**DISCIPLESHIP LESSON #5**

**How To Overcome Temptation**

There are a great many Christians that experience difficulty when it comes to handling temptation. They fail and fail often. Why is this? Is it because God in His providence has allowed for humans to fail more often than they succeed? No, God has given His children special means to help them overcome temptation. That is the subject for this lesson. God does not demand that believers act a certain way and then not give them the means to do so. The problem is when we do not take advantage of what God has provided for us. We will examine several means of overcoming temptation and trust God to encourage us to use each of them on a regular basis. Let us begin.

I. Prayer - One of the most effective means of overcoming temptation is the use of prayer. You must realize that there is power in prayer but it is not in the prayer itself. God is the One behind the answers to our prayers. Some today claim that God exercised His faith to create and re-create. We find no hint of this kind of teaching in Scripture. God exercised His power which was directed by His holy will to create and re-create. When Jesus gave the Model Prayer to His disciples, one part of the prayer went like this: (Matt 6:13: And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.) (NKJV). Jesus tells us to pray for God's intervention when we are tempted. The question might come to mind, "Does God lead us into temptation?" The problem with this question is that we do not see what is behind the phrase "lead us not into temptation." The word "lead" comes from a Greek word meaning "to bring into or lead into." The word translated "temptation" comes from the same word where we get our English word "test." So, both tests and temptations come from the same word. The context of a passage and the Word of God must give us the meaning, not a dictionary. It is possible that Jesus is telling us to pray to keep out of tests if it is the will of God. However, the next phrase, "deliver us from evil (or the evil one)" seems to set the context as being a temptation rather than a test. James tells us in (James 1:2: My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,) (NKJV). If we translate the word trials as temptations, we see the problem. How can we pray for God to lead us away from something that is a source of joy? You can see the difficulty in the passage. We are to pray for God's protection in the daily temptations of life. It is not that He will lead us to do something wrong, but we are to pray that He would lead us to resist temptation using all that He has given us. Prayer is an important means of overcoming temptation. Paul wrote these words in (1 Cor 10:13: No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who 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.)

Are there any temptations that you face that no one else has ever faced? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What characteristic of God is seen most when we are tempted? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Is it possible to be tempted more than you can stand? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What part does God play in our temptations? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Prayer is what Jesus relied upon to choose His disciples, to give Him strength, to give Him endurance, and to keep in touch with God's will. Can you do any less?

II. Scripture - Christians will probably never know fully the importance of God's Word until we reach Heaven. It is a source of comfort, strength, and encouragement but is has an important use as a means of avoiding temptation also. Listen to the words of the Psalmist in (Ps 119:9: How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.) It is evident from this well-known verse that keeping one's self pure cannot be done unless the Word of God is involved. Only God can change the heart which is the source of all sin in our bodies. When we try to change society without changing the hearts of men and women, we fail and modern America is an example of that. The Word of God, the Bible is given to us to help us avoid temptation and to keep our ways pure. Notice some facts about this verse. God does not say that we are to use His Word to direct our paths in this verse. That is true in other passages but not in this context. There is a problem with the young man in this verse. What is his problem? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Keeping a pure life is difficult. Using the means of God's Word is a valuable help. If Jesus Christ is not the Ruler, Lord, and Guide of your life, you can count on having an impure life. Purity in this context implies moral purity not sexual purity. "Keep his way," is in the piel imperfect in the Hebrew, meaning an unsettled condition. The young man is to work on arriving at a settled condition of being pure by following God's Word. How is all this to be done? According to God's Word. We read in (Ps 119:105: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.) It is evident how God's Word helps us with temptation. It not only shows us where we are walking but shows us the whole path. If you read through the 119th Psalm, you see quickly that God's Word reveals whether or not something is good or bad. We cannot depend upon our society to direct our path. Society is driven by an ever-changing god. It is the god of "What is best for me?" The problem with this mindset is God does not always approve of what society says is right. Our question to ourselves should be, "What is best for the kingdom of God according to the Bible?" This is living according to God's Word.

Jesus used God's Word to overcome temptation in Matthew 4:1-11. Turn there in your Bible and answer the following questions.

