

Overcoming Temptation

"... lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..."
Matthew 6:13



We can be free!! Temptation need not rule us!

"... No temptation has seized you except what is common to man, and God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

In this lesson we reflect upon...

- *How to identify a "danger zone" and take precautions*
- *Satan's strategies in temptation*
- *Our strategies in overcoming temptation*

Danger Zones

"... so if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall..."
1 Corinthians 10:12



"Danger Zone" = A "trigger" or vulnerability towards temptation

;We all have weaknesses! Certain situations, times, places or "moods" may predispose us to commit sin. None of us is immune! We all have our "Achilles heal," through which the enemy seeks to lure us into sinful behavior. A wise Christian learns to recognize his own weaknesses, be alert and take precautions.

We must be vigilant!

"... the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy..." Juan 10:10

"... Be dressed and ready for service and keep your lamps burning.... If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming he would not have let his house be broken into..." Luke 12:35, 39

"Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." 1 Peter 5:8

If we recognize our "weak spots" or "triggers" that predispose us to temptation, then we can take appropriate measures to avoid stumbling. These "safeguards," or "precautionary measures," can help us to avoid patterns of sin.

Flee from temptation! There is always an “escape route!”

“Flee the sinful passions of youth... ”(2 Timothy 2:22)

“... No temptation has seized you except what is common to man, and God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

We must set up safeguards to avoid tempting situations!

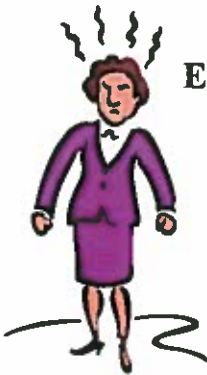
“Everything is permissible” but not everything is beneficial...” 1 Cor. 10:23

Avoidance can be a problem. As Christians, we need not flee from discomfort or personal challenge, *but the Bible clearly counsels us to avoid tempting situations.* If we learn to recognize where temptation lies, then we can take measures to avoid these situations when possible, or set up a “safety fence” of some sort.



For example...

- *The recovering alcoholic learns to avoid bars*
- *The recovering “womanizer” is careful always to wear his wedding ring visibly*
- *The recovering “compulsive shopper” avoids certain stores at certain times..etc.*



Example - Amargalina – Bitter Betty – Seeks to control her temper

Amargalina has an anger problem. She loses her temper quickly and tends to shout or say things she later regrets. This weakness has caused problems in her marriage and she even lost a job because of her quick temper. When she analyzes these explosions of anger, she realizes that her “tantrums” tend to happen when she is sleep deprived, and especially at certain “times” when her biological defenses are down. She also recognizes that situations of prolonged stress and pressure generally accompany these angry explosions.

What are some elements of her “danger zone”?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are some safeguards Amargalina can put in place to help prevent explosions of anger during these moments and seasons of her life?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Example: Paco wants to live in purity

Our brother Paco struggles with an addiction to internet pornography. Especially on Saturday evenings, when feeling lonely, he often goes down to his basement to his private study and watches inappropriate videos on his desktop computer. He has Christian room-mates, but they do not know the extent of his problem. He also struggles when away on business trips, after giving pressure filled presentations. This addiction provides an escape and method of relaxation after stressful moments.

What are some elements of Paco’s “danger zones?”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What measures could Paco take to establish safeguards that might help minimize these tempting situations?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Analyze a personal struggle in your life -- It could be...

Anger... gossip... sexual immorality... poor money management... deception... etc.

Think of a specific example of when you gave in to this temptation...

- *What happened?*

- *When did it happen?*
 - What day of the week? What time of day? What month of the year?_____
- *How did you feel just before “giving in?”*
 - Tired? Sleepy? Hungry?
 - Under stress? Lonely? Bored?_____

- *What were you doing before you "gave in?"*
 - Busy? Bored? On vacation? On a business trip?
 - Were you in contact with any particular person or people?

- *Where were you when you "gave in?"*
 - Alone at home?
 - With particular friends or acquaintances?
 - In a particular neighborhood? Hotel? Room of the house?

Using these questions as a guide for analyzing this particular struggle, note below some elements you can identify of your own "danger zone" for falling into this particular problem or sin.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Note some possible precautions or "safeguards" you could set up to avoid falling into this problem again?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How to overcome temptation?

Stay tight with Jesus – our perfect "Helper"!

You are not alone! Jesus understands what you are suffering.

"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Hebrews 2:18

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:15-16

Why is it so important for us to remember that Jesus was tempted, just as we are?

Know your enemy! Satan's schemes

If a military general knows the strategies employed by his enemy, then he can nullify any “element of surprise” and stand ready to resist. In the same way, our spiritual enemy employs strategies and schemes. Once we become aware of his techniques, we can thoughtfully resist or identify “escape routes” for retreat, if necessary!

