

Overcoming Temptation

Several years ago, a survey was given in a Christian magazine that asked its readers to rank their greatest spiritual challenges.

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

Those who took the survey noted that temptation was strongest when they neglected their time with God (81%) and when they were physically tired (57%).

When respondents were asked, "What helps you resist temptation?" 84% said they were able to resist by prayer and by avoiding compromising situations (76%). Bible study (66 percent) and being accountable to someone (52%).

In the model prayer in Mt 6:13, Jesus said, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"

What is temptation? James 1:13

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when by his own evil desire and dragged away and enticed."

Temptation falls into two categories.

The 1st is the desire to do what we know is wrong (Jam 1:14). The 2nd is the temptation **not** to do what we know is right. Jam 4:17, "to him that knows to do good and does not do it is sin."

God is not the one who brings temptation, it's from our own desires and there is nothing sinful about being tempted. The trouble occurs when we give in to what we know is wrong.

Today I would like for us to dig deep and think of some character flaws, some bad habits, maybe a specific sin that you would like to overcome. Are you tired of failing repeatedly?

Perhaps you have prayed about it and have tried to overcome a certain weakness, but that struggle is still there. What can we do? How can stand strong and resist what is evil?

I. Don't Give up: 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."

We can resist temptation because God will help us resist it.

II. Get into the word:

The more we get into the word the better prepared we will be when temptation arrives.

Sin will either keep you from the Bible or the Bible will keep you from sin. The only person that has ever lived a perfect life without sin is Jesus. When Jesus was tempted in Matt 4, how did He respond every single time? When Jesus was tempted to turn the rocks into bread, to throw Himself off of the pinnacle of the temple and to fall down and worship Satan. Jesus answered, "It is written . . ." (Matthew 4:4).

The Bible is a sword that will protect us from the Devil 's attacks. Heb 4:12, "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword"

Ps 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

III. Keep your thoughts pure. Temptation does not begin on the outside but in the inside.

A. Temptation always starts in your mind.

Jesus said in Mark 7:21-23: From within our hearts comes evil thoughts, sexual immorality, adultery, murders, thefts, greed, wickedness, deceit, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

What can we do to keep our thoughts clean? In Phil 4:8 Paul says in order to get the mind right, we've got to get our thoughts right. Paul says, focus on these things.

4. Learn to say NO

These two little letters are simple to say but they are not always easy to do because all of us have 2 natures that are at war within ourselves.

Eph 4:22-24, "Put away your former way of life, the old man, that grows corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

The old nature will always want us to do what is wrong, while the new nature wants us to do what is right. Christians have got to have the will power to say no to temptation.

James 4:7 says, Resist the Devil he will flee from you."

➔5. Pray for Deliverance.

Sometimes we fall because we don't ask for God's help. James said you **have not** because you **ask not** (4:2). Jesus instructed us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation" (Luke 11:4a).

If we are serious about pleasing God and serious about overcoming temptation, we have got to pray for God's strength in times of weakness.

6. Be around Godly people.

I Cor 15:33, "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

God made us to be relationship people and the more time we spend with Godly people the better we will be at withstanding temptation. Be sure to spend your time with people who will help you develop the character and mind of Christ.

➔7. Realize the consequences.

James 1:15, "sin when it is finished, brings forth death."

Next time you're tempted, ask yourself, "What are the consequences if I give in"?

Close:

Today through the scriptures it is my hope that I've offered you some ways that can prevent us from falling into temptation.

Don't give up, get into the word, keep your thoughts pure, learn to say no, pray for deliverance, get around godly people and realize the consequences of sin.