

Life Principles Center
Course: The War Within
Lesson 1: Who Is to Blame? (AS276)

Introduction

As long as we are on this earth in its present condition, we will be faced with temptation. The more “spiritual” you become, the more of a target you become. You see, if there’s one thing that Satan does not want to see, it is a mature, praying Christian. And so, as you grow in the faith, the Enemy will do more and more to get in your way.

Satan’s chief weapon against believers is the issue of temptation. He perfected his devious methods way back in the Garden of Eden, and he’s still using temptation to trap believers today. Therefore, as your spiritual maturity and responsibility increase, so must your sensitivity to and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. We’ll take a look at this serious issue in this important course, “The War Within.”

Objectives

Lesson 1, Section 1

By the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Honestly evaluate your human reasoning when it comes to temptation.**
- B. Understand why we can fully rely upon God during times of temptation.**

Scripture

Read James 1:12-17

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 am 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 is 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. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

In the course entitled, *Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight*, I explored the whole issue of spiritual warfare, and showed that we constantly face three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you have not yet taken that course, I encourage you to do so before continuing with this one.

J1: Before going any further, stop to answer the following questions in your journal: What are three specific areas of your life in which you struggle with temptation? How do you currently handle times of temptation? Who do you think is to blame for these temptations?

In this lesson, we are going to examine the first chapter of James, and ask a single question: *who is to blame for our temptations?* You see, it is our natural human tendency to place our blame on other people or things. Almost without thinking, we may cry out, “But it’s not my fault!” no matter what the situation may be. But, my friend, you will never become the person God wants you to be if you cannot come to grips with the personal responsibility for your sin.

So, **the first thing we must consider is our reasoning about temptation.** When we stumble, our minds start racing. We try to blame other people, our past, our weaknesses, or even God. Have you ever—even subconsciously—blamed God for your temptations? Have you ever thought, *Well, God is sovereign over all things, He knows my weaknesses, and He knows that this is something I want; so, He should have kept the temptation away!* Or what about this one: *I really want this, and God made me this way! So, it must be okay for me to do this!*

Please hear this important point: **as long as you blame God or others for your mistakes, you will never gain victory in the Christian life.** And, this excuse is nothing new; it is found all through history, even back to the Garden of Eden! When God asked why Adam sinned, what did he do? He blamed Eve, and even God! Then Eve added that it was the devil’s fault! From the instant sin entered the world, humans have been blaming others. However, the bottom line is that we must accept the responsibility ourselves.

Q1: True/False. Even though the decision is ultimately your own, it is reasonable to say that God could have done more to protect you from falling into temptation.

The second thing we must consider is the complete reliability of God. This means that we can trust God in our temptation. That trust is born out of the fact that God Himself cannot be tempted, nor does He tempt anyone else to sin. (James 1:13) In the course entitled, *Knowing Who God Is*, we explore several attributes that can only characterize God. One characteristic of God is that He is immutable, which means He never changes. This shows us that if God has never been tempted, and that He has never used temptation, then He will never do these things.

God is also omnipotent and omniscient. This means that no sin or temptation can ever “sneak up” on God, nor can it overpower Him. He is holy, completely and thoroughly.

Now, you may ask, “But what about Jesus? Wasn’t Jesus completely God? And wasn’t Jesus tempted while on earth? So does that mean that God really has been tempted in the past?” That is an excellent question. Look at Hebrews 4:15. There, we see that Jesus was “tempted in all things.” So, if we believe that Jesus was and is fully God, how can we support James’ statement that God cannot be tempted?

J2: Before moving on, take a moment to answer this important question. How would you defend the statement in James 1:13 in light of the temptations that Jesus faced (Hebrews 4:15)?

For Jesus to be the total person that He was while on earth, He had to be 100% God and also 100% man. This was no 50/50 situation; it was all-and-all. Now, what was it about the Lord Jesus Christ that was tempted? It was His human nature. He was “temptable” here on earth only because He took human nature upon Himself.

One thing we must not do, though, is assume that Jesus’ divine nature somehow made His temptation less alluring. In fact, quite the opposite is true. You see, when we face temptation, we often just give in to the pressure, and so we never really face a tremendous struggle. However, on those times that we do resist, what happens? The temptation always seems to grow stronger and more intense until we finally break.

But, remember that Jesus never sinned. This means that throughout His entire life on earth, He faced not only the “normal” temptations that we all encounter, but the added pressure of never having given in to the struggle. So, Jesus encountered more temptation and pressure than any other person in history.

Q2: Multiple Choice. The temptations Jesus experienced on earth were:

- A. More intense than our temptations, because He never surrendered to them and, therefore, never had any type of physical “release” that comes from giving in.**
- B. More intense than our temptations, because the devil offered Jesus more than what we have been tempted with.**
- C. Less intense than our temptations, because Jesus’ divinity allowed Him to resist in a way that we cannot understand.**
- D. Less intense than our temptations, because the devil was scared of Him.**

Therefore, we can trust that God is reliable when it comes to temptation. He will never tempt us or cause us to be tempted. Now, He may allow trials and persecutions to come about in our lives to test and purify us, but this is very different from actual temptation. (James 1:1-4, 12-17) At its root, temptation is the enticement to misuse our God-given desires. God would never condone such a harmful exploitation of His gifts to us.

Lesson 1, Section 2

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Understand your own responsibility in temptation.**
- B. Memorize James 1:14.**

The third thing we must consider when examining the blame for our temptation is our own responsibility. James 1:14 shows plainly that we are tempted when *our own* lusts carry us beyond God’s boundaries. The apostle Paul shows us what this personal responsibility looks like in Romans 7:17-21. There, Paul reflects on the great struggle he faces in his own body, as his new spirit clashes with his old, fleshly body.

Even though we have received the indwelling Holy Spirit, our bodies still experience the old cravings and desires. So, when temptation arises, where does it come from? You may reply, “The devil made me do it!” No, the devil cannot make a believer do anything. Or, “God made me do it! He

should have prevented it!” No, God did not make you sin, and He was always there giving you the strength to endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13) The only right response is to say, “Lord, I am struggling with temptation and I take full responsibility for that. Please give me the strength to stand firm in Your ways.”

J3: Memorize James 1:14. How does this verse show your personal responsibility in the temptations you face?

In addition to accepting the responsibility, we must also accept that we have a choice to make when confronted with temptation. As believers, we have the power and the wisdom in the Holy Spirit to let the temptation pass right on by, without dwelling on it. Or, we can choose to lock in on the temptation and allow it to take root in our lives.

