

ADULTS

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

FALL 2013 | LEADER GUIDE
RONNIE FLOYD | GENERAL EDITOR



PRESSURE POINTS
WHEN RELATIONSHIPS COLLIDE

SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

trial/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 1:13-18

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.

THE POINT

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

GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **"What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"**

SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

GUIDE: Call attention to the first sentence of "The Bible Meets Life" on page 20 of the PSG: "Just one more slice ... there's no harm in that, right?" Invite the group to share why Satan wants us to believe this lie.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** at the top of page 20 of the PSG: **"God won't tempt me, but He will provide a way to resist temptation."** To highlight God's provision for resisting temptation, use the third paragraph in "The Bible Meets Life" on that same page, starting with "God doesn't tempt us..."

TRANSITION: Note that we'll consider why temptations always disappoint. We'll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.





STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

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.*

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:13 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Key Word "trial/tempt" on that same page of the PSG to clarify the difference between a trial and a temptation. As needed, add details from the first two paragraphs on page 22 of the PSG ("James wrote to...But there is an appeal in temptation..."). Add even more details from the commentary on page 27 of this leader guide.

GUIDE: Invite group members to explore what makes temptation appealing. Point attention to the two promises and two truths on page 22 of the PSG. Let group members briefly name temptations and identify (1) a promise it offers, (2) why it fails to deliver on that promise.

DISCUSS: **Question #2** on page 22 of the PSG: **"If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often say yes to them?"**

TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

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James's first instruction regarding temptation was to guard against misplacing the blame for it. No one should say the temptation comes from God. Have you ever said to others or to yourself something like: "God made me this way, so I can't help that I have these desires"? Or, "Why did God allow this situation?"

When our talk takes this turn, we've gone down an old, wrong path. It's not only wrong; it doesn't help at all. Adam first cut the path after he broke God's command in the garden. He blamed Eve, whom God had created and given him, for giving him some fruit from the tree (Gen. 3:12). The woman gave the fruit! God Himself gave the woman! What was Adam to do? In truth, the responsibility was his. God had communicated the expectations to Adam. He could not shift responsibility to Eve or to God. Neither can we lay on God responsibility for our temptations, or for giving in to them.

For two closely connected reasons, the claim that "I am being tempted by God" is always false. First, **God is not tempted by evil.** This is a statement about God's character. Nothing in His nature makes Him vulnerable to temptation. His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. He is a faithful God, without prejudice; He is righteous and true (Deut. 32:4). He does not desire evil at all! Second, He doesn't tempt anyone. His activity is completely consistent with His character. His ways with His people are not tainted by evil in any sense. God does not tempt His people. God does test His people. He tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). He tested Israel's obedience in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4) and in the promised land (Judg. 2:22). The opportunity He gave in these tests was to prove faith by obedience.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Devil tempted Him (Matt. 4:1). The Spirit's and the Devil's roles were distinct. The Spirit led. The Devil tempted. The Devil was the one attempting to distract and draw Jesus away from obedience to God the Father and into sin. If we blame God in part or in full for temptation or sin, we can be assured of this—we are wrong! We have misplaced the blame.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Help group members understand the influence of our sinful natures by referring to the paragraph on page 23 of the PSG that starts with “Temptation is unique for every person...” Include the explanation of “own” and “idios” using page 23 of the PSG to illustrate that temptation is unique to each person.

SAY: “There are things that tempt me that have no appeal to you, and vice versa, but all temptation follows a predictable process. We’re drawn away and temptation grows. We can get ensnared almost before we know it.”

GUIDE: Illustrate the process of giving in to temptation by using the fishing illustration under “Temptation follows a predictable process...” on page 23 of the PSG. (If you have an avid fisherman in the group, invite him to bring in fishing tackle to illustrate James 1:14-15.) Invite learners to name and explain other situations that illustrate the deceptive process of how temptation draws us in.

DISCUSS: **Question #3** on page 23 of the PSG: **“In what ways are we tempted to satisfy a God-given desire in a sinful way?”** This discussion can help group members understand the destructive twist temptations present to God-given desires.

TRANSITION: Affirm that there’s another choice for satisfying our desires: God’s generous and perfect gifts.

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James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

Evil also exists on the outside. The Devil, “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), works against us (Jas. 4:7). Evil ideas arise. Evil people want to include us or use us in evil purposes. Each works with a person’s fundamental, evil desires. **Drawn away** and **enticed** pictures a baited trap or hook. What is bait without desire? Satan is a cunning hunter and fisherman. His bait may be a critic, an attractive man or woman, or the “out” telling a lie would give.

The word picture now shifts from hunting and fishing to conception and birth. The conception takes place when we yield to and embrace an evil desire, rather than resist and renounce it. The **birth** of the sinful thought, word, or deed follows. When sin **is fully grown, it gives birth to death**. As a baby grows naturally toward full maturity, sin may grow and mature until it is a muscle-bound habit of self-indulgent disobedience against God.

All Christians sin (1 John 1:8–2:2). When we do we hurt ourselves and other people. Actions to take following sin are to stop, confess our sin and receive forgiveness, and then choose a God-guided path to good action instead. In Proverbs 5–9 we find fuller and repeated descriptions of the process James 1:14-15 sets forth succinctly. There the adulteress who promises pleasure actually leads her victim toward the grave. Indulged lust can be lethal. First, the man has the desire. Then, the desire has the man locked in its death grip.

What kind of death did James have in view? Did he refer only to physical death or was he warning of spiritual, **eternal** death? Physical death is an enemy that gains its strength from sin, and Jesus will finally defeat physical death (1 Cor. 15:50-57). But God may also discipline sinning believers with premature physical death (11:30). In James 1:15, however, **death** appears to be more than physical. In James 1:14-15, we have the second of two contrasting paths and their contrasting destinations. We look back to James 1:12 to see the first path. There, the path of faithful endurance through trials leads to “the crown of life.” The crown of life is most certainly eternal (see also Rev. 2:10). It begins in the here and now. In James 1:14-15 we see that the path of acting sinfully on temptation leads to death. It seems clear that this death is also eternal. A believer in Christ will not sin his or her way out of grace and into eternal death in hell. All believers experience temptation. But if evil desire proves greater than holy desire and sin tragically dominates a life, eternal death will forever tell the story that his or her faith was false.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

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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.

SAY: "Just as it is out of character for God to tempt us, it is within His character to give us only good gifts. God provides good gifts that help us resist temptation."

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:16-18 on page 21 of the PSG while others listen for and identify the gifts God gives us.

GUIDE: Let several group members choose one of the three gifts God has provided as mentioned on page 24 of the PSG: (1) "A relationship with Christ" (2) "God's Word" and (3) "An escape route." Direct the group to use the content to summarize how that particular gift helps resist temptation.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 24 of the PSG: "What are some other gifts God has provided that could help you resist temptation?"

DO: Encourage group members to practice discerning God's way of escape by jotting ideas on **The Circumstance; The Escape** on page 25 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share what they wrote.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 25 of the PSG: "How can you support and encourage someone struggling with temptation?" This discussion will help group members pull together what they've learned so far.

TRANSITION: Next we'll discover three actions that can help us implement God's escape strategies.

TIP: Once you've asked a question, sit down (if you've been standing). This communicates that the discussion belongs to the group.

THE POINT

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

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

James addressed his readers as his dearly loved brothers, assuring them he was on their side. He was not a malicious accuser haranguing them about their desires. He was with them in the struggle against temptation. His purpose was not to condemn, but to warn of defeat and destruction. Having issued, in love, the warning, he was about to show the way to victory in God's goodness and provision.

In accord with His character, God gives good gifts. Variation and change (NIV) permeate creation, but God is unchanging. Light alternates with **shadow** in the natural order, but "God is light," with absolutely no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). God's goodness and generosity toward His people show wonderfully in His own choice by which He brought us forth in new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3-8). It is the promised gift of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (see Ezek. 36:26-27). By this marvelously generous gift we receive the capacity to obey God's commands rather than live in bondage to evil desire, temptation, and sin. This new birth comes by the message or word of **truth**. It is the "implanted word" able to save you (Jas. 1:21), the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), the "gospel" (see Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). The first of the harvest and freshest olive oil were holy offerings pointing to a harvest to follow (Num. 18:12; Lev. 23:10).

Let's look at three practical temptation-beating gifts God supplies: The first of these, and the most important, is a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame temptation, sin, and even death during His time on earth. For believers, Jesus—with all His power—dwells in us. He already has overcome temptation once, and He can do it again. Jesus, with His full authority over temptation lives in us, so we are not helpless before temptation. Second is the Word of God itself (Psalm 119:11). By treasuring God's Word in our hearts we will discern between right and wrong, and have a mighty weapon against temptation. Jesus answered the Devil's appeals with God's Word (Matt. 4:4). Treasure and use God's Word! A third gift God gives is a "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13) so we can bear temptation without committing sin. We may feel all options in a given situation are sinful. God does not allow that. God will give us a right way to take. Trust Him to show it to you; and then take that way.

Escape by knowing sin's pleasure is fleeting (Heb. 11:24-25). If we take the bait, we might enjoy it a while before we realize the hook is set; but pain, remorse, and broken human relationships follow. So refuse sin's promise of pleasure to embrace a true and lasting pleasure: living according to God's Word.

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

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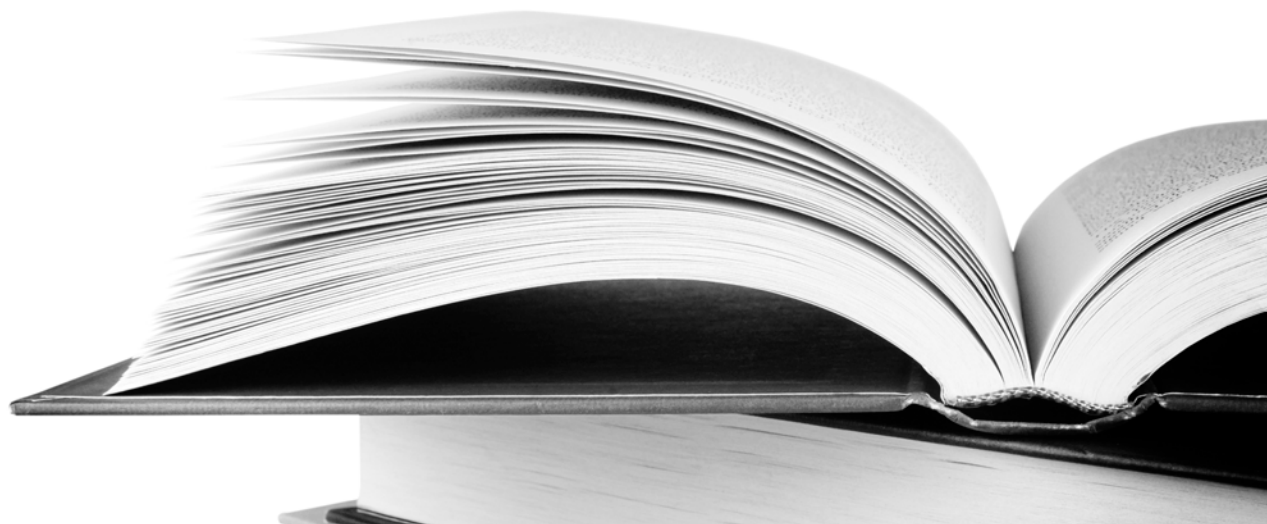
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In accord with His character, God gives good gifts. Variation and change (NIV) permeate creation, but God is unchanging. Light alternates with **shadow** in the natural order, but "God is light," with absolutely no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). God's goodness and generosity toward His people show wonderfully in His own choice by which He brought us forth in new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3-8). It is the promised gift of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (see Ezek. 36:26-27). By this marvelously generous gift we receive the capacity to obey God's commands rather than live in bondage to evil desire, temptation, and sin. This new birth comes by the message or word of **truth**. It is the "implanted word" able to save you (Jas. 1:21), the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), the "gospel" (see Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). The first of the harvest and freshest olive oil were holy offerings pointing to a harvest to follow (Num. 18:12; Lev. 23:10).

