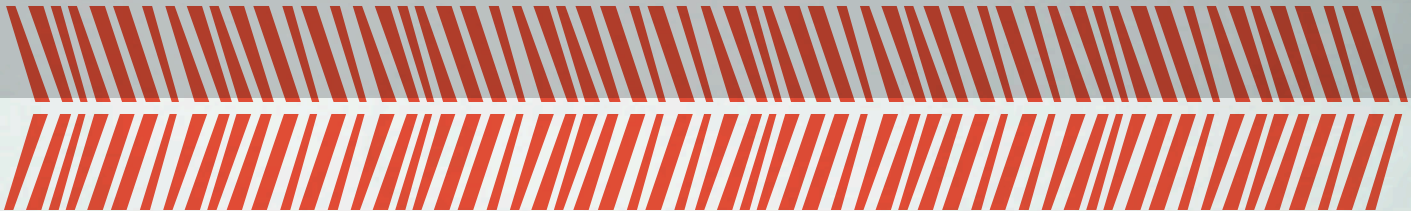


SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION





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***What “next big thing” do
you find irresistible?***

God won't tempt me, but He will provide a way to resist temptation.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Whether it's a new outfit, the latest techno-gadget, or gossip, we just find these things irresistible. We feel the pressure to give in, and why not? It's hard to resist something so inviting. If it wasn't appealing, we wouldn't be tempted.

Satan wants you to believe it's OK to give in to temptation. Who'll know? Where's the harm? Give in to the little temptations and you'll find yourself giving in to the big ones. We all know someone who lied and lost their reputation, the flirtatious person at work who lost their marriage, or someone who gave in to the temptation of gossip only to lose their best friend. Temptations promise good things, but in the end they always fail to deliver. The Bible is full of people who gave in to temptation and lost it all, but it also contains stories of men and women who successfully resisted temptation. What did they know that we don't?

God doesn't tempt us. Instead He provides a way for us to resist temptation and escape its harm. James 1:13-18 has the plan of action for resisting temptation and living in a way that pleases Christ.

WHAT DOES **THE BIBLE** SAY?

James 1:13-18 (HCSB)

13 No one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." For God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself doesn't tempt anyone.

14 But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desires.

15 Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.

16 Don't be deceived, my dearly loved brothers.

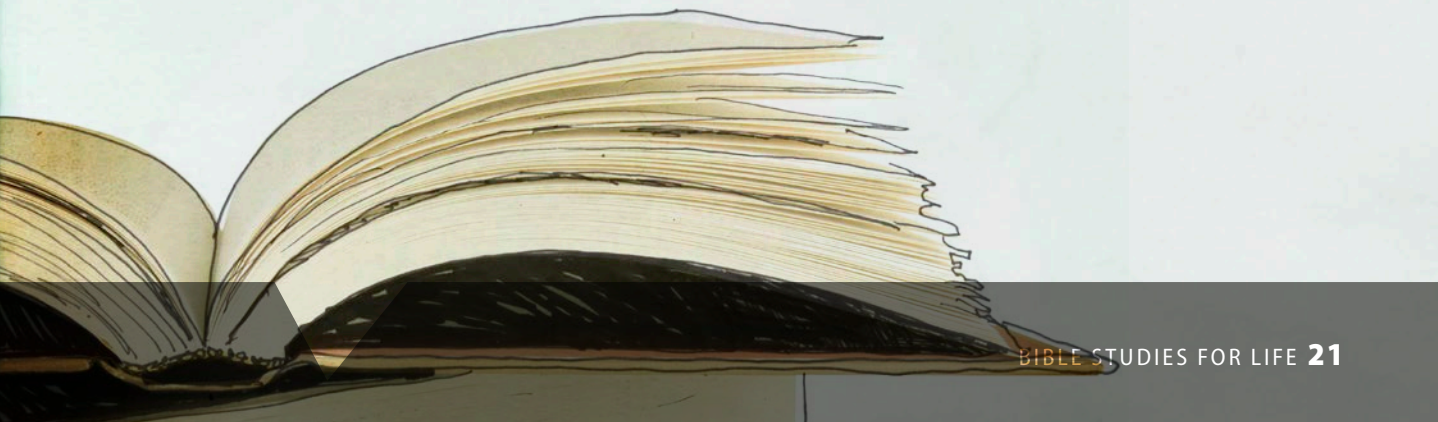
17 Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights; with Him there is no variation or shadow cast by turning.

18 By His own choice, He gave us a new birth by the message of truth so that we would be the firstfruits of His creatures.

Key Words

Trial or Tempt (vv. 13-14) – These words come from the same Greek word. Context determines whether the word is used for trials (referring to difficulties and hardships as in verse 2) or enticements to sin.

Evil desires (v. 14) – The single Greek word means a longing or desire. It can be a good or natural desire, but it is usually used to refer to something forbidden.



James 1:13

Previously, we looked at the pressure of trials, but temptations are totally different from trials. Trials bring hardship, difficulty, or an ordeal. The pressure from temptation, though, comes from its appeal. Temptation is typically characterized by a couple of promises.

- » **Temptation always promises you some gain.** It may offer fun, more money, pleasure, satisfaction, or an appeased palate. The grass of temptation will always appear greener.
- » **Temptation will also promise that you won't get hurt.** "You can get away with it, nobody will know, or it's no big deal. You won't get burned like others. You are different. You can handle it." Temptation promises that you are going to be much better off because you indulge.

Temptation makes promises it can't deliver because they're not true, but James provides four principles that are true.

