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How Do I Deal With Enticing Temptations?

1 Corinthians 10:13: (NASB) *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*



You hear the word "temptation." What do you think of? For some of us it might be best to NOT answer this question out loud. For others, it might be dark chocolate or getting even or pushing the envelope or wanting to take what is not ours. In every case, temptation is directly built upon our human desires and our human desires left unfettered will continually fabricate webs of attraction entitlement and deceit. These webs are binding, sticky and tenacious and once we allow ourselves to touch them we may find ourselves too close to walk away, too weak to resist and too willing to try it out - you know, just this once!

Temptation has shattered many relationships, disrupted many positive pathways and broken the contentment of many lives. Temptation is unfortunately not only alive and well, it is being fed, fostered and flaunted by our present society! What do we do? How do we get that temptation genie back in its bottle?

First, one of the classic (apparent) contradictions of Scripture: Does God "tempt" us to test us or not? **Yes, He can and does:** Matthew 6:13: (NASB) *And do not lead us into **temptation <3986>**, but deliver us from evil.* **No, He will not:** James 1:13: (NASB) *Let no one say when he is **tempted <3985>**, I am being **tempted <3985>** by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not **tempt <3985>** anyone.*

Temptation: Strongs #3986 from 3985; a putting to proof (by experiment [of good], experience [of evil], solicitation, discipline or provocation); by implication, adversity

Tempt: Strongs #3985 to test (objectively), i.e. endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline

The words for temptation here can be taken different ways: 1 Peter 4:12: (KJV) *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to **try <3986>** you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. Here it is a proving thing, overseen by God.*

Matthew 4:1: (KJV) *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted <3985>** of the devil. This is the enticing use of the word - Satan trying to trip Jesus up.*

2 Corinthians 13:5: (KJV) ***Examine <3985>** yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

This is the scrutinizing use of the word - seriously scrutinize your thoughts and behavior.

When Jesus teaches us to pray *lead us not into temptation*, we can better understand it this way: (Source: Biblical commentary by Adam Clarke) *And lead us not into temptation - That is, bring us not in to sore trial...Bring us not in, or lead us not in. This is a mere Hebraism: God is said to do a thing which He only permits or suffers to be done. In ancient Hebrew, God is said to "do" a thing which He only permits or allows to happen.*

Matthew 6:13: (NASB) *And do not lead us into **temptation <3986>**, but deliver us from evil.* Perhaps Jesus is saying, "God, do not permit us to be in sore trials without Your hand delivering us from the evil of those trials that comes from Satan. Do not leave us in temptation, but deliver us from evil as these temptations come to us." The whole Lord's prayer is about wanting to do God's will.

Let's look at the verse we previously discussed in context with the verse before it:

James 1:12-13: (NASB) ¹²*Blessed is a man who perseveres under **trial <3986>**; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³Let no one say when he is **tempted <3985>**, I am being **tempted <3985>** by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not **tempt <3985>** anyone.*

Temptation Revelation: Temptation is a hard testing spurred on by either good or evil that challenges the very core of our character.



As Christians, our ability to face temptation grows out of our application of the basic tenets of Christianity which are all about putting God’s will and God’s way first in every area of our lives. This sounds like a simple thing to do, but in reality, it is one of the greatest challenges of our everyday discipleship, so let’s get practical!

James explains the role of our desires in our lives and the inherent temptation to follow

them: James 4:1-3: *Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members* - You are getting in your own way because you are allowing your humanity and its fallen desires to interfere with your godly fellowship. What was the source of their problems? James was talking to dedicated Christians. *You lust and do not have; so, you commit murder* - they were murdering each other’s characters by evil speaking, slander, etc. *You are envious and cannot obtain* - their fleshly desires were in the way of their spiritual growth. You cannot have both.

- Submit therefore to God.
- Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
- Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.
- Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

How do we deal with enticing temptations? We have to be thinking about something bigger. Today is September 11 and we are dealing with two major hurricanes, Harvey and Irma, that hit the United States. We see many people dedicating themselves to others. It is sad that it takes dramatic tragedy for us to refocus.

Once James explains how our unchecked desires ruin us, he then tells us the elements that make up the formula to overcome temptation in James 4:7-10.