If we let the temptation linger in our minds, then we begin to fall into a type of fantasy life. There, in our imaginations, we can give free reign to certain attitudes and actions that we would never dare “live out” in real life. Then, as that fantasy grows, we discover too late that we are actually in bondage to that desire. Even if we never physically act on it, we have become slaves to a temptation that has become rooted in our minds.

So, the challenge for us as believers is to get to the point where we can perceive a temptation and yet say, “I take responsibility for this temptation, and I’m not going to allow it to control me. I can choose to turn away from it.”

In the next lesson of this course, we will continue this study by examining the appeal that temptation has for us, and begin to explore ways in which we can overcome that attraction.

Prayer

And, Father, we thank You for warning us in the Scriptures not to shift the blame. Thank you for the comforting words that you will set limitations on our temptation in order that we may be able to bear them successfully, victoriously, triumphantly. Thank You for making it very clear to us that we cannot shift the blame, that we must assume responsibility for our own temptation—they begin within us and not without.

I pray today that the Holy Spirit—Father, that the Holy Spirit will create a deep, abiding, insatiable, hungering, thirsting, yearning desire in the heart of every person who is listening or will listen to keep listening and to be earnest and open and honest. To search these Scriptures that

we're going to discuss. To look at themselves and evaluate what really is going on in [their lives] and believe in their heart that no matter what bondage they are in, You said, Lord Jesus, You came to set the captive free.

And we're claiming right now, in the name of Jesus, that captives are going to be set free. That people who have been in all types of bondage for years and years are going to be liberated and set free once and for all through the precious blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. And for that we'll thank You in Jesus' name, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory:

The Scripture memory assignment for this course is given below. Be sure to commit this passage to memory before moving on to the next lesson. Then, practice reciting it over and over throughout this course.

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

J4: Look back on your first journal entry from this lesson. Of the specific temptations you mentioned there, which one causes you the most persistent trouble? How might you be prone to blaming someone or something else for this weakness? How might taking personal responsibility for this matter change the situation?

Personal Goal:

Before moving on to Lesson 2, make yourself accountable to one person by disclosing your greatest temptation. Give that person permission to ask you about that situation regularly, as a way to protect yourself from the burden of secret sin.

Life Principles Center
Course: The War Within
Lesson 2: The Appeal (PS276)

Introduction: This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

Lesson 2, Section 1
Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the messenger and the message of temptation.
- B. Identify the ways in which Satan attempts to discredit God's Word.

Scripture

Read Genesis 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' " The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Lesson 2

In the previous lesson of this course, I asked you to identify your most persistent, troubling source of temptation. I hope that you were able to do so, because we will keep that one temptation before us as we

work through this entire course. As I've said before, learning simple truths will do nothing at all for you unless you actively apply that truth to your life. While we discuss temptation, we need to remember that this is not just a theological debate, but rather an issue that affects every area of your life.

When we think about temptation, we have to realize that if sin did not look "good," then we would never have to worry about it. Therefore, we need to take a serious look at what makes sin so attractive, and why we fall to it so easily. We can do this by taking a fresh look at the very first sin, the moment when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. Before continuing, be sure to read Genesis 3:1-7 carefully.

I want to show you a pattern that has been in effect since that original sin in the Garden of Eden. It worked against Adam and Eve, and it has been working against us all these years since. **First of all, we need to discover the messenger of the appeal.** Scripture shows that it was Satan—in the form of a serpent—that tempted Eve. We see that Satan is crafty, and we know from other passages that he is subtle and effective at setting traps for us. (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11)

Just as he originally tempted Eve, Satan still brings temptation against us every chance he gets. The only thing that has changed in the years since then is the vast array of tools that the Tempter has at his disposal. His intent, however, is the same.

Q1: Multiple Choice. In the Garden of Eden, Eve was tempted by:

- A. A simple serpent***
- B. Satan, disguised as a serpent***
- C. Her own hunger***
- D. The beauty of the fruit***

This brings us to the **second part of this pattern, which is the message of the appeal.** Every time Satan tempts us to sin, he is doing so with the exact same purpose: to alienate us from God. Remember, temptation is simply the allure to direct our worship away from God and toward some other person or thing that will bring us pleasure. When that happens, we take our focus off of God and put it on something else.

Satan does this in a number of ways. He begins by challenging the authorship and accuracy of the Word of God. In the Garden, the Tempter questioned whether or not God actually told them not to eat of the

specific tree. (Genesis 2:15-18; 3:1) Today, we see this same thing in the goading of unbelievers who say, “Well, you really can’t trust the Bible; after all, it’s just an ancient book that was written by some men.” The temptation is to simply consider the Bible as a philosophy book written by human hands. As believers, though, we can never accept that lie.

Then, Satan challenges the acceptability of the Word. In Genesis 3:4-5, he tries to convince Eve that God was wrong to issue that command. Do you see that progression? First, he implied, “Oh, God didn’t really say that.” Then, he moved on to, “Well, maybe God did say something like that, but you must have misunderstood what He meant.” And finally, “So what if God did say it? He’s just trying to keep good things from you. After all, it can’t really hurt you to eat this beautiful fruit, can it?” Well, Eve discovered that it could hurt. It only took one little bite to end the perfect purity of the human race.

Does that sound like the thoughts that run through your mind when you are being tempted? Most likely, you have been through this exact process many times. And that is because Satan’s methods have not changed in all these centuries. He’s still the same deceiver that he was in the Garden.

J1: Describe a time in your life when you have felt tempted in a way that corresponds with the process described above (doubting the authorship, accuracy, and acceptability of the Word of God).

Lesson 2, Section 2

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- A. Discuss Genesis 3:6a and understand the three specific avenues of temptation.
- B. Understand Satan’s misrepresentation of the truth amid temptation.

The third thing we must consider is the method of the appeal. There is an amazing parallel between this chapter of Genesis and the first epistle of John, written thousands of years later. In 1 John 2:15-16, we see the three specific avenues through which we are tempted: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. Well, with this in mind, let’s look back at the scene in the Garden.

Satan's most direct attack comes in Genesis 3:5-6. In verse 6, we see, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate." Can you see the pattern:

- *Lust of the flesh*: "the tree was good for food." Satan appealed to her appetite.
- *Lust of the eyes*: "it was a delight to the eyes."
- *Boastful pride of life*: "the tree was desirable to make one wise." She was convinced that she needed more, and that she was insufficient as God had made her.

