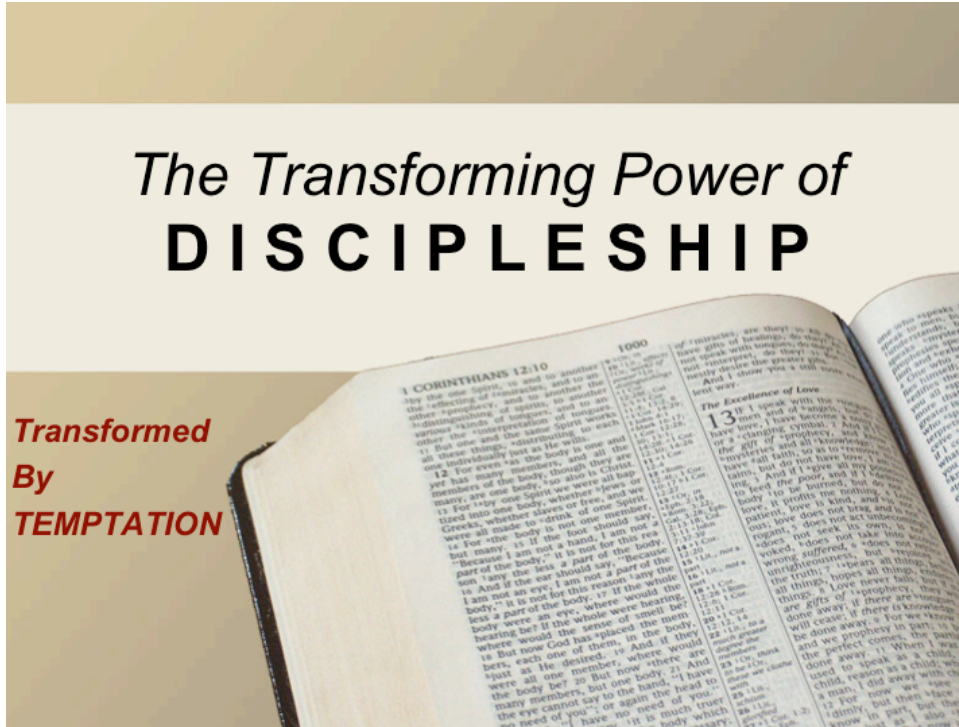


The Transforming Power of DISCIPLESHIP

Transformed
By
TEMPTATION



- Every one of us fights internal battles against Temptations
- There are thousands of different kinds of Temptations known to man, and you may have several different ones that you are battling within your heart
- Sometimes the roar of the battle is so loud you can barely hear yourself think
- Sometimes the rumbling is so deep you can't even concentrate on the reason that you are here today
- All too often the battle doesn't go the way that it should
- All too often I have sat in your seat, listening to a class, wondering what's gone wrong with my life
- Wondering why I am continually beset with so many Temptations
- I don't want to think about them so much
 - I want them to simply go away and leave me alone
- ***But, constantly I think about them!***

- I find myself stuck in this continual cycle
- Me, not wanting to think about all of these Temptations
 - And me, continually doing so
- Paul was very familiar with this struggle, and he speaks about it in the infamous passage in Romans 7...

- **SLIDE**

- Romans 7:15-19 (NIV)

- 15) I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.
- 16) And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.
- 17) ***As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.***
- 18) I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.
- 19) For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, **the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing.**

- ***The evil that I do not want to do – this is what I keep on doing!***

- Paul actually describes the Battle within himself as if his Temptations have a mind of their own

- **SLIDE**

- Romans 7:20-23 (NIV)

- 20) Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.
- 21) So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.
- 22) For in my inner being I delight in God's law;
- 23) but I see **another law at work in the members of my body**, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

- Paul understood that there was this force within him that was so powerful it influenced almost all of his actions

- ***And so, I asked myself this question...***

- I know that the Hope that we have been given calls us to partake in the Divine Nature
- But, this will only occur by being changed, by being transformed into something Godly
- ***So, why DO I have to battle with so many Temptations every day?***
- That's when it hit me...
- God actually uses Temptation to transform me into the kind of person that He wants me to be
- Of course, he uses the faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance to develop us into Godly people
- Of course, we are Transformed by the power of the Truth, and the influence of His Ecclesia...

