

01 – WHAT IS TEMPTATION?

Why Do a Series on Temptation?

- ✓ Temptation is something we all experience, but nobody talks about! Think about it! When was the last time you sat with your Christian friends and talked about your latest temptation? (You've probably never done that.) We don't talk about those things! Why not?
- ✓ For one thing, it's embarrassing! Who wants to admit that (sometimes) they still want to sin? But I think the bigger reason for our silence is ... *we don't trust each other!* We really don't!
- ✓ We read verses like, "Confess your sins to one another" (Ja. 5:16), and we think, "Yeah, right! If I do that, I'll be labelled for life!" So, when we're tempted, we don't ask for help. Instead, we struggle in silence. In some areas, we *know* we're losing the battle to sin, and we hate ourselves for it.
- ✓ In this series, we're going to have the conversation we'd have if you came to me and said, "I'm saved, but I'm struggling." We're going to take the bull by the horns and talk about winning the battle with sin.

Opening Thoughts

- ✓ There are two mistakes that churches make when they talk about sin. They either *over-emphasize* it, or they *under-emphasize* it.
- ✓ When you *over-emphasize* sin, legalism takes over the church. (People become harsh and judgmental toward each other.) On the other hand, *under-emphasize* sin, and people get the idea that sin is no big deal. Neither extreme is healthy.
- ✓ What we need to do instead is: Deal with the subject Biblically – model the grace of Christ – and help people find freedom. (How does that sound?)
- ✓ I'm going to talk to you (for a moment) like you're struggling with *some* area of sin. (Maybe it's just an *attitude*. It *could* be bigger.)

The Most Important Things You Need to Know

1.) The First Thing You Need to Know Is: **Freedom is Possible!**

- ✓ It doesn't matter *how* long you've struggled with a particular sin. It doesn't matter *how* many times you've failed. **You can be free!** **Believing that is half the battle!** (I'll say that another way: **How you see yourself and what you believe about yourself matters.**)

Prov. 23:7– “... as a man thinks in his heart, so is he ...”

- ✓ If you see yourself as bound by sin, and powerless to change, then that's what you'll *be*. (In fact, that's who the devil *wants* you to believe you are. But the Bible paints a very different picture of you!)

Who You REALLY Are!

- ✓ According to Scripture, you're a child of God; a new creature in Christ! God's given you everything you need to win this battle! You've got His Word, His Blood, His Name, His Spirit, His power, His authority, His life, His nature, His armor, His weapons.

Acts 1:8 – “But the Holy Spirit will come upon you and **give you power.**”

1 John 4:4 – “**Greater is He that is in you,** than he that is in the world.”

Ro. 6:14 – “For **sin shall not have dominion over you ...**”

- ✓ God has *made* you an overcomer! See yourself as one! This is “Step One” to freedom. **Change how you see God** and **change how you see yourself.**
- ✓ Up to now, you've probably seen God as distant. (If you picture His face, I'm sure He looks angry and disappointed as He watches you struggling with sin.)
- ✓ The truth is, **He's not angry or disappointed.** He's on your side! And **He's in you to help you!**)

- ✓ That's the first thing you're going to change. From now on, you're going to **picture God in your corner. He's gonna be your Coach, not your condemner.** (That condemnation you've been feeling ... That was all in your head, anyhow!) Change how you see God *and* yourself!

2.) The next thing you're going to change is: How You See God's Forgiveness.

- ✓ We're going to renew your mind here. 1 Jn. 1:9 really works!

Observations About God's Forgiveness

a.) God's Forgiveness is Instant

- ✓ We're picking this up in the middle of the story. David's committed adultery with Bathsheba and he's had her husband killed. Nathan has just confronted David, and David's about to repent.