My friend, Satan has not changed his battle plan. He still preys on our own weaknesses by attacking us through our flesh, our eyes, and our pride. We must remember that God Himself created us with our natural drives, but these things are only to be used within the boundaries God has established. When we go outside of those boundaries, we immediately lose sight of God.

J2: Did you recognize the pattern above (flesh, eyes, pride) as a process by which you have personally fallen into temptation? With what were you tempted in this way? What were the specific ways in which you were tempted through your flesh, eyes, and pride?

The fourth thing we need to notice in this passage is the **misrepresentation of the appeal**. In Genesis 3:5, Satan convinces Eve that if she eats the forbidden fruit, she will become just like God, knowing good and evil. What he does not tell her is the ultimate price involved. He simply exaggerates the benefits and covers up the consequences.

You see, Satan never told Eve about the responsibilities of actually knowing good and evil. In His loving wisdom, God had decided that it would be best for mankind not to know. However, convinced by Satan that it would *improve* them to know, Adam and Eve's eyes were opened to a world of pain and responsibility.

Q2: True/False. Satan was correct in that Adam and Eve could become aware of good and evil by eating the fruit..

Have you ever learned something by experience that you would much rather not know at all? I have heard this many, many times from people who have recovered from drug addictions, for example. They can explain all these realities about drug use, but it is information that they wish they could erase. In the same way, Adam and Eve immediately learned all about good and evil, but they just as quickly realized that it was a tragic mistake.

J3: What lessons have you learned from the mistakes you have made? Have you ever learned something through your actions that you wish you could erase from your mind?

My friend, we will never get to a point in our spiritual maturity where the appeal of sin disappears. As long as we are on this earth, we will be tempted by sin. However, as you grow to understand the nature of sin's appeal, I pray that you will be better prepared to resist the Tempter's advances. Satan often promises to reveal some new truth, but you can be assured that God's holy Word has all the truth for your life.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your wonderful love, goodness, and mercy toward us. And I want to pray right now, in Jesus' name, that somebody—somebody listening, somebody watching, somebody seated right here—who is clothed, cloaked, clouded, fogged in, trapped in bondage, imprisoned, chained, and is on the brink of deciding whether to just blow it all, I pray in Jesus' name on the authority of thy Word, by thy precious blood, that You will free and liberate somebody.

I pray, Father, for those who are undergoing great temptation right now, who've been toying and playing and reasoning and rationalizing the devil's lies, that you will expose to them what Satan has been doing. Give them the wisdom and the strength to get on their knees right here and now, turn their back on that temptation, and surrender afresh and anew to You as the Lord of their life.

I pray, Father, for somebody who's not saved—who feels so hopelessly and helplessly caught up in a particular temptation or sin—that they would be wise enough to confess that to You, to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive them of their sins, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and to yield their life to You right here and now. Father, we're praying for freedom, liberty, and deliverance for those who are captive, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

In the previous lesson of this course, you were instructed to find a specific accountability partner, with whom you can honestly share your most pervasive temptations. Before moving on to the next lesson, schedule a time to talk with this friend one-on-one. Allow them to question you about how you are coping with your temptations.

Life Principles Center
Course: The War Within
Lesson 3: At the Peak of Pressure (AT036)

Introduction: What makes a successful student? The Lord answers, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8). Divided into two sections, this lesson contains assignments that you are encouraged to finish before continuing to the next lesson.

Lesson 3, Section 1
Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Understand God's purposes for Jesus' temptations.**
- B. Understand Satan's purposes for tempting Jesus.**

Scripture

Read Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You'; and 'On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

So far in this course, we have examined the source of temptation and its strong appeal. Now, we need to shift our focus a bit and begin to

explore ways in which we can respond to the dangerous temptations in our lives. We can do this by studying the temptation of Jesus Christ Himself. You see, Jesus did not sit idly by and wait for Satan to tempt Him. Instead, Jesus had a strategy for conquering temptation that can work for us as well.

Matthew 4:1-11 gives us a wonderful picture of Jesus' triumph over Satan's lure. Jesus experienced great temptation during this 40-day period, and all throughout His ministry. Luke's Gospel tells us that after this specific time of temptation, Satan departed only briefly, until he could catch Jesus at a more "opportune time" (Luke 4:13). This shows that Jesus faced temptation not just once, but through His entire life on earth. Because Jesus was well acquainted with temptation, we can trust Him to guide us and to sympathize with us in our own moments of struggle.

First, let's answer the question *Why was Jesus tempted in the first place?* From God's perspective, the fact that Jesus withstood the same temptations that we face proves that He is worthy of being our Redeemer. As God, Jesus identifies with us as redeemed humanity; but as man, Jesus identifies with us in our trials and sufferings. So, He comes to identify Himself with us in order that we may be comforted and helped when we undergo temptation. (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16)

J1: While reading Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-16, consider Jesus' role in your life. What impact does His own familiarity with temptations have on how you face your own areas of weakness?

Satan, however, had a much darker purpose for this temptation. His primary motivation was to thwart God's entire redemptive plan. You see, because of mankind's sin, the only hope for our redemption was to put all of the world's sin upon a perfectly sinless man, Jesus Christ. Satan knew that if he could get Jesus to sin even once, then God's plan of redemption would be ruined, because the sinless sacrifice—Jesus—would have been tainted with sin.

Also, Satan was motivated by his original goal: to surpass God Himself. (Isaiah 14:12-15) If Satan had caused Jesus to sin even once, what would he have accomplished? It would have meant that Jesus would have forsaken His Father and bowed down to Satan. And, since we know that Jesus *is* God, this would have meant that God Himself would have

bowed before Satan. If this had happened, Satan would have at last been able to achieve his goal of being equal with God.

Q1: Multiple Choice. Satan's motivation behind Jesus' temptation was:

- A. To destroy God's redemptive plan for mankind.***
- B. To make Jesus an ally in his war against the Father.***
- C. To make himself equal to God by leading Jesus to sin.***
- D. To disprove Jesus' claim to be the Son of God.***
- E. All of the above***
- F. A and C***
- G. C and D***

Lesson 3, Section 2

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Recognize the three-fold pattern by which Satan tempts us.**
- B. Understand the heart of the issue when it comes to temptation.**

Now, we need to examine the three specific temptations that Jesus faced, and the pattern that Satan used in his attempt to entrap the Lord. In Matthew 4:3, he begins very subtly, "If you are the Son of God . . ." He starts this exchange by trying to insert a touch of doubt about Jesus' divine nature.

