

"Triumph Over Temptation"

All of us face temptation, which tests our character and our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we are exploring how we can overcome our temptations. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Psalm 5 and verse 4 describes our God: "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you." God's word helps us to understand the great struggles of our lives. Temptations are all around us, and we must become aware of their challenges and how we can overcome them. God blesses us in Scripture with the strength and the strategies that we need to fight through our temptations and remain pure in thought and in life. We must trust God's wisdom, for He knows not only the ways of the devil but also how to defeat their seduction. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Temptation by its very nature is a trial or test. God doesn't tempt us, but this world holds many temptations. When we're tempted to sin, we're choosing either to follow the Lord or to fall to all of the schemes of the devil. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." With the Lord's help we can win this personal struggle. We must be prepared for this moral and spiritual battle, because we're fighting for our souls.

Paul urges us in Ephesians 6:10 to 13, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm."

We offer this study free on overcoming temptation! If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

We'll now worship in song, read from James 1:12 to 15, and explore how to triumph over temptation.

Our reading today comes from James, chapter 1, beginning in verse 12. And we'll be looking at how we are being tested, and how we should live for the Lord. "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I'm being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he's carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." Yes, temptation and sin is a big deal.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father help us in those times of testing, that we may do what is right. Father we know that our own pleasures tempt us, help us to do what is right when it is difficult, but help us to love You and to serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen."

To overcome our temptations, we must first understand temptation and how it works. The tempter, the devil, uses our passions and pleasures to blind us to the true cost of sin. Sin will deceive you, enslave you, harden your heart, and cost your soul. Make no mistake; sin is your enemy and doesn't want you to serve God or to be saved. Satan promises you temporary pleasures but robs you of

God's eternal promises. The devil may promise you the world, but he wants to steal your soul. The devil is never your friend.

Temptations are tests. We're tempted by our desires, but we choose whether to give in to temptation. Now being tempted is the test but not the sin. Giving in to the temptation is the sin. Hebrews 4 and verse 15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Many give in to temptation with no struggle and sin against God, but like Jesus you can choose righteousness over sin. You can overcome your desires.

If you wish to overcome, first take responsibility for yourself. Stop blaming God, stop blaming others, stop blaming nature, and stop making excuses. Until you're honest with yourself before God, you'll continue to lie to yourself. And when you ignore your spiritual battle with your own desires, you're allowing your desires to defeat you. 1 John 1, verses 8 to 10 says, that "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Second, stop associating with things that will lead you astray. Control your heart, your eyes, and your thoughts. If you walk through mud, you'll get muddy. If you flirt with sin, you'll start practicing it. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 33 says, "Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals." Proverbs 22 and verse 3, says, that "The prudent sees danger and he hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it." Don't flirt with sin or let it draw you in. James 1:14 says, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." And so we must use our heads, and count the cost of giving in to our desires.

Third, if you wish to overcome temptation, fill your heart and soul with Scripture. Psalm 119 verse 11 says, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." Again, Psalm 119 verse 114, he says "You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word." The best guard against the devil's lies is to know the truth found in Scripture. Satan's whole history is one of lying. He lied to Adam and Eve saying "You will surely not die!" Jesus said in John 8:44 that the devil was a liar from the beginning. And Satan lies in order to seduce people into sin. He wants you to believe his lie and to make you think that God is keeping you from the happiness that you deserve. Frankly, it's the devil who robs you of happiness. God wants to bless you, but He wants to bless you in righteousness, not sin.

Many believe some common lies that Satan spreads. Now don't be deceived. You'll hear things like: "There is no God." "We can't know if God exists." "Or, God doesn't care." "Or the Bible isn't trustworthy." "Or the church is only interested in what it can get out of you." "Or Christians are hypocrites." "Or there is no hell; or everyone will be saved eventually." "Or you can sin and get away with it." "Or God won't judge us."

Or the devil might say as he tempts us, "Well just a little won't hurt." "Or no one will know." "You aren't responsible for your sins; you were born that way." "Or an unborn baby is not a person but mere tissue." "Or God didn't create us; we evolved from lower forms of life." You see, lie after lie comes our way, and many naively swallow it rather than take responsibility for their behavior.

The way to the truth so that you can refute the devil's lies is to know and use the Word of God. Paul said in Acts 20, verse 32, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Bible study is not merely to know God's will; it protects us from lies and reassures us of the truth. Psalm 119 verse 24

says, that "Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors." Again Psalm 119:104 says, "I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path."