2 Sam. 12:13 – "David said unto Nathan, '**I have sinned against the Lord.**' (that's his confession). And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord **also has put away your sin** ...'" (Past tense! How long did that take? A milli-second?)

b.) God's Cleansing Is Real – (1 Jn. 1:9b)

- ✓ You might not *feel* clean, but you ARE! Look at another verse:

John 13:10 – "Jesus replied, 'One who has **bathed all over** needs only to **have his feet washed** to be **entirely clean.**'"

- ✓ You took a spiritual "bath" when you received Jesus. As you walk in this world, sometimes you get your "feet" dirty. But you don't need to take another "bath". (You don't need to be born again again!) You just need the "foot wash" of 1 John 1:9. According to Jesus, that "foot wash" makes you "entirely clean".
- ✓ Someone might say, "Well, if God's forgiveness is that quick and that complete ..."

Why Not Just Go Ahead and Sin?

A.) Sin Disrupts Your Fellowship with God.

- ✓ Notice I didn't say sin breaks your "*relationship*" with God. It doesn't. As a child, when I was "bad", I didn't lose my place in the family. (My last name was still *Swanson*. I was still my parents' son!)
- ✓ Our *relationship* didn't change. But the *fellowship* around the supper table was strained until I repented. (The same is true in the family of God. You don't lose your *relationship* with God when you sin. But your *fellowship* is definitely strained.)

B.) Sin Erodes Your Confidence in Prayer

1 John 3:21 – "*Beloved, if our conscience doesn't accuse us, THEN we have confidence toward God.*"

- ✓ Now, flip that around. If our conscience does accuse us, it robs us of our confidence before God. (The context is prayer.)

C.) Sin Hurts Both You and Others

- ✓ As Christians, we understand that God forgives us when we sin. That's wonderful! But that's not the only consideration. Your sin doesn't just hurt YOU. (Think of the far-reaching consequences of David's sin. Bathsheba lost her *husband*, Uriah lost his *life*, Joab lost a *soldier*, four members of David's family died as a direct result of his sin.) Your sin doesn't just affect you. Sin has a domino effect.

D.) 1 John 1:9 Doesn't Erase the Consequences of Sin

- ✓ If you robbed a bank, then later used 1 John 1:9, God would forgive you. But when the police caught up with you, you'd still go to jail. 1 John 1:9 doesn't remove the consequences of sin. Never forget this, **sin complicates your life and the lives of those around you.** The best way to deal with sin is to avoid it in the first place!

1 John 2:10 – "*My little children, I write these things unto you, so you*

won't sin. (That's Plan A – Avoid Sin Completely.) *But if any man DOES sin,* (and we all *do* at times) *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous ...*” (That's Plan B – Get Forgiven.)

- ✓ Our goal in this series is to give you strategies that work in real life, so you can live as much as possible in “Plan A”. We'll also look at a few “case studies” – people who did well in the face of temptation (like Jesus and Joseph), and a few others who *didn't* do so well (like Eve, David, Samson and Judas). We'll learn a LOT from them.

Facts About Temptation

(i) It's Not a Sin to Be Tempted

Heb. 4:15 – “**Jesus was tempted** in every way we are. **Yet he didn't sin!**”

- ✓ Being tempted isn't a sin. Only yielding is a sin.

(ii) Temptation Plays on a Legitimate Need

- ✓ God created you with needs and desires. (You desire significance, sex, friendship, money, etc.) In temptation, Satan appeals to a need or desire that God *already* put in you ... and he offers you a short-cut. (“You don't have to get a job and *earn* money. Just *steal* what you want! You don't have to get married. Just sleep with her *now*.”)
- ✓ That's a great definition of sin. **Sin is meeting a legitimate need in an illegitimate way.** Ultimately, it's going to the wrong source to get your needs met. (In essence, you're telling God, “You're too slow”, pushing him out of the way, and letting Satan meet your need.)
- ✓ Now let's define temptation. **Temptation is Satan's offer to meet your needs in a way that will hurt you and offend God.** Listen! Satan's not out to do you any favors! Think of it this way: Every temptation is a “Trojan Horse”. It's “gift-wrapped dynamite”. Temptation is the doorway through which destruction enters your life. On the other hand, if God meets your needs, “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it” (Prov. 10:22)