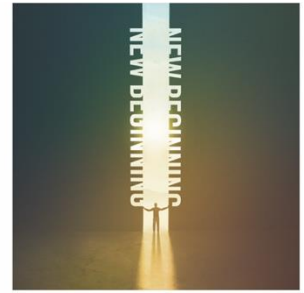


Wisdom With Temptation

A new beginning happens best with wisdom. And if there's anything we should want in times of confusion, it should be wisdom. Other than Jesus, the wisest man ever on earth was Solomon, who offers exactly what we need. Let's revisit the Bible's old wisdom in a new way to give light to a wise path forward.



INTRODUCTION

We are all regularly faced with various forms of temptation. Jesus understands temptation, as He overcame the devil in the wilderness with His very Word. God's Word offers us wisdom and direction when we are faced with temptation in our personal and professional lives. Temptation is a serious matter that we need to acknowledge and learn how to overcome so we can live fully for God!

STARTER QUESTION

Knowing that temptation is something that plagues all of us, what is the best way to recognize it and to fight back against it? Are there ways I am allowing temptation to grow in my life? Am I aware that temptation in and of itself is not a sin – and that God has provided a way out of temptation for me?

INTO THE WORD

1. We spent a great deal of time in Proverbs 6 studying a father's instruction to his son about the dangers of temptation. We learned that temptation promises satisfaction at the cost of obedience, which is clearly illustrated in this chapter. Read I Samuel 15:22 and II Chronicles 31:21 that both illustrate the importance of obedience to God. What other scripture verses and biblical accounts remind you of the importance of obedience to God above all else?
2. Pastor David reminded us that everyone faces temptation. Refer to the following scriptures for four infamous examples of temptation in the Bible: Genesis 3 (Adam and Eve), 2 Samuel 11-12 (David and Bathsheba), Job 1 (Job), and Luke 4 (Jesus). What were the desires being tested? Compare and contrast the responses to those temptations and the outcomes of those choices. Do we have any of these same temptations today? What can we learn from these Biblical examples? How can not addressing temptation lead to bigger problems?
3. Pastor David said when the desire is dead, the temptation to sin is no longer attractive. He referred to Proverbs 4: 14-15. Read Romans 6 and compare this section of scripture with David's point on desire. Specifically, which verses in this chapter give you hope of overcoming sin and living in God's grace? How does this chapter reinforce the concept that we are under no obligation to sin?

APPLICATION

4. We are often taught that the best way to deal with temptation is to avoid situations and places where we will be tempted. However, this is not always possible. The strongest temptations for many people come in solitude, in our own home, or in the quiet of our own minds. How do we overcome temptations like these?
5. David researched and presented the seven most common categories of temptation. With which category do you most identify? Are there small steps you can take to begin avoiding and pushing back against this temptation? So often we focus on the consequences of sin as motivation to resist temptation. Are there are benefits that come with resisting temptation that might be even greater motivators?

6. Temptation comes in many forms in our everyday lives. It is so commonplace that we may not even recognize that it is happening. Pastor David said we must be aware of what tempts us because the devil surely knows how to lure us. Think of some seemingly obscure or subtle ways that we are tempted at home or at the workplace and identify some practical ways to shut that down.
7. As Pastor David suggested, when the topic of temptation comes up, we think of the seemingly obvious moral temptations with obvious detrimental consequences – sexual, drugs, stealing, lying to cover up something, etc. What about the everyday not so obvious temptations, such as worry and procrastination, which can lead to unrest, resentment, and tension? Can you identify what triggers these temptations and how we attempt to rationalize them? What truths do we know that we can use to negate the excuses we make to act on these temptations?

PRAYER

Dear God, it seems that temptation is all around me. Some days it seems stronger than others. But I know that you have equipped me to face temptation through your power and by your Word. God, please help me to call out to you when I am facing temptation of any kind. As I submit myself to you, as your Word directs me to do, help me to resist the devil by recognizing temptation, identifying unhealthy shortcuts, and avoiding circumstances that lead me down the wrong road. I know that you are powerful enough to deliver me from all temptation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

In reference to question 2 from Into the Word:

- Adam and Eve's desire was wisdom. Their response was to give into temptation and eat the fruit that God had forbidden. The result was banishment from the Garden of Eden and suffering and pain.
- David and Bathsheba's desires were lust and pride. They gave way to sexual desires and David chose to cover up his sin. The result was Bathsheba became pregnant, lost the baby and her husband.
- The devil attempted to entice Job to turn away from God by killing off his cattle and his sons and daughters. Job was grief stricken but continued to worship God.
- The devil attempted to entice Jesus to sin but was not successful. Jesus was not tempted to do anything that the devil prompted Him to do. Therefore, the devil left Jesus.
- I believe that we have all these same temptations in the world today. We can draw strength from 1 Corinthians 10:13 that we can overcome these same temptations and any other temptation we face because God will not let us be tempted beyond what we can handle, and he will provide us with the means to endure it.

In reference to question 4 from Application:

Mike Emlet, Dean of Faculty at CCEF (Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation), uses Hebrews 12:1-4 to encourage us: "The call to endurance is not a just-grit-your-teeth and white-knuckle-it exhortation." Our focus should be on Jesus Christ, *especially* in times of temptation. It is so easy to focus only on our desire and temptation and try to "tough it out." But shifting our focus off the desire onto something else is a helpful tool. Refer to Philippians 4:8. What focus is better than Christ to give us the strength we need?

There are other things to remember that will give us the strength we need to resist temptations.

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we are promised that we are not unique to temptation. Be encouraged to know that other people have struggled with the same temptations that we do, and they have overcome them. God knows what you are capable of handling; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond your limit and will provide the means for you to endure it without falling. In Hebrews 4:14-16, we are reminded that Jesus Christ was also tempted, and He endured. Remember and take comfort in the fact that He understands what you are going through; He actually has personal experience when He promises that we can overcome.

Finally, we can find wisdom in some advice that an AA sponsor often gives (as related by Mike Emlet). Don't worry about tomorrow's temptations. "Face the temptations of tomorrow when tomorrow comes and not before. Anticipating the difficulty of tomorrow and imagining yourself unable to withstand it lowers your threshold for giving in today." Emlet goes on to say that, "The more consistently we exercise self-control, the stronger our resolve to make right choices will be."

In reference to question 5 in Application:

Joy of becoming more like Jesus, perfecter of our faith – Hebrews 12:2
The sweetness of a clear conscience – Acts 24:15-16
Our testimony of love and faith – 1 Timothy 1:5
Preserved fellowship with God – Isaiah 59:2
Deliverance from evil – Matthew 6:13
Joy in knowing we are not alone – James 1:2