You'll recall that he used this same method on Eve in the Garden, when he said, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1) The point of this question is to plant a seed of doubt about God's Word. Satan used this ploy in the beginning, and here he is thousands of years later using it on Jesus. And, he is still doing that same thing today, trying to get us to doubt God's Word and therefore use our own reasoning to justify sin.

J2: In what way(s) has Satan tried to cause you to sin by bringing doubt into your mind about the Word of God? In what areas has he tried to bring doubt? What did you do?

The first thing with which Satan tempted Jesus was food. Remember, Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. Without a doubt, He was hungry. And so, Satan simply says, "You know, if you really are the Son of God, why don't you turn some of the rocks into bread? What could that

hurt?” Now, here we begin to see Satan’s pattern, as he starts with what seems to be *reasonable*. However, although it seemed reasonable, it was against God’s plan.

The second thing with which Satan used to tempt Jesus was pride. This was expressed in his suggestion that Jesus throw himself off of the highest point of the Temple and simply float back to earth. With this spectacle, Jesus would no doubt have gained a multitude of followers. It was a temptation to take a short-cut and gain many believers quickly.

However, this type of faith would have been weak, as it would only have been motivated by awe, not sincere belief. So, while this option also seemed reasonable, there was a more obvious sense of refusing to do God’s purpose. Therefore, we see that Satan’s second step in temptation is to offer something that is *questionable*.

The third temptation involved sheer, material power. Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would only bow before him. This was clearly a call to abandon God’s plan and go about things in a completely different manner. Satan was essentially saying, “Look, God wants you to go through all this pain and trouble, but you don’t really have to do that! Just bow down to me here, and I’ll go ahead and make you ruler of this world!” With this, we see that Satan is making an obvious attack on God’s rule, which we can characterize as *definitely wrong*.

Now, we must remember what is at stake: God’s whole redemptive plan. If Satan can trip Jesus at this point, then all of God’s plans would crumble and Satan would be victorious. This was Satan’s best chance to overthrow God’s plan for mankind and establish himself as ruler of all.

Q2: Multiple Choice: Satan’s pattern for tempting us involves convincing us of things that are:

reasonable, then unbelievable, then definitely wrong

unreasonable, then possible, then definitely wrong

E. reasonable, then questionable, then definitely wrong

questionable, then reasonable, then definitely wrong

The heart of the issue—for Jesus and for us—was that Satan tempted Jesus to use His own God-given gifts to meet His God-given desires the wrong way at the wrong time. You see, God puts these desires within us all—desires for food, intimacy, etc. However, we must exercise these drives within the confines of God’s established boundaries.

Satan, knowing our weaknesses and our strengths, tries to entice us to satisfy our God-given desires by using our God-given abilities. But, he prompts us to do this in our own time, not according to God's will. When we do this, we get out of step with God and the results are often disastrous.

Every time Satan tempts us, it happens in the same general pattern. First, he raises an issue that seems somewhat reasonable. Then, he presses it a little further until it becomes a questionable matter. Finally, he puts the pressure on us to outright abandon God's will with things that are definitely wrong. This is how it was in the Garden, this is how it was during Jesus' temptations, and this is how it is today.

J3: Describe one specific time in your life when you felt Satan tempting you according to this pattern: reasonable, questionable, definitely wrong. Were you aware of the devil's leading as you went through this time? What was the outcome?

How can we defend ourselves? We can do this by following Jesus' example. When Eve was tempted in the Garden, what did she do? She allowed herself to have a discussion with Satan, through which the devil confused and enticed her to the point of sin. (Genesis 3:1-6) Jesus, however, refused to debate the devil. Instead, He promptly responded by quoting the Word of God. (Matthew 4:1-11) Satan cannot argue with the Word. He can break apart our own arguments point-by-point, but he is powerless against the Word of God.

My friend, I cannot stress to you enough how important it is to identify those specific areas of weakness in your life, and then explore what the Word of God says about that issue. Find those passages that deal with your weaknesses, and then memorize those verses. Satan never gives us time to grab our Bibles when he wants to tempt us. We must be prepared for his attacks by having the Word of God in our hearts, ready to spring into action.

In the next lesson of this course, we will see the dangers of flirting with temptation, as we examine the serious issue of "Playing with Fire." Until then, I pray that God grants you the wisdom to see the weak points of your life, and that you allow Him to strengthen you in those areas with His holy Word.

Q3: True/False. When we are being tempted by Satan, we should attempt to dismantle his attack point-by-point.

Prayer

Father, thank You for this wonderful passage of Scripture. Thank You for giving us a simple explanation. Thank You for entrenching in our minds and hearts the truths that become a part of our whole armor of defense, the shield of faith against the fiery darts of the devil. I pray the Spirit of God will motivate each one of us here, and those who are listening and watching who have already identified their most vulnerable areas of temptation, to get in the Word of God, to find those verses, to memorize them, to write them down, to repeat them, to quote them, to begin to use them as a soldier in battle would use his shield: as a defense against fiery missiles, enticements, and evil.

I thank You, Father, that You love us enough to have sent Your only begotten Son to live among us and to suffer temptations just like we do, so that we know that there is someone who fully loves us and fully understands us and is fully there to help us in every temptation.

We bless You and praise You for Your divine assistance when we face temptation. Now, Father, the devil doesn't like what he's heard today. He's not going to like what we are all in the process of learning, so I want to pray Your great hedge of protection upon every listener. And I pray that You'll give us great wisdom and that You will make us extremely sensitive to the slightest presence and the slightest, quietest voice of anything that has the enticement of evil in it. This is my prayer in Jesus' name, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

Restate the primary area of temptation in your life that you have identified already in this course. Now, use an online Bible or study Bible to identify three specific Scriptures that deal with your area of weakness. Write these down, keep them in your purse or wallet at all times, and strive to memorize each

one. These verses will serve as your ready defense every time Satan brings that same temptation to you.

Life Principles Center
Course: The War Within
Lesson 4: Playing With Fire (AT106)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 4, Section 1
Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the truth behind sexual temptation.
- B. Discover Samson's folly as he allowed his fleshly desires to control his behavior and decisions.

Scripture

Read Proverbs 6:23-29

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life, to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids. For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.

