

**A. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Temptation (13-14)**

1. It isn't \_\_\_\_\_.

2. It isn't \_\_\_\_\_.

3. It is \_\_\_\_\_.

**B. The Four \_\_\_\_\_ of Sin (14-15)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**C. The Three \_\_\_\_\_ to Temptation (16-18)**

1. Beware of \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Remember God is \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Remember You are \_\_\_\_\_.

## Homework

- **Read James 1:19-27.**
- **Read Max Lucado's "Lesson 3: Listening and Doing"** (pp 23-34).
- **Reflect on these questions posed by Lucado.**
  1. What three steps does James encourage you to take when interacting with others?
  2. According to James, what is the problem with human anger?
  3. What are some of the ways people can deceive themselves?
  4. How does James describe those who do not obey God's Word?
  5. How does God bless those who study his Word and obey its teaching?
  6. How can you practice a religion that is "pure and faultless" (verse 27)?
  7. How has your life changed since you "heard the music" and decided to follow Christ?
  8. How can you have "ears to hear" God's Word this week . . . and then do it?
  9. What pressures does culture put on you to disobey or disregard God's Word?
  10. What are some practical ways to protect yourself from the world's influence?
  11. Why is it often so difficult to "listen to the Word" and do what you know is right?
  12. In what ways to your actions demonstrate that you are a follower of Christ?
- **Bonus Journaling Question:** What are some specific ways that God has helped you to hear his Word *and* obey it?

**Introduction**

1. How many fishermen and fisherwomen are here? What do you need when you go fishin'?
  - a. License, pole, hooks, waders, boat, cooler and snacks, etc.
  - b. A very important item is the bait.
  - c. Without the right bait you can fish, but you won't catch much.
2. When it comes to sinning, James says there is bait involved, and we all supply it.
  - a. When we yield to the bait of temptation, our own evil desires, we sin and reap deadly consequences.
  - b. Read James 1:12-18.

**A. The Bait of Temptation (13-14)**

1. Jm 1:12, which we discussed last week, is a beatitude of blessing for those who endure trials/tests faithfully and those who resist temptation. It is a blessing linking these two sections of teaching on trials/tests that come from the world outside and temptations that come up from the inside.
2. Where do you get your fishing bait? Maybe at WalMart, Bass Pro Shop, a marina, or your compost pile?
3. What is the source for the bait of temptation in our lives?  
Some say it is God, Satan/Devil, other people, or the world (e.g., marketing and advertisement).
4. So who or what is the real source of our temptation which baits us to sin?
  - a. **It isn't God.** – “. . . God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone” (13).
    - 1) God tries/tests our faith (e.g., Abraham & Isaac, Joseph) and allows us to be tempted (e.g., Jesus).
    - 2) God is neither the agent nor the source of our temptation to sin.
    - 3) God never seeks to induce us to sin nor to destroy our faith in him.
    - 4) Wiersbe states, “God always tests us to bring out the *best*; Satan tempts us to bring out the worst. The testing of our faith proves that we are truly born again” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Mature*, 33).
    - 5) God sends only “good and perfect gifts” our way, as affirmed in Jm 1:17.
    - 6) God allows us to be tempted but always provides the good gift of a way of escape.
      - a) “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. 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 so that you can endure it (1 Cor 10:12-13).
      - b) The choice is ours to take the way of escape or not.
  - b. **It isn't Satan.**
    - 1) Did you notice that Satan, the Devil, is not mentioned at all in this passage?
    - 2) Satan is not the source of our temptation although he and his followers certainly can put fuel on the fire of temptation.
  - c. **It is us.**
    - 1) Do you remember the comic strip Pogo written and drawn by Walt Kelly? Pogo's famous line was “We have met the enemy and they is us.”
    - 2) The bad news is that we are the source of our own temptation.
    - 3) Part of our fallen human nature to blame others for our sin and not take responsibility.
      - a) When Adam & Eve yielded to the temptation to eat the forbidden fruit, “The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’” (Gn 3:12-13).
      - b) Eve blamed the serpent.
      - c) Adam initially blamed Eve for his sin, but ultimately, he blamed God.
    - 4) James says, each one of us is tempted “by his own evil desire (Gk., *idias epithumias*)” (14).
5. Hear this: Temptation is not sin.
  - a. Everyone is tempted. Even Jesus was tempted (e.g., in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13) and at Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-45)).
  - b. “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” (Hb 4:15).
  - c. Sin comes when we yield to the temptation, the bait, that comes our way from within us.

