

The Teacher and Overcoming Temptation

“For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry” (Acts 1:17).

Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the participant will be able to accomplish the following:

1. Identify three areas of temptation common to ministers.
2. Explain “how are the mighty fallen” as compared to temptation and I Corinthians 10:12-13.
3. Outline the difference between “trials” and “temptations.”
4. Analyze areas of temptation in one’s life and develop a plan for overcoming it.
5. Recall the three areas that temptation usually falls into (according to I John 2:16).
6. Recognize reasons for purity derived from I Thessalonians 4:2-8.
7. Summarize the four steps of how temptation works.
8. Provide proof of understanding the seven stages of every temptation (James 1:14-15).
9. Recall and implement Rick Warren’s four keys to defeating temptation.
10. Survey God’s Word and locate examples of those that effectively overcame temptation.

Introduction

Why should a teacher be concerned with overcoming temptation? Another lesson in this series told of a faculty education program where participants identified a teacher as a man of truth, a man of influence, and a man of example. When a teacher fails to set an example, it hinders his influence on others, and can eventually disqualify him from teaching the truth.

This lesson knows no boundaries, breaks all barriers, and poses no difficulties in application. It pertains to everyone. It is valid for the teacher in the classroom and the pastor in the pulpit. It relates to the

Pursuing Ministerial Excellence!

student behind the desk and the member on the pew. It is suitable for the senior leader in the organization and the janitor sweeping the floors of the church. It is for people everywhere, in every walk of life, regardless of gender or age.

You never outgrow the need for what you are about to read, study and put into practice. Temptation is man’s oldest problem. It is inevitable! It comes in many varieties, each one tailor made and designed by Satan to bring you down, destroy you, and ruin your ministry. It will play havoc on your relationships with God, spouse, family and others. It is not a question of whether temptation will come, but rather what shall be your response when it does come. There is only one answer for temptation. Run! Overcome it before it overcomes you. Temptation is a persistent companion; but one that cannot be entertained.

This lesson focuses specifically on those in the ministry, especially teachers and is fundamental in passing on this knowledge to students and members. There are three major areas of temptation common to ministers. They are:

Area of Temptation	Another Version
Money	Gold
Sex	Girls
Power	Glory

Our Daily Bread tells the story of a little plant called the “sundew” grows deep in the Australian bush. It has a slim stem and round leaves. It is beautiful with its clusters of red, white, and pink blossoms which are risk-free. However, the leaves are deadly. There is a sticky substance on them that captures any insect that touches it. As the bug struggles, the quivering causes the leaves to close forcefully around it and the plant feeds on its casualty. It looks innocent enough but is a destroyer. Temptation operates in much the same way.

Surprised by the Battle

Don Whitney in his commencement address entitled “The Almost Inevitable Ruin of Every Minister” explained everyone knows someone who used to be in the ministry and someone who shouldn’t be in the ministry. Everyone also knows another minister—perhaps several—he doesn’t want to be like. Whitney cited a statistic from James T. Draper, Jr. that said for every twenty men who enter the ministry by the time those men reach retirement age, only one will still be in the ministry. Take a moment and consider those who graduated from Bible school with you, or those that entered ministry at the same time you did. How many of them are no longer in the ministry; and for what reasons?

Whitney told a testimony that hits close to home when it comes to Bible school faculty. He spoke of a Bible school principal in South Africa who confessed that his fall from ministry resulted from becoming so busy in the Lord’s work he simply neglected to read His Bible and pray. The long-term effect of this neglect led to adultery.

Pursuing Ministerial Excellence!

“How are the mighty fallen” (I Samuel 1:19, 25, 27).

Warren Wiersbe in *The Bumps are What You Climb On* advised, “The most dangerous time—the time that requires the most vigilance—is when we have won the victory. For some reason, after the victory, we let down our guard, we get overconfident, and this gives the enemy a chance to get in and defeat us.” This happened to Elijah after the Mount Carmel triumph.

“If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure” (I Corinthians 10:12-13, NLT).

Some imagine sexual temptation is something one would grow out of. Sorry, that doesn’t happen. Others hope that marriage will handle the problem. Wrong again. David was about fifty years of age, and had been king for about twenty years, when he fell into adultery. The question is not, “Will I be tempted?” but rather, “What will I do when tempted?”

