

WHAT IS
TEMPTATION
AND WHAT ISN'T?



8-PART STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

We come to salvation in Christ, and this fills us with joy and excitement. We are ready to live for Jesus for the rest of our earthly lives and continue to be with the Father in eternal glory.



Then we get tempted. We want to do something we know is wrong. Often, without a proper understanding, our temptation shakes our faith, causing us shame or even guilt. Unfortunately, misunderstanding temptation comes in several different forms, beginning with bad teaching to either permissiveness (excusing sin or denying sin exists) or legalism (trying to be righteous in our own power).



Understanding temptation, however, brings us peace and empowers us to deal with our own wayward desires in love and truth. Here are 4 things temptation is and 4 things temptation is not.

CHAIR TIME



Throughout this study, you will notice photos of chairs, places to sit and be still. Some people call this chair time, others refer to it as quiet time. It refers to a pre-determined time, set aside to sit with God. Through prayer and reading the Bible, we are able to hear God's still small voice in our lives, mainly through what we read in Scripture. Taking time to reflect with Him enables us to spot the sin that will inevitably tempt us each day. This study is packed with knowledge, but without a personal relationship with God, we are helpless to apply it to our lives.

CHAIR TIME CHALLENGE: FIND YOUR 'CHAIR,' A PLACE WHERE YOU WILL COMMIT TO SITTING STILL WITH THE LORD EACH DAY.

4 THINGS TEMPTATION IS

1. TEMPTATION IS A TEST OF FAITH AND CHARACTER.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” - James 1:2-4

In this passage, James encourages us to consider trials, including temptation, as opportunities for growth and maturation. Instead of succumbing to despair or discouragement when faced with temptation, we should embrace it with joy, recognizing its potential to strengthen our faith and character.

Reflect: What is a trial in your life right now, and how might it be an opportunity to grow?

MATTHEW 24:13

“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”



This testing through temptation produces perseverance, enabling us to endure and overcome various challenges. The way of salvation goes through the narrow gate, and the way is narrow due to difficulties and spiritual battles along the path. Many quit.



We need endurance to the end to be saved (Matthew 24:13). Endurance reveals the inner strength developed through confronting and overcoming temptation.

ROMANS 8:13

“For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.”



When faced with temptation, we realize only God can give us the strength to overcome it. We put to death our sinful desires not in our own strength but through God’s Spirit (Romans 8:13). Only his divine power can overcome temptation. As we learn to rest in his power instead of our own, our faith grows, along with our inner Christ-like character.

2. TEMPTATION IS A LURE TO SIN



James 1:14-15

“Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.”

The verse begins with being dragged away. We often feel like it’s out of our control, yet Christ broke the power of sin and death through the cross. Now, in him, we are free from the power of sin.

However, we still have a choice. Conception requires two parties to become one. My mentor used to say, “You can’t help a bird from landing on your head, but you can keep it from building a nest there.” We can’t help the initial temptation. But we now have the power to take those thoughts captive and cast them down with truth.



2 Corinthians 10:5

“We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”

CONFESS & REPENT

But once conception has happened, then it grows to sin. If we have sinned, we confess and repent unto God, and he is faithful to cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). If we allow sin to continue, it leads to death. This could be the death of a ministry or calling, a relationship, a career, or even, ultimately, our eternal destiny if we've never been saved.

1 JOHN 1:9

BUT IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS TO HIM, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL WICKEDNESS.

James gives us this sobering warning so we will avoid such destruction and instead find life abundant in walking with Christ.



3. TEMPTATION IS A SPIRITUAL BATTLE



Temptation lies to us, making us think the immediate moment is the most important. Yet we have a spiritual enemy, the Devil, and his demons, and they attempt two things with sin—to draw us away from life in God’s will and to kill us, as detailed above.

As the passage indicates, our struggle goes deeper than the outward symptoms of temptation. There’s something much bigger going on. We are embroiled in a spiritual battle between God and the Devil, good and evil, light and dark, life and death.



The imagery of “rulers,” “authorities,” and “powers” denote hierarchical structures of spiritual influence and dominion, while “dark world” and “spiritual forces of evil” emphasize the malevolent nature of these beings.



