

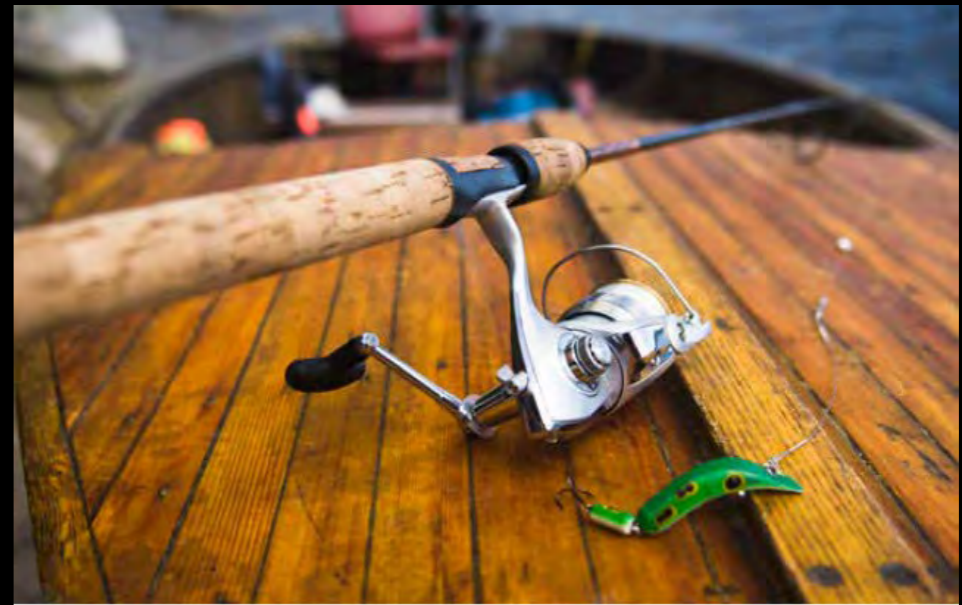
SESSION 1

# The Source of Temptation

SERVANTS For  
**CHRIST**

2 Corinthians 4:5

**BIBLE  
STUDIES  
FOR LIFE.**



# Dealing with Temptation

Session 1      **The Source of Temptation**    James 1:13-18      **April 16, 2023**

Session 2      **The Temptation to Rely on Myself Instead of God**  
Deuteronomy 8:2-10; Matthew 4:1-4      **April 23, 2023**

Session 3      **The Temptation to Test God**      **April 30, 2023**  
Deuteronomy 6:16-25; Matthew 4:5-7

Session 4      **The Temptation to Place Something Else Before God**      **May 1, 2023**  
Deuteronomy 6:10-15; Matthew 4:8-11

Session 5      **Recovering from a Fall into Temptation**    Psalm 32:1-7      **May 14, 2023**

Session 6      **The Strength to Stand Against Temptation**    Ephesians 6:10-18      **May 21, 2023**

What are the 3 sources of temptations?

**The three sources of temptation have been described as:**

- world -- "indifference and opposition to God's design", "empty, passing values";
- flesh -- "gluttony and sexual immorality, ... our corrupt inclinations, disordered passions";
- the Devil -- "a real, personal enemy, a fallen angel, Father of Lies, who ...

What are 10 common temptations?

Common temptations include **eating too much, spending too much, laziness, venting on social media, gossiping, feeling jealous, viewing pornography, lying or cheating and abusing alcohol.**

# THE POINT

We have no one to blame but ourselves when we fall into sin.

# THE PASSAGE

James 1:13-18

When temptation to sin presents itself, it usually looks like a short-cut to something we really desire. It may even be associated with a legitimate desire sought by an illegitimate means. Or it may be a natural, God-given desire pursued in an ungodly way. In other words, temptation often appears as a short-cut to something we want for ourselves. In James, the temptation is linked to an unholy desire. Sin is looking to satisfy *any* desire apart from faith in God. For, as [Romans 14:23](#) says, “whatever is not from faith is sin.” Apart from faith, everything we do is sin.

**Obey God and Deny Self.** We cannot live in obedience to God if we are giving in to temptation. Believers must learn to deny the pull of the old sin nature and submit to God when temptation is present.

What are temptations and examples?