What would happen if you lit a match and then held that flame against your skin? You would get burned, of course! That may sound like a rather simple question; after all, everyone knows that if you play with fire, you will get burned. However, it is amazing how many people fail to relate this principle to their spiritual lives. Flirting with temptation is no different than playing with a lit match; the result is always disastrous.

Throughout this course we have examined the issue of temptation, and I have asked you to identify the one or two areas of your life in which you feel the strongest pressure to sin. Perhaps that intense struggle in your life is sexual temptation. This is such a tremendous pitfall for many,

many people in every culture on earth. Because we can all identify with sexual drives and temptations, let us look at this particular issue as we discuss *Temptation: Playing with Fire*.

The best Scriptural example of a man who struggled with sexual temptation is the story of Samson in the book of Judges. At that time in Israel's history, the Philistines had conquered the nation and had begun to spread their false religion throughout Israel. This was done primarily through business associations with the Israelites, as well as the practice of intermarriage. The result was a weakened Israel, lulled into a compromising position by the Philistines.

God chose one man, Samson, to deliver the nation of Israel from the domination of the Philistines. To that end, Samson was consecrated as a Nazarite, one who was set apart for a special work of God. Samson was also gifted with superhuman strength and was therefore known for great acts of heroism in battle.

Despite his great strength, though, Samson had one tragic weakness: sexual temptation. Although God had great plans for Samson, he chose instead to gratify his own sinful lusts, and, therefore, rebelled against the will of his heavenly Father.

J1: Picture yourself as Samson. Considering your own gifts and abilities, what area would you consider to be your greatest strength? What would your greatest weakness be? Respond in your journal.

Now, you don't necessarily have to look in Scripture to find stories like this. The fact is, this same type of behavior and failure is going on all over the world right now. And the tragedy is, it does not only happen with evil people, but also with strong, church-going, committed Christians. Why do we so often give full reign to our temptations, and what are the consequences?

The first thing we need to discuss is the truth about sexual temptation. I want you to write this down and remember it: *the root of all sexual immorality is rebellion toward God.* Samson's first mistake, as we see in Judges 14:1-3, is that he made a decision to marry a Philistine, which he knew was against God's will. (Deuteronomy 7:1-3) He even ignored the godly advice of his parents. In his mind, his top priority was having this particular beautiful woman as his wife, no matter the cost.

Q1: Fill in the blank. According to the information above, complete this sentence:

“The root of all immorality is _____ toward God.”

Now, we can all identify with this. It may not be sexual temptation or the allure of a beautiful woman or handsome man, but we all know what it is like to want something so badly that nothing can stand in our way. What I find so interesting is that we follow through with these desires, despite the clear warnings of Scripture. Many people, for example, have rationalized the issue of sex so much that it is completely unrecognizable; however, our human rationalizations do not change the truth of the God’s Word. The Bible says to “abstain from sexual immorality”; no amount of rationalization can change that. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)

My friend, every time you go to bed with someone who is not your spouse—whether you are 16, 26, 36, 46, 56, 66, or any age—you are essentially going to bed with a lit match. And what would happen if you set a lit match on your bed? It would burn up, taking you and your whole house with it. You cannot play with fire without it having serious consequences.

J2: Read the following Scriptures and write one or two lines in response to each:

Proverbs 5:1—8

Proverbs 7:24-27

F. Proverbs 6:32

Proverbs 7:7, 10-11

Ephesians 5:3-6

1 Corinthians 6:15-20

Lesson 4, Section 2

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Apply the principles of this lesson to all sinful behavior, and not only sexual temptation.
- B. Understand the severe dangers of toying with sexual temptation.

The second thing we have to consider is the act of toying with sexual temptation. For many, including Samson, illicit sexual

indulgence becomes a type of hobby. No matter what the Word of God says, some people simply make sexual immorality a part of their natural, daily lives with no second thought or remorse. It has quite simply become a game; however, while we may call it “playing,” God still calls it sin.

Q2: True/False. It is impossible for a Christian to engage in an ongoing sin without some level of guilt or remorse.

What was the result of Samson’s sin? First of all, his wedding party turns into a drunken brawl, in which he makes a rich bet with his guests. Fearing they would lose their money to him, the group of men persuaded Samson’s bride to coax the answer from him. The end result of this exchange, as you can read in Judges 14, was Samson’s mass murder of 30 men. So, we see that he has already moved from rebellion, to lust, and then onto murder.

Later, in Judges 16:1, we see that Samson went to a prostitute. He just keeps falling deeper and deeper. He then pursued a Philistine woman named Delilah, who was a prostitute paid by the Philistine people to discover Samson’s weakness. (Judges 16:5) She did as she was told, and Samson is soon captured, stripped of his great strength, blinded, and set to menial labor, all the while knowing that he has no one to blame but himself.

You see, Samson was the strongest man in the whole Bible, but all that was required to topple him was the allure of a single seductive woman. Samson thought he could handle any obstacle that came his way; he believed he could walk away from any challenge unscathed. Then, one day, he realized that he was a prisoner of his own lust.

J3: Would you consider yourself to be a prisoner of any particular sin or temptation? How are you entrapped? What can you do to escape?

Now, let’s put all of this into today’s language. What are the modern consequences for sexual sin? There is a definite loss of purity, an overwhelming cloud of guilt, and a sense of separation from God and other people. Families break up, spouses begin abusing each other, and children are often caught in the crossfire of unfaithful parents. There are also diseases, emotional damage, and a whole list of other repercussions. In the end, the price is always greater than the thrill. Again, you cannot play with fire without eventually being consumed.

Now, this lesson focused on sexual sin, but I hope you see a pattern here that can be found in any type of ongoing sinful behavior. Remember, we already discovered that Satan moves subtly, and he often attacks us in the areas we consider to be our greatest strengths. He starts with what seems reasonable, then questionable, and only then tempts us with things that are definitely wrong. My friend, I pray that you are becoming more and more aware of his traps as you learn about his deadly art of temptation.

Prayer

Father, thank You for loving us enough to warn us with such tragic stories as that of Samson and Delilah. I pray in Jesus' name for those who are on the brink of burning their house down—that there might be genuine repentance [for] those who are watching and listening, as well as those who are here, [for] those who've been toying, tampering, and playing with sexual indulgence, excusing it, rationalizing it, I pray the Spirit of God would bring such deep-seated conviction, a heavy, cloudy warning to their hearts.