**B. The Four Stages of Sin?** (14-15) – Wiersbe in *Be Mature* outlines four stages of sin.

1. **Desire** – “each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire . . .” (14, emphasis mine)
  - a. This word “evil desire” (Gk., *epithumia*) is every fleshly, selfish, illicit desire we can imagine.
  - b. We each have evil desires within us as a result of our sin nature in Adam.
  - c. John described three types of temptation in the world, in our fallen fleshly nature.
  - d. “For everything in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 Jn 2:16, emphasis mine).
  - e. These are the same three types of temptation Jesus faced in the wilderness—flesh, selfishness, pride.
2. **Deception** – “. . . and enticed” (14, emphasis mine)
  - a. The word “enticed” (Gk., *deleazo*) is a Greek fishing term for being baited.
  - b. Our evil desires are like the right bait dropped before a hungry fish. It promises life but delivers death.
  - c. Certainly Satan and things of this world can stir and arouse our evil desires. Satan and the world know just what we’re hungry for. But we are the ones hungry for the fulfillment of our evil desires.
  - d. Our own evil desires bait the hook of sin with just what we want most.
  - e. This is why being able to resist these temptations is a source of joy, as we learned last week, because by resisting we persevere and move toward maturity in Christ Jesus.
3. **Disobedience** – “Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; . . .” (15, emphasis mine)
  - a. When our will yields to our sinful desires, we give birth to sin in our lives.
    - 1) Again, it is not sin to be tempted. Temptation is a fact of human nature.
    - 2) Sin only occurs when we *yield* to the temptation
    - 3) So, we must pray like Jesus in Gethsemane, “Father . . . not my will, but yours be done” (Lk 22:42).
  - b. The word “sin” (Gk., *harmatia*) means “missing the mark,” which is very descriptive and used often in the NT to describe sin. “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Ro 3:23).
  - c. Our goal is to resist temptation and by persevering over it to move toward full maturity in Christ.
  - d. But sometimes we miss, and our evil desires win the day.
  - e. We must confess our sin and ask God for help, for his wisdom not to repeat our mistake.
  - f. If we consistently yield to temptation, the sin in our lives grows and can become habitual.
4. **Death** – “. . . and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (15, emphasis mine)
  - a. The word “death” (Gk., *thanaton*) refers both to physical and spiritual death.
  - b. Sin may offer temporary pleasures, but it always ends in death and destruction for us and for others.
  - c. While we only want to experience the pleasures of the sin, we are deceived and receive more than we bargained for when our sin gives birth to death.
5. The story of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 is a great example of these stages in action.
  - a. **Desire** – “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 . . .” (Gen 3:6, emphasis mine)
  - b. **Deception** – “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’?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 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’” (Gn 3:1-3, emphasis mine).
  - c. **Disobedience** – “. . . she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Gn 3:6, emphasis mine).
  - d. **Death** – “And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken Gn 3:22-23, emphasis mine).
6. Paul emphasized these same stages of sin in Romans 7. **Read Ro 7:7-13.**
7. Scot McKnight in his James commentary notes an interesting parallel with the stages of sin in Jm 1:14-15 and the process of testing in Jm 1:2-12 (McKnight, *James*, 121).
  - a. 1:15            Desire -> sin -> death
  - b. 1:2-12        Testing -> endurance -> life

**C. The Three Barriers to Temptation (16-18)** – Wiersbe presents three barriers God gives us to resist temptation. “In the first barrier, God says, ‘Look ahead and beware of judgment.’ In the second barrier, He says, ‘Look around and see how good I have been to you.’ But with this third barrier, God says, ‘Look within and realize that you have been born from above and possess the divine nature’” (Wiersbe, *Be Mature*, 52).

**1. Beware of Judgment (15)**

When we are tempted, we must play the movie forward to see the end it brings for us and for others.

**2. Remember God is Good (16-17)**

a. “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters” (16) – God’s goodness may be under question in the messianic community due to their testing of persecution and poverty and their temptation to react with violence and insults against their persecutors.

b. There may also be a suggestion by some that God is like “shifting shadows.” That he is inconsistent—sometimes helpful, sometimes not; sometimes giving good things, sometimes sending temptations.

c. McKnight observes, “What the community is going through is not designed by God to break them, but is an opportunity for their moral formation as they learn to draw on God’s reliable goodness” (McKnight, 123).

d. John MacArthur notes, “Two different Greek words for ‘gift’ emphasize the perfection and inclusiveness of God’s graciousness; the first denotes the act of giving, and the second is the object given. Everything related to divine giving is adequate, complete, and beneficial” (John MacArthur, *James*, 13).

