



Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

RESPONDING TO TEMPTATION WISELY

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 10:13 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 3:1-5 | Luke 4:1-12 | John 14:15-16
Colossians 3:2 | 1 Thessalonians 3:5 | 2 Timothy 2:22 | James 1:13-16 | 1 John 2:15-17

SUMMARY:

Temptation is unavoidable.

No one—even a mature believer—is entirely immune to the appeal of temptation. How do you usually react to its call? Do you cry out to God for His help? Or do you often end up yielding to it?

Most people have no idea how to respond to the attraction of sin. They try to stand against it but give in eventually, making excuses about “being human.” Their sin brings a weight of guilt and shame, so they confess it and promise the Lord they will improve. Unfortunately, the cycle of temptation and defeat often continues time and again.

Believers don’t have to live this way. Although this life is filled with temptations, we can learn to endure without surrendering to them.

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

What is the nature of temptation?

I define temptation as *an enticement of our God-given desires to go beyond God-given limits*. If we yield to an enticement, we seek something He doesn’t want for us, attempt to have it sooner than He desires, or pursue it in an improper way.

■ **There are three sources of temptation.**

James’s epistle says, “Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust” (1:14). That means some temptation simply comes from ourselves, or what the Bible calls our “flesh.” Second, the Devil deceives us (1 Thess. 3:5) just as

he lied to Eve about the consequences of her rebellion against God (Gen. 3:1-5). Third, the world system is a source of temptation. For example, consider how ads entice us to spend money. And those who dress immodestly often stir up the God-given desire for sexual intimacy—but do so in the wrong way.

■ **Temptation by nature is common and universal.**

First Corinthians 10:13 says, “No temptation has seized you but such is common to man.” Temptation always has an attraction or we wouldn’t be drawn to it. Essentially, it’s an enticement to evil. Satan’s purpose for it is to distract us from our relationship with the Father. When you and I are focused on ungodly desires, our prayer life is hindered and we can not adequately understand the Word of God.

■ **Temptation is different from a trial.**

A temptation is an inducement to commit some evil or disobey God. A trial is simply a time of difficulty in a person’s life. Satan wants to use both to destroy us. But the Lord allows temptation and trial to strengthen our faith and teach us to depend on Him.

■ **Christians often have misconceptions about temptation.**

One myth is that temptation itself is a sin. But it only becomes sinful if we act on it. Or, believers may think temptation disappoints God. There is no doubt that the Lord is *displeased* when we fall. But we cannot *disappoint* Him because He already knows the future. Many people believe that they “fall” into temptation. The truth is, believers deliberately step into or yield to temptation. The Holy Spirit provides us with the power to resist sin. Only

lost people “fall” into temptation. Still others think the best way to deal with temptation is to run away from it. Yes, there *are* times when the wisest thing you can do is flee (2 Tim. 2:22). For times when you can’t leave the situation, it’s essential to learn how to handle temptation wisely.

■ **When temptation results in sin, it always follows the same pattern.** It begins when an idea is planted in the mind. Then the imagination gets involved—a person dreams about fulfilling a certain desire. Next, the person willfully decides to sin against God and makes a choice—giving his or her consent to the idea of disobeying the Lord. The final step is sin.

How can we respond wisely to temptation?

We must begin by taking responsibility for our choices. Be willing to face your thoughts, imagination, and choices. Then, prepare for future temptations by building a defense system. How?

■ **Focus on the big picture.** Satan wants to narrow your focus to the fulfillment of one particular desire. Resist his plans by considering how yielding to this temptation will affect your health, finances, relationships, and God’s plans for you. Also, look for a godly way to fulfill the desire. For instance, instead of stealing, work to earn the money to buy what you want.

■ **Recall 1 Corinthians 10:13:** “God is faithful [and] will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” Claim this promise when temptation strikes.

■ **Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.** Our heavenly Father has placed His Spirit within each believer to enable us to handle every situation and circumstance of life (John 14:15-16). As a child of God, you have the awesome power of the Spirit to reset your thinking, change your attitude, and enable you to say no.

■ **“Set your mind on things above, not things on earth”** (Col. 3:2). In other words, determine to walk a victorious Christian life. Don’t focus on desires that will draw you away

from God (1 John 2:15-17). Stop and ask, “Lord, how can I meet this need in a godly way?”

■ **Identify areas of weakness.** When you and I know our weaknesses, we can be more sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in that area. For example, if you have a spending problem, avoid going to the mall “just to look.”

■ **Recognize times of weakness.** Remember HALT: don’t allow yourself to become too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. When people are physically or emotionally vulnerable, they are more likely to give in to temptation.

■ **Build a defense by reading God’s Word.** Study the Bible and ask the Lord to build truth into your life as a protection against temptation. Instead of trying to reason with Satan, simply speak biblical truth. Remember that Jesus answered all three of the Devil’s temptations with the Word (Luke 4:1-12).

CONCLUSION:

Why do believers sometimes walk into sin over and over? It’s often because they are not making the Bible a priority in their lives. I encourage you to attend a church that preaches the Word of God. Read the Scriptures and allow them to change your thinking. Those who build their lives on the foundation of the Book have the ability to resist temptation.

Perhaps you aren’t a Christian. Maybe you are tired of failing over and over—giving in to temptation and destroying your life. Apart from God’s help, you will never be able to find genuine freedom from sin. Tell the Lord that you want Him to forgive you and take charge of your life. Then, you too will have the ability to resist temptation through the power, grace, and mercy of God. ✨



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