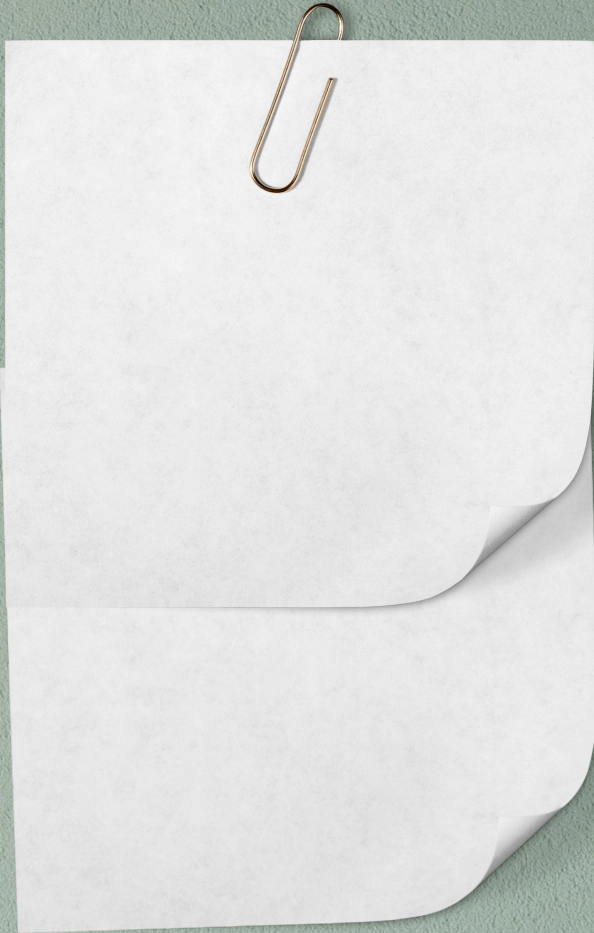
This spiritual battle permeates every aspect of our lives, infiltrating our thoughts, desires, and actions. Ephesians 6:12 emphasizes this warfare occurs in the supernatural realm. This is bigger than us.

Only God can help us, so we must put on the armor of God (Ephesians), provided to us by the Lord. With this armor and God's power, we can stand in times of temptation and struggle.

REFLECT:

READ EPHESIANS 6:10-18

WHAT MAKES UP THE ARMOR OF GOD, AND HOW DOES IT PROTECT US FROM TEMPTATION?



EPHESIANS 6:12

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

4. TEMPTATION IS COMMON TO HUMANITY

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. 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 endure it.” **1 CORINTHIANS 10:13**



Every human shares the experience of temptation, and none of us are immune to the allure. Temptation transcends cultural, social, and geographical boundaries. Regardless of our background or circumstances, everyone faces temptations of various forms and intensities.

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS



1

First, God is aware of our struggles. Hebrews 4:15 tells us Jesus, our High Priest, understands our plight since, as a human, he was tempted in every way and yet overcame, choosing righteousness.

2

Second, God won’t allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, especially in light of the strength and support of God in Christ to endure.

3

Thirdly, God provides a way out when we are tempted, enabling us to resist, overcome, or escape. This way out may come in various forms, but when we submit to God and seek the escape, we will find it. He is faithful and desires to see us live righteous and blessed lives.

4 THINGS TEMPTATION IS NOT

1.) TEMPTATION IS NOT FROM GOD

“When tempted, no one should say,
‘God is tempting me.’
For God cannot be tempted by evil,
nor does he tempt anyone.”
- James 1:13

God doesn't tempt people. He alone is good and can't do evil or participate in it. Therefore, when tempted, we know God isn't behind it.

In this verse, James attributes the source of temptation to the desires of the human heart, which entice and lead us away from righteousness. James even emphasizes God's holiness and purity by affirming that the Lord cannot be tempted by evil. Unlike human beings, who are susceptible to sinful desires and impulses, God remains untouched by the corrupting influence of sin.



1 JOHN 2:15-16

“Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.”



1 John 2:15-16 lists three lusts we deal with—the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The Bible provides two additional sources of temptation: the Devil and the world.



We’ve already dealt with our spiritual enemy and the unseen battle for our eternal destinies. Yet people often misunderstand how the Bible defines how “the world” tempts us.



Scripture equates “the world” with systems like governments and societies, any organizational or institutional power, ultimately seen. The ultimate evil of the world can be seen in empires like Babylon in Revelation.