1. How did Jesus answer every statement thrown at Him by the devil? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What was the devil trying to get Jesus to do in the first temptation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. What was the devil trying to get Jesus to do in the second temptation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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4. What was the devil trying to get Jesus to do in the third temptation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5. After reading this passage, how are you to deal with temptations? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Why not pray and ask God to help you when you have to face temptations, either today or tomorrow?

III. Church Attendance - Many who have problems in their Christian lives do so because they do not follow God's Word when it comes to regular church attendance. It is like having a new born baby and telling the child: "Young man, you are a part of this family now and you need to act like it. The refrigerator is in the kitchen and all you need to eat or drink is in the kitchen or refrigerator. If you want a bath, the bathroom is down the hall and to the left. And, by the way, you need to get a job and get busy making a living because everyone must pull their own weight. Any questions? Have a nice life." That would be ridiculous. That child must be fed, bathed, dressed and taken care of. It will be several years before the child can take care of himself. But, often in the church we think we can face the world without any training. It can take as long as 3-5 years for a new believer to be able to stand on his or her own. Regular church attendance will help you get a solid grip on how to worship God, how to give to God, how to witness, and a great many other things. Christians are commanded to assemble themselves together in the New Testament. (Heb 10:23-25: Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.)

In verses 23 and 24, we see the present tense is used. It is carried over to verse 25 and is termed by scholars a "customary present." This simply means that believers are not to make missing worship a habit. They are to make worship attendance a habit. But what are the benefits of church attendance? Let us examine some benefits of church attendance.

1. Attendance is commanded for all believers. We have already considered this benefit and if there were no other reasons for going to church, this would be enough. If God says it, that is enough. A Christian who does not attend worship is in danger of falling prey to the temptations of the world.

2. There is great encouragement in regular church attendance. We are able to build each other up when we come together on Sundays. Hebrews 10:25 says we are able to encourage one another as we assemble ourselves together. How can this be done if we do not attend? Who knows the impact you may have upon another believer by your regular attendance. If you are not in attendance, you may miss an opportunity to minister in the name of Jesus Christ.

3. We obey the Great Commandment when we attend church. We see the two greatest commandments in (Mark 12:29-31: Jesus answered, "The foremost is, "HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' 31 "The second is this, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these.") The greatest commandment is to love God with all you heart, soul, mind, and strength. You cannot do that if you are regular in missing worship at your church. If you love God, you will want to obey His commands. If you can miss church and not feel sorry for it, you are in a very dangerous situation. God is not pleased when we disobey. Going to church pleases Him.

4. You follow Jesus' example when you attend church. There are T-shirts bracelets, Bible covers, bumper stickers and other forms of communication that have the following letters on them: WWJD. The letters stand for: What Would Jesus Do? When it comes to church attendance, Jesus was very regular in His attendance at the synagogue in (Luke 4:16: And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.) We see here that Jesus had a custom of attending worship. If we want to be like Him, we must attend church also.

5. You support the work of God worldwide. Jesus said in (Matt 12:30: "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.) You cannot be on the same side as Jesus if you do not obey His Word. Church attendance is necessary for all believers because it tells the world whose side you are on.

6. You maintain a balanced Christian life. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus and said these words: (Eph 4:11-12: And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;) The reason God placed these men in the church was so that the body of Christ (the church) might be built up in Christ. Teachers, leaders, and others in your church are placed there by God to help you maintain a healthy Christian life. If you do not attend, you will have an unbalanced Christian life and therefore, an unbalanced life. Why the unbalance? Just a few verses down from this previous passage we see these words: (Eph 4:14: As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;) Those placed in the church by God will help you to be grounded in your faith instead of being tossed from wrong idea to wrong idea. You cannot be helped if you have to be chased down by a pastor or member of a church because you are not attending church. But what else does God give us to help us overcome temptation?