“ ... that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.” 2 Cor. 2:11

Scheme #1 – He “scratches where we itch”

Scheme #2 – He paints God as the “bad guy”

Scheme #3 – He takes advantage of our “false sense of security”

Scheme #4 – He tempts us to “cover up”

Scheme #5 – He leads us through temptation “little by little”



Scheme #1 – He “scratches where we itch”

He tempts us to fulfill legitimate needs in illegitimate ways.

Temptation usually appeals to a desire we have – often completely innocent and natural. For example, Jesus “was hungry” and thus Satan tempted him to change the stones to bread. Hunger itself is not sinful, but Satan tempts him to satisfy his hunger in the wrong way. Our enemy also tempts us to fulfill our “hungers” in sinful ways.

Concupiscence – Deceitful desire - The root of sin



“... but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like the shifting shadows... ” James 1:14-17



Concupiscence = a deceitful desire – A desire which promises what it cannot fulfill

We are tempted to seek a “good” thing in a “bad” way

A pop song sums it up... “lookin’ for love in all the wrong places...”

For example:

- ***Sexual immorality***, could result from a quest for *companionship*
- ***Drug abuse***, could result from a desire to *calm our anxiety and find peace... etc.*

We seek the “right” things in the “wrong” ways.

In each case, note down what the person might be seeking in his or her sinful behavior.

1. *The adulterer—might be seeking* _____.
2. *The thief—might be seeking* _____.
3. *The alcoholic—might be seeking* _____.
4. *The gossip—might be seeking* _____.
5. *The materialist—might be seeking* _____.

Think of a particular struggle in your life: What hunger or desire are you seeking to fulfill when giving in to this temptation?

Scheme#2 – God is painted as “the bad guy”



The enemy causes us to doubt God’s goodness by making us think that God’s limitations deprive us of happiness and well being.



Read Genesis 3:1-13 -- Adam and Eve



How does the Serpent sow the seeds of doubt regarding the character of God in his dialog with Eve? How does he paint God as the “bad guy.”

A deception usually mixes truth with falsehood

In the temptation of Adam and Eve, which are the truths with Satan employs in order to trick them into sin? Which are the lies?

Truths _____

Lies _____

Analyze the process of Adam and Eve's temptation – How could they have escaped?

1. She dialogued with the serpent
2. She listened to his lie – “You will not die!”
3. She doubted the Character of God – “God does not want you to be wise, like He is.”
4. She dwelt on her desires for attractive food and wisdom – and sinned!

Now identify the “escape routes” -- How could they have interrupted this process?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

**Scheme #3 – Satan lulls us into “false security”
and takes advantage**

He allows us to feel invincible and thus lower our guard



“...if you think you are standing firm, be careful so you don't fall...” (2 Cor. 10:12)



Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5: David and Bathsheba

David was securely established on his throne, having won amazing victories against overwhelming odds, when he succumbed to temptation. How can times of success and relative calm be even more dangerous than times of struggle?

Although it was “in the time when kings go to war,” David “stayed in Jerusalem” and fell into sin. We know that he was also sleeping in the afternoon before strolling on his roof and observing the bathing Bathsheba. What can we learn from this?

Jesus warns us not to lower our guard!

"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap... be always on the watch, and pray..." Luke 21:34-36



According to this warning from Jesus, which are some habits or attitudes that could leave us vulnerable and cause us to lower our guard?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Think of your life. Which are the moments when you feel "comfortable" and perhaps vulnerable to lower your guard?

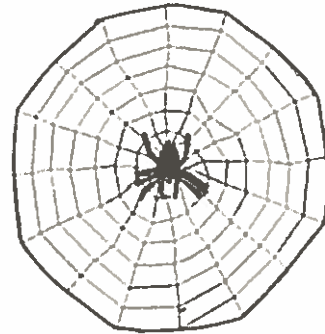
Scheme # 4 – We cover sin, and make it worse!

Covering up our sin only entangles us further!

After sinning, what is our most natural impulse?
Cover up!!

What is necessary, in general, to cover our sin?
Lie!

There is only one escape...
Confession!



A wise man once said: *"When in doubt, tell the truth!"*

In order to cover his sin, David ordered the death of Bathsheba's husband.

He who covers his sin will not prosper, but he who confesses and renounces them will find mercy. -- Prov. 18:13

*"O what a tangled web we weave,
when at first we practice to deceive." - Shakespeare*

We analyze David's temptation process – How could he have escaped at each point?

- 1. He felt comfortable, invulnerable and invincible after his great victories*
- 2. He stayed in the palace during the season when kings go out to war*
- 3. He was lazy and slept during the afternoon*
- 4. He indulged his desire to linger in his gaze upon a bathing woman*
- 5. He committed adultery*
- 6. He sought to cover his sin with duplicity*
- 7. He ultimately ordered the death of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband*

Identify the "escape routes" – List the ways David could have interrupted this process and avoided falling into the sins he committed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Scheme #5 – Satan leads us along "little by little"

Illustration – how to cook a frog!