A. D. Hart is quoted as saying the following in a book entitled *Sins of the Body: Ministry in a Sexual Society* by Terry Muck: “A minister’s vulnerability has nothing to do with his marital happiness. For many centuries, Scripture has warned us to be on guard when we feel most safe! Sexual attraction can occur as easily when one is happily married as when one is not. You may more deliberately seek out an affair when you are not happy, but you are not necessarily safe when all is bliss at home.” Steve Arterburn said, “Sexual sins are the termites in the walls and foundations of today’s marriage.”

Locating the Battle Grounds

Many things come our way that are hazardous. We need to be aware of these dangers so we will avoid them (Romans 13:14). Satan has tactics and we do not need to be ignorant of his devices (II Corinthians 2:11), nor give him a foothold in our lives or ministries (Ephesians 4:26-28). Satan attacks in the areas of our greatest weakness. What happens when we do not overcome? We lose control, and become a servant to our opponent. We cannot function in our ministry properly and become ineffective in the kingdom of God. As a teacher it is tragic to gain the world, but lose one’s own soul. Judas was instructed to teach and preach. He had his assigned place and shared in the ministry. What happened? He failed to overcome enticement. He could have learned, but didn’t. The bitter consequence was he lost his position.

“I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified” (I Corinthians 9:27, NLT).

Our senses serve us well, if used for our advantage rather than disadvantage. Temptation comes through:

Eyes	What I see.
Ears	What I hear.
Mouth	What I taste.

Pursuing Ministerial Excellence!

Hand	What I touch.
Nose	What I smell.

Senses are servants. However, if we do not control them, they end up controlling us. “We capture every thought and make it give up and obey Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5, NCV). Arrest and imprison every sense. With God’s help, pull down every stronghold.

Biblically, temptation normally falls into one of three areas:

1. Lust of the flesh
2. Lust of the eyes
3. Pride of Life

“For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things]--these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself]” (I John 2:16, AMP).

Check it out. See that it is true. Look at Adam and Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3), or the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4). As you read these biblical accounts, quickly identify these three components. And it is no different with temptation today. Jesus overcame temptation and empowers others to do the same.

Understanding the Battle Plan

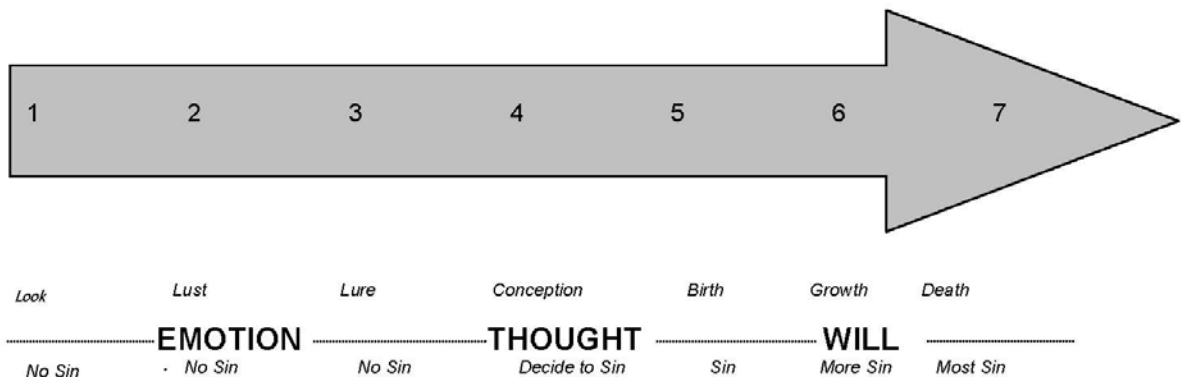
Rick Warren in his classic book *Purpose Driven Life* believes temptation is an opportunity to do right. He outlines four steps of how temptation works. In his lesson “How to Win Over Temptation” he explains the difference between trials and temptations. Both are types of testing. Trials “are situations designed by God in order to help us grow.” Temptations “are designed by the devil in order to cause us to sin.”

Step One	Desire	Temptation begins in the mind. Satan identifies a desire within you and takes advantage of it.
Step Two	Doubt	Satan endeavors to get you to doubt what God has said about the sin. You ask, “Is it really wrong?”
Step Three	Deception	Satan doesn’t tell the truth. He is the father of lies (John 8:44). Sin is sin. A little sin is like a little pregnant. It will eventually show itself. Sin is like a detective. It will find you out.
Step Four	Disobedience	You act on thoughts you’ve played in your mind. What began as an idea is birthed as a behavior.