I pray that each one of us may be surrounded by Your divine protection moment by moment, day by day. That we would be wise enough before we get out of the bed each morning to dress in the full armor, the full spiritual armor of the child of God. The helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, our loins gird about with truth, our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of the Living God in our heart.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, which quenches, ricochets off all the fiery darts of temptation. Those flaming missiles of temptation Satan fires at us daily. Grant us the wisdom and the will to make whatever corrections are necessary. And to be not only protected by Your grace, but to be a warning to others whom we see walking in the wrong direction, playing with the fire that shall ultimately burn them, is my prayer in Jesus' name, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

Before moving on to Lesson 5, take the time to read the complete story of Samson in Judges chapters 13-16. Then, respond in your journal by noting new insights you have gained in this study of Samson's weakness.

Life Principles Center
Course: The War Within
Lesson 5: The Key Question (PT106)

Introduction: What makes a successful student? The Lord answers, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8). Divided into two sections, this lesson contains assignments that you are encouraged to finish before continuing to the next lesson.

Lesson 5, Section 1

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Compare and contrast the reactions that Joseph and Samson had to their temptations.**
- B. Understand Satan's classic strategy for temptation.**

Scripture

Read Genesis 39:1-9

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you,

because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

Throughout this course, we have explored the issue of temptation in great detail. In the previous lesson, we saw the dangers of giving into temptation in the life of Samson; now, we will examine the temptations that faced Joseph, and how he achieved victory despite overwhelming circumstances.

What we will see in the story of Joseph is something that should be very familiar to all of us, and that is the manner in which Satan tempts us. He always tries to keep our attention focused intently on the object of our desire. He does not want us to start looking around at other things, and he certainly does not want us to start thinking about God. If Satan can keep our eyes solely on the object, he knows he already has us beat.

So, a sure way to achieve victory over temptation is to keep your eyes open—open to God, to the consequences, and to the circumstances. Therefore, we can learn to ask key questions in the midst of temptation to help keep our focus where it should be—on God.

J1: Think about a specific time in your life when you were undergoing intense temptation to sin. Was it easy to take your eyes off of the object of desire? Did it seem as though 100% of your attention was on that object? How might that have been the work of Satan, keeping your eyes from wandering off the target of temptation?

Now, we are focusing on the events of Genesis 39, but it is important to have some understanding of Joseph's background at this point. Joseph had been the favorite son of his father, Jacob, and his brothers were jealous of him. Their animosity reached the point that they decided to kill him. Then, at the last minute, they chose to sell him into slavery instead. He was purchased by an Egyptian official named Potiphar, whom he served for about 13 years. He had great success under Potiphar, which is where Genesis 39 picks up.

We see in Genesis 39:4-6 that, although he was still a slave, Joseph was an important figure in Potiphar's household. He was unusually gifted in many ways, and, as such, Potiphar placed him in charge of his affairs. Now, isn't it interesting that Satan always seems to attack us at our strongest points? This is what we saw with Samson, and now we see it

again with Joseph. The difference, however, is that Joseph refused to give in to the temptations around him.

Q1: True/False. Because Samson surrendered to temptation and Joseph did not, we can infer that Samson faced a greater degree of temptation than Joseph did.

Over his years of service, Joseph had grown into a charming, handsome, well-liked young man. And, we see that Potiphar's wife found him quite attractive. Over and over again, she attempts to seduce Joseph, but each time he refuses.

We cannot overlook the challenge this was for him. Remember, Joseph must have had some deep emotional needs. He had been separated from the love of his parents and the companionship of his brothers for over 13 years. Also, he was a slave, despite his good relationship with his master. On top of all this, he had grown into manhood without the opportunity to marry. These pressures must have been enormous as he now faced the allure of a seductive Egyptian beauty.

Satan knew Joseph's weak spots, and he did his best to exploit them. In doing so, we see that Satan's tactics never seem to change very much. Responding to the woman's advances, Joseph exclaims, "There is no one greater in this house than I, and ***he has withheld nothing from me except you***, because you are his wife" (Genesis 39:9a). Now, that sounds familiar. Where else in Scripture do we see a time in which God said, "You can have it all except for this one thing"? That's right—the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:16-17)

You see, Satan never changes his tricks; he doesn't really need to. He has been doing the same thing since the Garden of Eden, and we still fall for it time after time. However, Joseph was ready for the trial, and even at the height of temptation, he kept his eyes on the Lord and on the consequences, and he was able to resist.

Lesson 5, Section 2

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Learn seven key questions to ask in the midst of temptation.
- B. Remember and apply Genesis 39:9b in times of temptation.

What we need to learn from the story of Joseph is that it is indeed possible to resist even the strongest of temptations. When Satan turns up the pressure, we can still choose to obey the Lord. One sure way to do this is to keep our mind from focusing only on the object of desire. We can escape this kind of “tunnel vision” by asking ourselves several key questions:

1. ***Is this temptation a violation of the Word of God?*** This is why you and I need to know what the Bible says. My friend, I hope you have already identified those key areas of temptation in your life and found relevant Scripture passages. I have emphasized this throughout this course. Let me just say once again: whatever area holds the greatest temptation to sin in your life, find the Scriptures that address that issue and write that Word on your heart. Satan never gives us time to grab our Bibles when he throws temptation at us; we must be ready by having the Word of God already in our hearts.
2. ***What have been the consequences of this sin in the lives of others?*** It is usually easy to identify the probable consequences of our sinful desires. When facing temptation, force yourself to examine the results of that specific action in the life of someone you know. Sadly, we most likely know at least one person who has fallen to each temptation we can imagine.
3. ***If I yield to this sin, how will it affect me personally?***
There is no such thing as sinning without consequences. We simply cannot sin against God without there being some negative effect on our lives. We should also ask similar questions:
How will this affect God’s plan for my life?
How will this affect the people around me?
4. ***Am I willing to pay the consequences of yielding to this temptation?*** Most of the time, if you ask someone this question, they will say, “Well, no, I guess not.” However, their actions may show a definite willingness to pay the consequences for their sin.
5. ***Will yielding to this temptation satisfy me, or only stir up stronger desires?*** The devil’s favorite line is, “Oh, one time can’t hurt you.” Yes it can. The reason is that giving in that first time creates a snowball effect. Whether its sexual immorality, gambling, drinking, or anything else, people rarely stop after only one experience.
6. ***Is yielding to this temptation a wise decision, or is it foolish?*** My friend, you can’t be wise *and* sin at the same time.

