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The Holy Spirit's Power to Resist Temptation

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The Holy Spirit's Power to Resist Temptation

There are days when it seems that the enticement of sin is everywhere! Advanced by the media, promoted on the Internet, endorsed by friends and/or acquaintances, sometimes simply presented at an unexpected moment, the temptation to do something that dishonors God is all places! As Christians, what are we to do with this onslaught of temptation? It is only through the Holy Spirit's power that we can resist temptation and live victorious for Christ!

The truth is that we all face numerous temptations daily. And it is important to remember that being tempted is not a sin; it is normal! However, when we are tempted, there is a choice to be made: give in or to trust God. Giving in to temptation is what results in sin, and when we sin, we break our fellowship with God.

“No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.” —1 Corinthians 10:13

In this verse, God tells us how to overcome temptation! First of all, trust God ... temptation is normal! Secondly, trust God ... the Holy Spirit will give us the ability to withstand temptation! Finally, trust God ... He will give us a “way out.”

Q. When do you most experience temptation? Is there something in your life right now that is regularly tempting you to sin or to not hold on to your relationship with God?

Q. What can you do to help yourself remember that God is going to provide a way out for you when you are tempted?

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit empowers us to resist temptation is by helping us to be aware of it ahead of time! Believers face three main “attackers” when it comes to temptation: Satan, the “world”, and what we call “fleshly desires.” These three attackers can present themselves to us individually or they can interact with one another.

Satan

Satan is a vicious enemy whose primary goal is to destroy you and your relationship with Christ. In 1 Peter 5:8 the Bible calls him a “roaring lion” who is always looking to destroy believers. His biggest desire is to keep you away from God’s Word ... and your dependency on Christ. He uses his weapons of doubt and discouragement to accomplish that goal. You don’t need to fear him! He can only defeat you if you let him. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you His wisdom to know when Satan is attacking you and seeking to distract you from your goal of loving God! Satan wants to destroy you and your relationship with Christ.

Q. Are there times in your life when you feel as though Satan is tempting you? What can you do to resist him?

The “World”

In the Bible, the “world” is a term that refers to the ordered, arranged system of physical reality. Although there is nothing wrong with money or material success, it is very easy to get so focused on possessions and success, that God becomes secondary to personal goals, dreams, and ambitions. God wants to be your first and highest focus in life ... and you will only be truly satisfied when you give Him his rightful place.

Matthew 6:33 is a great verse to memorize and to hold on to when faced with temptation from the “world”: “But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Q. What in the world is most likely to tempt you? What active step can you take to resist temptation in this area of your life?

“Fleshly Desires”

The “flesh” is the earthly part of man with its lusts and desires. We all are assaulted daily by images and desires that are outside the will of God. This includes temptations such as sex outside of marriage, gossip, anger, addictions, and other destructive behavior. When we ignore the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are certain to live in the flesh and will make ourselves miserable.

Q. How can you guard against temptations in the area of fleshly desires?

Here are some ways that temptation can subtly present itself to you. Remember, Satan will try to control your perspective, manipulate your thinking, and exploit your foundational desires. God wants to be your first and highest focus in life.

Deception

Deception is hard to discern because it is often cleverly disguised. It can be total lies that have been dressed up to look like the truth, lies that have been mixed in with the truth, or misrepresentations of truth taken out of context.

Worldly Gratification

There is nothing wrong with enjoying God's gifts to you! However, when those gifts become consuming or become distorted they can present a major temptation in life! This can come in the form (but is not limited to) sensual pleasure, money and possessions, and/or fame and power.

Accusation

This is one of Satan's favorite tricks! If he can get you to believe that you are not worthy of God's love, or that you don't truly have a relationship with Him, he has gained a foothold in drawing you away from God. Satan's tactics in this arena include condemning you of past sins that have already been confessed to God and forgiven, or creating false guilt about things for which God does not hold you responsible.

Distraction

Temptation also can come in the form of distraction! If you can be sidetracked from staying focused on your purpose of living for God, Satan can keep you from growing in your relationship with Him. Distraction presents itself to different people in different ways! For some, distraction can come in the form of entertaining diversions, or relationships, or work. For others, distraction may come from a crisis of some kind—either professionally, relationally, or spiritually. Satan will try to control your perspective, manipulate your thinking, and exploit your foundational desires.

Affliction

Suffering, hardship, and pain can present temptation to us! Satan can use any kind of mental or emotional torment or physical illness or disease to tempt us to question God's great love for us. It is during these times that we must hold on to what we *know* about God's greatness to sustain us and hold us close to Him!

Discouragement

Think about how discouragement can be a temptation. When we are discouraged, we often feel hopelessness, or loneliness, or despair. It is during these times when we are especially vulnerable to temptation. We often will do anything to feel better!

Doubt

Here again, doubt is not sin! Doubting, when dealt with appropriately can lead us to a deeper understanding and experience of God! However, doubt can also lead us away from God when we question His motives and character and search for the answers in places other than His Word.

Division

Oh, what an ugly word for God's people! When we are tempted to be divided with God's children, we focus on differences in others, or we are suspicious of the motivations of others.

Intimidation

A key component of intimidation is fear. And we are often afraid—and when we are afraid, we can be tempted to do all kinds of things! We are afraid of failure, rejection, the unknown, persecution.

Q. As you look at this list, how does temptation most often come in your life?

Q. The next time you are tempted, what is one thing you can do to resist it?

As you mature in Christ and learn to depend on the Holy Spirit's guidance, you will become more and more sensitive to the times temptation is before you. When you are tempted, don't say, "The temptation is too strong," and give in to it. If you are abiding in God, the Holy Spirit has promised to give you the power to withstand temptation. Ask for His help!

Darrel's Story

I had been dating Tori for two years and we were involved sexually. I attended a Christian youth camp and gave me life to Jesus. When I got home, I wanted to please my Savior, but when it came to my sexual relationship with Tori, I rationalized my behavior—wanting God to approve. I thought He would understand my “needs” as a guy. But, because I wanted to please Christ, I kept reading the Bible and I realized that it said I needed to have sexual purity. I realized that this was actually an act of obedience to Christ, and that sex outside of marriage was wrong. I knew though, that I didn't have the strength to break off my relationship with Tori.

So, by faith, I asked for the Holy Spirit to empower me to obey Him and help me to do what I knew I needed to do. The temptation to have sex with Tori was so strong that I realized we needed to quit seeing each other.

When I chose to obey God and broke off my relationship with Tori, the Holy Spirit gave me tremendous peace and joy. Since that decision, my life has been truly awesome! Darrel took God seriously, and “ran” from the temptation that could have entrapped him and hindered his walk with Christ. By faith, Darrel chose to obey God.

If you are involved in a battle over temptation, sin, or addiction to a substance or lifestyle, the power of the Holy Spirit is able to lift you out and give you total victory. Choose to trust Him! Focus on your relationship with God, who He is, what He is doing in your life!

2 Thessalonians 3:3 assures us, “But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

James 4:7 promises, “So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Memorize scripture, ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit's wisdom, hold on to God's faithfulness ... the Holy Spirit will help you resist the temptation!

Application

Q. As you consider all that has been discussed in this lesson, what is one thing you can begin to put into your life today that will help you the next time you are tempted?

Choose one of the verses presented in this lesson to memorize and focus on it the next time you are tempted.