

THREE

Overcoming Temptation

JAMES 1:12–18



12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 No one is to say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

OBSERVE

1. Summarize or diagram this passage.

 **THINK**

2. Since this passage is about temptation, let's begin by exploring our temptations. Each of us will have different temptations according to our personalities, upbringing, and trials. Think of your current life and the way you respond to trials. List some of your temptations, including heart temptations, such as a temptation to worry, resent people, dwell on the negative, live in regret, or be envious of your friends. Review question 5 from Lesson 1 if you need help remembering your trials.

3. Verses 14 and 15 give us an understanding of how temptation works. It's not God who tempts us; it's our desires. Look over your temptation list and choose two temptations to work on for today's study. For each temptation, list a desire that may be fueling that temptation. For example, a temptation to worry about money may be fueled by a desire for financial security. A temptation to spend too much time on social media may be fueled by a desire for connection. A temptation to binge on Netflix may be fueled by a desire for the fun and easy life.

4. In question 3 we looked at what we hope we'll get (or avoid) if we indulge our desires—things like a great life, a finished to-do list, or being able to stay in our comfort zone. Yet James 1:15 tells us we'll get death if we give in to a temptation that leads to sin. This death is eternal if we give up on God altogether, but we can also experience temporary death as believers—the death of abundant life (John 10:10)—as giving in to temptation leads to things like negative emotions, addictions, immaturity, and distance from God. Look at the first temptation you listed in question 3 and the desire that's fueling your temptation. How does giving in to that temptation affect a) your enjoyment of life and your health, b) your ministry and/or relationships with others, and c) your relationship with God?

5. Look at the second temptation you listed in question 3 and the desire that's fueling your temptation. How does giving in to that temptation affect a) your enjoyment of life and your health, b) your ministry and/or relationships with others, and c) your relationship with God?

6. Verse 8 says that every good gift comes from the Father. We see these gifts in the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, etc. (Galatians 5:22–23)—and other things He gives us. Review your answers to question 3. What “gifts” are you usually looking for with each of your temptations? What gift does God want to give you? (For example, when I give in to the temptation to procrastinate my work, I’m looking for the “gift” of the easy life. God, on the other hand, wants to give me the gifts of the fruit of the Spirit and personal growth—in this case, the fruit of self-control and personal growth in the area of doing my work.)

7. How do God’s gifts (the fruit of the Spirit, a closer walk with Him, abundant life, sharing in His ministry, personal growth, etc.) differ from the sorts of gifts we go looking for?

8. If we struggle with the same temptation for a long time, it’s tempting to just give up trying to fight it. Yet James 1:12 tells us that the man is blessed who perseveres under trial. This could also be translated “blessed is the man who perseveres under temptation.” Why would

the person who perseveres with overcoming his or her temptations be more blessed than the one who gives up and stops working on overcoming them?

9. Choose one of the temptations you mentioned in this lesson. What would it look like to persevere with overcoming it? For example, if I were to persevere in overcoming the temptation of procrastination, I might try to develop the habit of communing with God while I write, going to Him for help when I don't feel like writing, and seeking His opinion rather than the imagined opinions of everyone else. I might also listen to Ted Talks on how to overcome procrastination, get a book on how to overcome it, or do an internet search for "procrastination Bible" to see how others deal with it. (Of course, I would have to be careful not to search Ted Talks and books on procrastination *instead* of doing my work, as we all know what that rabbit hole looks like!)



PRAY

10. Read the passage one last time with your temptations in mind, then visit with God about your temptations. Ask Him for the strength and truth, as well as practical ideas, to gain victory over your temptations.



TAKEAWAY

11. What is your biggest takeaway from today's lesson?



ACTION STEPS

12. List any action steps you'd like to take based on your takeaway and prayer time with God. If you'd like help with overcoming temptation, check out the Break a Habit or Live in Peace tabs at barbraveling.com.