7. **Last is the key question**, the one that we must always keep on the forefront of our minds. And that is to ask the same question that Joseph asks in Genesis 39:9b, ***“How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”*** Remember, Satan does not want you to think about God in the midst of temptation. He knows that once you start thinking about God, rather than the object of temptation, then he may lose you.

You see, Satan wants us to forget all about God. However, you know that is something we simply cannot do. There is no such thing as a part-time Christian. Therefore, whenever we sin, we take Jesus along with us. Christ is always there, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, wherever we go and whatever we do. That means that if you commit adultery, for example, Jesus is right there in the bed with you.

It is amazing what happens when people realize that Jesus is there with them in the midst of their sin. Attitudes begin to change. Actions are reconsidered. And, strength and a renewed determination are found in the face of temptation.

We will conclude this course in the next lesson as we examine the subtle and potentially surprising *Tool of the Tempter*.

Q2: Multiple Choice. Which one of the following is NOT a question to consider when facing temptation?

If I yield to this sin, how will it affect me personally?

Is yielding to this temptation a wise decision, or is it foolish?

Is this temptation a violation of the Word of God?

• Will someone find out if I do this?

None of the above.

J2: Read Isaiah 30:20-21. This passage indicates that when we keep our eyes on the Lord, we will hear His direction clearly. According to the lesson you’ve just completed, what is the result of keeping your eyes fixed upon other things, instead of the Lord?

Prayer

Father God, when we think about Your enduring presence in our lives, even when we are engaged in sin, we just don't know what to say. All we can do is fall on our face before You, repent of our sin, and accept Your loving kindness and forgiveness.

Lord, protect us each day. Let us get out of bed each morning by putting on the full spiritual armor of God. Let the attacks and temptations of the enemy fall flat against the shield of faith You've given us.

And, Lord, protect our minds with the helmet of salvation. When we face that strong temptation, bring these important questions that we have studied to mind. In the name of Jesus, we ask that You prevent the devil from putting his blinders on us. Oh, God, keep our eyes from being fixed on the object of temptation, and let them remain constantly fixed upon You, our Strength and our Defender. And it is in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ we ask it, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

Before moving on to Lesson 6, commit the six questions we have studied to memory. In this way, you can be better prepared to face those unexpected moments of temptation.

Also, be sure to review the Scripture passages that you have already discovered that deal specifically with your own areas of temptation. Use your private journal to record any new insights you have had in relation to your struggles and God's ability to bring victory.

Transcript of Audio/Video Teaching Clip Paying the Consequences

When we're in the midst of temptation, we must make every effort to take our eyes off of the object of desire and ask ourselves some serious questions. One of these important questions that we often avoid is, "Am I willing to pay the consequences of yielding to this temptation?"

Now, if most of us stopped long enough to ask that question, we'd probably answer NO. But listen, when we flirt with temptation long enough, there comes a time when we get completely wrapped up in it. At that point, even if we consider the consequences, we may still go right ahead and do what we know will hurt us.

I remember one example very clearly. I was sitting with a man on his front porch, and we were discussing a temptation in his life that he didn't think he could conquer. As we talked, I went right down the line, using Scripture to show him every disastrous consequence of the action he was considering. I even had him read some of the verses himself, just to stress how clear the Word of God was on the issue.

After we did this for a while, I just said plainly to him, "Now, you know what God thinks about this, and you know what the results will be. So, what are you going to do?"

I'll never forget this. He looked right back up at me, and he said, "I hear what you're saying, but I'm going to do this anyway." And what a terrible, horrible series of consequences began in that man's life from that point on.

If you could ask him today, "Well, was it worth it? Was the pleasure worth the pain?" I know beyond a shadow of a doubt what he would say. "Oh God, if I had only listened, if I had only known what all the consequences would do to me, I never would have done it."

My friend, don't be deceived: when we consider the cost and still go right ahead with the sin that we're flirting with, we will face consequences. And listen . . . millions and millions of broken lives throughout history testify to the fact that those consequences simply are not worth it.

Life Principles Center
Course: The War Within
Lesson 6: A Tool of the Tempter (AT176)

Introduction: What makes a successful student? The Lord answers, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8). Divided into two sections, this lesson contains assignments that you are encouraged to finish before continuing to the next lesson.

Lesson 6, Section 1

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 6, you should be able to:

- A. Understand your own role in the temptation of others.**
- B. Understand Jesus' strong word of warning in Matthew 18:6-7.**

Scripture

Read Matthew 18:5-7

And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea . Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!

We have seen throughout this course that temptation is a part of life, and that we will never reach a point in our Christian walk when we are free from temptation. We have also seen the ways in which we are tempted, and we have examined the lives of some biblical men and women who fell into temptation. As we conclude this course, we must explore one final area: what happens when you and I become the tempters.

You see, when we talk about temptation, it is so easy to always see ourselves as the victims. What we often fail to realize is that we may be guilty of leading someone to sin ourselves! My friend, we are never more

like the devil than when we are actively enticing someone else to sin. In Matthew 18:5-7, we see that Jesus had a very strict warning about this type of behavior. He said that it would be better for that person to die than to become such a tool of the devil. What did Jesus mean by this strong statement?

J1: Have you ever considered yourself to be a “tool of the tempter”? In what ways has the devil used you to tempt other people? In what ways have you been tempted by other people?

Primarily, this is a word of warning. Jesus is saying that when we tempt others to sin, we can expect to suffer the consequences of that act right along with them. Moreover, we are guilty of leading someone else away from God’s will. Many people try to make light of this statement, saying something like, “Oh, this doesn’t sound like the Jesus I know. Surely He must mean something else.” No, He doesn’t. Jesus never misspoke, and He never made a mistake. He knew what He was saying.

His original audience would have gotten the full impact, as well. When He refers to tying a millstone around the person’s neck and throwing them in the river, He is giving a very clear picture of death. The people of the day were well acquainted with these millstones. They were the large, heavy stones used to grind wheat and grain. If a person were tied to one of these and thrown into the sea, he would immediately sink to the bottom. Now, how on earth could that possibly have been misinterpreted?

So, what we see here is a strong warning to everyone who engages in the act of tempting other people. We see this in personal relationships, in which a man, for example, manipulates a woman into immoral behavior. We also see it in prostitution, gambling, and the distribution of illegal drugs.

