

40 Weeks of Purpose

Week 27

Defeating Temptation

- The next 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...
- Although God allows Temptation into our life...
 - He does not Tempt us...
- James is quite clear about that...
- 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?
- Keep reading...
- James 1:14-15 (NIV)
 - 14) but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged 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
- And the process is always the same...
 - 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...
 - 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
- The Evil Beast within your heart that roars to be fed is not the issue
- Without conception, it is lifeless, stillborn, dead...
- You are the one to bring it to life by feeding it!

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
- If you feed the Beast, it will rise up and bring sin into your life

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

- Unchecked, unstopped, uncontrolled, your Beasts will kill you

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

- But, how then do we control this process?
- How do we stop it from killing us?

• 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

• Feed your temptations, and they will win

- They win, and you lose

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

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
- ***It is not a sin to be tempted***
- 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

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...
- 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

• James 4:7 (NIV)

7) Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

• You might understand the Devil differently, but do not miss the message of that verse

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

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

- ***God doesn't get irritated or bored when you continually come back to Him***

• Every time you stand up against temptation, you become more like Christ

- Always remember that there is a way out

- 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

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***

- Instead the scriptures tells us to refocus our thoughts on something else

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

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

- ***Your emotions ACTIVATE your behavior and you act on what you feel***

- Ignoring a temptation, therefore, is far more effective than fighting it

- ***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

- ***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

- 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.

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:
- 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
 - 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
- God's plan for your growth involves your Brothers and Sisters
- 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.

- ***Don't repress it!***

- ***Confess it!***

- Hiding your hurt only makes it worse
 - Problems grow in the dark and shrink in the light
- ***You are only as sick as your secrets***
- ***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...***
 - ***Willpower and personal resolutions are not enough***

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
- Get **AGGRESSIVE** in your battle against temptation and sin
- 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 simply shot off a round of God's Word
- Memorize Bible verses, so your weapon won't be empty at the time of the battle

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
 - ***Develop a HEALTHY APPRECIATION of your own wickedness***
 - ***Realize your own vulnerability to sin***
- James 4:7-10 (NIV)
 - 7) Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you.
 - 8) Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
 - 9) Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.
 - 10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.
- Now we get down to it...
- ***Resist the devil, and he will flee from you***
- Don't give those thoughts a moment of your time
 - Don't give them a even a fleeting thought

• 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.

• ***Make every thought obedient to Christ...***

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WEEK:

Every temptation is an opportunity to do good

VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:

• Romans 8:28 (NIV)

28) *In all things God works for the good of those who love him*

QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:

What Christlike character can I develop by defeating my most common temptation?