

STUDIES IN TEMPTATION

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Submitted to Dr. Abramson as a mentoring research assignment, Fiji, 1997-98

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Lesson One

All of us experience temptations throughout life. It is my desire that through these lessons I can help you to be able to see a temptation coming and overcome it. I am writing to you about things that I have gone through and have had to learn to overcome as you do in certain areas.

(1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV) *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*

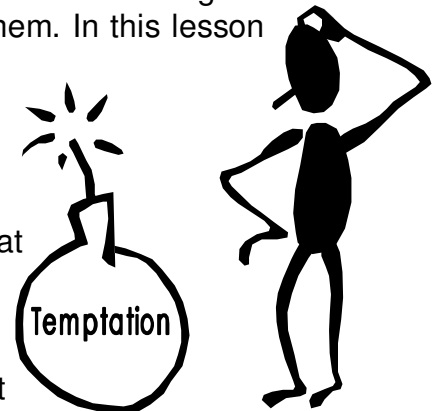
God is faithful and is an ever-present help in times of need. With every temptation there is a way of escape and God will provide it, but you have to choose to take the escape He provides for you.

There are many areas in which Satan tempts us and in the following lessons we are going to study those and see how to overcome them. In this lesson we will focus on what temptation is.

What is Temptation?

The dictionary describes temptation as "something that tries to persuade by the prospect of pleasure or advantage."

Before any of us sin, there is always a temptation. It was a temptation that enticed Adam and Eve to sin. Before they sinned, there was a temptation – that temptation was to eat of a forbidden fruit.



(Genesis 3:1- 5 NKJV) *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" {2} And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; {3} "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" {4} Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. {5} For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Being tempted is not a sin. We can look throughout the Bible and find great men of God who were tempted. Some of these men gave into the temptation and

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others did not. Throughout these lessons, we will be looking at many of them. Jesus Himself was tempted and He was without sin.

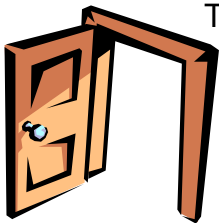
(Hebrews 4:15 NKJV) *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."*

Jesus went through the same temptations you have and He knows how to help you through them.

You need to deal with the temptations that come against you because if they go ignored and begin to create sinful action, they will blow up and cause you and others many harms. **No one sins in a vacuum!** Whatever you do will always affect someone else. This is what happened to Adam and Eve. Temptation's aim is to get you to enter into sin. That is why you are tempted.

Symbols of Temptation

1. A Door

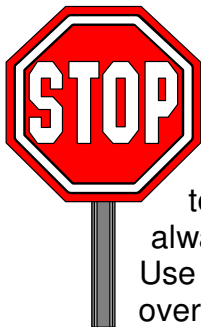


Temptation is a door. This door opens up to sin. If you decide to open that door, then you make an entrance for sin to enter. It is up to you to keep the door closed and you do this by not giving into your temptation. We will discuss how to keep the door closed in later lessons. Many times we talk about not letting a salesman get his foot in the door because it takes a lot to get rid of him. It is the same way with sin. Once it has its foot in the door, it will put up a fight to stay, and this guy wants to sell you something that is a lot worse than a cheap vacuum cleaner! It is important that we never give the devil any foothold in our lives.

(Ephesians 4:27 NKJV) *"nor give place (foothold) to the devil."*

How could you give the devil a foothold or place in your life? _____

2. A Sign



How can temptations be signs to you? Temptations are like stop signs. They blaze out, "STOP" or "Danger". When a temptation comes, you always have the choice to give in or stand against it. Temptation's aim is to get you to enter into sin. Whenever you are tempted, it will always try to get you to go against God's Word. It will always try to get you to sin. Temptations are the "STOP" signs to sin! Use the signs to your advantage! Instead of letting them overcome you, overcome them by using them! When a temptation comes, say, "Ah, there is another stop sign. I don't need to go that way. Now which way to should I

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go?” Satan always overplays his hand and you can really anger Him by using temptations to overcome.

Let's look at Joseph and how he used the temptation as a sign and overcame!

(Genesis 39:6-9 NKJV) *“Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. {7} And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” {8} But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. {9} There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”*

Joseph recognized the temptation, (his master's wife) and stopped – did not go anywhere further with it. If you read on into the story of Joseph, you will see that at one point he ran away from her. Joseph used the temptation to his own advantage and did not sin.

What could some other signs of temptation say? _____

3. A Bomb



Temptations are dangerous like bombs. If you hang around them long enough they will blow up and you will be caught in the middle of the explosion. If you were in a war and someone on the other side of the battlefield threw a bomb at you and it landed at your feet, what would you do? Would you try to run or jump, doing anything you could to get away, or would you sit there and admire the spark on the lit fuse, waiting to see what the explosion looked like? Maybe you would wait to see if, just perhaps, it would not blow up. Is that what you would do?

Describe how you would react. _____

A good example of this is Ananias.

(Acts 5:5 NKJV) *“Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.”*

This man lied to the Holy Spirit. He could have told the truth, but he gave into the temptation and it blew up in his face. He lost his life because of it.

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Temptations are dangerous and should be dealt with as quickly as possible. The longer you are around them, the more attached you will become to them. Your attachment will end up causing you and others harm.

4. A Tasty Treat



Notice the picture. Here is this big fish, just swimming along thinking about the good-looking bass it had just seen swim by. Suddenly he sees this big worm in the water, just sitting there squiggling and squirming. "Hmmm, I have not had lunch yet and I am really hungry", it thinks. It opens its mouth and... I am sure that you understand what happens next. Many times temptation looks very tasty to us, but underneath that beauty and attraction is something deadly and costly.

Samson found out how costly it was to give into temptation.

(Judges 16:21 NKJV) *"Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison."*

Samson was not even supposed to be with the Philistine woman, but he gave in to the temptation of it. She looked good and desirable, but underneath was something that cost him his eyes and eventually his life. Temptations look good to you. You will very rarely be tempted with something that does not look good to you because it will have no effect on you. You are tempted in the areas of your weakness. We'll call this fish Samson.



What are some tasty treats that are deadly? _____

Final Questions:

1. Find ten more examples of people that were tempted in the Bible. How many of them gave into the temptation and how many overcame them?
2. How did each of the people that overcame the temptations do it? How did the others fail? What should they not have done?
3. In your own words, define temptation as it comes against you. How does it affect you? What symbols could you use that would be effective in helping you see and overcome those temptations? See if you can come up with more symbols for your own personal use.

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