Temptation Revelation: We are regular people with regular enticements. God is faithfully watching us and cares about us. He gives us the power to endure!

We came across an article from wikiHow.com called *How to Deal with Temptation*. Ironically, the seven steps they recommended seem to line up with James 4:7-10, so we will discuss them side-by-side.

wikiHow: Recognize potential temptation
James 4:7-10: *Submit therefore to God...*

By submitting to God, your ability to recognize temptation increases dramatically, because you are then guided by something bigger and higher than you are. Here is an example of what we are to not only avoid - we should run from it as fast as we can: 2 Samuel 11:1-2: *At the time when kings go out to battle* - why was King David not leading his men to battle? He was not where he was supposed to be. We will continually refer to him as “King” David to remind us that God never wanted Israel to have a king, knowing the trouble they can bring to the people, but they insisted. David was Israel’s second king after Saul. King David was in trouble, as his laziness or lethargy in not leading his troops positioned him for selfish thinking. He saw an attractive woman and was interested. He was not focusing on something higher. At this point he should have recognized potential temptation; submitted therefore unto God.

Our recognition of temptation is far clearer when we are focused on God’s ways:

Psalms 1:1-3: Notice how we are warned about the process: *The man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked* - First, you are walking along, going about your business. *Nor stand in the path of sinners* - Next, you are standing. You have been slowed down to a standstill by entertaining something that is not good. *Nor sit in the seat of scoffers* - Finally, you sit. You have gotten comfortable. King David allowed this process to slow him down and finally sit him down right in the middle of temptation and sin. Blessed is the man who does not go through that process of walking then standing then sitting; but rather, one whose *delight is in the law of the LORD*. Put yourself in a position where you are seeing things from God’s standpoint.

Temptation Revelation: Personal focus and attention highlight what we do NOT have and give temptation an open door to fill the void. Godly focus and attention fill us and leave no extra room!

wikiHow: Remove yourself from temptation
James 4:7-10: *...Resist the devil and he will flee from you...*



Rather than walking away, King David not only gawked at the woman, he awakened and entertained his lustful thoughts, and he as king overrode all goodness, propriety and honor and made his desire a reality. He had the opportunity to walk away but did not. He put himself in a dangerous position. **First there was the stark reality of who he desired. Every fact in this story screamed out NO!** 2 Samuel 11:3-5: Uriah was one of David's most trusted soldiers. Bathsheba was the granddaughter of one of David's most trusted advisors, Ahithophel. King David completely pushed away any thought of propriety. Of course, he was the king, right? He was entitled to do as he pleased, right? One of the problems of giving in to temptation is thinking we are "king," even though we professed Jesus to be the king of our lives. We need to be subservient to our true king and not the king of ourselves. Then there was the selfish feeding of lust and the throwing away of caution, righteousness and decency. The damage King David had now done was deep, humiliating and overflowing with consequences from this act of impropriety.

Resisting and removing ourselves opens the door to preemptive strikes against temptation:
Colossians 3:2-5

Temptation Revelation: When temptation remains in your mind, it is at least contained to a degree. When we act on our temptations the tidal wave of consequences and grief inevitably follow. Only resistance based on submission can avert this storm.

wikiHow: Be honest.

James 4:7-10: ...*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...*

Giving in to temptation steels our minds towards denial and cover up - we now live by lies: 2 Samuel 11:6-9: King David's plan failed. He brought Uriah back from the front to find out how the war was going...actually, no. King David brought him back hoping Uriah would have sex with Bathsheba to cover up her pregnancy with David. Uriah had great honor and courage. The plan would fail because honor and courage do not play temptations' games. **Where do I live when it comes to temptations in my life? Is it in the treacherous lair of my own desires or is it in God's protective shadow?** Psalms 91:1-4: *'He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty* - when you are in someone's shadow, no one can see you. We can hide away from the temptations around us because that is the only safe place.

Temptation Revelation: Giving in to temptation only produces lies, deceit and misery, while seeking God's sacred presence right here and now produces a fortress of protection and righteousness.

wikiHow: Visualize yourself resisting temptation.