Let's look at three practical temptation-beating gifts God supplies: The first of these, and the most important, is a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame temptation, sin, and even death during His time on earth. For believers, Jesus—with all His power—dwells in us. He already has overcome temptation once, and He can do it again. Jesus, with His full authority over temptation lives in us, so we are not helpless before temptation. Second is the Word of God itself (Psalm 119:11). By treasuring God's Word in our hearts we will discern between right and wrong, and have a mighty weapon against temptation. Jesus answered the Devil's appeals with God's Word (Matt. 4:4). Treasure and use God's Word! A third gift God gives is a "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13) so we can bear temptation without committing sin. We may feel all options in a given situation are sinful. God does not allow that. God will give us a right way to take. Trust Him to show it to you; and then take that way.

Escape by knowing sin's pleasure is fleeting (Heb. 11:24-25). If we take the bait, we might enjoy it a while before we realize the hook is set; but pain, remorse, and broken human relationships follow. So refuse sin's promise of pleasure to embrace a true and lasting pleasure: living according to God's Word.

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: "It's not a sin to be tempted. What matters is what we do with temptations. We can fret over them, or we can take advantage of what God has provided."

GUIDE: Point attention to the escape strategies on page 26 of the PSG. Lead the group to identify how each escape strategy would help them resist a temptation.

The strategies are:

- ▶ Think about the temptations you face. Pray, asking God to help you recognize and do His strategy to overcome each.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 4:25 and practice it in moments of temptation.
- ▶ Find a friend you can trust and ask him or her to hold you accountable as you face temptation.

Wrap it Up

SAY: "Sin may offer temporary pleasure, but we will experience consequences when we give in to temptation. Put down the fork and choose God's way of escape."

PRAY: Thank God for providing ways of escape from temptation. Ask Him to keep before us the things He has provided to help avoid the pressure of temptation.



My group's prayer requests

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A Marriage Redeemed



Magical. It's really the only word that described the week our family had just spent. It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip—the kind you dream, plan, and save for—it had been a fairy tale.

We were on the long drive home to Texas, the kids asleep in the back of our van. I was tired, too, but on a high that comes from making dreams come true. I didn't know my "perfect world" was about to end.



To continue reading "A Marriage Redeemed" from HomeLife magazine, visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles or scan this QR code.



SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

trial/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 1:13-18

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.

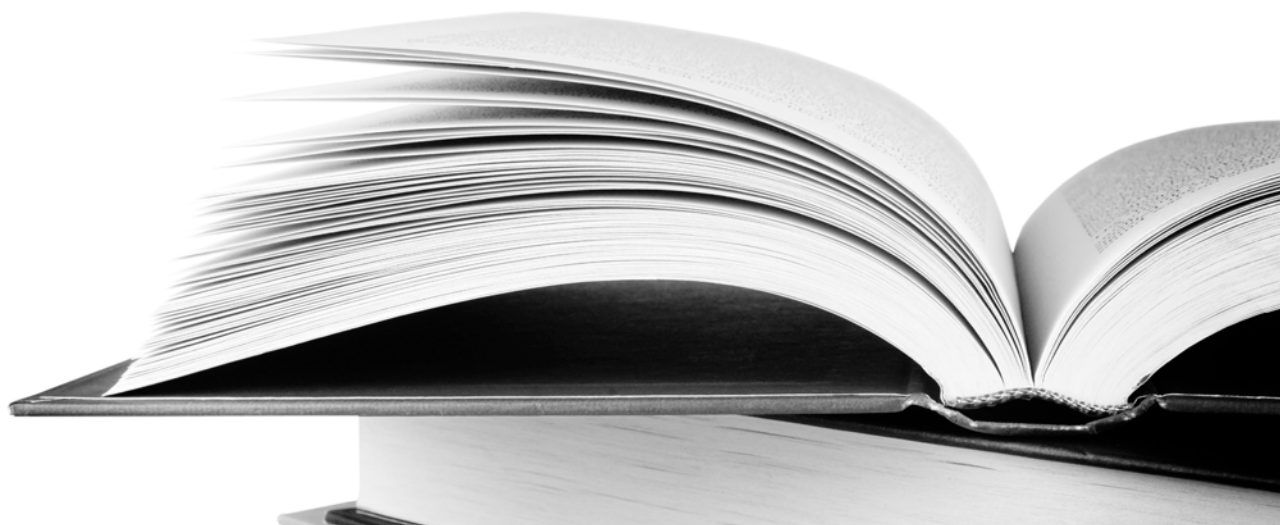
14 But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desires.

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.





5 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

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.

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:13 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Key Word "trial/tempt" on that same page of the PSG to clarify the difference between a trial and a temptation. As needed, add details from the first two paragraphs on page 22 of the PSG ("James wrote to...But there is an appeal in temptation..."). Add even more details from the commentary on page 27 of this leader guide.

GUIDE: Invite group members to explore what makes temptation appealing. Point attention to the two promises and two truths on page 22 of the PSG. Let group members briefly name temptations and identify (1) a promise it offers, (2) why it fails to deliver on that promise.

DISCUSS: **Question #2** on page 22 of the PSG: **"If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often say yes to them?"**

TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

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TIP: Don't feel obligated to discuss every question or complete every step. Your group may need more time in one section and less in another.

THE POINT

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

James 1:13 Commentary

In our last session we focused on various trials believers experience (Jas. 1:2). We discovered joyful trust in God is the way through the trials. Trials are hardships. They can range from persecution to unjust criticism; from sickness to poverty. Trials may even come as wealth or flattery. A trial can have a strengthening purpose as an occasion for demonstrating wise, resolute, and loyal faith. A trial may also be an occasion for temptation. James turned attention to this reality when he wrote that no one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." What could have been a useful trial may be experienced by believers as a temptation. For example, the trial of conflict presents opportunity for patient trust, but can present temptation to gossip or complain. Poverty presents opportunity for contentment, but may give temptation to covet. Riches present opportunity for generosity, but may tempt toward indulgence.

James's first instruction regarding temptation was to guard against misplacing the blame for it. No one should say the temptation comes from God. Have you ever said to others or to yourself something like: "God made me this way, so I can't help that I have these desires"? Or, "Why did God allow this situation?"

When our talk takes this turn, we've gone down an old, wrong path. It's not only wrong; it doesn't help at all. Adam first cut the path after he broke God's command in the garden. He blamed Eve, whom God had created and given him, for giving him some fruit from the tree (Gen. 3:12). The woman gave the fruit! God Himself gave the woman! What was Adam to do? In truth, the responsibility was his. God had communicated the expectations to Adam. He could not shift responsibility to Eve or to God. Neither can we lay on God responsibility for our temptations, or for giving in to them.

For two closely connected reasons, the claim that "I am being tempted by God" is always false. First, **God is not tempted by evil**. This is a statement about God's character. Nothing in His nature makes Him vulnerable to temptation. His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. He is a faithful God, without prejudice; He is righteous and true (Deut. 32:4). He does not desire evil at all! Second, He doesn't tempt anyone. His activity is completely consistent with His character. His ways with His people are not tainted by evil in any sense. God does not tempt His people. God does test His people. He tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). He tested Israel's obedience in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4) and in the promised land (Judg. 2:22). The opportunity He gave in these tests was to prove faith by obedience.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Devil tempted Him (Matt. 4:1). The Spirit's and the Devil's roles were distinct. The Spirit led. The Devil tempted. The Devil was the one attempting to distract and draw Jesus away from obedience to God the Father and into sin. If we blame God in part or in full for temptation or sin, we can be assured of this—we are wrong! We have misplaced the blame.

STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

Notes

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Help group members understand the influence of our sinful natures by referring to the paragraph on page 23 of the PSG that starts with “Temptation is unique for every person...” Include the explanation of “own” and “idios” using page 23 of the PSG to illustrate that temptation is unique to each person.

SAY: “There are things that tempt me that have no appeal to you, and vice versa, but all temptation follows a predictable process. We’re drawn away and temptation grows. We can get ensnared almost before we know it.”

GUIDE: Illustrate the process of giving in to temptation by using the fishing illustration under “Temptation follows a predictable process...” on page 23 of the PSG. (If you have an avid fisherman in the group, invite him to bring in fishing tackle to illustrate James 1:14-15.) Invite learners to name and explain other situations that illustrate the deceptive process of how temptation draws us in.

DISCUSS: **Question #3** on page 23 of the PSG: “**In what ways are we tempted to satisfy a God-given desire in a sinful way?**” This discussion can help group members understand the destructive twist temptations present to God-given desires.

TRANSITION: Affirm that there’s another choice for satisfying our desires: God’s generous and perfect gifts.

TIP: Because the topic of temptation can get personal, many of the discussion questions are stated in the plural or third person. This allows anonymity.

THE POINT

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

James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

Evil also exists on the outside. The Devil, “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), works against us (Jas. 4:7). Evil ideas arise. Evil people want to include us or use us in evil purposes. Each works with a person’s fundamental, evil desires. **Drawn away** and **enticed** pictures a baited trap or hook. What is bait without desire? Satan is a cunning hunter and fisherman. His bait may be a critic, an attractive man or woman, or the “out” telling a lie would give.

The word picture now shifts from hunting and fishing to conception and birth. The conception takes place when we yield to and embrace an evil desire, rather than resist and renounce it. The **birth** of the sinful thought, word, or deed follows. When sin **is fully grown, it gives birth to death**. As a baby grows naturally toward full maturity, sin may grow and mature until it is a muscle-bound habit of self-indulgent disobedience against God.

All Christians sin (1 John 1:8–2:2). When we do we hurt ourselves and other people. Actions to take following sin are to stop, confess our sin and receive forgiveness, and then choose a God-guided path to good action instead. In Proverbs 5–9 we find fuller and repeated descriptions of the process James 1:14-15 sets forth succinctly. There the adulteress who promises pleasure actually leads her victim toward the grave. Indulged lust can be lethal. First, the man has the desire. Then, the desire has the man locked in its death grip.

What kind of death did James have in view? Did he refer only to physical death or was he warning of spiritual, **eternal** death? Physical death is an enemy that gains its strength from sin, and Jesus will finally defeat physical death (1 Cor. 15:50-57). But God may also discipline sinning believers with premature physical death (11:30). In James 1:15, however, **death** appears to be more than physical. In James 1:14-15, we have the second of two contrasting paths and their contrasting destinations. We look back to James 1:12 to see the first path. There, the path of faithful endurance through trials leads to “the crown of life.” The crown of life is most certainly eternal (see also Rev. 2:10). It begins in the here and now. In James 1:14-15 we see that the path of acting sinfully on temptation leads to death. It seems clear that this death is also eternal. A believer in Christ will not sin his or her way out of grace and into eternal death in hell. All believers experience temptation. But if evil desire proves greater than holy desire and sin tragically dominates a life, eternal death will forever tell the story that his or her faith was false.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

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.

SAY: "Just as it is out of character for God to tempt us, it is within His character to give us only good gifts. God provides good gifts that help us resist temptation."

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:16-18 on page 21 of the PSG while others listen for and identify the gifts God gives us.

GUIDE: Let several group members choose one of the three gifts God has provided as mentioned on page 24 of the PSG: (1) "A relationship with Christ" (2) "God's Word" and (3) "An escape route." Direct the group to use the content to summarize how that particular gift helps resist temptation.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 24 of the PSG: "**What are some other gifts God has provided that could help you resist temptation?**"

DO: Encourage group members to practice discerning God's way of escape by jotting ideas on **The Circumstance; The Escape** on page 25 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share what they wrote.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 25 of the PSG: "**How can you support and encourage someone struggling with temptation?**" This discussion will help group members pull together what they've learned so far.

TRANSITION: Next we'll discover three actions that can help us implement God's escape strategies.