The Devil tempted Christ in the wilderness, and the enemy offered Jesus the rule over all nations. This points to how “the world” tempts us: earthly power over others. As seen with Jesus in the wilderness, he has defeated all temptation.

REFLECT

Take time to reflect about the things that tempt you in your everyday life.

- Lust of the eyes - what do you see that tempts you to sin?
- Lust of the flesh - what do you desire that tempts you to sin?
- The Pride of Life - In what ways does your pride tempt you to sin daily?



2.) TEMPTATION IS NOT UNIQUE TO YOU

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” - 1 Peter 5:8



When we're tempted, the Devil tells us the following lie: No one is tempted like this. You alone deal with it. First, this lie also tempts our pride. Even if the statement leads us to think we're more sinful than anyone else, or weaker, or something negative, that's another form of pride. None of us are that special.

REFLECT: DO YOU RECOGNIZE ANY OF THE LIES ABOVE?

Second, the Devil loves to isolate us, both from God and one another. When a hunter attacks, he goes after the straggler or attempts to isolate one from the rest. 1 Peter 5:8 warns us of this: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” A devouring lion doesn't attack the strength of the herd. Those numbers overwhelm even a strong lion.

REFLECT: RECALL A TIME YOU FELT ISOLATED AND ALONE. WERE YOU BEING TEMPTED?



WEAPONS AGAINST DECEIT AND ISOLATION

As part of his strategy, the Devil attempts to get us alone, apart from God and others. Getting us to feel special, unique, and too sinful for redemption, he isolates us. Then he can better deceive us and draw us into sin and death.

The solution, therefore, must address these issues. We need to choose humility instead of pride.

REFLECT:
USE THIS SPACE TO
LOOK UP AND WRITE
OUT THE FOLLOWING
VERSES:

1 PETER 5:5

JAMES 4:7

JAMES 5:16

1

God gives strength to the humble, but he resists the proud (1 Peter 5:5).

2

Next, in humility, we submit ourselves to God, acknowledging his Lordship over us. When we do, we have God's strength to resist the Devil, and the enemy flees (James 4:7).

3

Finally, we become vulnerable with brothers and sisters. James 5:16 tells us to confess our sins to others, and we will be healed. Our healing and strength come from connection instead of isolation.



3.) TEMPTATION IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST

**ANOTHER LIE THAT ACCOMPANIES TEMPTATION:
I COULDN'T HELP IT.**

Before salvation and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, this was true. Sin had us bound, and we possessed no ability to break those chains on our own. The Bible informs us we were already dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1), despite walking around and talking.

**“Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.”
- Ephesians 2:1**

Upon repentance unto the Father through the Son, God translated us from death to life (Colossians 1:13). He forgave all our sins, canceled the punishment of death, and empowered us to live a new life through regeneration. He gave us a new heart, making us partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Now, with Christ's power, we have the ability to overcome temptation.

1 PETER 1:3-4

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.



Of course, the Devil lies to us, trying to defeat us by telling us we have no other choice but to sin. This mentality drives us to quit, not endure. 1 Corinthians 10:13 also assures us that God provides a way out of temptation, suggesting it isn't insurmountable. Despite the challenges posed by temptation, God always provides a way out.



1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.



These provisions teach us we have agency and responsibility in confronting temptation. While God offers assistance and guidance, God calls us to actively seek and utilize the means provided by God to resist temptation. This may involve prayer, reliance on Scripture, fellowship with other believers, and the cultivation of spiritual disciplines. We can trust in God's faithfulness and rely on His strength to help us endure and overcome temptation