James 1 could effectively be called the “Temptation Chapter.” Chip Ingram in his lesson “Understanding and Overcoming Temptation” reveals the seven stages of every temptation adapted from *Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation* by Bruce H. Wilkinson. These have been modified in the table that follows and is based on James 1:14-15.

Stage Number	The Scripture	The Stage		Action Step
1	"When he is drawn away	The Look	No Sin	
2	By his own desires	The Lust	No Sin	Recognize that every temptation can only tempt because of my personal desire.
3	And enticed. Then	The Lure	No Sin	Quench improper desire by stopping all enticements.
4	When desire has conceived	The Conception	Decide to Sin	Decide ahead of time not to sin.
5	It gives birth to sin;	The Birth	Sin	If you are en route to sin, stop, and submit to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Abort sin before it is too late.
6	And sin, when it is full-grown	The Growth	More Sin	We willfully sin.
7	Brings forth death."	The Death	Most Sin	Cry out to Jesus to set you free from bondage.

The following diagram (by Chip Ingram) shows the process explained above, and as it involves one's emotion, thought, and will.



Winning the Battle

Rick Warren provides four keys to defeating temptation.

1. Refocus your attention on something else. If you try to resist temptation it only increases. Trying to block the thoughts only drive them deeper. Don't fight the thought. Turn your attention to

Pursuing Ministerial Excellence!

something else. Keep your mind occupied with God’s Word. Quote Scriptures. Pray. Sing praises to God.

2. Reveal your struggle to a godly friend. Everyone needs someone to honestly share your struggles with. We all fight temptations. We are all human.
3. Resist the devil (James 4:7). Put on your spiritual armor (Ephesians 6). Develop a warrior’s mindset.
4. Realize your vulnerability. Don’t place yourself in tempting situations. Recognize your pattern of temptation. Be prepared for it. There are certain circumstances that make you more vulnerable to temptation. Identify them. Stay away from these trap doors. Why go there? Ask, “Where am I most tempted?” “What do I feel?” Ask, “Who is with me when I’m most tempted?” Temptation increases when one is bored and/or lonely. Work out ways to deal with the circumstances.

“No temptation has seized you except what is 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 so that you can stand up under it” (I Corinthians 10:13).

According to Peter Brain in his excellent book *Going the Distance* the Apostle Paul outlines eight reasons for sexual purity. Surely these can be applied to other areas of purity as well. These are outlined in the table below.

Reason	Reference
Jesus commanded it.	I Thessalonians 4:2
It is God’s will.	I Thessalonians 4:3
Self-control.	I Thessalonians 4:4
It shows a witness to those who do not know the Lord.	I Thessalonians 4:5
For the sake of others so that we will not wrong them.	I Thessalonians 4:6
To escape the judgment of God.	I Thessalonians 4:6
God calls us to holiness.	I Thessalonians 4:7
The Holy Spirit lives within believers.	I Thessalonians 4:8

He further explains that sexual integrity is one of the many ways Christian leaders (and this certainly applies to Bible school faculty) “direct, teach and demonstrate real discipleship. Being an example (I Peter 5:3) and a model (Philippians 4:9) go with the job.”

Scripture abounds with men and women who led overcoming lives. Yes, there were occasional casualties and failures but let’s focus on the overcomers. Joseph was tempted by his boss’s wife. She chased him. He ran. His relationship with God was more important to him than satisfying physical and sexual urges. Joseph nurtured that relationship and kept it alive. He could have taken advantage of the moment. He could have assumed or rationalized it was one of the privileges or benefits of position. The mind has a strange way of justifying wrong things as right. He said, “No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God” (Genesis 39:9).

Pursuing Ministerial Excellence!

Daniel was another Old Testament patriarch and example of a steadfast conqueror. “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8). Daniel made it his daily objective or target to guard his relationship with God. That is a great idea. “Lord, I purpose in my heart not to defile myself or hinder my relationship with you!”

Lesson in Review

1. Why should a teacher be concerned with overcoming temptation? _____

2. What are three areas of temptation common to ministers? _____

3. What is the difference between trials and temptations? _____

4. How did Steve Arterburn describe sexual sins? _____

5. Why (or how) did Judas lose his assigned place in the ministry? _____

6. Biblically, temptation usually falls in three areas. What are they? _____

7. Briefly outline the four steps of how temptation works. _____

8. What are the four keys to overcoming temptation? _____

9. What was Joseph's response when he encountered temptation? _____

10. What did Daniel say in Daniel 1:8? _____