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TIP: Once you've asked a question, sit down (if you've been standing). This communicates that the discussion belongs to the group.

THE POINT

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

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

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5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: "It's not a sin to be tempted. What matters is what we do with temptations. We can fret over them, or we can take advantage of what God has provided."

GUIDE: Point attention to the escape strategies on page 26 of the PSG. Lead the group to identify how each escape strategy would help them resist a temptation.

The strategies are:

- ▶ Think about the temptations you face. Pray, asking God to help you recognize and do His strategy to overcome each.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 4:25 and practice it in moments of temptation.
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Wrap it Up

SAY: "Sin may offer temporary pleasure, but we will experience consequences when we give in to temptation. Put down the fork and choose God's way of escape."

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SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes



Notes

DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **“What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?”**

SAY: “Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you’ve gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference.”

GUIDE: Call attention to the first sentence of “The Bible Meets Life” on page

20 of the PSG: “Just one more slice ... there’s no harm in that, right?” Invite the group to share why Satan wants us to believe this lie.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** at the top of page 20 of the PSG: **“God won’t tempt me, but He will provide a way to resist temptation.”** To highlight God’s provision for resisting temptation, use the third paragraph in “The Bible Meets Life” on that same page, starting with “God doesn’t tempt us...”

TRANSITION: Note that we’ll consider why temptations always disappoint. We’ll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

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READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:13 on page 21 of the PSG.

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TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

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James 1:13 Commentary

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STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

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TRANSITION: Affirm that there's another choice for satisfying our desires: God's generous and perfect gifts.

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James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

Evil also exists on the outside. The Devil, "the tempter" (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), works against us (Jas. 4:7). Evil ideas arise. Evil people want to include us or use us in evil purposes. Each works with a person's fundamental, evil desires. **Drawn away** and **enticed** pictures a baited trap or hook. What is bait without desire? Satan is a cunning hunter and fisherman. His bait may be a critic, an attractive man or woman, or the "out" telling a lie would give.

The word picture now shifts from hunting and fishing to conception and birth. The conception takes place when we yield to and embrace an evil desire, rather than resist and renounce it. The **birth** of the sinful thought, word, or deed follows. When sin **is fully grown, it gives birth to death**. As a baby grows naturally toward full maturity, sin may grow and mature until it is a muscle-bound habit of self-indulgent disobedience against God.

All Christians sin (1 John 1:8-2:2). When we do we hurt ourselves and other people. Actions to take following sin are to stop, confess our sin and receive forgiveness, and then choose a God-guided path to good action instead. In Proverbs 5-9 we find fuller and repeated descriptions of the process James 1:14-15 sets forth succinctly. There the adulteress who promises pleasure actually leads her victim toward the grave. Indulged lust can be lethal. First, the man has the desire. Then, the desire has the man locked in its death grip.

What kind of death did James have in view? Did he refer only to physical death or was he warning of spiritual, **eternal** death? Physical death is an enemy that gains its strength from sin, and Jesus will finally defeat physical death (1 Cor. 15:50-57). But God may also discipline sinning believers with premature physical death (11:30). In James 1:15, however, **death** appears to be more than physical. In James 1:14-15, we have the second of two contrasting paths and their contrasting destinations. We look back to James 1:12 to see the first path. There, the path of faithful endurance through trials leads to "the crown of life." The crown of life is most certainly eternal (see also Rev. 2:10). It begins in the here and now. In James 1:14-15 we see that the path of acting sinfully on temptation leads to death. It seems clear that this death is also eternal. A believer in Christ will not sin his or her way out of grace and into eternal death in hell. All believers experience temptation. But if evil desire proves greater than holy desire and sin tragically dominates a life, eternal death will forever tell the story that his or her faith was false.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

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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.

SAY: "Just as it is out of character for God to tempt us, it is within His character to give us only good gifts. God provides good gifts that help us resist temptation."

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:16-18 on page 21 of the PSG while others listen for and identify the gifts God gives us.

GUIDE: Let several group members choose one of the three gifts God has provided as mentioned on page 24 of the PSG: (1) "A relationship with Christ" (2) "God's Word" and (3) "An escape route." Direct the group to use the content to summarize how that particular gift helps resist temptation.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 24 of the PSG: "What are some other gifts God has provided that could help you resist temptation?"

DO: Encourage group members to practice discerning God's way of escape by jotting ideas on **The Circumstance; The Escape** on page 25 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share what they wrote.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 25 of the PSG: "How can you support and encourage someone struggling with temptation?" This discussion will help group members pull together what they've learned so far.

TRANSITION: Next we'll discover three actions that can help us implement God's escape strategies.

TIP: Once you've asked a question, sit down (if you've been standing). This communicates that the discussion belongs to the group.

THE POINT

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

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

James addressed his readers as his dearly loved brothers, assuring them he was on their side. He was not a malicious accuser haranguing them about their desires. He was with them in the struggle against temptation. His purpose was not to condemn, but to warn of defeat and destruction. Having issued, in love, the warning, he was about to show the way to victory in God's goodness and provision.

In accord with His character, God gives good gifts. Variation and change (NIV) permeate creation, but God is unchanging. Light alternates with **shadow** in the natural order, but "God is light," with absolutely no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). God's goodness and generosity toward His people show wonderfully in His own choice by which He brought us forth in new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3-8). It is the promised gift of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (see Ezek. 36:26-27). By this marvelously generous gift we receive the capacity to obey God's commands rather than live in bondage to evil desire, temptation, and sin. This new birth comes by the message or word of **truth**. It is the "implanted word" able to save you (Jas. 1:21), the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), the "gospel" (see Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). The first of the harvest and freshest olive oil were holy offerings pointing to a harvest to follow (Num. 18:12; Lev. 23:10).

Let's look at three practical temptation-beating gifts God supplies: The first of these, and the most important, is a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame temptation, sin, and even death during His time on earth. For believers, Jesus—with all His power—dwells in us. He already has overcome temptation once, and He can do it again. Jesus, with His full authority over temptation lives in us, so we are not helpless before temptation. Second is the Word of God itself (Psalm 119:11). By treasuring God's Word in our hearts we will discern between right and wrong, and have a mighty weapon against temptation. Jesus answered the Devil's appeals with God's Word (Matt. 4:4). Treasure and use God's Word! A third gift God gives is a "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13) so we can bear temptation without committing sin. We may feel all options in a given situation are sinful. God does not allow that. God will give us a right way to take. Trust Him to show it to you; and then take that way.

Escape by knowing sin's pleasure is fleeting (Heb. 11:24-25). If we take the bait, we might enjoy it a while before we realize the hook is set; but pain, remorse, and broken human relationships follow. So refuse sin's promise of pleasure to embrace a true and lasting pleasure: living according to God's Word.

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: “It’s not a sin to be tempted. What matters is what we do with temptations. We can fret over them, or we can take advantage of what God has provided.”

GUIDE: Point attention to the escape strategies on page 26 of the PSG. Lead the group to identify how each escape strategy would help them resist a temptation. The strategies are:

- ▶ Think about the temptations you face. Pray, asking God to help you recognize and do His strategy to overcome each.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 4:25 and practice it in moments of temptation.
- ▶ Find a friend you can trust and ask him or her to hold you accountable as you face temptation.

Wrap it Up

SAY: “Sin may offer temporary pleasure, but we will experience consequences when we give in to temptation. Put down the fork and choose God’s way of escape.”

PRAY: Thank God for providing ways of escape from temptation. Ask Him to keep before us the things He has provided to help avoid the pressure of temptation.



My group's prayer requests



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A Marriage Redeemed



Magical. It’s really the only word that described the week our family had just spent. It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip—the kind you dream, plan, and save for—it had been a fairy tale.

We were on the long drive home to Texas, the kids asleep in the back of our van. I was tired, too, but on a high that comes from making dreams come true. I didn’t know my “perfect world” was about to end.



To continue reading “A Marriage Redeemed” from *HomeLife* magazine, visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles or scan this QR code.



SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

trial/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 1:13-18

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.

THE POINT

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

GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **"What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"**

SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

GUIDE: Call attention to the first sentence of "The Bible Meets Life" on page 20 of the PSG: "Just one more slice ... there's no harm in that, right?" Invite the group to share why Satan wants us to believe this lie.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** at the top of page 20 of the PSG: **"God won't tempt me, but He will provide a way to resist temptation."** To highlight God's provision for resisting temptation, use the third paragraph in "The Bible Meets Life" on that same page, starting with "God doesn't tempt us..."

TRANSITION: Note that we'll consider why temptations always disappoint. We'll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.





STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

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.

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:13 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Key Word "trial/tempt" on that same page of the PSG to clarify the difference between a trial and a temptation. As needed, add details from the first two paragraphs on page 22 of the PSG ("James wrote to...But there is an appeal in temptation..."). Add even more details from the commentary on page 27 of this leader guide.

GUIDE: Invite group members to explore what makes temptation appealing. Point attention to the two promises and two truths on page 22 of the PSG. Let group members briefly name temptations and identify (1) a promise it offers, (2) why it fails to deliver on that promise.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 22 of the PSG: **"If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often say yes to them?"**

TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

TIP: Don't feel obligated to discuss every question or complete every step. Your group may need more time in one section and less in another.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

Notes

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Help group members understand the influence of our sinful natures by referring to the paragraph on page 23 of the PSG that starts with “Temptation is unique for every person...” Include the explanation of “own” and “idios” using page 23 of the PSG to illustrate that temptation is unique to each person.

SAY: “There are things that tempt me that have no appeal to you, and vice versa, but all temptation follows a predictable process. We’re drawn away and temptation grows. We can get ensnared almost before we know it.”

GUIDE: Illustrate the process of giving in to temptation by using the fishing illustration under “Temptation follows a predictable process...” on page 23 of the PSG. (If you have an avid fisherman in the group, invite him to bring in fishing tackle to illustrate James 1:14-15.) Invite learners to name and explain other situations that illustrate the deceptive process of how temptation draws us in.

DISCUSS: **Question #3** on page 23 of the PSG: **“In what ways are we tempted to satisfy a God-given desire in a sinful way?”** This discussion can help group members understand the destructive twist temptations present to God-given desires.

TRANSITION: Affirm that there’s another choice for satisfying our desires: God’s generous and perfect gifts.

TIP: Because the topic of temptation can get personal, many of the discussion questions are stated in the plural or third person. This allows anonymity.

THE POINT

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

James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

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15 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

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5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: "It's not a sin to be tempted. What matters is what we do with temptations. We can fret over them, or we can take advantage of what God has provided."

GUIDE: Point attention to the escape strategies on page 26 of the PSG. Lead the group to identify how each escape strategy would help them resist a temptation.

The strategies are:

- ▶ Think about the temptations you face. Pray, asking God to help you recognize and do His strategy to overcome each.
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Wrap it Up

SAY: "Sin may offer temporary pleasure, but we will experience consequences when we give in to temptation. Put down the fork and choose God's way of escape."

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Notes

My group's prayer requests

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SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

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James 1:13-18

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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.