And, although we may not realize it, we even see it in our places of business. Listen, if you are in a career that requires you to tempt others into making ungodly decisions, get out of that job. I don’t care if it is advertising, graphic design, real estate, or anything else. If your job demands that you lead people to make sinful decisions about their personal lives or finances, God will certainly hold you accountable for every individual that falls under your influence.

J2: Does your career or social involvements require that you actively tempt other people to engage in ungodly activities? If

so, explain what you are called upon to do that may be destructive to others. What changes can you make in your life to avoid this? If your job or position does not cause you to do this, then take a moment to list specific individuals or professions that make their living by preying on other people.

Now, why would Jesus say it is better for a person to die than to tempt others? First, let's look at what He did NOT say. He did not say that God would not forgive. He did not say that we would lose our salvation. Instead, He said it would be better for that person to die before becoming a tool of Satan.

You see, when we tempt other people to sin, we become living, breathing, active propagators of sin. That means that we are the ones who take the job of leading other people away from God. And, from God's perspective, it would be better for everyone involved if He called us home before that happens.

Now, here me when I say this: this does NOT mean that we should ever entertain the idea of taking our own life. No matter how you rationalize it, that act is murder and goes against the will of God. He never intends for you to make that decision. The duration of your life is strictly up to God; if you take that decision away from Him, you only rob yourself of everything He had planned to do in and through your life.

Q1: True/False. Even if we are guilty of leading others to sin, we can be assured that our own salvation is secure, although our spiritual reward may be diminished.

Now that we have this spiritual principle in mind, the second section of this lesson will help us see how one man's life completely fell apart as a result of his decision to lead others in sin.

Lesson 6, Section 2

Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 6, you should be able to:

- A. Understand and explain the pivotal moment of temptation in King David's life.
- B. Recognize your own culpability in enticing others to sin.

In this course, we have seen trials and temptations in the story of Samson and Delilah, as well as in the account of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Now, we will wrap up this study with one final example: King David. You'll recall that David was a mighty man of God, and richly blessed in all he did. After years of turmoil, David finally had everything he ever wanted and rested in God's perfect peace. (2 Samuel 7:1)

In 2 Samuel 11, however, David began to go astray. Verses 1-17 show a great change in David's life. No longer did he live to serve the Lord; rather, he acted only on his own desires and impulses. This came about in his pursuit of Bathsheba, and the consequences that resulted from that illicit relationship.

You see, David allowed himself to be consumed with passion. He accidentally saw Bathsheba bathing, and he nursed that image in his mind as it grew from an innocent mistake, to a lustful longing, to an active fantasy. David allowed his eyes to fill his mind, and he never looked away. Remember, we saw in the previous lesson that Satan will do anything he can to keep our eyes fixed on the object of desire. This is exactly what David did.

Q2: True/False. In times of temptation, Satan's chief goal is to keep our minds too busy with several different things, so that we may slip into a bad decision accidentally.

Then, David brought temptation and desire upon the unsuspecting Bathsheba. There is no indication that she was anything less than loving and faithful to her husband. We should not assume that she was an irreverent, lustful woman. Instead, she simply responded to the king's invitation to his home.

I imagine that throughout their discussion, David tried every trick he could think of to make her comfortable, and then to lead her into his bedroom. Most likely, he thanked her for coming, complimented the outstanding military service of her husband, and then moved the conversation into more personal matters. For instance, perhaps he played up on her loneliness while her husband was away at war, and then commented that he, too, was lonely, despite all the people that surrounded him.

Whatever it was that they talked about, we can be sure that it was not motivated by God. Instead, David did everything imaginable to break through her defenses and reservations, so that he could have his own desires met.

After that night, David's life was never the same. As a result of his adultery, Bathsheba conceived a son and David arranged the murder of her husband. The baby died, David's sin was exposed, and the entire nation became aware of David's actions.

Later, David struggled with intense family crises, as his daughter was raped by her half-brother, Amnon. Then, his other son, Absalom, killed Amnon for the rape. Absalom later rebelled against David, divided the nation, caused David to flee, and was eventually killed by David's soldiers. All of the years following his one night with Bathsheba demonstrate the dramatic fall that can and will occur in the life of a believer who has turned away from the Lord.

With all this in mind, we can infer from Jesus' statement in Matthew 18:6-7 that it would have been much better for David and everyone involved if he had died at the height of his success. Therefore, we can see the immense importance of guarding our behavior each and every day that we spend on this earth. What could be more horrible for a believer than to become a willing soldier in Satan's army of tempters?

J3: Have you ever personally experienced a moment of decision like this one in the life of David? Have you made such a tremendous mistake that it seemed to redirect the course of your entire life? Discuss that issue, and then ask God to forgive you and bring your life back under His control.

Now, my friend, no matter what your circumstances are, no matter what your rationalizations have been, you have no excuse. You have seen the Word of God on this matter, and you must realize that there is absolutely no excuse for enticing someone else to sin. I want to ask you to repent of your sin, repent of enticing others to sin, and to commit to a life of loving edification in the lives of others. Remember, you are a soldier of God, not the devil. Discover where and how your Commander is leading you, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, go and do it.

Prayer

Father, in Jesus' name, I pray that you'll sink this truth deep into the heart of every single hearer. Lord, more than likely there may have been some people who have heard who didn't like what they heard, or may have been terribly frustrated by what they've heard because of the nature of their business.

I pray, Father, in Jesus' name that You would grant them the courage and the faith to make whatever decision is necessary. I pray that if there's anyone listening or anyone here who is even now in the process of trying to entice anyone else to evil that there would be genuine repentance and a recommitment of their life to purity in the lives of others. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

But _____ is _____ when he is _____
 _____ and _____ by _____
 _____ 1:14

Conclusion

It never fails to break my heart to see a once faithful soldier in Christ's army fall to the trappings of temptation. I have seen this over and over again in my years as a pastor: a godly man accepts Jesus as Savior, begins to experience tremendous growth in the Spirit, and then Satan moves in with an arsenal of temptation. That's the way the Enemy has worked from the beginning, and that's the way he will always work. But God has already defeated Satan. And, as children of God, we share in that victory. We do not have to fall to every temptation that the world, the flesh, and the devil send our way. We can stand and fight. And, in Christ, we can have victory.

As a follow-up to this course, I encourage you to take the courses entitled "Landmines in the Pathway of the Believer" parts one and two. In those courses, you'll find in-depth discussions of ten of Satan's most effective weapons. Plus, you'll discover biblical principles for safeguarding your life before these things ever become problems in your life.