

# STUDIES IN TEMPTATION

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

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## Lesson Two

### Where Does Temptation Come From?

Some may think that temptation **only** comes from the devil or his demons. This is not true. If this were true, then who tempted Satan in the beginning?

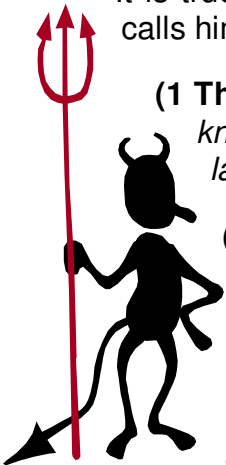


**(Isaiah 14:13 - 14 NKJV)** *"For you (Satan) have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; {14} I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"*

Satan was tempted from within! This may come as a shock to you, but many times you tempt yourself! Later we will talk about how we tempt ourselves. Sometimes when temptations come, it is because of our flesh and our carnal mind.

### Satan Is the Tempter

It is true that Satan, also known as the devil, does tempt us. In fact, the Bible calls him the tempter.



**(1 Th 3:5 NKJV)** *"For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain."*

**(Mat 4:3 NKJV)** *"Now when the tempter came to Him (Jesus), he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'"*

We know that the Bible is referring to Satan here because it says in

**(Luke 4:13 NKJV)** *"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."*

God greatest desire is to have you close to Him and in constant fellowship with Him. Throughout the Bible, it says that you are to pray always. There is much importance in prayer and we will talk about that in later lessons. Satan does not want you to have a relationship with God. He will use temptations to try to pull you away from God. When you sin, you step back from God and break your communication with Him.

You can see that this is what Satan tried to do with Jesus.

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**(Matthew 4:8-9 NKJV)** *“Again, the devil took Him (Jesus) up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. {9} And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”*

Satan tempted Jesus to look away from God. If Satan can destroy your relationship with God then he will have no problem destroying you.

**(John 10:10 NKJV)** *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”*

**Satan’s greatest desire is that you will look away from God and focus on the things that he brings to you.**

Look at how Jesus answered the devil’s temptation:

**(Mat 4:10 NKJV)** *“Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”*

Jesus did not let Satan divert His attention from God. He maintained His focus. **Satan could never get the upper hand on Jesus because with every temptation He would always go back to His Father.** Catch the secret – if you go to your Heavenly Father in times of temptation, He will help you through.

**(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 has given you authority over Satan and every evil work that he might bring against you!

### Your Flesh!



Yes, believe it or not, your flesh brings temptations to you!  
How can this be, you may ask? Good question.

Many times, we try to blame everything on the devil.

**We usually try to do this because then it means that we do not have to take responsibility for our actions.**

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Paul himself had trouble with his flesh and he wrote some very good things that we ought to take a look at.

**(Romans 7:14-22 NKJV)** *"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. {15} For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. {16} If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. {17} But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. {18} For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. {19} For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. {20} Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. {21} I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. {22} For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."*

Paul had trouble doing the things that he did not want to do. Notice that he does not mention, or even hint that the devil brought temptation against him, BUT he does talk about his flesh! Your flesh is your soul, or your will, mind, and emotions. Paul said that there was part of him that did not want to do the things that were wrong. **If you are enjoying your sin, you need to take a close look at yourself and ask if you have really made Jesus lord of your life, or are you "playing" church to TRY to escape from hell!** Paul said that there were two laws in him (or two contrasting desires). One is the desire to do as God says and the other is to do as the flesh says. Notice verse 22 – Paul says that his spirit loves the law of God (or what God tells him to do.) However, even he had trouble overcoming some of the temptations he was faced with! Paul said there was something inside him that was evil – something that wanted to go against God's law or will, and that is the flesh.

In the next chapter, Paul states something that is very relevant to what he said here.

**(Romans 8:7 NKJV)** *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."*

When you receive Jesus into your heart, your spirit is transformed and made alive unto God. Even so, you still have your flesh and your mind that must be transformed to the image of God! Without being transformed, it will never be under the lordship of Jesus Christ and it will be open to all kind of attacks.



**(Romans 12:2 NKJV)** *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

**If your mind is not transformed then you will NEVER be able to prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God!**

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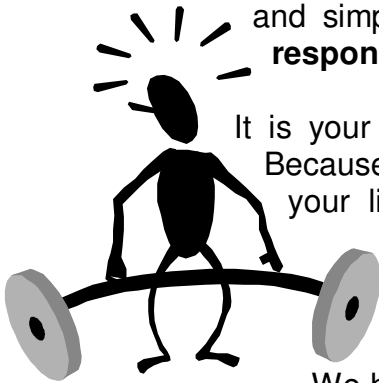
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Paul said that he did things that he did not want to do and did not do the things that he wanted to do. He realized that this happened because of the lack of renewing of the mind (see Romans 12:2).