THE POINT

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

GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): "What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"

SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

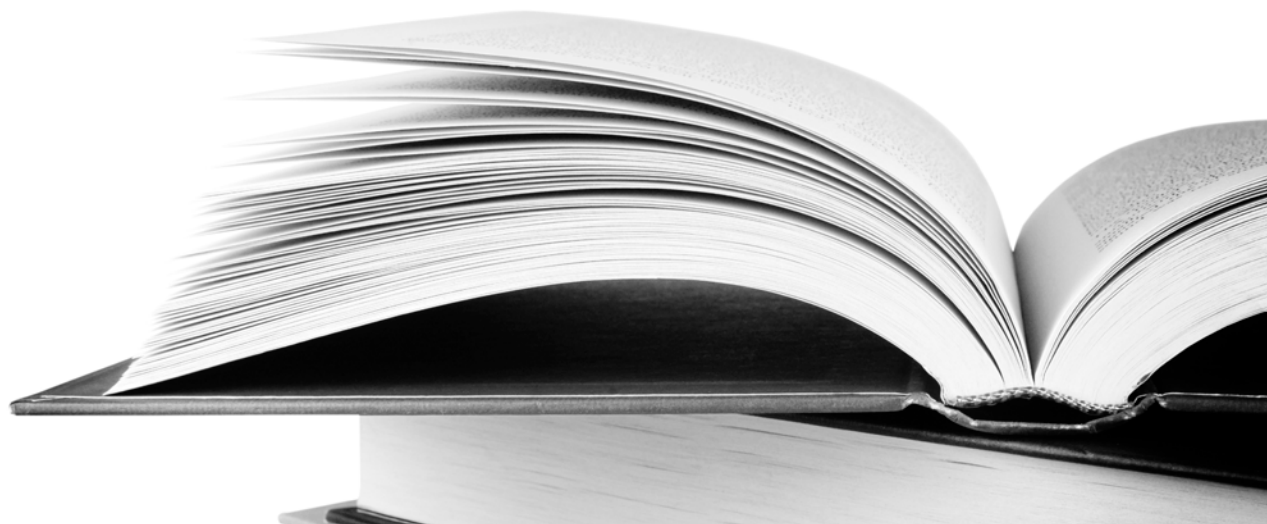
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GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** at the top of page 20 of the PSG: "God won't tempt me, but He will provide a way to resist temptation." To highlight God's provision for resisting temptation, use the third paragraph in "The Bible Meets Life" on that same page, starting with "God doesn't tempt us..."

TRANSITION: Note that we'll consider why temptations always disappoint. We'll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.



James 1:13 Commentary

In our last session we focused on various trials believers experience (Jas. 1:2). We discovered joyful trust in God is the way through the trials. Trials are hardships. They can range from persecution to unjust criticism; from sickness to poverty. Trials may even come as wealth or flattery. A trial can have a strengthening purpose as an occasion for demonstrating wise, resolute, and loyal faith. A trial may also be an occasion for temptation. James turned attention to this reality when he wrote that no one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." What could have been a useful trial may be experienced by believers as a temptation. For example, the trial of conflict presents opportunity for patient trust, but can present temptation to gossip or complain. Poverty presents opportunity for contentment, but may give temptation to covet. Riches present opportunity for generosity, but may tempt toward indulgence.

James's first instruction regarding temptation was to guard against misplacing the blame for it. No one should say the temptation comes from God. Have you ever said to others or to yourself something like: "God made me this way, so I can't help that I have these desires"? Or, "Why did God allow this situation?"

When our talk takes this turn, we've gone down an old, wrong path. It's not only wrong; it doesn't help at all. Adam first cut the path after he broke God's command in the garden. He blamed Eve, whom God had created and given him, for giving him some fruit from the tree (Gen. 3:12). The woman gave the fruit! God Himself gave the woman! What was Adam to do? In truth, the responsibility was his. God had communicated the expectations to Adam. He could not shift responsibility to Eve or to God. Neither can we lay on God responsibility for our temptations, or for giving in to them.

For two closely connected reasons, the claim that "I am being tempted by God" is always false. First, **God is not tempted by evil**. This is a statement about God's character. Nothing in His nature makes Him vulnerable to temptation. His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. He is a faithful God, without prejudice; He is righteous and true (Deut. 32:4). He does not desire evil at all! Second, He doesn't tempt anyone. His activity is completely consistent with His character. His ways with His people are not tainted by evil in any sense. God does not tempt His people. God does test His people. He tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). He tested Israel's obedience in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4) and in the promised land (Judg. 2:22). The opportunity He gave in these tests was to prove faith by obedience.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Devil tempted Him (Matt. 4:1). The Spirit's and the Devil's roles were distinct. The Spirit led. The Devil tempted. The Devil was the one attempting to distract and draw Jesus away from obedience to God the Father and into sin. If we blame God in part or in full for temptation or sin, we can be assured of this—we are wrong! We have misplaced the blame.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Help group members understand the influence of our sinful natures by referring to the paragraph on page 23 of the PSG that starts with “Temptation is unique for every person...” Include the explanation of “own” and “idios” using page 23 of the PSG to illustrate that temptation is unique to each person.

SAY: “There are things that tempt me that have no appeal to you, and vice versa, but all temptation follows a predictable process. We’re drawn away and temptation grows. We can get ensnared almost before we know it.”

GUIDE: Illustrate the process of giving in to temptation by using the fishing illustration under “Temptation follows a predictable process...” on page 23 of the PSG. (If you have an avid fisherman in the group, invite him to bring in fishing tackle to illustrate James 1:14-15.) Invite learners to name and explain other situations that illustrate the deceptive process of how temptation draws us in.

DISCUSS: **Question #3** on page 23 of the PSG: “**In what ways are we tempted to satisfy a God-given desire in a sinful way?**” This discussion can help group members understand the destructive twist temptations present to God-given desires.

TRANSITION: Affirm that there’s another choice for satisfying our desires: God’s generous and perfect gifts.

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TIP: Because the topic of temptation can get personal, many of the discussion questions are stated in the plural or third person. This allows anonymity.

THE POINT

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

James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

Evil also exists on the outside. The Devil, “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), works against us (Jas. 4:7). Evil ideas arise. Evil people want to include us or use us in evil purposes. Each works with a person’s fundamental, evil desires. **Drawn away** and **enticed** pictures a baited trap or hook. What is bait without desire? Satan is a cunning hunter and fisherman. His bait may be a critic, an attractive man or woman, or the “out” telling a lie would give.

The word picture now shifts from hunting and fishing to conception and birth. The conception takes place when we yield to and embrace an evil desire, rather than resist and renounce it. The **birth** of the sinful thought, word, or deed follows. When sin **is fully grown, it gives birth to death**. As a baby grows naturally toward full maturity, sin may grow and mature until it is a muscle-bound habit of self-indulgent disobedience against God.

All Christians sin (1 John 1:8–2:2). When we do we hurt ourselves and other people. Actions to take following sin are to stop, confess our sin and receive forgiveness, and then choose a God-guided path to good action instead. In Proverbs 5–9 we find fuller and repeated descriptions of the process James 1:14-15 sets forth succinctly. There the adulteress who promises pleasure actually leads her victim toward the grave. Indulged lust can be lethal. First, the man has the desire. Then, the desire has the man locked in its death grip.

What kind of death did James have in view? Did he refer only to physical death or was he warning of spiritual, **eternal** death? Physical death is an enemy that gains its strength from sin, and Jesus will finally defeat physical death (1 Cor. 15:50-57). But God may also discipline sinning believers with premature physical death (11:30). In James 1:15, however, **death** appears to be more than physical. In James 1:14-15, we have the second of two contrasting paths and their contrasting destinations. We look back to James 1:12 to see the first path. There, the path of faithful endurance through trials leads to “the crown of life.” The crown of life is most certainly eternal (see also Rev. 2:10). It begins in the here and now. In James 1:14-15 we see that the path of acting sinfully on temptation leads to death. It seems clear that this death is also eternal. A believer in Christ will not sin his or her way out of grace and into eternal death in hell. All believers experience temptation. But if evil desire proves greater than holy desire and sin tragically dominates a life, eternal death will forever tell the story that his or her faith was false.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

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.

SAY: "Just as it is out of character for God to tempt us, it is within His character to give us only good gifts. God provides good gifts that help us resist temptation."

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:16-18 on page 21 of the PSG while others listen for and identify the gifts God gives us.

GUIDE: Let several group members choose one of the three gifts God has provided as mentioned on page 24 of the PSG: (1) "A relationship with Christ" (2) "God's Word" and (3) "An escape route." Direct the group to use the content to summarize how that particular gift helps resist temptation.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 24 of the PSG: "What are some other gifts God has provided that could help you resist temptation?"

DO: Encourage group members to practice discerning God's way of escape by jotting ideas on **The Circumstance; The Escape** on page 25 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share what they wrote.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 25 of the PSG: "How can you support and encourage someone struggling with temptation?" This discussion will help group members pull together what they've learned so far.

TRANSITION: Next we'll discover three actions that can help us implement God's escape strategies.

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TIP: Once you've asked a question, sit down (if you've been standing). This communicates that the discussion belongs to the group.

THE POINT

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

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

James addressed his readers as his dearly loved brothers, assuring them he was on their side. He was not a malicious accuser haranguing them about their desires. He was with them in the struggle against temptation. His purpose was not to condemn, but to warn of defeat and destruction. Having issued, in love, the warning, he was about to show the way to victory in God's goodness and provision.

In accord with His character, God gives good gifts. Variation and change (NIV) permeate creation, but God is unchanging. Light alternates with **shadow** in the natural order, but "God is light," with absolutely no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). God's goodness and generosity toward His people show wonderfully in His own choice by which He brought us forth in new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3-8). It is the promised gift of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (see Ezek. 36:26-27). By this marvelously generous gift we receive the capacity to obey God's commands rather than live in bondage to evil desire, temptation, and sin. This new birth comes by the message or word of **truth**. It is the "implanted word" able to save you (Jas. 1:21), the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), the "gospel" (see Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). The first of the harvest and freshest olive oil were holy offerings pointing to a harvest to follow (Num. 18:12; Lev. 23:10).

Let's look at three practical temptation-beating gifts God supplies: The first of these, and the most important, is a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame temptation, sin, and even death during His time on earth. For believers, Jesus—with all His power—dwells in us. He already has overcome temptation once, and He can do it again. Jesus, with His full authority over temptation lives in us, so we are not helpless before temptation. Second is the Word of God itself (Psalm 119:11). By treasuring God's Word in our hearts we will discern between right and wrong, and have a mighty weapon against temptation. Jesus answered the Devil's appeals with God's Word (Matt. 4:4). Treasure and use God's Word! A third gift God gives is a "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13) so we can bear temptation without committing sin. We may feel all options in a given situation are sinful. God does not allow that. God will give us a right way to take. Trust Him to show it to you; and then take that way.

Escape by knowing sin's pleasure is fleeting (Heb. 11:24-25). If we take the bait, we might enjoy it a while before we realize the hook is set; but pain, remorse, and broken human relationships follow. So refuse sin's promise of pleasure to embrace a true and lasting pleasure: living according to God's Word.



SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

trial/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.

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James 1:13-18

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.

THE POINT

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

GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **"What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"**

SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

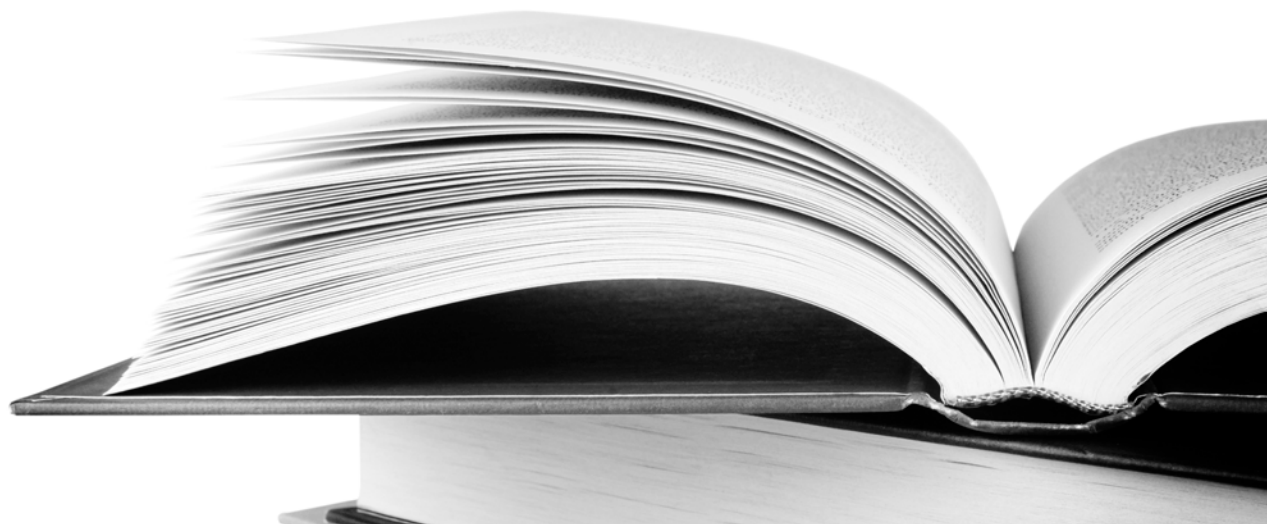
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TRANSITION: Note that we'll consider why temptations always disappoint. We'll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.





STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

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.**

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:13 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Key Word "trial/tempt" on that same page of the PSG to clarify the difference between a trial and a temptation. As needed, add details from the first two paragraphs on page 22 of the PSG ("James wrote to...But there is an appeal in temptation..."). Add even more details from the commentary on page 27 of this leader guide.

GUIDE: Invite group members to explore what makes temptation appealing. Point attention to the two promises and two truths on page 22 of the PSG. Let group members briefly name temptations and identify (1) a promise it offers, (2) why it fails to deliver on that promise.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 22 of the PSG: **"If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often say yes to them?"**

TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

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TIP: Don't feel obligated to discuss every question or complete every step. Your group may need more time in one section and less in another.

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

James 1:13 Commentary

In our last session we focused on various trials believers experience (Jas. 1:2). We discovered joyful trust in God is the way through the trials. Trials are hardships. They can range from persecution to unjust criticism; from sickness to poverty. Trials may even come as wealth or flattery. A trial can have a strengthening purpose as an occasion for demonstrating wise, resolute, and loyal faith. A trial may also be an occasion for temptation. James turned attention to this reality when he wrote that no one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." What could have been a useful trial may be experienced by believers as a temptation. For example, the trial of conflict presents opportunity for patient trust, but can present temptation to gossip or complain. Poverty presents opportunity for contentment, but may give temptation to covet. Riches present opportunity for generosity, but may tempt toward indulgence.

James's first instruction regarding temptation was to guard against misplacing the blame for it. No one should say the temptation comes from God. Have you ever said to others or to yourself something like: "God made me this way, so I can't help that I have these desires"? Or, "Why did God allow this situation?"

When our talk takes this turn, we've gone down an old, wrong path. It's not only wrong; it doesn't help at all. Adam first cut the path after he broke God's command in the garden. He blamed Eve, whom God had created and given him, for giving him some fruit from the tree (Gen. 3:12). The woman gave the fruit! God Himself gave the woman! What was Adam to do? In truth, the responsibility was his. God had communicated the expectations to Adam. He could not shift responsibility to Eve or to God. Neither can we lay on God responsibility for our temptations, or for giving in to them.

For two closely connected reasons, the claim that "I am being tempted by God" is always false. First, **God is not tempted by evil**. This is a statement about God's character. Nothing in His nature makes Him vulnerable to temptation. His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. He is a faithful God, without prejudice; He is righteous and true (Deut. 32:4). He does not desire evil at all! Second, He doesn't tempt anyone. His activity is completely consistent with His character. His ways with His people are not tainted by evil in any sense. God does not tempt His people. God does test His people. He tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). He tested Israel's obedience in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4) and in the promised land (Judg. 2:22). The opportunity He gave in these tests was to prove faith by obedience.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Devil tempted Him (Matt. 4:1). The Spirit's and the Devil's roles were distinct. The Spirit led. The Devil tempted. The Devil was the one attempting to distract and draw Jesus away from obedience to God the Father and into sin. If we blame God in part or in full for temptation or sin, we can be assured of this—we are wrong! We have misplaced the blame.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

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.

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STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

Notes

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.

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5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: "It's not a sin to be tempted. What matters is what we do with temptations. We can fret over them, or we can take advantage of what God has provided."

GUIDE: Point attention to the escape strategies on page 26 of the PSG. Lead the group to identify how each escape strategy would help them resist a temptation. The strategies are:

- ▶ Think about the temptations you face. Pray, asking God to help you recognize and do His strategy to overcome each.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 4:25 and practice it in moments of temptation.
- ▶ Find a friend you can trust and ask him or her to hold you accountable as you face temptation.

Wrap it Up

SAY: "Sin may offer temporary pleasure, but we will experience consequences when we give in to temptation. Put down the fork and choose God's way of escape."

PRAY: Thank God for providing ways of escape from temptation. Ask Him to keep before us the things He has provided to help avoid the pressure of temptation.



My group's prayer requests

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Go to www.BibleStudiesforLife.com

A Marriage Redeemed



Magical. It's really the only word that described the week our family had just spent. It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip—the kind you dream, plan, and save for—it had been a fairy tale.

We were on the long drive home to Texas, the kids asleep in the back of our van. I was tired, too, but on a high that comes from making dreams come true. I didn't know my "perfect world" was about to end.



To continue reading "A Marriage Redeemed" from HomeLife magazine, visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles or scan this QR code.



SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

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THE POINT

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GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): "What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"

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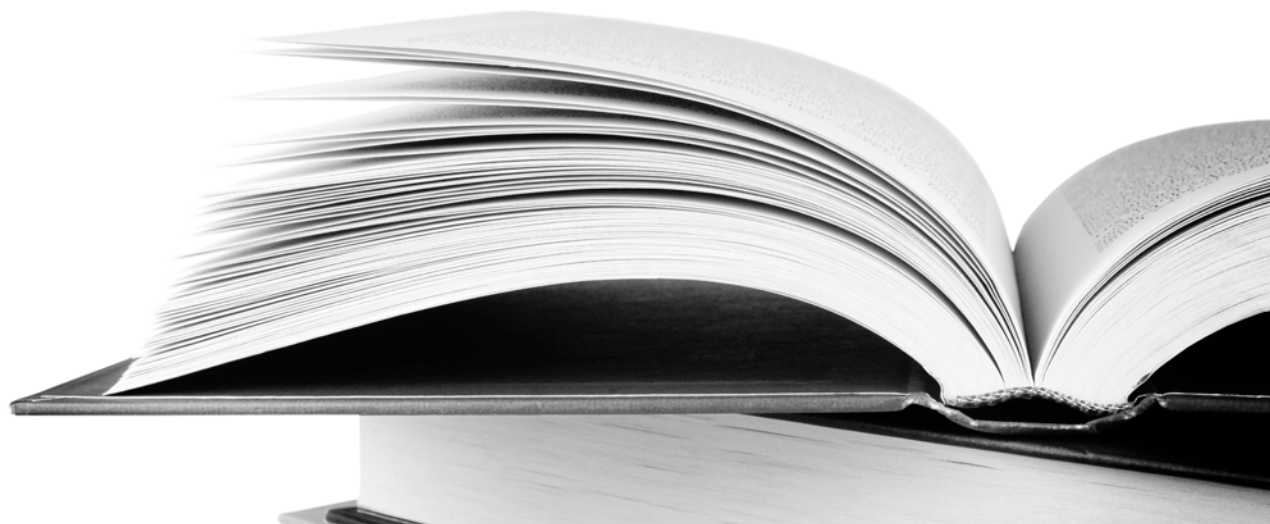
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When our talk takes this turn, we've gone down an old, wrong path. It's not only wrong; it doesn't help at all. Adam first cut the path after he broke God's command in the garden. He blamed Eve, whom God had created and given him, for giving him some fruit from the tree (Gen. 3:12). The woman gave the fruit! God Himself gave the woman! What was Adam to do? In truth, the responsibility was his. God had communicated the expectations to Adam. He could not shift responsibility to Eve or to God. Neither can we lay on God responsibility for our temptations, or for giving in to them.

For two closely connected reasons, the claim that "I am being tempted by God" is always false. First, **God is not tempted by evil.** This is a statement about God's character. Nothing in His nature makes Him vulnerable to temptation. His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. He is a faithful God, without prejudice; He is righteous and true (Deut. 32:4). He does not desire evil at all! Second, He doesn't tempt anyone. His activity is completely consistent with His character. His ways with His people are not tainted by evil in any sense. God does not tempt His people. God does test His people. He tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). He tested Israel's obedience in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4) and in the promised land (Judg. 2:22). The opportunity He gave in these tests was to prove faith by obedience.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Devil tempted Him (Matt. 4:1). The Spirit's and the Devil's roles were distinct. The Spirit led. The Devil tempted. The Devil was the one attempting to distract and draw Jesus away from obedience to God the Father and into sin. If we blame God in part or in full for temptation or sin, we can be assured of this—we are wrong! We have misplaced the blame.

James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

Evil also exists on the outside. The Devil, “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), works against us (Jas. 4:7). Evil ideas arise. Evil people want to include us or use us in evil purposes. Each works with a person’s fundamental, evil desires. **Drawn away** and **enticed** pictures a baited trap or hook. What is bait without desire? Satan is a cunning hunter and fisherman. His bait may be a critic, an attractive man or woman, or the “out” telling a lie would give.

The word picture now shifts from hunting and fishing to conception and birth. The conception takes place when we yield to and embrace an evil desire, rather than resist and renounce it. The **birth** of the sinful thought, word, or deed follows. When sin **is fully grown**, it **gives birth to death**. As a baby grows naturally toward full maturity, sin may grow and mature until it is a muscle-bound habit of self-indulgent disobedience against God.

All Christians sin (1 John 1:8–2:2). When we do we hurt ourselves and other people. Actions to take following sin are to stop, confess our sin and receive forgiveness, and then choose a God-guided path to good action instead. In Proverbs 5–9 we find fuller and repeated descriptions of the process James 1:14–15 sets forth succinctly. There the adulteress who promises pleasure actually leads her victim toward the grave. Indulged lust can be lethal. First, the man has the desire. Then, the desire has the man locked in its death grip.

What kind of death did James have in view? Did he refer only to physical death or was he warning of spiritual, **eternal** death? Physical death is an enemy that gains its strength from sin, and Jesus will finally defeat physical death (1 Cor. 15:50-57). But God may also discipline sinning believers with premature physical death (11:30). In James 1:15, however, **death** appears to be more than physical. In James 1:14-15, we have the second of two contrasting paths and their contrasting destinations. We look back to James 1:12 to see the first path. There, the path of faithful endurance through trials leads to “the crown of life.” The crown of life is most certainly eternal (see also Rev. 2:10). It begins in the here and now. In James 1:14-15 we see that the path of acting sinfully on temptation leads to death. It seems clear that this death is also eternal. A believer in Christ will not sin his or her way out of grace and into eternal death in hell. All believers experience temptation. But if evil desire proves greater than holy desire and sin tragically dominates a life, eternal death will forever tell the story that his or her faith was false.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

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.

SAY: "Just as it is out of character for God to tempt us, it is within His character to give us only good gifts. God provides good gifts that help us resist temptation."

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:16-18 on page 21 of the PSG while others listen for and identify the gifts God gives us.

GUIDE: Let several group members choose one of the three gifts God has provided as mentioned on page 24 of the PSG: (1) "A relationship with Christ" (2) "God's Word" and (3) "An escape route." Direct the group to use the content to summarize how that particular gift helps resist temptation.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 24 of the PSG: "What are some other gifts God has provided that could help you resist temptation?"

DO: Encourage group members to practice discerning God's way of escape by jotting ideas on **The Circumstance; The Escape** on page 25 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share what they wrote.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 25 of the PSG: "How can you support and encourage someone struggling with temptation?" This discussion will help group members pull together what they've learned so far.

TRANSITION: Next we'll discover three actions that can help us implement God's escape strategies.

Notes

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TIP: Once you've asked a question, sit down (if you've been standing). This communicates that the discussion belongs to the group.

THE POINT

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

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

James addressed his readers as his dearly loved brothers, assuring them he was on their side. He was not a malicious accuser haranguing them about their desires. He was with them in the struggle against temptation. His purpose was not to condemn, but to warn of defeat and destruction. Having issued, in love, the warning, he was about to show the way to victory in God's goodness and provision.