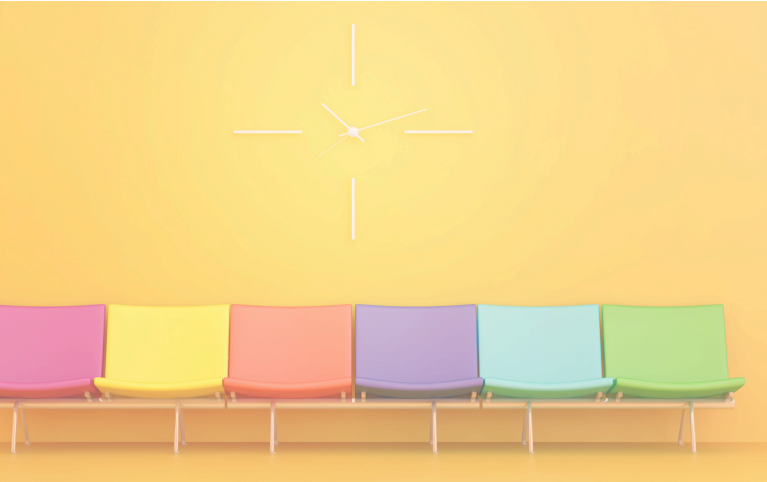
REFLECT THE “I DIDN’T DO IT” ANTIDOTE

We can all relate to feeling falsely accused, and sometimes, that’s the absolute truth! But many times, we are tempted to react in denial when we have fallen into the temptation to sin. Truth is the antidote.

Below, take some time to list “I didn’t do it” moments, and then write out what actually happened, admitting your mistake and asking God for forgiveness. Pray for the strength to turn from that behavior. It’s the best antidote around!



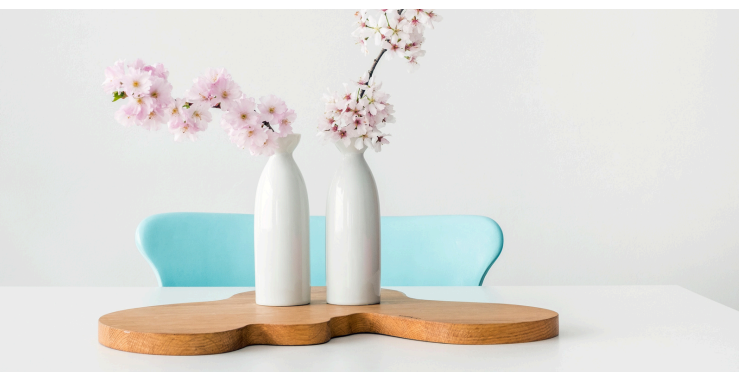
4. TEMPTATION IS NOT INHERENTLY SINFUL



Hebrews 4:15

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

As we must, we look to Christ's example for truth. The Devil directly tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-13). Jesus never sinned, so temptation itself isn't sin. Hebrews takes it a step further, saying that Christ was tempted “in every way.” Jesus endured every temptation, no matter how despicable we imagine, and yet lived without sin.



Jesus even possessed a different will from his Father. In Gethsemane, he pleaded with his Father. He didn't want to suffer the horror of the cross, physically and spiritually (Matthew 26:39). He chose to obey God and didn't sin. This narrative teaches us that even when our will goes contrary to the Father, that's not sin.

FINDING COMFORT

This should comfort us. The Devil tries to lie to us again by telling us that our temptations or wayward will disqualify us in some way. It's not true, and we must stand on what is right.

Through the Holy Ghost, we've been given the mind and spirit of Christ. At the point of temptation, we rest in the power of God, not our own ability, to submit to God and participate in the Father's will, which brings life and peace.

Remember, God is for us, not against us. He died and rose from the dead expressly because he loved us abundantly and desired to reconcile us to himself, giving us eternal life and escaping spiritual death (John 3:16). Jesus came not to condemn us but to save us (John 3:17). If he wanted to condemn, he never would have come at all.


He is for us. He loves us. His will and plan to destroy sin and reconcile all creation to himself brings him pleasure (Ephesians 1:5). When we feel weak and tempted, let us humbly come to the Father who loves us and stands ready to help us in any time of need.

REFLECT:

READ JOHN 3:16-17, TAKING TIME TO PRAYERFULLY THANK GOD FOR HIS NEVER-ENDING LOVE, AND ASKING HIM TO EQUIP US TO FACE TEMPTATION.


NOTES

MEMORY VERSES



“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”

John 3:16-17



“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

Hebrews 4:15



Britt Mooney lives and tells great stories. As an author of fiction and non-fiction, he is passionate about teaching ministries and nonprofits the power of storytelling to inspire and spread truth. Mooney has a podcast called Kingdom Over Coffee and is a published author of *We Were Reborn for This: The Jesus Model for Living Heaven on Earth* as well as *Say Yes: How God-Sized Dreams Take Flight*.