- **SLIDE**

- ***But, God also uses TEMPTATION to Transform us...***

- I'm not saying that God wants to Tempt us...
 - God doesn't want to see us fail

- **SLIDE**

- God does allow Temptation into our life in order to cause us to **GROW**
- God doesn't allow Temptation to come into our life simply to torment and torture us

- **SLIDE**

- God wants **GOOD** to come of it!
 - God wants us to tackle it head on, and learn from it
 - God wants us to grow, to change, and to be transformed by our Temptations!
 - To be victorious in our battle against sin and to emerge from that battle stronger people

- **SLIDE**

- Character development always involves a **CHOICE**

- **SLIDE**

- Temptation is the ultimate expression of **FREE WILL**

- **SLIDE**

- We always see Temptation as an opportunity to **SIN**

- **SLIDE**

- But, every temptation is also an opportunity to do **GOOD!**
- Every time you choose to do good, instead of sin, you are growing in the character of Christ
- Developing in us the Character of Christ is the real reason behind Temptation
 - It's not to trick us
 - It's not to trip us up
- In order for us then to succeed at this task, it's important that we clearly understand the Character of Christ
- Paul probably gives the best description of the Character of Christ, when he speaks about the gifts of the Spirit...

- **SLIDE**

- Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

- 22) But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**
- 23) **gentleness** and **self-control**. Against such things there is no law.

- These nine qualities are a beautiful description of Jesus Christ
 - To have the fruit of the Spirit is to be like Christ
- But, God doesn't give us the fruit of the Spirit instantly
 - It's not like praying at the side of your bed one night, and waking up the next morning a changed person
- Fruit always matures and ripens slowly...

- God develops the fruit of the Spirit in you by allowing you to experience circumstances in which you are tempted to express the exact **OPPOSITE** quality

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **LOVE**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us around some **UNLOVELY** people
 - It doesn't take any character to love people who are lovely and loving to you
 - God wants to stretch you, to cause you to grow
 - To do that He is going to put you around some people who are simply nasty, and ask you to love them

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **JOY**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us in the midst of **SORROW**
 - Happiness depends on external circumstances, but Joy is based on your relationship to God
 - Not every event or circumstance in your life is going to be pleasant, but that doesn't affect the feelings that you have because of your Father
 - God has forgiven us an incredible debt, and the joy produced by an understanding of that Grace is stronger than any sorrow

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **PEACE**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us in times of **CHAOS**
 - By not allowing things to go the way that we planned, and allowing times of confusion into our lives, God calls us to reach out for Peace

- Anyone can be peaceful sitting on the edge of a beautiful lake watching the sun set while on vacation
 - We learn real Peace by choosing to trust God in circumstances in which we are tempted to worry or be afraid

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **PATIENCE**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us in places where we have to **WAIT**
 - I am a very patient person, until I'm forced to do something on someone else's schedule
 - Anyone is patient as long as things are going their own way...
 - I actually find myself yelling at the car ahead of me, knowing full well that they cannot hear,

“Don't you know that I'm running late!?!”