In accord with His character, God gives good gifts. Variation and change (NIV) permeate creation, but God is unchanging. Light alternates with **shadow** in the natural order, but "God is light," with absolutely no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). God's goodness and generosity toward His people show wonderfully in His own choice by which He brought us forth in new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3-8). It is the promised gift of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (see Ezek. 36:26-27). By this marvelously generous gift we receive the capacity to obey God's commands rather than live in bondage to evil desire, temptation, and sin. This new birth comes by the message or word of **truth**. It is the "implanted word" able to save you (Jas. 1:21), the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), the "gospel" (see Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). The first of the harvest and freshest olive oil were holy offerings pointing to a harvest to follow (Num. 18:12; Lev. 23:10).

Let's look at three practical temptation-beating gifts God supplies: The first of these, and the most important, is a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame temptation, sin, and even death during His time on earth. For believers, Jesus—with all His power—dwells in us. He already has overcome temptation once, and He can do it again. Jesus, with His full authority over temptation lives in us, so we are not helpless before temptation. Second is the Word of God itself (Psalm 119:11). By treasuring God's Word in our hearts we will discern between right and wrong, and have a mighty weapon against temptation. Jesus answered the Devil's appeals with God's Word (Matt. 4:4). Treasure and use God's Word! A third gift God gives is a "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13) so we can bear temptation without committing sin. We may feel all options in a given situation are sinful. God does not allow that. God will give us a right way to take. Trust Him to show it to you; and then take that way.

Escape by knowing sin's pleasure is fleeting (Heb. 11:24-25). If we take the bait, we might enjoy it a while before we realize the hook is set; but pain, remorse, and broken human relationships follow. So refuse sin's promise of pleasure to embrace a true and lasting pleasure: living according to God's Word.





5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: "It's not a sin to be tempted. What matters is what we do with temptations. We can fret over them, or we can take advantage of what God has provided."

GUIDE: Point attention to the escape strategies on page 26 of the PSG. Lead the group to identify how each escape strategy would help them resist a temptation. The strategies are:

- ▶ Think about the temptations you face. Pray, asking God to help you recognize and do His strategy to overcome each.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 4:25 and practice it in moments of temptation.
- ▶ Find a friend you can trust and ask him or her to hold you accountable as you face temptation.

Wrap it Up

SAY: "Sin may offer temporary pleasure, but we will experience consequences when we give in to temptation. Put down the fork and choose God's way of escape."

PRAY: Thank God for providing ways of escape from temptation. Ask Him to keep before us the things He has provided to help avoid the pressure of temptation.



My group's prayer requests

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A Marriage Redeemed



Magical. It's really the only word that described the week our family had just spent. It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip—the kind you dream, plan, and save for—it had been a fairy tale.

We were on the long drive home to Texas, the kids asleep in the back of our van. I was tired, too, but on a high that comes from making dreams come true. I didn't know my "perfect world" was about to end.



To continue reading "A Marriage Redeemed" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles or scan this QR code.



SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

trial/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 1:13-18

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.

THE POINT

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

GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **"What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"**

SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

GUIDE: Call attention to the first sentence of "The Bible Meets Life" on page 20 of the PSG: "Just one more slice ... there's no harm in that, right?" Invite the group to share why Satan wants us to believe this lie.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** at the top of page 20 of the PSG: **"God won't tempt me, but He will provide a way to resist temptation."** To highlight God's provision for resisting temptation, use the third paragraph in "The Bible Meets Life" on that same page, starting with "God doesn't tempt us..."

TRANSITION: Note that we'll consider why temptations always disappoint. We'll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.





STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

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.

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:13 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Key Word "trial/tempt" on that same page of the PSG to clarify the difference between a trial and a temptation. As needed, add details from the first two paragraphs on page 22 of the PSG ("James wrote to...But there is an appeal in temptation..."). Add even more details from the commentary on page 27 of this leader guide.

GUIDE: Invite group members to explore what makes temptation appealing. Point attention to the two promises and two truths on page 22 of the PSG. Let group members briefly name temptations and identify (1) a promise it offers, (2) why it fails to deliver on that promise.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 22 of the PSG: **"If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often say yes to them?"**

TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

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TIP: Don't feel obligated to discuss every question or complete every step. Your group may need more time in one section and less in another.

THE POINT

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James 1:13 Commentary

In our last session we focused on various trials believers experience (Jas. 1:2). We discovered joyful trust in God is the way through the trials. Trials are hardships. They can range from persecution to unjust criticism; from sickness to poverty. Trials may even come as wealth or flattery. A trial can have a strengthening purpose as an occasion for demonstrating wise, resolute, and loyal faith. A trial may also be an occasion for temptation. James turned attention to this reality when he wrote that no one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." What could have been a useful trial may be experienced by believers as a temptation. For example, the trial of conflict presents opportunity for patient trust, but can present temptation to gossip or complain. Poverty presents opportunity for contentment, but may give temptation to covet. Riches present opportunity for generosity, but may tempt toward indulgence.

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STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Help group members understand the influence of our sinful natures by referring to the paragraph on page 23 of the PSG that starts with "Temptation is unique for every person..." Include the explanation of "own" and "idios" using page 23 of the PSG to illustrate that temptation is unique to each person.

SAY: "There are things that tempt me that have no appeal to you, and vice versa, but all temptation follows a predictable process. We're drawn away and temptation grows. We can get ensnared almost before we know it."

GUIDE: Illustrate the process of giving in to temptation by using the fishing illustration under "Temptation follows a predictable process..." on page 23 of the PSG. (If you have an avid fisherman in the group, invite him to bring in fishing tackle to illustrate James 1:14-15.) Invite learners to name and explain other situations that illustrate the deceptive process of how temptation draws us in.

DISCUSS: **Question #3** on page 23 of the PSG: "In what ways are we tempted to satisfy a God-given desire in a sinful way?" This discussion can help group members understand the destructive twist temptations present to God-given desires.

TRANSITION: Affirm that there's another choice for satisfying our desires: God's generous and perfect gifts.

Notes

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TIP: Because the topic of temptation can get personal, many of the discussion questions are stated in the plural or third person. This allows anonymity.

THE POINT

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

James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

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STUDY THE BIBLE

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5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

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Notes

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My group's prayer requests

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SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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The Bible Meets Life

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James 1:13-18

The Setting

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THE POINT

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GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **"What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"**

SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

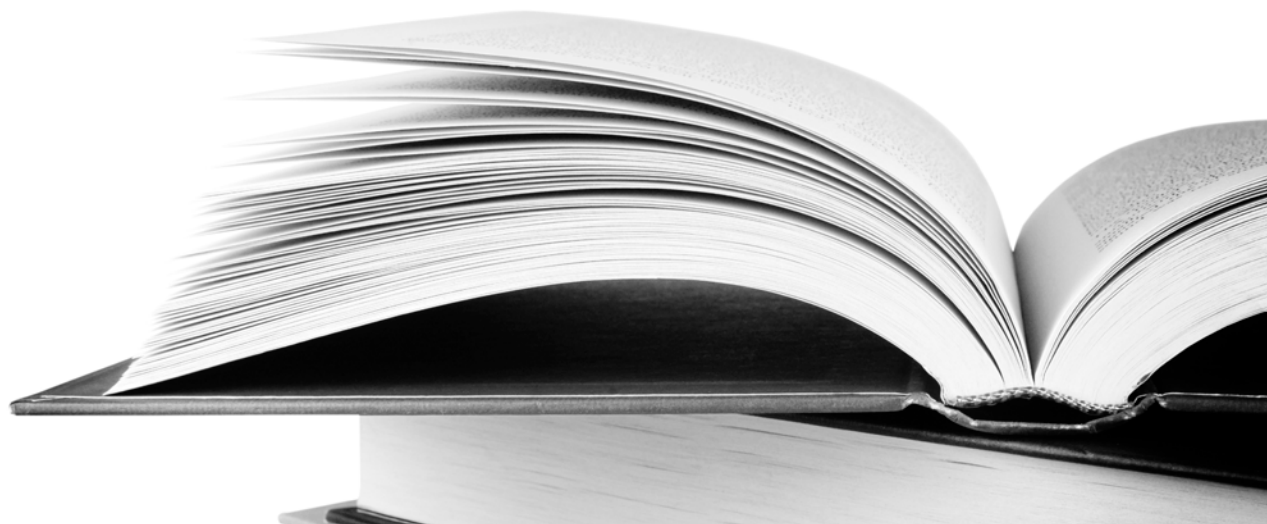
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STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

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GUIDE: Use the Key Word "trial/tempt" on that same page of the PSG to clarify the difference between a trial and a temptation. As needed, add details from the first two paragraphs on page 22 of the PSG ("James wrote to...But there is an appeal in temptation..."). Add even more details from the commentary on page 27 of this leader guide.

GUIDE: Invite group members to explore what makes temptation appealing. Point attention to the two promises and two truths on page 22 of the PSG. Let group members briefly name temptations and identify (1) a promise it offers, (2) why it fails to deliver on that promise.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 22 of the PSG: **"If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often say yes to them?"**

TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

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TIP: Don't feel obligated to discuss every question or complete every step. Your group may need more time in one section and less in another.

THE POINT

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

James 1:13 Commentary

In our last session we focused on various trials believers experience (Jas. 1:2). We discovered joyful trust in God is the way through the trials. Trials are hardships. They can range from persecution to unjust criticism; from sickness to poverty. Trials may even come as wealth or flattery. A trial can have a strengthening purpose as an occasion for demonstrating wise, resolute, and loyal faith. A trial may also be an occasion for temptation. James turned attention to this reality when he wrote that no one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." What could have been a useful trial may be experienced by believers as a temptation. For example, the trial of conflict presents opportunity for patient trust, but can present temptation to gossip or complain. Poverty presents opportunity for contentment, but may give temptation to covet. Riches present opportunity for generosity, but may tempt toward indulgence.

James's first instruction regarding temptation was to guard against misplacing the blame for it. No one should say the temptation comes from God. Have you ever said to others or to yourself something like: "God made me this way, so I can't help that I have these desires"? Or, "Why did God allow this situation?"

When our talk takes this turn, we've gone down an old, wrong path. It's not only wrong; it doesn't help at all. Adam first cut the path after he broke God's command in the garden. He blamed Eve, whom God had created and given him, for giving him some fruit from the tree (Gen. 3:12). The woman gave the fruit! God Himself gave the woman! What was Adam to do? In truth, the responsibility was his. God had communicated the expectations to Adam. He could not shift responsibility to Eve or to God. Neither can we lay on God responsibility for our temptations, or for giving in to them.

For two closely connected reasons, the claim that "I am being tempted by God" is always false. First, **God is not tempted by evil.** This is a statement about God's character. Nothing in His nature makes Him vulnerable to temptation. His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. He is a faithful God, without prejudice; He is righteous and true (Deut. 32:4). He does not desire evil at all! Second, He doesn't tempt anyone. His activity is completely consistent with His character. His ways with His people are not tainted by evil in any sense. God does not tempt His people. God does test His people. He tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). He tested Israel's obedience in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4) and in the promised land (Judg. 2:22). The opportunity He gave in these tests was to prove faith by obedience.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Devil tempted Him (Matt. 4:1). The Spirit's and the Devil's roles were distinct. The Spirit led. The Devil tempted. The Devil was the one attempting to distract and draw Jesus away from obedience to God the Father and into sin. If we blame God in part or in full for temptation or sin, we can be assured of this—we are wrong! We have misplaced the blame.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Help group members understand the influence of our sinful natures by referring to the paragraph on page 23 of the PSG that starts with “Temptation is unique for every person...” Include the explanation of “own” and “idios” using page 23 of the PSG to illustrate that temptation is unique to each person.

SAY: “There are things that tempt me that have no appeal to you, and vice versa, but all temptation follows a predictable process. We’re drawn away and temptation grows. We can get ensnared almost before we know it.”

