

Rely on God's Resources (6): His Help in Temptation

Hebrews 2:18 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁸ 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.

Psalms 119:9-11 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping it according to Your word.
¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
¹¹ I have treasured Your word in my heart,
So that I may not sin against You.*

Introduction

This morning, we are going to think about a crucial and challenging topic—**temptation**. While one sermon can't possibly cover the full depth of this subject, I hope to offer a meaningful overview that highlights the core truths to equip you with practical steps for overcoming temptation in daily life.

We'll begin by identifying the two primary sources of temptation: the human heart within and Satan, the tempter, from without. Then, we'll explore practical strategies for resisting temptation—what I call “shunning the bait.” These include fleeing from tempting situations, resisting the devil, and learning to filter our thoughts.

Next week, I'll talk about the most powerful defense of all against temptation: hiding God's Word in our hearts, remaining steadfast in prayer, and depending on the Holy Spirit. These are the keys to living a victorious life in Christ, even in the face of temptation.

Content

Temptation Is a Common Human Experience.

No one is exempt from temptation. When you face temptation, you're not alone—and you're certainly not the only one. Temptation is something we all encounter, regardless of age, gender, or background. It's a daily reality for every human being. Even Jesus, the Son of God, was tempted—though He never gave in. Because He's walked that path, He fully understands what we're going through, and He stands ready to help us in our time of need.

Temptations are **everywhere**, though they may look different for each person. For one, it might be drugs (like Tom), for another, drinking (Sam), or smoking (Kay). Some struggle with overeating (Lisa), others with pornography (Ted), greed (Mitch—“those who want to get rich fall into temptation,” as 1 Timothy 6:9 says), or gambling (Harry). Still others wrestle with pride (Peter), vanity (Sue), or self-pity (Bea). The list goes on. One of life’s great mysteries is that God, in His wisdom, doesn’t remove temptation completely from our lives—but He does provide a way out of it.

Temptations are **inevitable**—but giving in to them is not. You don’t have to fall or be overcome. By the way, avoiding temptation altogether is far wiser than trying to escape its grip once you’re caught. As William Blake once said, it is *“better to shun the bait than to struggle in the snare.”*

Understanding the Nature of Temptation

Many of us find ourselves asking, “Where does temptation even come from?” Scripture gives us a clear answer: temptation arises from two primary sources—**our own hearts** and **Satan**, the ultimate cause of evil. The human heart is capable of desiring what is wrong, and Satan actively works to exploit those desires.

One thing we must never do when we are tempted is to blame God, because He never tempts anyone. James makes this plain: *“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, **nor does He tempt anyone**; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed”* (James 1:13–14, NIV).

Temptation is real, but so is the truth—God is not its source. Instead, He is our refuge when it comes.

So, here’s what God does when it comes to temptation. First, *He sets the limits*. God determines how far the enemy can go—He never allows the righteous to be shaken (Psalm 55:22). God never allows us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. He knows our limits better than we do. And not only that, but He also faithfully provides a way out so we can endure it. God doesn’t just watch us in our struggle—He equips us to overcome and provides the way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Three Key Factors in Temptation

Imagine yourself standing in the center of a great arena -- Temptation Coliseum. Welcome to the battleground where real-life temptations play out. In this arena, you will see three key players involved in your battle with temptation. Understanding them is the first step toward victory.

First: **Circumstances and Situations.** When facing temptation, one of the most important things to examine is your environment. *Where are you? Who are you with? What are you allowing into your space?* Often, it's the setting that makes resistance difficult—sometimes nearly impossible.

Take Sam, for example—he struggles with alcoholism, yet he chooses to sit in a bar surrounded by drinking buddies. That environment feeds the temptation. The wisest strategy in moments like these is exactly what Scripture tells us: **flee** (1 Timothy 6:11).

We see this illustrated vividly in Scripture through two men: **Joseph** the Son of Jacob and King **David**. Both were facing the same temptation: to sleep with another man's wife. Their reaction was the opposite. When Joseph was repeatedly seduced by Potiphar's wife in a private and tempting situation, he **ran**. He physically removed himself from the opportunity to sin (Genesis 39).

David, on the other hand, encountered temptation when he saw Bathsheba, Uriah's wife—and instead of fleeing, he **lingered** and acted on his desires, ultimately committing adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11).

The results? Joseph was honored by God and rose to become the prime minister of Egypt. David, though forgiven, endured public shame and faced long-lasting consequences.

The lesson is clear: **Don't put yourself in a situation where temptation has the upper hand.** Flee from environments that stir up your weakness. Do everything with the end in mind, and live to honor God with your choices.

Next: **Beware of the Tempter—The devil**

Temptation isn't just circumstantial—it's also **strategic**. Behind every temptation is a tempter: **the devil**. He doesn't play favorites. He tempts everyone—you, me, even Jesus our Lord.

His mission is clear: to **steal your joy, destroy your peace, and derail God's purpose in your life** (1 Thessalonians 3:5). He wants to leave you defeated, discouraged, and doubting.

Pastor David Wilkerson once said, *"I believe Satan's most powerful weapon against God's people is temptation and lust that leads to sin. His purpose is to engulf believers in guilt, fear, and condemnation—to make them discouraged and downcast."*

And here's the sobering reality: *the more you love Jesus, the more intensely the enemy will try to tempt you.* So, stay alert. Don't underestimate the tempter's tactics—and don't try to face him without the armor of God.

Temptation Is Personalized.

One of the enemy's most dangerous tactics is how **strategically personal** his temptations are. Satan studies us. He observes the way we think, speak, act, and react—carefully noting our patterns and weaknesses. And when the time is right, he knows exactly which button to press—the one we're least likely to resist.

Take Eve, for example. Long before the serpent spoke, it's likely that Eve had already spent time near the forbidden tree, admiring its beauty more than Adam did. The serpent knew where to strike. He came to her with subtle questions and twisted truth:

*“Now the serpent was more cunning than any animal of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God really said, “You shall not eat from **any** tree of the garden”?’”* (Genesis 3:1)

Notice how Satan approached Eve. He didn't come with horns and pitchfork—he came with a **question** that planted doubt in Eve's heart. He attacked where curiosity had already taken root. That's how he works. He tempts us where we're vulnerable, not where we're strong. So, stay watchful, and guard the areas of your heart that linger too close to danger.

Consider Harry, a gambler. As he kept visiting casinos in Atlantic City, Satan would know exactly which buttons to push—whether it's the thrill of getting rich quick or the urge to win back what he's already lost. The enemy would launch his assault through every sense—sight, sound, smell, even taste—all designed to break down Harry's resistance and draw him deeper into temptation.

But Scripture gives us the clearest and strongest strategy for confronting the devil:

“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

We don't have to fight in our own strength, but we must **stand our ground**. When we actively resist, the enemy has no choice—he must retreat.

Third: We Must Understand Our Inner Disposition.

Our hearts and minds are a constant battleground—places where spiritual warfare is fought daily. You've felt it: the inner tug-of-war between the desire for instant gratification and the deeper conviction to resist temptation. Scripture calls us to be active and intentional in this fight. *“**Take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 10:5)

We must learn to **discern** and **filter** the thoughts that enter our minds. Not every thought is your own—some are prompted by God, others are planted by the enemy. In John 13:2, we're told that *“the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus.”* A few verses later, Satan entered him (John 13:27).

That's a sobering reminder. If we don't guard our minds, the enemy will use them as entry points. So don't give him space. Don't entertain thoughts that pull you away from Christ. Take them captive, and submit them to the Lordship of Jesus.

We will continue next Sunday about three divine ways to overcome temptation.

Let us pray.