It is said that when a frog is placed into boiling water he will instinctively leap out and save his life. However, if that same frog is placed in lukewarm water, heated up little by little, he will stay still and be boiled. Satan employs this strategy by leading us through temptation one little step at a time until we succumb.



Read Proverbs 7:6-27 – The example of the "foolish young man"

The writer of proverbs observe this scene through his window one evening.

A saying: "Don't be in the wrong place at the wrong time!"

How does the temptation of the "foolish young man" teach us the truth of this saying?

The process of the temptation of the foolish young man – How could he have escaped?

- 1. He walked down the street where this woman lived – (wrong place)*
- 2. He walked down this street at twilight – (wrong time)*
- 3. He spoke to the woman when her husband was away on business –
(very, very wrong time!)*
- 4. He engaged in dialog with this woman*
- 5. He went in the house*
- 6. ... and sinned.*

Identify the “escape routes” – What are three ways that this young man could have avoided falling into this temptation at various points in the process?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Some guidelines for overcoming temptation

- 1. Flee – There is always an escape route!*
- 2. “Pack Heat” – Memorize verses*
- 3. Stay awake – Pray regularly*
- 4. Stay busy in positive activities*
- 5. Spend time with positive people*
- 6. Be transparent*
- 7. Set up safeguards*

1. Flee! There is always a “way out!”

“Flee the sinful passions of youth...” (2 Timothy 2:22)



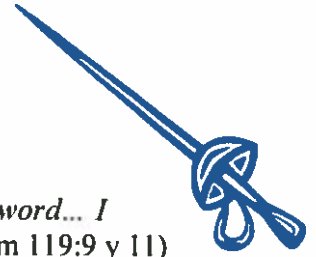
Read Genesis 39:7-12

When Joseph realized the schemes of Potiphar’s wife, what did he do to avoid falling into temptation? (Gen. 39:10)

2. Use the sword – Memorize the word!

“How can a young man keep his way pure... by living according to your word... I have hidden your word in my heart so I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:9 y 11)

“Jesus responded, saying, “It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Luke 4:4)



3. Stay awake – Watch and Pray

“Watch and pray so that you won’t fall into temptation.. the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak..” (Mateo 26:41)

What do we mean that prayer keeps us “awake” spiritually?

4. Stay busy (in that which is positive)

“The idle mind is the devil's playground.”

If David had stayed busy fighting the battles of the Lord, then he would not have had time to stroll on his roof and linger in his gaze at a bathing woman in the first place.

List some ways one could stay busy in positive ways during potential seasons of temptation.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

5. Spend time with positive people – (and avoid the negative!)

“Bad company corrupts good character...” 1 Cor. 15:33

“He who walks with the wise, will become wise....” (Prov. 13:20)

“Enséñame con quien andas, y te diré quien eres...” (Popular saying in Spanish)

“Birds of a feather, flock together.”

Friendships can lead us to greatness... or to failure! We believe that Christians ought not to isolate themselves from all interaction with outsiders. Otherwise, how could they share their

faith with others! Yet common sense shows us that some friendships tend to lead us towards sin, and require that we put a healthy distance.

Take note of a couple acquaintances who “bring out the best” in you.

1. _____
2. _____



Think of a couple who “bring out the worst!”

6. Be transparent – walk in the light and avoid shadows

As a rule, temptation thrives in darkness and anonymity. We feel that no one will notice a sin we commit, and the temptation has greater “pull.”

We must confess our struggles to a spiritually mature brother in Christ – *before giving in!*

Note down the names of three individuals you know who are appropriate to receive a confession from you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

7. Set up safeguards

To avoid falling off a balcony, we set up a railing. Likewise in the Christian life: If we are serious about avoiding sin, then we must establish a margin in our lives that makes sinning that much more difficult to accomplish. These safeguards make falling into sin less likely.

Avoid shadows – situations of anonymity



“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.... Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them... For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret...” Ephesians 5:8-12

Situations in which no one knows you or sees you tend to provide easier access to temptation.

Examples...

The man who struggles with internet porn ---- Remove the computer from private places.

The young woman tempted to immorality --- Live with a Christian female room-mate

Ex – alcoholic ---- Avoid neighborhoods or bars where you used to drink

The gossip ---- Avoid phone conversations with certain friends

Final Example for Review: Compulsive Shopping – “Shopaholic”



Materialistic Matilda

Poor Matilda. Every time she feels anxious, sad, and lonely or under stress, she goes shopping! She buys sweaters. She buys jewelry. She buys shoes. She buys purses. She buys, buys, buys and buys more!!! Her credit card debt is through the roof and she cannot get a loan to buy a car – let alone a house! Poor Matilda. She feels she just cannot resist the temptation to spend money. Sometimes she goes to the mall to “kill time” when she feels lonely. She promises herself she will not buy anything, but always leaves with her arms full of bags! Especially when she spends time with her friends on Friday night, they go shopping together. Can you share some advice, based on this lesson, to help Matilda to avoid this temptation?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