Temptation is **something you want to have or to do, even though you know you shouldn't.** That bag of peanut butter cups on top of your fridge might be an example of a temptation. The thing that you want despite knowing it's not good for you — like the cool sneakers you really can't afford — is a temptation.

## 1 | The Source of Temptation



### THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We all have a favorite food. We get a whiff of it, and we're looking for a fork. It's so tempting! The urge to take a bite of cake may not necessarily be a bad thing, but we're often tempted to indulge ourselves in other ways. Temptation is the ultimate "bait and switch." It promises something good, but it delivers something harmful, even deadly.

Fish discover this the hard way. As a kid, I loved fishing. I'd roll up a piece of bread on a hook, place it in the water, and watch the small fish go crazy. I'd catch the smaller fish and use them as bait to catch bigger fish. It excited me to drop the bait in the water and see if I could lure a bass to bite. Fun for me, but not for the fish.

Who lures us into sin? We may want to blame Satan—"The devil made me do it!"—but the answer is a lot closer to home. Thankfully, the solution is as close as a prayer.

# DEALING WITH TEMPTATION

The Christian life is not always easy. In fact, it is war! Unfortunately, it doesn't always look like war. Too often it appears on the surface like the tranquil picture of a fisherman casting his line into a cool, serene lake—but Satan is the fisherman and we're the fish! He uses the bait of our own selfish desires to lure us into sin.

We don't have to give in. We can stand strong in the face of temptation. How do we defend ourselves against the schemes of the devil? In these six sessions, we will consider how to deal with temptation and sin. We'll discover how to stand our ground, avoid sin, live faithfully for God, and live lives that please Him.

I pray that, by the end of our study together, you will be able to identify the source of your sin, expose your idols, and learn how to be satisfied in God alone.

**QUESTION 1:**

*What food can you almost never say no to?*

**QUESTION 2:**

*How have you seen temptation work to lead people astray?*

**QUESTION 3:**

*How would you describe the stages of temptation in your own words?*

**QUESTION 4:**

*What are some of the good gifts God has given us to help face temptation?*

**QUESTION 5:**

*How can our group help one another overcome temptation in our lives?*





I. **Temptation is rooted in our own sin nature, not because God is tempting us (13-15).**



## SESSION 1

# The Source of Temptation

**[VERSE 13]:** James denied that God is responsible or even capable of being the origin of any temptation. God cannot be tempted by evil. This understanding of trials reveals an aspect of God's activity in our lives, as well as of His character. Because of God's holy character, He cannot be influenced by evil, nor is He capable of tempting His creatures. God and evil are two diametrically opposed forces that consistently repel each other. So, testing cannot be equated with the temptation to sin.

## SESSION 1

# The Source of Temptation

**[VERSE 14]:** James next answered the question: *Who, then, is responsible when we fall?* God is not responsible. It's not even the devil who is responsible. The simple answer is: We are responsible. Fleshly desires too often result in people being "drawn away . . . and enticed." The Greek words underlying "drawn away" and "enticed" are fishing terms. The

fish is drawn out of its safe hiding place due to the attractiveness of the lure being used. A person is drawn away and enticed "of his own lust." Uncontrolled desire often results in sin. We human beings have a tendency to blame the devil for all of our problems. Certainly, he plays his part in tempting us, but James wanted his readers to recognize it is a person's own desires that ultimately drag him or her away into sin.

## SESSION 1

**[VERSE 15]:** The progression of evil goes through three stages: desire, sin, and death. The desire innate within the person joins with the outward temptation and produces sin. One can avoid the sin by refusing to give in to the tempting desire. But after the desire is conceived, sin becomes the offspring of that evil union. Sin then becomes alive in the self and, if allowed, will grow and become stronger. When sin is allowed to go unchecked, it eventually will produce “death.” For the believer, this is a sense of guilt and alienation from God. To be clear, James was not suggesting that only when sin has reached a certain point would there be the consequence of death. The penalty for sin of any kind is a spiritual death of sorts. James was simply charting the progression that occurs when a believer yields to temptation.

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**II. We are deceived into sin when we forget that all good and perfect gifts come from God (16-18).**



## SESSION 1

# The Source of Temptation

**[VERSES 16-17]:** God is the true giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift.” God has nothing to do with evil when we are tempted. Nothing withheld from God’s children or prohibited by God’s Word is good, no matter how attractive the lure may be to a person. James referred to God as the “Father of lights,” because He is the Creator and Ruler of all things. Further, God is described as One “with whom is no variableness.” There is change in shifting shadows, but God does not change. There is no shifting in Him.)

