

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-13 How to Resist Temptation

When a person seeks your help, they may be struggling to resist temptation. Maybe they need help with the results of poor choices they have made in response to being tempted. Offer them the help they seek. The Holy Spirit will guide you while you listen to their situation. You can help them to understand temptation and how to resist it in the future. In this lesson and the next few to follow, we will discuss what temptation is. We will consider from the Bible different examples of trials and temptations.

One thing we know about temptation is that it is not sin. Christ was “tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin” (Heb 4:15). Further, “All temptations that have befallen us are common to man, and God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out” (1Cor 10:13).

Some will say temptation is a good thing. It sheds light on your weaknesses. It shows you places where you need to be more careful. Some may think the devil is a ‘kitty cat’ to be petted and cuddled. We need to realize that the devil is really “a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1Peter 5:8). Scriptures say we are tempted when we are “dragged away” by our own lust or “evil desire.” When we let those desires rule our decisions, then sin can be the result (James 1:14). Possibly temptation is more personal than we want to believe.

We have a good example of temptation in the scriptures. The story of Christ being tempted is recorded in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. As you hear the following story of Christ’s temptation from Matthew, listen carefully. Pause after each temptation. Imagine how you would have responded to the temptation put to Christ.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

Question: Was Satan asking Christ to do a magic trick to prove he was the Son of God? Or did Satan know he was the Son of God and wanted Christ to fail?

From Christ’s response we can understand that Satan knew Christ was hungry. He was being tempted to use his supernatural powers as the Son of God for his own personal needs. Jesus’ response tells us he knew Satan was testing his obedience to God over his need for food: “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matt 4:1-4).

How would you or how have you in the past answered the roaring lion, Satan? Some of the people who seek your advice will believe they are facing a survival decision. How will you advise them? Christ says the answer is in knowing God’s Word and trusting God for provision.

Then the devil took Christ to the holy city. He had him stand on the highest point of the temple, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘God will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

As I heard this scripture I said, “That is true! God has put his angels in charge over us, but not when we purposely try to harm ourselves.” What did you think as you heard this part of Christ’s temptation? Could Christ have fallen to his death?

Jesus responded, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again I thought, “God is our Savior, not our magic wand!” What did you think?

Lastly the devil took Christ to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

Was the devil asking Christ to serve him as well as serving God? He didn’t say, “Serve me alone.” At the time of Christ it was common for people to serve many gods and idols. This could have been a very difficult temptation to reason with. But Christ answered according to what was written in the Word of God. In our time people still wrestle with this temptation.

“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matt 4:5-10).

Temptation is not a sin but is an attempt to get you to stray from your faith. Christ was tempted in all points, yet without sin. The Bible encourages anyone who has struggled with temptation. It says because Jesus “himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18).

Often we will see people in situations in which they could enrich themselves with money, fame, power, or influence. They do not give in to that temptation. Other times you see people who are sick of the results of their lack of self-control. These are the ones who need the Word of God. They need your help. You may have heard people excuse themselves by saying, “But I am not the only one, others are doing the same thing!” This may be true but having company does not make sin right. Rather than being on the defensive, the person should realize they need to repent. God will help them overcome that temptation the next time.

How do you view others who are going through temptations? How should we counsel or advise someone who has fallen or is struggling with temptation? These and many other questions will come to your mind as you interact with people. The Holy Spirit will lead you to the answers, just as he did Christ in his temptation.

This lesson is **important** because it gives us Christ’s answers that we can use when tempted by Satan:

It is written: following Christ is more important than my personal needs or wants.

It is written: I should not tempt God.

It is written: I am to serve God and him alone.

To all his temptations, Jesus responded to Satan, “It is written.”

The main **truth** of the lesson is that heaven and earth shall pass away before one small word of God loses its meaning. You can believe it and stress it to those God leads your way.

Let’s **review** this lesson:

1. In each of Christ’s responses to Satan, he said the same thing. What was it? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Jesus answered each temptation with ‘It is written,’” you are right.
2. Is being tempted a sin? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, “No, being tempted is not a sin,” you are correct.
3. Who is Satan compared to in the Scriptures? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Satan is compared to a “roaring lion looking for someone to devour,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this story a few times and share it with your friends. Get them involved in considering how they would react to temptation from Satan. Ask them what advice they would give someone who is experiencing strong temptation. Memorize the following words of the apostle Paul: “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out” (First Corinthians 10:13).