James 4:7-10: ...*Cleanse your hands, you sinners;...*

Creating a picture in your mind is effective thinking. It is called "bench racing," where you visualize yourself before the race how it is supposed to go. Visualize yourself going the other direction from the temptation. If you fall a little, *cleanse your hands*. Wash it off of you immediately. Do not stop; go in the other direction.

Deceit can only produce more deceit. The temptation to cover up becomes an evil obsession: 2 Samuel 11:10-13: *I will not do this thing* - Uriah was honoring David. David wants him to have no honor because David himself has none at this point in his life. King David was now blind to honor. "I will get him to where he is not thinking as clearly." He was not only trying to cover up his own deceptive actions, but he was trying to make Uriah violate that which Uriah saw to be sacred in his heart and mind. King David's power, position and persistence were no match for simple godly honor! A high, godly and focused character will always crush the lowest of desires. If we are in a testing time or experience with grave consequences, we need to turn the reigns over to our Father, lest we bury ourselves deeper in sin.

Our theme Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13: We are not automatically different because we name the name of Christ. We have to grow into our Christianity and guard against temptations. Even though we are subject to the same temptations as everyone else, we have hope and a promise to deal with those temptations! Play and replay this Scripture in your mind again and again. *God is faithful*. Jesus said, *I have overcome the world*. If we are to follow in



his footsteps, we are to overcome our worldly desires the same way he did. We will make mistakes and fall, but we need to keep getting up and eventually overcome so we can prove our loyalty and faithfulness to him. This is the pattern given to us, and there is no other template laid out for us in the Scriptures. Even the Apostle Paul said, *Follow me as I follow Christ Jesus.*

Temptation Revelation: Once we have stepped into temptation, the choices that it presents us with become grimmer. God promised us HIS care and to run to Him, while difficult, is our best choice!

wikiHow: Think of the long-term consequences
James 4:7-10: *...and purify your hearts, you double-minded...*

The darkness of a mind overtaken in temptation and bent on deception cannot be overstated! 2 Samuel 11:14-16: King David utterly lost his way in his obsession to protect his personal power and reputation. Because all his other fabrications did not work, he would murder Uriah and make it look like a battle casualty. How low did he go? (What must Joab have been thinking?) The necessary long-term purification of our minds can only come to us through humility! King David did not have humility at this point in his life. 1 Peter 5:6-8

Temptation Revelation: Succumbing to temptation fixes our minds on the immediate circumstance. We MUST re-fix our minds on the big picture and forcefully cast our issues to our benevolent Father.

wikiHow: Distract yourself
James 4:7-10: *...Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom...*

This puts yourself in the serious mindset of saying, "I cannot violate God's trust in me." *Be miserable and mourn and weep* - when we have violated that trust, we should be miserable and mourn and weep! We need to show God we are sorry for such things. King David was *not* sorry. He was still bent on hiding what he had done. **King David's distraction techniques were to cover up his wrong and not to change his own heart:** 2 Samuel 11:17,18, 23-25: Instead of mourning for all he had shattered, David issued hollow words to Joab to continue his cover-up. Mastering temptation only comes through strong and serious focus upon God's way. There is no middle ground. We are not strong enough by ourselves to reason ourselves out of temptation. We are only strong enough when we use God's reasoning and Christlike thinking to get us through.

Temptation Revelation: The results of feeding temptation are starkly evil, but the results of fighting temptation are dramatically glorious!

wikiHow: Do not give yourself a choice
James 4:7-10: *...Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you...*

King David's humbling finally came as a result of God's hand being heavy upon him! He had no choice: 2 Samuel 12:1-9: It is much easier for us to see the evil in someone else's actions rather than the evil of our own. Sometimes we need a Nathan in our lives who has the courage to tell us, *Thou art the man.* Eventually, David repented and God was able to forgive him. **God can change us and will change us as long as we become willing to receive that change:** James 1:17-18: We can take great solace in the unchanging word of truth that can deliver us through temptation.

Temptation Revelation: God's power can and will overwhelm temptation in any stage if we would only let it. We simply need the humility, focus and passion to LET HIM overrule our experience!

Temptation is alive and well in our lives. We must fight it so we can stand for things that are good, righteous and godly in a world that is dark and miserable.

*So, how do I deal with enticing temptations?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*