1) “Every good (gift) . . .” (Gk., *pasa dosis agathe*) – The word gift (Gk., *dosis*) is untranslated in our English versions. This word indicates the spirit in which God gives gifts to us. It is given for our good.

2) “. . . and (every) perfect gift” (Gk., *kai pan dorema teleion*) – The word gift (Gk., *dorema*) is used to describe what is given. It is perfect (Gk., *teleion*), meaning it is complete, exactly what is needed, not lacking in any way. This is the same word James used in 1:4 to describe the Christian who successfully perseveres in faith through trials and so is “. . . mature and complete (Gk., *teleioi*), not lacking anything.”

3) What God gives (Gk., *dorema*) and how he gives (Gk., *dosis*) it are good and perfect.

4) Everything good comes from God.

e. God is “the Father of the heavenly lights” (17b).

1) This may be a reference to angels or celestial objects (e.g., sun, moon, stars). Hebrews viewed stars as being heavenly or angelic beings (e.g., Lucifer as the fallen morning star in Isa 14:12 & Lk 10:18; Also, Jesus is “the bright and morning star” in Rev 22:16).

2) God is the creator of everything. He is the source.

3) As the source of light there is no darkness in God. He does not change “like shifting shadows” but is consistent and constant in giving good gifts to us faithfully.

f. The greatest good gift that God gives to us is new birth (18).

**3. Remember You are Reborn (18)**

a. “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth . . .” (18)

1) The verb “give birth” (Gk., *apokyei*) can mean “to give rise to,” “to give birth to,” “to cause to exist,” or “to bring to being.” It is the same term used in verse 15 when James indicated that when sin is accomplished, it “gives birth” to death.

2) Johnny Hunt notes, “Whereas sin kills us, God births us into existence! . . . We are born again by the word of truth.” (Hunt, *Shoe Leather Christianity*, 14-15).

3) Human desire (Gk., *epithumia*) leads to sin and death, but God’s desire (Gk., *bouletheis*) leads to new birth and life.

4) God delivers us from the ultimate consequence of our sin nature, which is eternal, spiritual death, “through the word of truth,” which is a clear reference to the gospel of Jesus, who is the living Word and the Truth.

5) God gives us the good gift of a cure for the terminal case of sin we inherited from Adam in the Fall.

b. James said we are “a kind of firstfruits of all he created” (18)

- 1) What does he mean by “firstfruits”? Where is this word used elsewhere in the Bible?
- 2) Paul said that Jesus is “the firstfruits (Gk., *aparche*) of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20).
- 3) Paul also referred to certain persons as the firstfruits of his work in particular areas. “Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert (Gk., *aparcheton*) to Christ in the province of Asia” (Ro 16:5).
- 4) In the OT, the firstfruits were the earliest gathered produce from the harvest which was offered to God in recognition of his faithfulness in providing for his people. In the OT there was a Feast of Firstfruits that followed the Passover (cf. Lev 23:9-14).
  - a) So, Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection. Christ was raised first and then we who believe in him will follow.
  - b) Epenetus was the firstfruit of Paul’s gospel proclamation in Asia.
- 5) James appears to use the term here of the dispersed Jewish community. They were the firstfruits offered to God with the promise of a continuing harvest of fruit for the kingdom of God. We are part of that harvest.
- 6) The sweet fruit of our redemption is the greatest gift that God gives to us.

#### D. Closing Thoughts

1. Remember that our own evil desires are the source of our temptation.
2. We will be tempted—today, this week, every day.
3. God provides a way of escape from temptation, if we will only take it.
4. It is not sin to be tempted. Sin comes when we yield to the temptation.
5. We must submit our human will to the Lord’s will.
6. We are not alone in our temptation as we abide in Christ Jesus, the only one in flesh who ever overcame every human temptation.
7. When we fail to resist temptation, we must confess our sin to God and seek his forgiveness.
8. Don’t take the bait of temptation; Give God the glory by resisting your temptations with his help and the barriers he provides. Turn away from yielding to temptation in sin that will destroy and kill. Instead, turn into the good gifts of new birth and life that God gives to you in Christ Jesus.