Fourth, take control of what your mind focuses upon. Philippians 4, verses 8 to 9 says, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you've learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." What you focus on is what you treasure. If you focus on sin, you'll look for opportunities to sin, but if you hunger for righteousness, you'll be filled with the blessing of God. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." So focus on God! Love and respect Him! Treasure Him!

Isaiah 51 verse 7 says, "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and the quarry from which you were dug." We came from God and we belong to Him. Joseph overcame his temptation by remembering who he was and how he belonged to God. Genesis 39:6-9 says: Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he's put everything that he has in my charge. He's not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Awe, he knew the cost of sin.

Job 28:28 says, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding." Scripture often speaks of "fearing the Lord." Well this is a positive respect for the holiness and glory of God, realizing that He means what He says. It's the kind of respect that does not try God or fail to take Him seriously.

Fifth, guard your heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Psalm 15 verses 1 and 2 says, "O LORD, who may abide in Thy tent? Who may dwell on Thy holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart." The Lord Jesus helps us to understand how the heart affects our lives and our souls. Jesus said in Luke 6:43 to 45, "For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit; nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what's good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

Two kinds of birds fly over the California deserts: the hummingbird and the vulture. Now all the vulture can see is rotting meat because that is what it looks for. It thrives on that diet. But the hummingbird ignores the carcasses and the smelly flesh of dead animals. Instead, it looks for the tiny blossoms of the cactus flowers. It buzzes around until it finds the colorful blooms almost hidden from view by the rocks. And each bird finds what it's looking for. What are you looking for? Better still what are you finding? What you're finding tells what you're really looking for. Your expectations will determine your outcome.

Sixth, resist the devil. James 4:7 to 8 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God (that's the foundation). 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." Double-minded people have never fully submitted to God. They have half their mind set on the flesh, while the other half is on God. They want to serve both and are most unhappy, because they know they can't please

either one. We must decide to serve the Lord and resist the devil. We must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. We must honestly look at ourselves and correct our ways.

1 Peter 5:8 to 10 encourages us, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." When we draw close to God and resist the devil, we'll come out better in the end. And no matter how we may suffer now for our faith, the God of all grace will reassure our hearts and souls. So have faith when you're tested. God will be with you.

Seventh, and last, never forget the power of prayer. We must never sell short the power of prayer. You'll remember the Lord Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." It's difficult to give in to temptation when you're fervent in prayer to God. Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:13, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The Lord explored in Luke 21:34 to verse 36, this idea of watching ourselves and praying. He says, "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation (that is loose moral living) and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Yes, we live in a challenging time, that tempts us and tries to separate us from our God and our faith. Many of our children are deceived by the world and they're leaving the faith. Many churches are weak and closing their doors. Morally speaking, our culture is confused about the most basic matters. Our culture breeds the idea that there's no such thing as sin. And Satan has certainly pulled out all the stops attempting to defeat everything that Christians stand for, and everything that is good. He's indeed a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Sadly, many no longer know what the word of God says or are willing to follow God. They have souls that are in peril of being lost.

You're fighting temptation alone. 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13 says that God though, is with you. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but will with the temptation also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that in times of temptation You stand with us, and You help us, and You give us the strength and the wisdom to know how to defeat it. Help us Heavenly Father each day. In Jesus name, Amen."

Our greatest defense begins with a knowledge of God's word and prayer. Let's begin studying God's word daily and praying fervent prayers. Isn't it time that we got down on our knees again? We can't be the salt of the earth until we humble ourselves and revive our faith, our love for God, and our commitment to righteousness. We'll never defeat the devil who is battling us for our souls until we become "strong in the Lord." We can't save our children, if we're losing our own fight for our own souls. Hosea 4 verse 6 says, that "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, (God says) I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

These aren't the times for weak prayers and complacency. We must humble our hearts and bow our knees to God. We must get serious about our faith and our commitment to God. Every moral and spiritual problem comes from a rejection of God's word and the failure to seek His face for the truth and for what is right. If we forget God, God will forget us.

To get right with God, believe with all your heart in Jesus Christ. Let Him be the Lord of your life by turning to Him and turning away from sin by repenting. Confess Jesus Christ as God's Son, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you're baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ, God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16). He will add you to the church (Acts 2:47). He will make you His child (Galatians 3:26 to 27). So do it today!

We hope today's study about overcoming temptation has encouraged you to draw close to God and resist the devil. Now if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area and we encourage you to go and focus on God. And go to church, be a part of a worshipping congregation. Well, as always we say to you that we love you, and we pray that God will bless you, and that comes from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.