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **KINDNESS**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us around people that are **UNDESERVING** of it
 - Being kind to the Sales Clerk that went out of their way, dug through the storage racks in the back, and found you the last yellow one is easy...
 - Being kind to the waitress who was rude, completely ignored you during the entire meal, never brought you the Ketchup, and got your bill wrong is what God really wants from you
 - Being kind to kind people is no big deal... Even the Publicans do that!
 - God wants you to go out of your way to help someone
 - God wants you to go beyond your Comfort Zone
 - God wants you to reach out to someone who you normally wouldn't even associate with

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **GOODNESS**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us where it is **INCONVENIENT** to help
 - I'm always more inclined to hold a door for someone, when I am standing there waiting for someone else to come
 - Being Good when it's convenient, is not what God wants from us
 - God wants us to do good for others even when it hurts
 - God wants us to make ourselves available to help even when it's not really a good time for YOU

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **FAITHFULNESS**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us in situations where it's **EASY** to sin
 - Fear of getting caught is **not** a good motivator to help you avoid unfaithfulness
 - There is an old joke about a man that asks a woman if she will cheat on her Husband, and sleep with him for \$1,000,000
 - The woman would never consider anything like that...
 - But, \$1,000,000 is a LOT of money!
 - She thinks it over for a while, and eventually agrees
 - Then the man then asks if she will do it for \$50
 - *"What kind of woman do you think I am?,"* she replies indignantly
 - *"We've already determined what kind of woman you are,"* states the man, *"now we are simply haggling over the price."*
 - Faithfulness doesn't have a price

- Faithful people don't respond differently when others are watching, as they would when they are all alone
 - No matter if no one will get hurt, and no one will ever know...
 - You remain **FAITHFUL**

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **GENTLENESS**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us in positions of **POWER**
 - There are a few Gentle souls born into this world...
 - The rest of us need to learn about Meekness and Humility the hard way
 - God puts in positions where it's hard to be humble...
 - Situations where we have succeeded against all odds, where we excel at things that others fear to even attempt
 - Situations where we have power that we can wield upon those around us
 - Then he asks us to be Humble, and to be Meek...
 - To be Gentle with those around us

- **SLIDE**

- God teaches us **SELF-CONTROL**

- **SLIDE**

- By putting us in areas of **EXCESS**
 - A poor man takes no pride in that he has resisted the lust of buying a Ferrari
 - Self-Control is all about not doing things that you have the ability to do
 - The temptation comes when you have more than enough, and you still are able to control yourself
 - There are two ways to live, we always counsel newly married couples:

- You can spend less than you make
- Or you can make more than you spend
- One of these is in your control and the other isn't
- One teaches you self-control, and the other doesn't
- God uses the opposite of each fruit to allow you a choice
 - You can't claim to be **GOOD** if you have never been tempted to be **BAD**
- Every time you defeat a temptation, you become more like Jesus!
- The most important step is **Defeating Temptation**
- In order to successfully defeat Temptation, I think that it is important to fully come to understand where your Temptations come from and how they work...
- **SLIDE**
- Although God **ALLOWS** Temptation into our life...
- **SLIDE**
 - He does **NOT** Tempt us...
- James is quite clear about that...
- **SLIDE**
- James 1:13 (NIV)
 - 13) When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, **nor does He tempt anyone**
- So, where do these rumblings deep in our heart originate?
 - Don't look out the window to see the Devil...
 - Simply look in the mirror!
- Keep reading...
- **SLIDE**

- James 1:14-15 (NIV)

- 14) but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is **drawn away** and enticed.
- 15) Then, after desire has **conceived**, it gives birth to sin; and **sin**, when it is full-grown, gives birth to **death**.

- I love James' description of the process, because it's almost a mathematical equation for him...

- And the process is always the same...

- **SLIDE**

- 1) First, you are **DRAWN AWAY** by your own evil desires
 - You begin to doubt what God has said about sin. Maybe it's not wrong.

Maybe we won't die if we eat of the tree...

