

Sermon Study Guide

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THE MAIN THING: *The Temptation Trap (Part 1): Independence*

Christians will face temptation. By looking at how Jesus handled temptation when He was in the wilderness we too will be able to overcome temptations that come our way. The first key to responding to temptation is by knowing and using the Word of God at the point of our temptation.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Tell about your experiences with a mouse or a mouse trap.
2. To what lengths have you ever gone to satisfy a food craving?
3. Define the difference between a 'craving' and a 'temptation.'

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. In I Peter 5:8, what instructions are given to a Christ-follower? What actions does this infer? Why does Peter call the devil a 'roaring lion'? What does this mean for a believer?
2. How was the Apostle Paul using Israel's history as a warning for the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor 10:1-11; read this passage in *The Message*)? How does this apply to us?
3. Compare the dialogue between the devil and Eve, with that of Satan and Jesus. (Gen 3:1-6 and Matt 4:1-11) Identify the differences. What do we learn from both encounters?
4. How does Deut 8:2,3 describe dependence on God? (Extra resource: Exodus 16:1-9)
5. What offensive weapon does a Christ-follower use in the battle against temptation? (Eph 6:17) How do we 'wield' this weapon?

PURSUSSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community*

1. In what life choices are you acting 'independently' of God?
2. What is written in the Word about an area of weakness or vulnerability you face? Who can you talk to in order to identify any hidden traps that need your attention?
3. Who in your life is an example of living dependent on God?
4. Meditate on Heb 4:15, 16 to encourage growing in your dependence on God.

THE WORD (NIV)

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

² Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil.² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^[b]"⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He 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.'^[c]"⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^[d]"⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'^[e]"¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Ephesians 6:17

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1 Peter 5:8

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin

Sermon Study Summary

The Temptation Trap – Part 1

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Consider the mouse trap. After a billion mice have been slain in this diabolical fashion the mice have not yet figured it out. The genius of it is that it offers the mouse something it desperately wants and lures it in – utterly unaware that a killbar awaits them.

Temptation traps are the same. They offer us something we desperately want. The difference is that the trap is set by satan and we are the mice. It is designed to kill your spiritual life and derail you from the life God wants you to live. Yet, after having worked billions of times have we not figured it out yet? Are we not smart enough to see it?

When we become Christians the temptations increase. Our adversary, satan, targets us. The New Agers, atheists and ungodly are already a part of his kingdom. We are the threat to his kingdom and he is actively seeking our destruction (1 Peter 5:8). The primary act of spiritual warfare takes place in the day to day temptations of life and no committed Christian is exempt (1 Cor 10:10-11). We must beware of the lies that say that we either believe we cannot fail or, conversely, that we have no power to resist. These Christians do not know the authority that they have in Christ. God expects us to live in consistent victory over all known sin. When we are in the frontlines of the battle – we do face maximum attacks, but it's only in the frontlines that we get to see the enemy's crushing defeat!

Jesus is our model who was tempted and yet did not sin (Heb 4:15). How did he victoriously handle the tempter? Matt 4:1-11. Where do you see satan's most potent temptations? Where are you most vulnerable? Our problem with temptation isn't primarily from the outside, but from the inside. Our heart condition is the problem. In the desert it gave Jesus the chance to examine the motivations of His heart and overcome that battle. Then He was able to take on the world. So it is for us. We have much in common with Jesus' temptations. How? Under the temptations are the tempter's strategies. If we see what these strategies are we can see our own temptations in the same light.

Immediately after Jesus' baptism where he received the affirming words of His Father, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness. It was part of a purpose to prove that Jesus was the Son of God who came to defeat the enemy and restore humanity to God's original purposes. Here the devil tries his best to trap Jesus and thus disqualify Him from His mission. Here, in the desert, Jesus fasted for 40 days. And He was hungry! It was here that satan comes to Jesus and essentially says 'Since you are the Son of God turn these stones into bread'. In these words is the temptation to act independently of God. Satan was suggesting to Jesus to satisfy His hunger now. Why wait? Jesus had the power to do it.

This is at the heart of every temptation we face. It is the subtle suggestion to act on our own outside of God – to take what is within our reach for our self-gratification. God knows we have needs and institutes boundaries around them, keeping our well-being in mind. Temptations urge us to meet our needs outside of God's parameters. That was the original sin in the garden. Adam and Eve declared their independence from God. And it is our fundamental problem today: Are we going to act independently or do it God's way? Trust. Whom do you trust to meet the deepest needs of your life?

Jesus connected His temptation with what Israel went through in the wilderness by quoting from Deuteronomy (Deut 8:2-3). There God had miraculously provided food (manna) for the Israelites in the wilderness. Each day they knew from where their food came. The lesson to them was that apart from God they could not survive. They had to depend on God. The true challenge would come when they entered into the abundance of the Promised Land and were tempted to forget God. This is true for us today. In our abundance we are tempted to satisfy even legitimate desires in our way and our time. Advertising thrives on the 'have it now' mentality. As an entitled culture we make things happen in order to meet our deepest needs. Jesus refused to bow to this. He placed His trust in God to provide for Him in His time, and even if it did not happen He would be sustained by God's Word. We must do the same and appeal to His Word and refuse to work independently of Him. This is the key: It is written, the Power of His Word. Jesus responded to temptations with the phrase 'It is written'. Jesus used the Word as an immovable anchor to resist satan. Read it. Know it. Memorize it. The Word is our only offensive weapon against the devil (Eph 6).

Do you know how to wield your sword? Apply it to the area of your temptation. Until then you will never know how powerful the Word of God is. Erwin Lutzer says "Temptation is not a sin. It's a call to battle!" If we don't battle the temptation it will have the better of you. The way we battle it is by anchoring our lives in His Word. The power of a life anchored in the Word of God is not just personal transformation and enrichment but that we become instruments in transforming and enriching the lives of others.

What is written in the Word about the area of temptation that you are facing today? That's what you need to hold on to in order to resist the temptation trap.