**(Romans 8:6 NKJV)** *“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”.*

It is our mind that tries to control us and tries to override the spirit. If your mind is not transformed by being renewed then you will turn from God! That is the pure and simple fact and is clearly stated in this scripture. **You have the**

**responsibility of renewing your mind!**



It is your flesh and unrenewed mind that will bring temptations to you. Because you are not perfect and you are human, you will have areas in your life that are not totally under the lordship of Christ. As you continue to become more and more like Christ, you will see temptations losing their powers over you. **It is the weakness of your flesh that gives temptations a place in you.**

We have talked about renewing our mind and being conformed to the image of Christ. Where is it that we become more like Christ?

**(2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NKJV)** *“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. {18} But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

It is where the Spirit of the Lord is that you are transformed to the image of Christ! **This means that you need to step into those places you recognize as being occupied by the Holy Spirit!**

## Other People

This is an interesting one to think about. Temptations can come from other people without them even trying to tempt you. Sometimes it can be people that Satan may be using or it may be an innocent incident where your flesh is attracted to something.

Let's look at an example from the Old Testament where people unknowingly presented a temptation to a young man named Gideon.

**(Judges 8:22-23 NKJV)** *“Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from*

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*the hand of Midian.” {23} But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.””*

Gideon had just finished a wonderful military movement where he banished an enemy from Israel. After this the people came to him and wanted to make him king. They said, “Rule over us and then have your son and grandson do the same.” Here was a perfect temptation set up for him, but he did not go with it. What would have happened if Gideon had let this temptation to become king affect him? Do you think that he would have been recorded in Hebrews 11?

**It is worthwhile to follow God and not what other people want you to do!**



All that we have talked about boils down to the strength of your flesh! Satan's temptations will not affect you if you don't follow your fleshly desires. **If you set your mind on following God and submitting to Him in all that you do, then you are many steps closer to overcoming!** When people bring temptations, you will be able to withstand them because you have surrendered your will to God!

### Not From God!

How many times have you heard these statements, “God is tempting me at this time.” or “God tempted me the other day.” **These are totally untrue.** God does not tempt anyone. Remember what was said in the first lesson – “Temptation's aim is to get you to enter into sin.” God will never try to get you to sin. To do so would be totally against His nature. He wants us close to Him and sin drives us away from Him. The Bible clearly teaches us that God does not tempt!

**(James 1:13-15 NKJV)** *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”*

Now, be careful that you don't get tempting and testing mixed up. God will test and allow tests to come to you. The purpose of a test is to give you the opportunity to draw you closer to God and to improve your character. No teacher gives his student a test with the desire and intention of having him fail it.

**(James 1:2-3 NKJV)** *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”*

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**(1 Peter 1:6-7 NKJV)** *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, {7} that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"*

This is a great verse. Peter is saying that even though the testings may be hard, if you go through them, your faith will be found more precious than gold. If you stick through testings, it shows how genuine your faith is and will praise and honor and glorify God! This is why James said greatly rejoice when you have tests. Your character has the chance to be improved and you can draw closer to God! That is reason enough to rejoice! For gold to become pure, it must go through the fire.

**(Gen 22:1 NKJV)** *"Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' {2} Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'"*

Talk about a difficult test! God wanted Abraham to give his only son as a sacrifice! Even though it was hard, Abraham began doing what God told him to do, up to the point of putting his son on the altar! Right before he was going to plunge the knife into his son's heart, an angel stopped him.

**(Genesis 22:16-18 NKJV)** *"and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son; {17} blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. {18} 'In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'"*

Abraham stuck through the test and began doing what God had told him to do. The final result was that because of Abraham's genuine faith all the people of the world have been blessed – Jesus came from the line of Abraham and glory is being given to Him every day (see 1 Peter 1:7)!

Look at what happened to Job after all the tests had ended.

**(Job 42:12-13 NKJV)** *"Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. {13} He also had seven sons and three daughters."*

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Job had gone through all kinds of different tests, but he did not curse God or turn away from God. Do you think that God received much glory for the way He blessed Job in the latter days?

**You must be careful in testings though, because temptations can come in the middle of them!**

**(Job 2:9 NKJV)** *"Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!""*

In the middle of the tests, Job received a temptation to curse God and turn away from Him. Yet Job said something that is so important:

**(Job 13:15 NKJV)** *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."*

Job never stopped trusting and serving God, no matter how bad his situations became. In the end of Job's tests, he was closer to God, his character had improved and God blessed him with more than he ever had!

Never let anyone tell you that God wants to tempt you. He wants to give you all the opportunities to draw closer to Him. We serve a God that is relational. He wants His children to know Him in an intimate way. **Rejoice in the tests that come your way because they will bring glory to the One that saved you!**

### Final Questions:

1. Identify three times when Satan has brought temptation against you, three times when your flesh has tempted you and three times, each, when people have willfully or unintentionally tempted you.
2. What did you do in each case? How could you have overcome the times you failed?
3. What can you recognize and use again from the times you succeeded?
4. Find five other examples in the Bible are there were someone was tempted by Satan, their flesh, or people. How did they fail or overcome?
5. Find five examples of people that were tested by God. What was the outcome of the test? Did they draw closer to God or draw back?

*"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. {18} But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."*  
**(2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NKJV)**