- **SLIDE**

- 2) Then you **ADD** something to the temptation in order for it to conceive
 - My Grandpa always said, ***"It takes two to Tango"***
 - The evil desires that drag you away and entices you are not the problem
 - Without conception, it is lifeless, stillborn, dead...
 - You are the one to bring it to life!
 - If you don't do anything to add to it, then it does not conceive

- **SLIDE**

- 3) And after conception, it gives birth to **SIN**
 - Every time
 - Not sometimes...
 - Every time.
 - You can't play with this fire and not get burned

• **SLIDE**

4) And Sin Gives Birth to **DEATH**

- Unchecked, unstopped, uncontrolled, your Temptations will lead to sin, and your sins will kill you

• It's clear, a simple mathematical progression...

- But, how then do we control this process?

- How do we stop it from beating us?

• ***Stop giving in to the Temptations!***

• **SLIDE**

• Galatians 6:7-8 (NIV)

7) Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

8) **The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction**; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

• It's no secret

- It's no great mystery

• Garbage In

- Garbage Out

• **WE ALONE** are the biggest source of our own Temptations

- And **WE ALONE** can take steps to overcome those Temptations

• So, here are 7 steps to helping you overcome Temptations

SLIDE

1 - Refuse to be **DEMORALIZED**

• Many Brothers and Sisters feel ashamed just for being tempted

- Many feel guilty that they aren't somehow "beyond" temptation

- ***This is a misunderstanding of spiritual maturity***
 - ***You will never outgrow temptation***
- Be realistic about the inevitability of temptation
 - You will never be able to avoid it completely
 - Don't be shocked, or surprised, or discouraged by it
- Don't be ashamed that you are facing the same temptations again and again...
 - Shame, Guilt and Discouragement only serve to weaken your resolve

SLIDE

- ***It is NOT a SIN to be tempted!***

SLIDE

- Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)
 - 15) 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**.
- Temptation only becomes a sin when you give in to it
 - Don't be caught off guard thinking it could never happen to you

SLIDE

2 - Recognize your PATTERN of temptations and be prepared for them

- There are certain situations that make you more vulnerable to temptation than others
 - These situations are unique to each person's weaknesses
- Don't think that because you don't have another Brother's weaknesses that you don't have to worry about your own
 - I've **NEVER** been tempted to gamble
 - But, there are plenty of thin gamblers out there...

SLIDE

- Learn what circumstances make you the most **VULNERABLE** and learn to **AVOID** them
 - Continually ask yourself questions:
 - *When am I most tempted?*
 - *What specific time of the day?*
 - *Where am I most tempted?*
 - *At Work? At Home? In Hotels? Hanging out with the Neighbors?*
 - *Who is with me when I am most tempted?*
 - *Friends? Coworkers?*
 - *How do I usually feel when I am most tempted?*
 - *Tired? Bored? Lonely? Depressed? Stressed?*
- Identify your typical **PATTERN** of temptation and **AVOID** those situations

SLIDE

- James 4:7 (NIV)
 - 7) Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you.
- As Christadelphians we understand the concept of the Devil correctly...
 - So, don't miss the message of that verse!

SLIDE

3 - **REQUEST God's help**

- God wants you to call on him in times of temptation, and He will rescue you
 - Unfortunately, sometimes you don't really want to be helped
 - You sometimes want to give in to temptation even though you know it's wrong

- Sometimes you are actually embarrassed to ask God for help because you keep giving in to the same temptation over and over

SLIDE

- *But, God is everlasting, and His patience endures forever*

SLIDE

- *God doesn't get **IRRITATED** or **BORED** when you continually come back to Him for help*
- Every time you stand up against temptation, you become more like Christ
- Always remember that there is a way out

SLIDE

- 1st Corinthians 10:13 (Message)
 - 13) No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that **God will never let you down**; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it.
- It may seem that a problem is too overpowering for you to bear, but that is not true

SLIDE

4 - REFOCUS your attention

- Trying to block a thought only drives it deeper into your memory
 - *You can't stop thinking about something by trying not to*
 - You've all played the Pink Elephant game, right?
- Instead the scriptures tells us to refocus our thoughts on something else