GUIDE: Illustrate the process of giving in to temptation by using the fishing illustration under “Temptation follows a predictable process...” on page 23 of the PSG. (If you have an avid fisherman in the group, invite him to bring in fishing tackle to illustrate James 1:14-15.) Invite learners to name and explain other situations that illustrate the deceptive process of how temptation draws us in.

DISCUSS: **Question #3** on page 23 of the PSG: “**In what ways are we tempted to satisfy a God-given desire in a sinful way?**” This discussion can help group members understand the destructive twist temptations present to God-given desires.

TRANSITION: Affirm that there’s another choice for satisfying our desires: God’s generous and perfect gifts.

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

TIP: Because the topic of temptation can get personal, many of the discussion questions are stated in the plural or third person. This allows anonymity.

THE POINT

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

James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

Evil also exists on the outside. The Devil, “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), works against us (Jas. 4:7). Evil ideas arise. Evil people want to include us or use us in evil purposes. Each works with a person’s fundamental, evil desires. **Drawn away** and **enticed** pictures a baited trap or hook. What is bait without desire? Satan is a cunning hunter and fisherman. His bait may be a critic, an attractive man or woman, or the “out” telling a lie would give.

The word picture now shifts from hunting and fishing to conception and birth. The conception takes place when we yield to and embrace an evil desire, rather than resist and renounce it. The **birth** of the sinful thought, word, or deed follows. When sin **is fully grown, it gives birth to death**. As a baby grows naturally toward full maturity, sin may grow and mature until it is a muscle-bound habit of self-indulgent disobedience against God.

All Christians sin (1 John 1:8–2:2). When we do we hurt ourselves and other people. Actions to take following sin are to stop, confess our sin and receive forgiveness, and then choose a God-guided path to good action instead. In Proverbs 5–9 we find fuller and repeated descriptions of the process James 1:14-15 sets forth succinctly. There the adulteress who promises pleasure actually leads her victim toward the grave. Indulged lust can be lethal. First, the man has the desire. Then, the desire has the man locked in its death grip.

What kind of death did James have in view? Did he refer only to physical death or was he warning of spiritual, **eternal** death? Physical death is an enemy that gains its strength from sin, and Jesus will finally defeat physical death (1 Cor. 15:50-57). But God may also discipline sinning believers with premature physical death (11:30). In James 1:15, however, **death** appears to be more than physical. In James 1:14-15, we have the second of two contrasting paths and their contrasting destinations. We look back to James 1:12 to see the first path. There, the path of faithful endurance through trials leads to “the crown of life.” The crown of life is most certainly eternal (see also Rev. 2:10). It begins in the here and now. In James 1:14-15 we see that the path of acting sinfully on temptation leads to death. It seems clear that this death is also eternal. A believer in Christ will not sin his or her way out of grace and into eternal death in hell. All believers experience temptation. But if evil desire proves greater than holy desire and sin tragically dominates a life, eternal death will forever tell the story that his or her faith was false.

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

James addressed his readers as his dearly loved brothers, assuring them he was on their side. He was not a malicious accuser haranguing them about their desires. He was with them in the struggle against temptation. His purpose was not to condemn, but to warn of defeat and destruction. Having issued, in love, the warning, he was about to show the way to victory in God's goodness and provision.

In accord with His character, God gives good gifts. Variation and change (NIV) permeate creation, but God is unchanging. Light alternates with **shadow** in the natural order, but "God is light," with absolutely no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). God's goodness and generosity toward His people show wonderfully in His own choice by which He brought us forth in new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3-8). It is the promised gift of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (see Ezek. 36:26-27). By this marvelously generous gift we receive the capacity to obey God's commands rather than live in bondage to evil desire, temptation, and sin. This new birth comes by the message or word of **truth**. It is the "implanted word" able to save you (Jas. 1:21), the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), the "gospel" (see Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). The first of the harvest and freshest olive oil were holy offerings pointing to a harvest to follow (Num. 18:12; Lev. 23:10).

Let's look at three practical temptation-beating gifts God supplies: The first of these, and the most important, is a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame temptation, sin, and even death during His time on earth. For believers, Jesus—with all His power—dwells in us. He already has overcome temptation once, and He can do it again. Jesus, with His full authority over temptation lives in us, so we are not helpless before temptation. Second is the Word of God itself (Psalm 119:11). By treasuring God's Word in our hearts we will discern between right and wrong, and have a mighty weapon against temptation. Jesus answered the Devil's appeals with God's Word (Matt. 4:4). Treasure and use God's Word! A third gift God gives is a "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13) so we can bear temptation without committing sin. We may feel all options in a given situation are sinful. God does not allow that. God will give us a right way to take. Trust Him to show it to you; and then take that way.

Escape by knowing sin's pleasure is fleeting (Heb. 11:24-25). If we take the bait, we might enjoy it a while before we realize the hook is set; but pain, remorse, and broken human relationships follow. So refuse sin's promise of pleasure to embrace a true and lasting pleasure: living according to God's Word.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: “It’s not a sin to be tempted. What matters is what we do with temptations. We can fret over them, or we can take advantage of what God has provided.”

GUIDE: Point attention to the escape strategies on page 26 of the PSG. Lead the group to identify how each escape strategy would help them resist a temptation.

The strategies are:

- ▶ Think about the temptations you face. Pray, asking God to help you recognize and do His strategy to overcome each.
- ▶ Memorize Proverbs 4:25 and practice it in moments of temptation.
- ▶ Find a friend you can trust and ask him or her to hold you accountable as you face temptation.

Wrap it Up

SAY: “Sin may offer temporary pleasure, but we will experience consequences when we give in to temptation. Put down the fork and choose God’s way of escape.”

PRAY: Thank God for providing ways of escape from temptation. Ask Him to keep before us the things He has provided to help avoid the pressure of temptation.



My group's prayer requests

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Looking for ideas for even more interaction?
Go to www.BibleStudiesforLife.com

A Marriage Redeemed



Magical. It’s really the only word that described the week our family had just spent. It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip—the kind you dream, plan, and save for—it had been a fairy tale.

We were on the long drive home to Texas, the kids asleep in the back of our van. I was tired, too, but on a high that comes from making dreams come true. I didn’t know my “perfect world” was about to end.



To continue reading “A Marriage Redeemed” from HomeLife magazine, visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles or scan this QR code.



SESSION 2

THE PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

The Point

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

The Bible Meets Life

Temptation is a reality for all of us. Even Jesus was tempted. We can't avoid it, but we don't have to give in to it. We often feel like temptation is irresistible, or we blame God because we falsely assume, "He made me this way, and I can't help but give in." We need to learn that just the opposite is true: God does not tempt us with what is bad, but He provides us with what is good. Those good things can help us stand up against temptation.

The Passage

James 1:13-18

The Setting

After writing about how we should respond to the trials we face, James turned his attention to temptations. We all face trials and temptations, but temptations do not come from God. James concluded this section by pointing our attention to what does come from God. He is the giver of all good things.

What does the Bible say?

Key Words

trial/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 1:13-18

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.

THE POINT

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

GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



DISCUSS: Ask the introductory question on page 19 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): "What food tempts you to say yes to just one more bite?"

SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

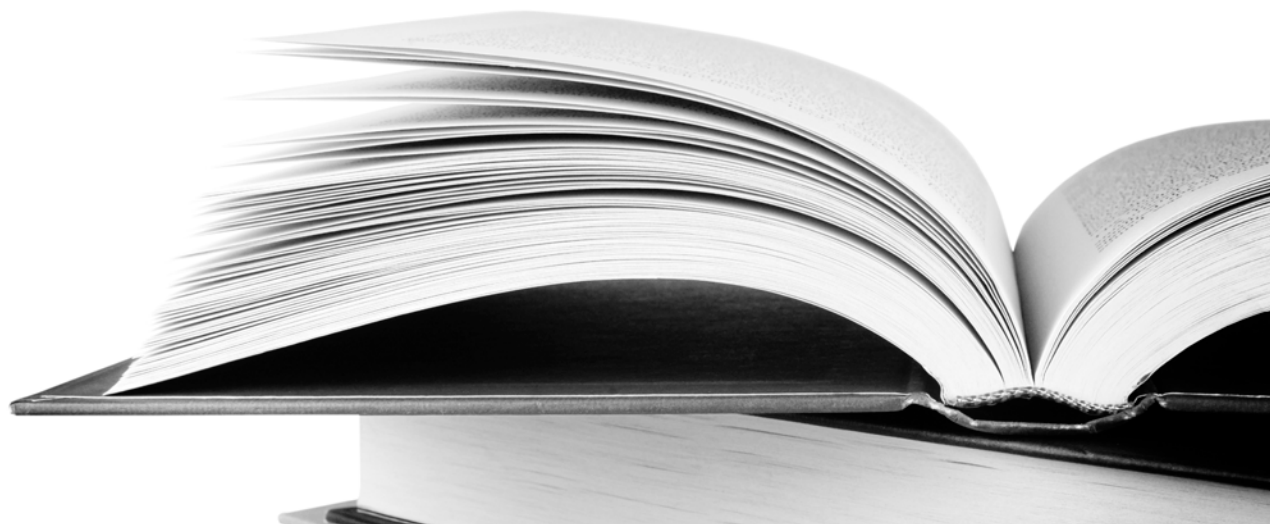
GUIDE: Call attention to the first sentence of "The Bible Meets Life" on page 20 of the PSG: "Just one more slice ... there's no harm in that, right?" Invite the group to share why Satan wants us to believe this lie.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** at the top of page 20 of the PSG: "God won't tempt me, but He will provide a way to resist temptation." To highlight God's provision for resisting temptation, use the third paragraph in "The Bible Meets Life" on that same page, starting with "God doesn't tempt us..."

TRANSITION: Note that we'll consider why temptations always disappoint. We'll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.





STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:13

Notes

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.

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:13 on page 21 of the PSG.

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DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 22 of the PSG: **"If temptations promise good but never deliver, why do we so often say yes to them?"**

TRANSITION: Let's now find where temptations come from and why we feel pressure to give in to them.

TIP: Don't feel obligated to discuss every question or complete every step. Your group may need more time in one section and less in another.

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STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

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SAY: “Just as it is out of character for God to tempt us, it is within His character to give us only good gifts. God provides good gifts that help us resist temptation.”

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:16-18 on page 21 of the PSG while others listen for and identify the gifts God gives us.

GUIDE: Let several group members choose one of the three gifts God has provided as mentioned on page 24 of the PSG: (1) “A relationship with Christ” (2) “God’s Word” and (3) “An escape route.” Direct the group to use the content to summarize how that particular gift helps resist temptation.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 24 of the PSG: “What are some other gifts God has provided that could help you resist temptation?”

DO: Encourage group members to practice discerning God’s way of escape by jotting ideas on **The Circumstance; The Escape** on page 25 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share what they wrote.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 25 of the PSG: “How can you support and encourage someone struggling with temptation?” This discussion will help group members pull together what they’ve learned so far.

TRANSITION: Next we’ll discover three actions that can help us implement God’s escape strategies.

TIP: Once you’ve asked a question, sit down (if you’ve been standing). This communicates that the discussion belongs to the group.

THE POINT

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

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

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SESSION 2

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GET INTO THE STUDY



Notes



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SAY: "Have you ever stepped on a scale only to find you've gained weight because you said yes to one more bite? Taking those seemingly harmless bites does make a difference."

