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# Three Avenues of Temptations

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# Three Avenues of Temptations

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1 John 2:15-17 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world – the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions – is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains forever.”

Kosmos is the Greek word that has been translated here as world. It is not referring to planet earth or all of humanity. It is referring to the system of evil that is under Satan’s control.

This passage reveals three different avenues of temptation that Satan uses to tempt us into trying to fulfill legitimate desires in wrong ways.

## **1. The cravings of sinful man**

This is the urge to satisfy the appetites and senses of our physical body. Another way to phrase this idea would be, “sensual pleasures and entertainment.”

Satan whispers, “Do whatever it takes to satisfy your physical senses and the cravings of your body because happiness is waiting for you.” There are many different inappropriate ways that we may attempt to satisfy our physical cravings. It may be as simple as overeating. Or it may involve getting drunk, getting high, or pursuing some sexual escapade through a relationship or on the internet or through pornography.

Our desires and passions can be fueled by the thrill of sensuality. And often times the more we experience, the more we want to experience. Pleasure can become addictive especially if it is used as an escape from feelings of insignificance, insecurity, or rejection.

For example, if you don’t think that you are a significant person then obviously how you spend your time doesn’t matter much. If that’s true then you might as well try to fill up your hours with as much pleasurable activity as possible. Because you’re not really using time to accomplish something, you’re just using up time trying to avoid boredom. Sensual pleasure and entertainment are a way of doing that. However,

sensuality is an appetite that cannot be satisfied. There is pleasure that comes from sensuality, but it only lasts for a short time. Once it is over, all you are left with is consequences.

There's nothing wrong with wanting a pleasurable life, but the pleasures we enjoy must be pleasing to God as well as to us. God wants us to enjoy pleasures, but within his guidelines. Here are some questions to use as you evaluate your pleasure:

- Is this pleasure wholesome ... or sinful?
- Am I more devoted to pleasure ... or to God?
- Is this pleasure helping ... or hindering my devotion to God?

## **2. The lust of the eyes**

This temptation is wanting to acquire everything that we see. Another way to put it is, "the seductiveness of money and possessions."

How many times have you heard someone say, "You owe it to yourself." Or, "You deserve it because you are worth it." Or, "Buy whatever your heart desires, then the happiness things bring will be yours forever."

How can you argue with that kind of reasoning, and who would even want to?

We live in a very materialistic society. Advertising has become the science of creating dissatisfaction within people and then promising fulfillment through the purchase of a product or experience. We are led to believe that if we buy that product it will help us be accepted, secure, or significant.

You have probably all seen the bumper sticker that reads "He who dies with the most toys wins". It sounds funny, but it is actually one of Satan's lies. The writer of Ecclesiastes teaches us, "The one who loves money will never be satisfied with money, he who loves wealth will never be satisfied with his income." (Ecclesiastes 5:10). It is easy to be fueled by the magnetism of greed—the more we have, the more we want.

Jesus had a great story to tell regarding this very issue. Here is it as recorded in Luke 12:15-21.

"Then he said to them, 'Watch out and guard yourself from all types of greed, because one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.' He then told them a parable: 'The land of a certain rich man produced an abundant crop, so

he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to myself, 'You have plenty of goods stored up for many years; relax, eat, drink, celebrate!'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded back from you, but who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' So it is with the one who stores up riches for himself, but is not rich toward God."

The point of this story is not that we shouldn't have money. There is nothing wrong with having money. It's just that money can give us a false sense of security. God is the owner of everything and we are to be good stewards of what he has entrusted to our care. When our money leads us away from God instead of drawing us closer to him, that's when we're in trouble! First Timothy 6:9-10 warns us, "Those who long to be rich, however, stumble into temptation and a trap and many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils. Some people in reaching for it have strayed from the faith and stabbed themselves with many pains."

Once again, God wants us to enjoy the good things he has put in our lives—but within his guidelines. Here are some questions to use as you consider your attitudes about money and possessions:

- Is my desire for money and material things stronger than my love and devotion to God?
- Am I content with the material blessings God has given me or am I consumed with getting more?
- Am I putting my hope and trust in my material resources or in God?

### **3. The boasting of what he has and does**

This temptation plays itself out in the seductiveness of fame and power. It is taking credit for things that will increase your self-importance or prestige.

Society tells us that we should "Pursue popularity," "Impress people with how great you are," "Climb the social ladder," "Get in the limelight," "Make a name for yourself and be somebody," "Show off your strength, beauty, intelligence, or position," ... "Then you'll be happy."

It's easy to fall prey to this kind of advice because we so desire the acceptance of others and want to be seen as a significant person. We need to remember that the voice of pride speaks to us from our old nature. It insists that we capitalize on every opportunity to exalt ourselves, because this is how we will find happiness.

It is important that we not be fueled by the glory of pride. The more praise and recognition we receive, the more we need and often solicit. Fame and power give us a false sense of significance, security, love, and acceptance by others.

There's nothing wrong with being famous or powerful. God has created us for greatness, but he wants us to concentrate on using our greatness in his way. Two Timothy 1:7 is a powerful reminder of this truth, "For God did not give us a Spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Here are some questions to use as you consider your own importance:

- Am I serving others ... or demanding to be served?
- Am I building God's kingdom ... or my own?
- Am I doing everything for the glory of God ... or seeking glory for myself?