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**[VERSE 18]:** The reference here is to the new birth. God chose to give us birth “with the word of truth,” the gospel. In keeping with his conception theme, James said that God, by His choice, “begat he us.” God had a special purpose in choosing us through the gospel—that is, He had in mind a regenerative outcome in which we would become “first-fruits.” In the Old Testament, the first-fruits were typically used to denote the first crop of the harvest that was given as an offering to God. If the first-fruits were good, so would the entire harvest be. In the New Testament, Christ is, with respect to the resurrection, “the first-fruits” (1 Corinthians 15:20,23); believers, with respect to regeneration, are the “first-fruits,” and are meant to be an offering to God.



# sin

**THE POINT:** We have no one to blame but ourselves when we fall into

James used words that referred to trials, tests, and temptations, but in the original language he was using words that come from the same root word. So, when was he referring to a trial or test and when was he referring to a temptation? Context provides the answer. In the opening verses of James 1, James was clearly talking about trials (James 1:1-12). Trials are difficult hardships that lead to suffering. They're called trials because they are hard to face, and yet, if we are to remain faithful, we endure through them. While trials test the genuineness of our faith, God uses them as a means for our endurance. A temptation, on the other hand, leads us to do something wrong and sinful.

**James 1:13** <sup>13</sup> Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

**God** does not tempt anyone to sin.

Trials are hard, and we tend to blame someone for what we are going through. When we can't find someone to blame, we may even blame God. During trials, we may also be tempted to doubt God; we doubt either His goodness or His sovereignty. Not all trials are the same. Some are only an inconvenience. Others can be debilitating, like the loss of a loved one. Those who have experienced such loss can often feel devastated. Sometimes as we work through grief, we want to question God. We remember that He is sovereign, all-powerful, and all-loving, and we may wonder: *God, since You love me, why didn't You spare me this pain? Since You can do all things, why didn't You prevent this death?* This is where the book of James helps us. Is God letting us experience trials and difficulties in order to tempt us? The answer is no.

**James 1:14-15** <sup>14</sup> But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

\_\_\_\_\_ begins with our own sin nature.

# Temptation

We've already seen that the source of temptation and sin is not God. But neither is it the devil. The source is our own sinful desires. This does not mean the devil or other people can't be involved, but the desire to sin is firmly rooted in ourselves. The devil tempts us by working

James provided a memorable picture with fishing imagery to make his point . An angler takes bait and throws it in front of some unsuspecting bass laying under a log . When the worm is dangled in front of his face, his desire is awakened, and he decides he would really like to eat it . So, he swims out from the safety of his log and in one giant gulp swallows the bait . It's at that point that the fish realizes that he's been duped and he's no longer in control . He is being pulled against his will in the direction of the angler's boat, the net, the cooler, and ultimately the dinner table .

**James 1:16-18** <sup>16</sup> Do not err, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. <sup>18</sup> Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Everything good comes from God, including the word of \_\_\_\_\_ .

# Truth

Rather than God being the source of our temptation and giving birth to our sin, He does quite the opposite; He gives us birth “with the word of truth” (James 1:18). He did this “of his own will” (v . 18)—that is, our salvation is all by His grace . Salvation is one of those good gifts we receive from God . And the word of truth that gives us life is the word of truth we live in day after day . It is the word of truth by which we can stand against temptation . (In the next three sessions, we will see how Jesus used Scripture as He faced temptation .)

God brought about the new birth in us by His will and through His word in order that “we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (v . 18) . The firstfruits were the initial portion of the harvest that promised a bountiful harvest to come . That's what we are . That's what our salvation represents . The God who is good is just getting started .

## WHO'S TO BLAME?

When I sin, I am most likely to blame: *(Circle one or more.)*

Engage

A. Circumstances    B. God    C. Another person    D. Satan    E. My sin nature

Use the space below to write out a brief prayer of thanks to God for His good gifts that help you stand up to temptation .

**DAY 1:** Because God is good, He will never lead us to sin.

**Read James 1:13.**

James gives us two important truths about God to help us as we battle the temptation to sin .

