

An Honest Look at Temptation

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Reconciliation Ministries newsletter and is part of our

new vintage newsletter series – a series of newsletter articles that were published in the early days of

Reconciliation Ministries which are still relevant for today. It was written by then director, Jack Hickey, who continues to celebrate over 30 years of walking in sexual and relational wholeness.



For no temptation – no trial regarded as enticing to sin (no matter how it comes or where it leads) – has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man – that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear. But God is faithful (to His Word and to His compassionate nature), and He (can be trusted) not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength or resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will (always) also provide the way out – that means to escape to a landing place – that you may be capable and strong and powerful patiently to bear up under it.

1 Corinthians 10:13, Amplified Bible

“Will I always have to face temptation? Won’t God just take it away?” I am often asked this by the people I counsel. The answer is yes, you will always face temptation. No, God won’t take it away. Temptation is a reality of life.

“Well then,” the person will continue, “there is no real victory. There is no true freedom from sin. Why do I have to fight for something I’ll never get?” The problem is not in being tempted, it is understanding temptation. Jesus never said he would take temptation away. He only said we can have victory over temptation. Temptation will not over take us.

It is this lack of understanding temptation that gets so many believers confused and out of sorts. They begin to feel (and sad to say, are often told) that their faith is not enough. If they were a good Christian or a spiritual person, they would not face temptation. Look at Hebrews 4:15. Who is that passage talking about being tempted? Is it some weak believer with no faith to see them through? No, it’s Jesus, our High Priest, our Victor.

We need to clear up some of these misconceptions before we can see God intervene on our behalf. Jesus is our example of how a believer should and can live. Hebrews 2:18 reads, *“For since He, Himself, was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”* It is best that we look at His life to find out who we, as believers in Christ, should approach temptation. To do this we need to look at Hebrews 4:15 again.

“For we do not have a high Priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

Temptation is not sin. One way that Satan makes us break under temptation is by telling us that we are sinning. I have known people who spend a good part of their day asking forgiveness for their temptation. This verse tells us that Jesus faced the same temptations and yet did not sin. That is because the temptations themselves are not sinful. It is what we do with the temptations that brings sin into the picture.

“Oh, but Jesus was divine and it was different for Him.” Yes, He was divine, but He was also as human as you and I. Look at the verse, ***“...as we are...”*** He must have faced sin as we do if He was to give us victory over it. Jesus came to earth as a baby not because babies are cute. He had to be born – like us – and grow up – like us – in order to die for us. It wasn’t just God on the cross; He was one of us up there.

If He, being one of us, did not sin by begin tempted, then we are not sinning either. Scripture teaches us that Satan will tempt us. We are not told (anywhere) not to be tempted. We are told to resist – turn away from – flee – stand against temptation.

Temptation is not our identity. I see this so often in dealing with people coming out of homosexuality. They are set free and believe they are new creatures in Christ. But when a temptation comes they think, “I must still be gay. If I wasn’t, I wouldn’t be tempted with these feelings.”

Remember that Satan has come to “kill, steal, and destroy” (John 10:10). He did not come to be an annoyance. He knows that our sexual appetite is a strong force. We are told to resist and stand against every kind of temptation except sexual temptation. *We are told to run from sexual temptation.* Satan knows our weakest point and there he will hit us.

The fact we are tempted by something from our past does not give us that identity. These are familiar to us. Jesus washed away your sin not your memory. We are now in Christ. I once lived in Vermont, I now live in Michigan. I often remember Vermont and how it was to live there, but I **now** am in Michigan. That is fact. We are **now** in Christ and no matter how we remember our past, it is our past. That too is fact.

Temptation is not a sign of a poor spiritual walk. Revelation 12:10 gives Satan an interesting name. It reads to him as “the accuser of our brethren.” Jesus told us that Satan was a liar and there was no truth in him. (John 8:44). So why are we so quick to believe Satan?

So often I have had people tell me that they feel they are spiritually falling apart because they are facing temptation. As I said earlier, temptation is a reality of the Christian life. It can defeat us and discourage us, or we can be strengthened by it. James said we should count it all joy when we face trials (James 1:2). Paul said he rejoices in affliction because he has learned when **he is weak; God is strong** (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

The fact we go through rough times, or that we face temptation – no matter what the temptation is – does not mean we are weak spiritually. As you look through Scriptures you see men and women of faith facing great temptation. Even Jesus faced them and He always had a good spiritual walk.

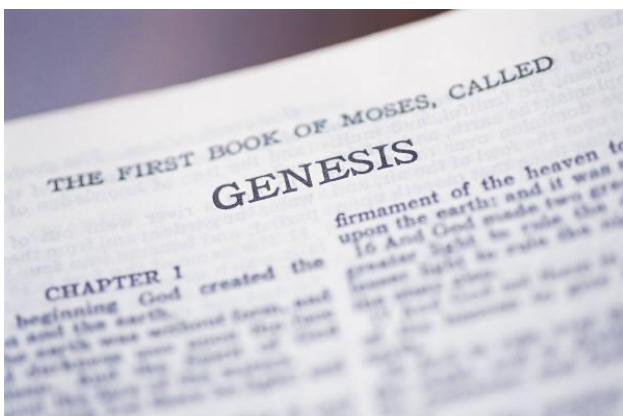
As we resist temptation, we become spiritually strong. We then see that we are dependent on Jesus to get us through. He is faithful when we face temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). Temptation is more a sign of a spirit who is growing than a weak one.

All temptation is common. Did you ever feel you were the **only** person dealing with your problems? I have. I know many have felt this way. What is almost funny about that is how untrue it is. We may put a different face on it, or give it a different name, but we all face the same battle. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us, “*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man.*”

As a counselor, I will often point out areas that a person is struggling with that they had not told me about. They always look shocked, as if I had read their mind. The truth is I have dealt with enough people over the years I know how sin works in a person's life. I can pick it out because it is a common problem.

Once we take the specialty out of our sin, we can address it. We can then see that others have not only faced it, but have gotten victory over it. Satan loves to make us feel we are all alone, and that no one understands or can help us. That is a lie. We may have our own perspective of sin, but it's all the same dynamics and all the same answer.

Once we understand these basic facts, we can deal more effectively with temptation. It is God's will that you be free from all bondage. He has provided victory, healing and wholeness for you. That does not mean, however, that you'll never face temptation.



Be ready for the enemy by knowing the truth to battle his lies. When you face temptation – no matter what the temptation is – remember the following: 1) you are not sinning, 2) that is not your identity, 3) it doesn't mean you are spiritually weak, and 4) others face it as well. Speak those truths and turn away from Satan and his deceptions.

“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.”

James 1:12