- 1. Temptation is inevitable.** It's not a matter of *if* you are tempted, but *when* you are tempted. Temptation comes to all of us. It came to Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11) as surely as it comes to you and me.
- 2. Temptation never comes from God.** Regardless of the type of temptation you face, one thing is certain; God isn't the source of it. We know this to be true because of the nature of God. God does not tempt us, because He is good, loving, holy, and righteous. He cannot and will not pressure us to do anything contrary to His character.



If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often fall for them?

QUESTION 2

How does it make you feel to know that your desires are sometimes your worst enemy?

QUESTION 3

James 1:14-15



- 3. Temptation is unique to each individual.** We all experience temptation and we experience the same types of temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13), but the specifics of our temptations can be as unique as each individual. What is a temptation to me may not be a temptation for you. Some people are easily tempted by sexual images; others can easily look away. Some of us are tempted by food to engage in overeating and gluttony; others of us can walk away after a salad and an apple.
- 4. Temptation always follows the same predictable process.** James outlined a process from the world of fishing. An angler takes bait and throws it in front of some unsuspecting bass lying under a log. The fish isn't looking to hurt anyone or to get hurt. But he does have a natural urge to eat. It's a good urge; it's part of life. When the worm is dangled in front of his face, his desire is awakened and he would like to eat. In one giant gulp he swallows the bait. At that point, the fish realizes he's been duped and he's no longer in control. He is being pulled against his will in the direction of the angler's boat, the net, the cooler, and possibly, the taxidermist.

So what is the bait used on you? James says we are tempted when we get carried away and enticed by lust. You have a desire—maybe even a God-given desire—for food, sex, approval, or shelter. These things aren't bad in themselves, but when the desire consumes us, it's wrong. When we make a choice to leave the safety and shelter of God's provision, we make a foolish choice to take Satan's bait. Sin has conceived in us and now the result is beyond us. Sin entangles and ensnares us.

James 1:16-18

So how do we deal with the pressure of temptation? Consider the good and perfect gifts God gives to us. Instead of leading us to evil, God provides what we need to do good and live righteously. Let's consider just three.

- 1. A relationship with Christ.** Too many of us think we are helpless to resist temptation. But you are a child of God—a saint—and you are called to be holy and blameless. You are a child of the King with full authority over the enemy and with the power of Christ in you. Jesus Christ takes up residence in your life and empowers you by His Holy Spirit.
- 2. God's Word.** When Jesus was tempted, He used Scripture to respond to the pressure of temptation. Memorize God's Word and hide it in your heart.
- 3. An escape route.** One of God's gifts to us is the promise from 1 Corinthians 10:13. God will provide a way of escape and help us stand up under anything we face. God's escape route may be a telephone ringing, a whisper in your conscious, or a friend's accountability. Don't walk past God's opportunity to bail out. Depend on God and the Holy Spirit for help; He is with you and desires to strengthen you in the face of temptation.

How do the good gifts of God compare to the things I desire?

QUESTION 4



**What escape routes
can you watch for
when you find yourself
being tempted?**

QUESTION 5

*"Only those who try
to resist temptation
know how strong it is!"*

C. S. LEWIS

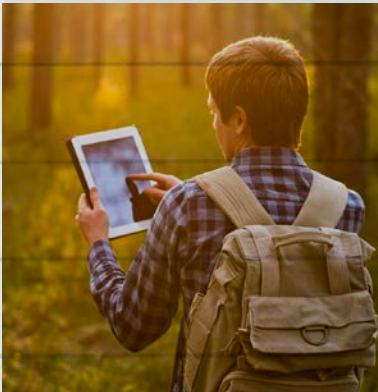
**GOOD
GIFTS,
PERFECT
GIFTS**

Now that you know the truths about temptation from the Book of James, it's time to come up with a plan to face them. Take time to consider what you will do when faced with temptation. Instead of giving in, turn to God's good gifts for you.

- » When temptation comes my way, I will cling to my relationship with Jesus by:

- » When temptation comes my way, I will use God's Word to:

- » When temptation comes my way, I will be on the lookout for:

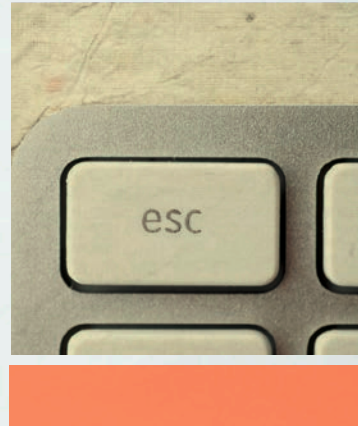


LIVE IT OUT

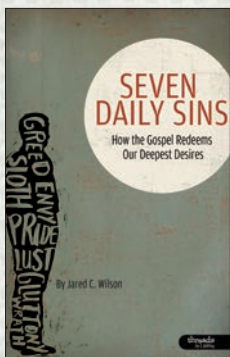
Being tempted isn't wrong. But when we linger over temptation, we grow weaker by the second. So don't give temptation a second look.

- » **Think** about the greatest temptation you face. Pray, asking God to give you strength to overcome it.
- » **Memorize** 1 Corinthians 10:13 and reflect on it in moments of temptation.
- » **Find** a friend you can trust and ask them to hold you accountable as you face temptation.

Chasing our "must haves" robs us of the freedom Christ offers and a sense of His presence. Rely on God's Word and His well-timed escape routes; He promises a reward that exceeds our imagination. **This week, don't fall for temptation. Stand up and live in the power of Christ.**



Greed: How to Like (Not Love) Money and Stuff



Almost nothing else makes us stupid like money and what it can buy. In a society that hands out credit cards like Tic Tacs®, accumulating debt is just par for the course. Jesus talked about money and possessions so much that you'd think His audience was typically full of rich people. It wasn't, of course.

To continue reading "Greed: How to Like (Not Love) Money and Stuff" from *Seven Daily Sins*, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

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My thoughts