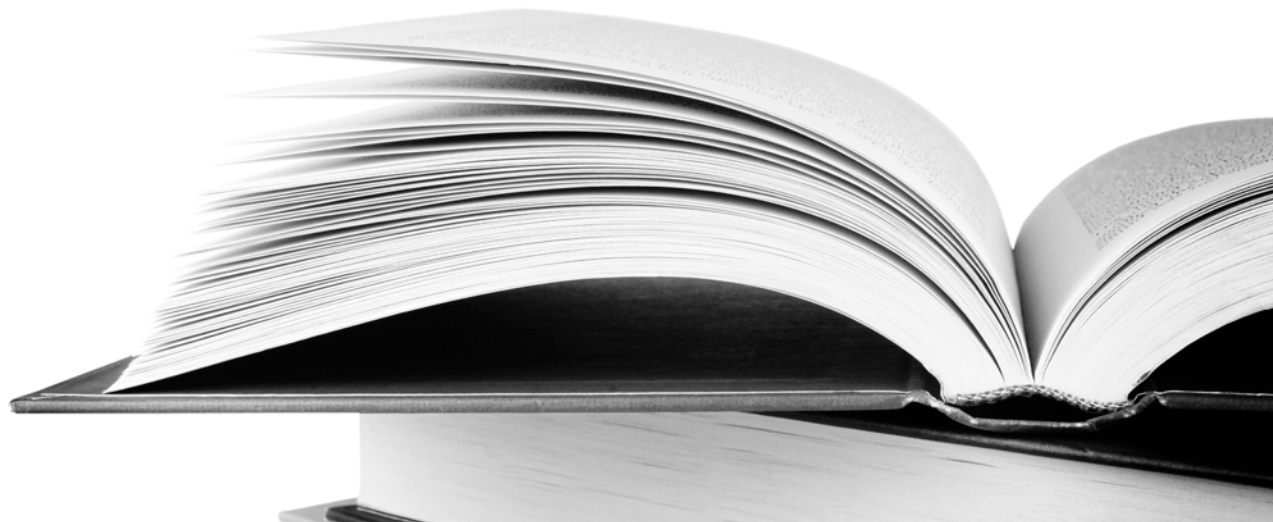
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TRANSITION: Note that we'll consider why temptations always disappoint. We'll find, instead, gifts God provides to withstand the pressure of temptation.

PRAY: Ask God to open our eyes through the discussion of the Bible to the nature of temptation.

Dotted lines for taking notes.





STUDY THE BIBLE

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

James 1:13 Commentary

In our last session we focused on various trials believers experience (Jas. 1:2). We discovered joyful trust in God is the way through the trials. Trials are hardships. They can range from persecution to unjust criticism; from sickness to poverty. Trials may even come as wealth or flattery. A trial can have a strengthening purpose as an occasion for demonstrating wise, resolute, and loyal faith. A trial may also be an occasion for temptation. James turned attention to this reality when he wrote that no one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." What could have been a useful trial may be experienced by believers as a temptation. For example, the trial of conflict presents opportunity for patient trust, but can present temptation to gossip or complain. Poverty presents opportunity for contentment, but may give temptation to covet. Riches present opportunity for generosity, but may tempt toward indulgence.

James's first instruction regarding temptation was to guard against misplacing the blame for it. No one should say the temptation comes from God. Have you ever said to others or to yourself something like: "God made me this way, so I can't help that I have these desires"? Or, "Why did God allow this situation?"

When our talk takes this turn, we've gone down an old, wrong path. It's not only wrong; it doesn't help at all. Adam first cut the path after he broke God's command in the garden. He blamed Eve, whom God had created and given him, for giving him some fruit from the tree (Gen. 3:12). The woman gave the fruit! God Himself gave the woman! What was Adam to do? In truth, the responsibility was his. God had communicated the expectations to Adam. He could not shift responsibility to Eve or to God. Neither can we lay on God responsibility for our temptations, or for giving in to them.

For two closely connected reasons, the claim that "I am being tempted by God" is always false. First, **God is not tempted by evil.** This is a statement about God's character. Nothing in His nature makes Him vulnerable to temptation. His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. He is a faithful God, without prejudice; He is righteous and true (Deut. 32:4). He does not desire evil at all! Second, He doesn't tempt anyone. His activity is completely consistent with His character. His ways with His people are not tainted by evil in any sense. God does not tempt His people. God does test His people. He tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). He tested Israel's obedience in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4) and in the promised land (Judg. 2:22). The opportunity He gave in these tests was to prove faith by obedience.

The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Devil tempted Him (Matt. 4:1). The Spirit's and the Devil's roles were distinct. The Spirit led. The Devil tempted. The Devil was the one attempting to distract and draw Jesus away from obedience to God the Father and into sin. If we blame God in part or in full for temptation or sin, we can be assured of this—we are wrong! We have misplaced the blame.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:14-15

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.

READ: Invite a group member to read James 1:14-15 on page 21 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Help group members understand the influence of our sinful natures by referring to the paragraph on page 23 of the PSG that starts with "Temptation is unique for every person..." Include the explanation of "own" and "idios" using page 23 of the PSG to illustrate that temptation is unique to each person.

SAY: "There are things that tempt me that have no appeal to you, and vice versa, but all temptation follows a predictable process. We're drawn away and temptation grows. We can get ensnared almost before we know it."

GUIDE: Illustrate the process of giving in to temptation by using the fishing illustration under "Temptation follows a predictable process..." on page 23 of the PSG. (If you have an avid fisherman in the group, invite him to bring in fishing tackle to illustrate James 1:14-15.) Invite learners to name and explain other situations that illustrate the deceptive process of how temptation draws us in.

DISCUSS: **Question #3** on page 23 of the PSG: **"In what ways are we tempted to satisfy a God-given desire in a sinful way?"** This discussion can help group members understand the destructive twist temptations present to God-given desires.

TRANSITION: Affirm that there's another choice for satisfying our desires: God's generous and perfect gifts.

Notes

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TIP: Because the topic of temptation can get personal, many of the discussion questions are stated in the plural or third person. This allows anonymity.

THE POINT

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

James 1:14-15 Commentary

If God is not to blame, who is? **Each person is tempted** when lured away and enticed by his or her own evil desires. Temptation works to create a heart condition in which we respond wrongly to a trial. James echoed Jesus at this point. Jesus taught that evil comes from within and defiles a person (Mark 7:23). Evil attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds are from the inside out (vv. 14-23).

Evil also exists on the outside. The Devil, "the tempter" (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), works against us (Jas. 4:7). Evil ideas arise. Evil people want to include us or use us in evil purposes. Each works with a person's fundamental, evil desires. **Drawn away** and **enticed** pictures a baited trap or hook. What is bait without desire? Satan is a cunning hunter and fisherman. His bait may be a critic, an attractive man or woman, or the "out" telling a lie would give.

The word picture now shifts from hunting and fishing to conception and birth. The conception takes place when we yield to and embrace an evil desire, rather than resist and renounce it. The **birth** of the sinful thought, word, or deed follows. When sin **is fully grown, it gives birth to death**. As a baby grows naturally toward full maturity, sin may grow and mature until it is a muscle-bound habit of self-indulgent disobedience against God.

All Christians sin (1 John 1:8-2:2). When we do we hurt ourselves and other people. Actions to take following sin are to stop, confess our sin and receive forgiveness, and then choose a God-guided path to good action instead. In Proverbs 5-9 we find fuller and repeated descriptions of the process James 1:14-15 sets forth succinctly. There the adulteress who promises pleasure actually leads her victim toward the grave. Indulged lust can be lethal. First, the man has the desire. Then, the desire has the man locked in its death grip.

What kind of death did James have in view? Did he refer only to physical death or was he warning of spiritual, **eternal** death? Physical death is an enemy that gains its strength from sin, and Jesus will finally defeat physical death (1 Cor. 15:50-57). But God may also discipline sinning believers with premature physical death (11:30). In James 1:15, however, **death** appears to be more than physical. In James 1:14-15, we have the second of two contrasting paths and their contrasting destinations. We look back to James 1:12 to see the first path. There, the path of faithful endurance through trials leads to "the crown of life." The crown of life is most certainly eternal (see also Rev. 2:10). It begins in the here and now. In James 1:14-15 we see that the path of acting sinfully on temptation leads to death. It seems clear that this death is also eternal. A believer in Christ will not sin his or her way out of grace and into eternal death in hell. All believers experience temptation. But if evil desire proves greater than holy desire and sin tragically dominates a life, eternal death will forever tell the story that his or her faith was false.



STUDY THE BIBLE

James 1:16-18

Notes

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.

SAY: "Just as it is out of character for God to tempt us, it is within His character to give us only good gifts. God provides good gifts that help us resist temptation."

READ: Ask a group member to read James 1:16-18 on page 21 of the PSG while others listen for and identify the gifts God gives us.

GUIDE: Let several group members choose one of the three gifts God has provided as mentioned on page 24 of the PSG: (1) "A relationship with Christ" (2) "God's Word" and (3) "An escape route." Direct the group to use the content to summarize how that particular gift helps resist temptation.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 24 of the PSG: "What are some other gifts God has provided that could help you resist temptation?"

DO: Encourage group members to practice discerning God's way of escape by jotting ideas on **The Circumstance; The Escape** on page 25 of the PSG. Call on volunteers to share what they wrote.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 25 of the PSG: "How can you support and encourage someone struggling with temptation?" This discussion will help group members pull together what they've learned so far.

TRANSITION: Next we'll discover three actions that can help us implement God's escape strategies.

TIP: Once you've asked a question, sit down (if you've been standing). This communicates that the discussion belongs to the group.

THE POINT

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

James 1:16-18 Commentary

We have reached a transition point in our Bible passage. It is time to look back *and* look forward. **Don't be deceived** refers to the ground already gained and yet to be covered. We should not be deceived into blaming God for temptation. The fundamental strength of temptation is our own evil desires. If we do not beat temptation, sin will overcome us quite fully. We should also not be deceived about God's intent. If we do not blame God, we are in position to receive His provision for victory over temptation.

James addressed his readers as his dearly loved brothers, assuring them he was on their side. He was not a malicious accuser haranguing them about their desires. He was with them in the struggle against temptation. His purpose was not to condemn, but to warn of defeat and destruction. Having issued, in love, the warning, he was about to show the way to victory in God's goodness and provision.

In accord with His character, God gives good gifts. Variation and change (NIV) permeate creation, but God is unchanging. Light alternates with **shadow** in the natural order, but "God is light," with absolutely no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). God's goodness and generosity toward His people show wonderfully in His own choice by which He brought us forth in new birth by the Spirit (John 3:3-8). It is the promised gift of a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (see Ezek. 36:26-27). By this marvelously generous gift we receive the capacity to obey God's commands rather than live in bondage to evil desire, temptation, and sin. This new birth comes by the message or word of **truth**. It is the "implanted word" able to save you (Jas. 1:21), the "word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), the "gospel" (see Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5). The first of the harvest and freshest olive oil were holy offerings pointing to a harvest to follow (Num. 18:12; Lev. 23:10).

Let's look at three practical temptation-beating gifts God supplies: The first of these, and the most important, is a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus overcame temptation, sin, and even death during His time on earth. For believers, Jesus—with all His power—dwells in us. He already has overcome temptation once, and He can do it again. Jesus, with His full authority over temptation lives in us, so we are not helpless before temptation. Second is the Word of God itself (Psalm 119:11). By treasuring God's Word in our hearts we will discern between right and wrong, and have a mighty weapon against temptation. Jesus answered the Devil's appeals with God's Word (Matt. 4:4). Treasure and use God's Word! A third gift God gives is a "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13) so we can bear temptation without committing sin. We may feel all options in a given situation are sinful. God does not allow that. God will give us a right way to take. Trust Him to show it to you; and then take that way.

Escape by knowing sin's pleasure is fleeting (Heb. 11:24-25). If we take the bait, we might enjoy it a while before we realize the hook is set; but pain, remorse, and broken human relationships follow. So refuse sin's promise of pleasure to embrace a true and lasting pleasure: living according to God's Word.

My group's prayer requests



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A Marriage Redeemed



Magical. It's really the only word that described the week our family had just spent. It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip—the kind you dream, plan, and save for—it had been a fairy tale.

We were on the long drive home to Texas, the kids asleep in the back of our van. I was tired, too, but on a high that comes from making dreams come true. I didn't know my "perfect world" was about to end.



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