SLIDE

- *Temptation begins by **CAPTURING** your attention*

SLIDE

- *What gets your attention **AROUSES** your emotions*

SLIDE

- *Your emotions **ACTIVATE** your behavior and you act on what you feel*
- Ignoring a temptation, therefore, is far more effective than fighting it

SLIDE

- *Once your mind is on something else, the temptation loses its power*
- This is the principle of **Replacement**
- One of my favorite parables tells of an evil spirit that finally leaves a man, and wanders around in the desert for a while
- When it decides to return to the man it left, it finds him unoccupied and swept clean
- ***So, does it decide to stay away because the man has finally cleaned everything up?***
- **NO!** It goes out and finds seven friends to come join it
 - And the final condition of that man is worse than the first

SLIDE

- Philippians 4:8 (NIV)
 - 8) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think about such things.**

SLIDE

5 - **REVEAL your struggle to a Godly friend**

- You don't have to broadcast your temptations to the whole world (**please!**)
 - But, you do need to have at least one person with whom you can honestly share your struggles with
- This has to be stressed:

SLIDE

- If you are **LOSING** the battle against a persistent bad habit, addiction or temptation

- If you are stuck in a cycle of Good Intention - Failure - Guilt

SLIDE

- You will **NOT** get better on your own!
- Some temptations are only overcome with the help of a partner who prays for you, encourages you, and holds you accountable
 - Accountability is the key to defeating the most heinous of sins – Pornography, Alcoholism, Child Abuse
- God's plan for your growth involves your Brothers and Sisters
 - Don't remove yourself from that plan by being too private or fearful

SLIDE

- James 5:16 (Message)
 - 16) Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and **pray for each other** so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with.

SLIDE

- **Don't REPRESS it!**

SLIDE

- **CONFESS it!**
- Hiding your hurt only makes it worse
 - Problems grow in the dark and shrink in the light

SLIDE

- **You are only as sick as your SECRETS**

SLIDE

- Stop **PRETENDING** that you are perfect and share your inner self with a friend

- The main reason you hide your faults is pride
 - You want others to think that you have everything “under control”
 - But, you can’t...

SLIDE

- Willpower and personal resolutions are **NOT ENOUGH**

SLIDE

6 - **FIGHT** the Temptation

- That seems like an obvious statement, but often it gets lost
- *You are in a war here...*
 - The Bible describes your life as a spiritual battle against evil forces
 - The Scriptures uses terms like, fight, conquer, strive and overcome
- You are supposed to **fight back**, not simply resign yourself to defeat

SLIDE

- Get **AGGRESSIVE** in your battle against temptation and sin

SLIDE

- Use the Word of God as your **WEAPON**
 - In the wilderness, every time Jesus was tempted, he quoted scripture
 - He didn’t argue the point, he didn’t debate it, he simply shot off a round of God’s Word

SLIDE

- Memorize Bible verses, so your weapon won’t be empty at the time of the battle

SLIDE

7 - **REALIZE** your vulnerability

- *Remember that it is easier to stay out of temptation than it is to get out of it*

- Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are strong, and place yourself in tempting situations
- Don't ever get confident that you will do the right thing

SLIDE

- **Develop a *HEALTHY APPRECIATION* of your own wickedness**
- I remember when Brother Harry Tenant was very old, and I heard him speak for the last time, he said, *"The older I get, the more I am acutely aware of my own sinfulness."*
 - Realize your own vulnerability to sin – And stay away from it!

SLIDE

- **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you**
 - Take control of your thoughts, and they will no longer control you!

SLIDE

- 2nd Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)
 - 5) We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive every thought** to make it **obedient to Christ**.
 - That is how we Transform ourselves
 - By Transforming our Thoughts!

SLIDE

- God allows **TEMPTATION** into our lives **NOT** because He wants to **PUNISH** us

SLIDE

- But, because He wants to **CHANGE** us into better **SERVANTS**

SLIDE

- He wants to **TRANSFORM** us into **DISCIPLES** of Christ