IV. The Desire For A Godly Life - This concept is almost unheard of in the society of modern America. We do not often teach in churches the desire for a Godly life. God has to place this in our hearts after our conversion because it is not natural. A true believer will have in their innermost being, a desire to live a Godly life. If not, there is much doubt if he or she really is a believer. Sin should make us sick of ourselves and the remains of the sinful nature that drag us down from time to time. The apostle Paul tells us this in: (Rom 5:14: Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.) Death was our king in our lives before Christ. But sin reigned also. Notice (Rom 5:21: so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.) Sin also reigned through or in death. We were slaves to sin and death. We could not stop sinning or dying until Christ came into our lives and made us dissatisfied with our condition. He gave us the ability to believe in Him for eternal salvation and now we have a new master, King Jesus. The verse above says that grace will reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are now slaves to the grace of Christ. We now can choose to do the right thing instead of only being able to choose the wrong. If you truly have the grace of Christ in your life, you will want to obey Him in everything. If you do not have a desire to obey, according to 1 John 1:6-7, you are lying about your relationship with Christ. A desire for a holy Godly life will be one sure trademark of a believer. Do you have a desire to live as Jesus wants you to live? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you see yourself falling back into a former way of life, get into the Word of God, the worship of God, and pray constantly for the will to resist temptation. Now, let us examine one of the most important means of living grace, the Holy Spirit.

V. The Holy Spirit - The dove is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit because of His gentleness. However, He is often overlooked in the Christian life. Jesus mentioned His coming in (John 14:16-17: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.) There are some key ideas in this passage that will help you realize and allow the Holy Spirit to help you overcome temptation. Let us look at these ideas one at a time.

1. The word translated "Helper" comes from the Greek word "paracletos." It means "one called alongside to help." The Holy Spirit is our Helper especially when we need strength overcoming temptation. Can you think of a temptation that you face where the Holy Spirit could give you help? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus relied upon the Holy Spirit when He was tempted in the wilderness in (Matt. 4:1: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.) We can see here that the Spirit of God led Jesus to be tempted. He not only was the Leader to the test, but He was the Helper during the test. He will do the same for you.

2. Jesus said the Helper would be with us forever. What significance does that have to your overcoming temptation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

There is never a time you will be tempted when the Holy Spirit is not there. He is God and is everywhere at the same time. This is a reason for praise!

3. According to verse 17, does the world recognize the Holy Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Jesus said the Helper would be with us. Turn to Matthew 1:23 and answer the following. How does this concept fit in with the name Jesus was to be called in Matthew 1:23? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

What does "Emmanuel" mean in Hebrew? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Jesus said the Helper would be "in you." What is your understanding of the phrase "in you?" \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This is a grammatical use called a "dative of interest or advantage." It means the Holy Spirit will be with us for our advantage or benefit. He is with us to help us overcome temptation and become shaped into the likeness of Christ.

It is easy to see the importance of the Holy Spirit in helping us overcome temptation. He does not want us to fail when temptation comes. He is there to help us come out of the temptation a victor rather than a captive. But, what else has God given us to help us overcome temptation?

VI. Trials - We do not often think of trials as a means of God's grace but according to Scripture, they are. God often allows trials to come to bring into our lives a measure of endurance or patience. Without these tests, we could not grow as God wants us to grow. It is like taking a test in school. If you fail the test, you have to take it again if you want credit for the course. If you pass the test, you go on to something else. Of course, God does not give us trials and tests to see if we will fail, but to show us His grace and mercy in passing the test. Turn in your Bible to James 1:2-8 and answer the following questions.

1. Why does James tell us to look at our trials as a source of joy? (3) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What are we to know about our faith being tested? (3)

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3. What is the product of tests and trials? (4)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. What is the reason we are to ask for God's wisdom? (2-4) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

It can be seen from this passage that we are to view our trials differently than the world views trials. As a believer, we have a Source (God) of wisdom that will help us to deal with our difficulties in such a way as to encourage others. Christians are not to let their trials get them down, but they are to accept them as being from the hand of God. J. B. Phillips translates verse two like this: "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!" We are to consider trials as means of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. Without them, we cannot grow in grace and knowledge of Christ.

If you want to study this principle of overcoming temptation more, read through your Bible and underline all the means of grace that God has given His servants down through the years. It could turn out to be a great study for you. However, if temptation gets you down on a regular basis, use the means that God has given us to overcome temptation. He does not want you to live like you are a slave to sin. He wants you to overcome and to live like an overcomer. Your pastor may have more ideas for you to put into practice from Scripture if you still fail to overcome temptation, and do so often. Talk with him and if necessary ask for his help. He is there to help also.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Discipline of Grace, Jerry Bridges, published by NavPress.

Personal Spiritual Disciplines, Don Whitney, published by Moody Press.

The Pursuit of God, A. W. Tozer, published by Christian publications.

A Christian Directory, Richard Baxter, published by Soli Deo Gloria