

Temptation

Temptation is the desire to do something sinful. It should be noted that being tempted can lead to sinful behavior if one gives into it, but being tempted and not giving into it, is not sinful. In other words, being tempted, which happens to all of us many times in our lives, is not sinful, but giving into it, and actually committing the sin is when one has crossed the line into sinful behavior. We are all humans and have areas we are weak, and areas in which we are strong. One person might have a weakness for alcohol and another might have a weakness for gambling. What tempts one person to sin might not tempt the next person at all. It is important to understand both our strengths and weaknesses so that we can try to make improvements where we need to, in order to be stronger Christians. In this lesson, we will look at several scriptures in the Bible that deal with a topic we will all face, temptation. We will also look at some reasons why we might be tempted to sin, as well as how overcoming temptation can make us stronger Christians.

Scriptures about temptation

Matthew 26:41 “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” and **Luke 22:46** “And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Prayer is a tool God has given Christians to help us fight against temptation. Christians can pray when we know we will face a tempting situation that cannot be avoided. Christians can pray in general for strength to avoid temptation. Praying can help Christians put foremost in their minds the behavior they know God expects of them. Praying is a good tool to help a Christian feel stronger, but they still must conduct themselves as they know it is God’s will for them to. God will not force anyone to do the right thing. We have the free will to choose to be pleasing or displeasing to God. Hopefully, we all choose to be pleasing to God and fight against temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” In our lives, we will face temptations, but we do not have to give into them. We can fight and defeat temptations and become stronger because of it. Life is not guaranteed to be easy for Christians. We all have hurdles we must jump over. However, we will never face a situation in which we have no free will, and simply have no way to avoid sinning. We might face situations which are very hard and find it difficult to not give into temptation, but our ability to choose not to sin will never be overridden. We can overcome temptation and not give into sin. We will not be forced to sin. We either choose to sin or not. Sometimes it might be very hard, but we can defeat sin if we try hard enough. No Christian is perfect and we will all stumble and fall in our lives, but we can also repent and get ourselves right with God when we fall.

Hebrews 2:18 “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” and **Hebrews 4:15-16** “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy,

and find grace to help in time of need.” Jesus knows what we are going through because He too faced temptation. While Jesus did not sin, He did face temptations and knows what struggles we face. Jesus is ready and willing to be our advocate with God if we let Him. Jesus will not force Himself on us and make us do God’s will, but He understands us. Faithful Christians have an open door to pray to God through Jesus for strength and forgiveness.

James 1:2-4 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” We will all face temptation because it is part of life. However, as Christians, we can use the temptations that we face to help strengthen us. When we overcome temptation, we grow stronger as Christians. This does not mean Christians should surround themselves with sin so we can constantly battle it, but rather, like an athlete that works out to be a better athlete, defeating temptation can be a “workout” to make a Christian stronger.

James 1:12 “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Overcoming temptation and being a faithful Christian until the end leads to a home in Heaven. God has promised this greatest of rewards to His faithful followers. Don’t we all want to get it Heaven?

James 1:13-16 “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.” God does not tempt us. We are tempted by our own lusts and desires. Sin occurs when we let our desire overcome us, we give in, and commit a sinful act. Sin not repented of leads to eternal destruction. The good news is we have the power, however difficult it might be, to not give in to temptation, and thus commit a sinful act. If there is an area we are struggling with, we can pray and reach out to faithful Christians for help in resisting temptation. In the long run, fighting back temptation can strengthen us.

James 4:7 “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” and **I Peter 1:5-7** “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” The trials of overcoming temptation can build up your Christian armor. There is no force that can force you to sin. While a Christian must always be vigilant, as one becomes a stronger Christian, it can become easier to resist temptation. Remember though, Christians don’t ever retire until they pass away, or the Lord comes.

Why are we tempted?

Matthew 13:22 “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” Sometimes we can be tempted because we place things above God in our priorities. Did we miss worship service to watch a game, go fishing, relax, etc.? Did we place buying that

new car over giving some of our income to God? God should be first in our lives. If He is not, we have work to do. It is easier to fall into temptation when something is more important than being a faithful Christian to us.

1 Timothy 6:7-10 “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” If having money or getting material possessions are more important than God, one can easily lead oneself into giving into temptation. If one believes money or material things are more important than God, it will show in your life. Money and possessions are not by themselves sinful. When they take priority over God, that is sinful. When getting more stuff is the most important thing to a Christian, they are vulnerable to temptation because being faithful is not their priority.

James 1:14 “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” We draw ourselves into temptation, not God or not some supernatural force. Our own sinful desires can lead us into temptation if we let them. However, if we don’t let our own sinful desires control us, we can become stronger Christians.

1 John 2:15-17 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” It is certainly fine to love your spouse, your dog, your favorite movie, or your favorite football team. However, none of these things can be more important than God. A faithful Christian will put God first and, in the end, spend eternity in Heaven. This is not easy. It is a lifelong work that a Christian must continue to pursue. A Christian can certainly stumble and fall along the way, but they must get back up and reapply themselves to being obedient to God. It is much easier to fight against temptations when God comes first.

Conclusion

We will all face temptations. Even Jesus faced temptation. What is important is that we learn what tempts us to sin, so that we can avoid putting ourselves into situations we are likely to give in. Someone that struggles with being tempted to drink should avoid environments which will make it harder for them to say no to alcohol. Someone that struggles with gambling that walks into a casino is making life much harder on themselves. When we face temptation and defeat it, we can grow stronger as Christians, and we do want to become stronger. However, there is no reason to purposely put ourselves on temptation’s path, because we will face enough temptation in our lives without trying to make our lives more difficult. Hopefully, this lesson helps us all to better understand and overcome temptations we will face in our lives.