1. God is not tempted by evil. Scripture bears this out: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5) . By nature, God is good . In His holiness and goodness, He will have nothing to do with sin and evil; therefore, evil has no pull on Him . Furthermore, everything God does is good . When He created, everything He made was good (Genesis 1:31) . And because God is good and is the creator and source of all that is good, He cannot be tempted by evil . (James will pick up this thought again in verse 17.)
2. God Himself does not tempt anyone. This is good news! It’s true that God tests us to strengthen our faith . God tested Abraham to prove the genuineness of his faith (Genesis 22:1-19) . In the process, Abraham’s faith was strengthened . Tests strengthen but temptations harm . God aims to strengthen our faith, not destroy it . He is not an erratic, whimsical, temperamental deity who plays with our lives . He is a good God that provides the means we need to endure in faith .

Instead of looking to blame God whenever we face trials, we must remind ourselves, “God is not doing this to tempt me into sin .” He is good and wants my good as well . He is not a destroyer of faith but a builder of faith .

*In prayer, acknowledge any areas of sin and your sinful desires so you can guard your heart against these temptations.*

*“The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.”*

**P S A L M 14 5: 17**

**DAY 2:** Unchecked, our evil desires can lead us to sin.

**Read James 1:14.**

It would be great if we didn't have to deal with our "own lust" (James 1:14) but consider for a moment where these desires come from . Everything God made was good . Evil came into our world through Satan, and sin came to us through Adam . When Adam sinned, we all sinned with him (Romans 5:12) . As a result, we have inherited Adam's sin, guilt, corruption, and condemnation (vv . 13-21) . We know this is true because the penalty for sin is death—and we all die . Jesus confirmed that "evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" all flow from our sinful hearts (Mark 7:21-22) . This is why we need new hearts . And yet, even as Christians with new hearts, we must continue to put off our old ways of thinking and renew our minds by putting on new ways of thinking (Ephesians 4:22-24) .

When we face trials, we're tempted to act like we did before we were Christians, allowing our evil desires to arise and take control . The image James gave of temptation is our evil desires enticing us and dragging us away into sin . Those old, sinful, evil desires are like a fishing lure that dangles in front of us, and when we bite, we are pulled into sin .

*Search God's Word for truth regarding an area of sin you're currently battling. Find a verse that confronts that sin and place it somewhere you see often.*

**DAY 3:** Sin leads to brokenness and distances us from God.

**Read James 1:15.**

In James 1:15, James shifted imagery away from fishing to the delivery room to show us the course of sin . Once we "bite" the lure of our evil desires, we are dragged away . But now that "biting" of the bait turns into conception . "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (v . 15) . But that's not the end of the process; sin also conceives and gives birth to death .

When we allow our sinful desires to go unchecked, they entice us and drag us away into sin . We're not just burdened with our sin; we are burdened with sin's offspring: death . And we have no one to blame but ourselves . But let's remember James's aim . He wanted to encourage us to endure steadfastly under trial, which is why he wrote earlier: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (v . 12) .

*Memorize James 1:14-16 to help you remember the course of sin.*

**DAY 4:** Don't be misled by lies; know God's Word instead.

**Read James 1:16.**

James included a word of caution: "Do not err" (James 1:16). This expression indicated that an important statement was coming. James issued a warning, loud and clear: Don't be misled into thinking that God is the author of temptation when He is in truth and only capable of doing good. In the original Greek, this was written in the present tense imperative, which suggests that the recipients of the letter had been actively participating in the very activity that James was prohibiting. So, the command might be better translated: "Stop being deceived."

James followed up his warning with this truth: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (v. 17). James encouraged the believers to develop a wholehearted trust in God and be careful not to fall into the trap of believing that God would intentionally put anything into their lives to lead them astray. They were to be on constant guard against self-deception. It can be said that the greatest temptation of the sinner is unbelief, while the greatest temptation of the believer is corrupted belief. Trials will come. God has an absolute right to test us. Through that testing, our faith will be strengthened. But make no mistake about it: God does not tempt. He will never entice anyone to do evil.

