with a thought. Our thoughts generally end up in actions being taken. It is very true that we are what we think...

Proverbs 4:23 - Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

What is the best way to not let tempting thoughts get a foothold in your mind?

The instant a tempting thought enters your mind, don't give it any time even to repress it. Instead, give your mind something else to become interested in. This is what David had in mind when he wrote:

Psalms 119:37 - Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way.

Jesus reinforced this in Matthew 6:22-23:

Matthew 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!

It is important to not fill our minds with evil things that come through the port of our eyes.

Why is it that most diets don't work?

Because most diets focus so much on food that it is impossible to get the subject of food out of your mind. The power of suggestion is powerful, we usually end up doing what we are thinking about so ignoring a temptation is more effective than fighting it.

What advise does Romans 12:21 give us that may be applied in defeating temptation?

Romans 12:21 - Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Give your mind some good things to think about to replace tempting thoughts. This is what Paul had in mind:

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.

What role does spiritual warfare play in the battle for our minds?

Satan and his minions seek to make you think thoughts that are aligned with them and opposed to God. So we need to be serious about what our minds wander to and be diligent about keeping them focused on topics that have eternal value...

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Why is it important to reveal our struggle over temptations with a godly friend or support group?

A godly friend is one more person to be accountable to besides God. They can also help us with a plan for avoiding temptations, be an encouragement, pray for us, and be a help to us if we fail.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.

What does James 5:16 have to say about God's plan for us to grow more like Christ?

James 5:16 - Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. God's plan for us is that we involve other Christians in our growth. As Rick Warren said, "Revealing you feeling is the beginning of healing."

Why do we hide our faults?

We hide our thoughts because of pride. We want others to think that we have our temptations under control. It is humbling to admit our weaknesses to others. But lack of humility is the very thing that is keeping us from getting better...

James 4:6 - God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

What is the problem with thinking that we have a certain temptation under control?

If I have some temptation that I can't talk about, it is in control of my life. If I could handle it on my own, it would not be a temptation for me. Willpower fails and resolutions will never continue to stand.

Are we powerless when the devil tempts us?

We are not powerless in the face of demonic temptation, Scripture says we should fight back...

James 4:7 - Resist the devil and he will flee from you. While we can not resist temptation, we can resist the devil.

How can we resist the devil?

We are engaged in spiritual warfare whether we recognize this or not. Certainly if we understand that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle and take action to protect ourselves, we will fare much better. Ephesians 6 describes the protection that God offers for us so that we may stand

against the wiles of the devil. In all cases we must take action to put on this spiritual armor starting with accepting God's salvation...

Ephesians 6:17 - And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

Can Satan force people to do things against their will?

Satan and his demons can only suggest ideas to us, they can not make believers do anything. I believe that demons can indwell unbelievers if they have opened themselves up to them and thus be controlled by them. But believers have the Holy Spirit in them so there is no place for demons.

What is our weapon that we may use against the devil?

We have "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" Jesus demonstrated the use of the Word of God against the temptations of Satan when He spent His 40 days in the wilderness prior to starting His ministry.

Why should we memorize Scripture?

There is power in God's Word and Satan fears it. We need to memorize Scripture so that we will be better armed for the spiritual warfare that rages around us.

Will we ever reach a point when we can let down our guard regarding temptations?

We should never think we can let down our guard, Satan is looking for us to get cocky and overconfident in our ability to deal with temptation because...

Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Given the right circumstances, we can all be tempted to sin so we need to remember...

Proverbs 14:16 - A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident.

Rick Warren paraphrased Paul when he said, "it is easier to stay out of temptation than to get out of it." Paul said...

1 Corinthians 10:12 - Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Has anyone asked themselves: "Who can I ask to be a spiritual partner with me to defeat a persistent temptation by praying for me?"

My wife is my best partner for these things... I could use her help in my temptation to eating too much of the wrong things.