*Ask a mature Christian friend to be prepared to speak the truth to you about God's goodness when he or she sees you facing trials and temptations. Be prepared to do the same for him or her.*



**DAY 5:** God's love for you is pure and enduring.

**Read James 1:17-18.**

Some might think James was introducing a new topic in James 1:16, but he was returning to the role of God in our trials and temptations . James turns our attention back to God's goodness . He had earlier considered God's goodness by looking at the negative: "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (v . 13) . Beginning in verse 17, James highlighted God's goodness in two positive ways .

1. God provides all that is good. Everything good we experience and possess is from God . Think about that for a moment . Run through all that is good in your life . There is nothing good you receive that is not from God . James expresses it like this: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (v . 17) .
2. God is unchanging . The lights can continually be changing, casting shadows as they turn in their orbits, but the One who created them does not change . He is "the Father of lights" (v . 17) . God is the sovereign creator of the lights (Genesis 1:14-19), and His sovereignty and goodness reflected in creation are still present and active . We are reminded of His goodness and love through them . "To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 136:7-9) .

God's nature is absolutely good . Because of this, we can trust Him in our times of temptation and depend on His goodness to help us withstand our struggles .

*Pause to consider what it means for God to be good in all ways, at all times. Take time to respond in praise to God for His goodness.*

*"Taking the time to reflect on God's gifts and miraculous works is a vital part of a relationship with Him."*



The struggle with temptation is one of the most frustrating things in the life of a believer. Even those outside the church understand the struggle with temptation, but many write it off as simply a weakness, an impulse we can't fight, or something "the devil made me do." We must acknowledge that we have a fallen human nature that will always pull us toward sin, but in Christ, we do not have to give in to temptation.

*Who or what do you most often blame when you fall into sin?*

*How might understanding the source and course of sin help you stand firm in the time of temptation?*

*How have you experienced success when facing temptation as you have matured in your walk with Christ?*



# LIVE IT OUT

It's a harsh reality, but it's your own sinful desires that carry you away. How will you take responsibility for your own sin?

► **Confess.** If you blamed others or God for your sin or the fact you fall into sin, confess that to God. Admit your own responsibility and look to God to help you stand and resist the pull of sin.

- ▶ **List.** Make a list of the good things God has done or placed in your life. Add to your list any trials or difficulties God used to strengthen your faith in Him. Offer a prayer of thanks for how He has worked in your life.

- ▶ **Instruct.** Help someone you know who is struggling with temptation by sharing the truths you discovered in James 1:13-18. Don't just focus on the principle that we alone are to blame for our sin, but lift up the goodness of God who can walk with and strengthen us.

The source of our temptation comes from within and sin must be dealt with on the inside. All of the external therapies and gimmicks in the world will not deliver a sinner from the abiding wrath of God. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ([1 Cor. 15:57](#)). The answer is to turn back to God and look to Him for every good and perfect gift.

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.  
The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.  
(Matthew 26:41, NIV)

If you've been a Christian for more than a day, you've likely sought out a prayer for resisting temptation before. Suppressing the urge to sin is difficult on your own, but when you turn to God for help, he can empower you with wisdom and strength to overcome even the most enticing temptations.

Walking away from circumstances that aren't good for us becomes easier when we consult the scriptures and tap into God's power through prayer. If you are facing temptation right now, find encouragement in the prayer below. Read the Bible verses that follow the prayer to reassure you that the Lord can help us resist all forms of sin.

# A Prayer for Resisting Temptation

Dear Lord Jesus,

I try hard not to stumble in my walk of faith, but you know the temptations that I face today. I experience desires that lead me away from you. Sometimes the temptation seems too strong for me. The desires seem too powerful to resist.

I need your help in this battle. I cannot walk alone, Lord. I need your guidance. My flesh is weak. Please help me. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit to give me strength. I cannot make it without you.

Your Word promises that I will not be tempted beyond what I can bear. I ask for your strength to stand up against temptation each and every time I encounter it.

Help me to stay awake spiritually so that temptation won't catch me by surprise. I want to always pray so that I won't be dragged away by evil desires. Help me keep my spirit well fed with your Holy Word so that I remember you are living in me. And you are greater than every power of darkness and sin that is in the world.



Your Word also tells me you will provide a way of escape from temptation. Please, Lord, give me the wisdom to walk away when I am tempted, and the clarity to see the way out that you will provide. Thank you, Lord, that you are a faithful deliverer and that I can count on your help in my time of need. Thank you for being here for me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray,

Amen.