

Unquestionable

James 1:13-18

Purpose of series: The purpose of this series is to assist you in taking off the limits of God's expression *through* you and *in* your life and His blessing *on* your life. This series provides us with a practical view of how to live a life of spiritual impact and personal fullness in a difficult world under pressure. We will learn to be limited less by the things that can distract us from our real purpose and our true potential as believers on this earth.

Purpose of this message: The purpose of this message is to identify areas of temptation and how to overcome them. We are exposed everyday to a new means of temptation. It should be the concern of every Christian that they find a place in their life where the Holy Spirit can expose and alarm them of intruding forces attempting to minimize their relationship and effectiveness with and for God. Today's message will identify five lies that people yield to in temptation. Also, I will give you four steps out of your temptation to free you from the limits of temptations intention, to bring you into sin and eventually death! Learn how to overcome temptation that limits your living, your relationship with God and your impact on a world desperate for the fullness of God. Live limitless today by becoming invested...unquestionable of who your God is and how you are going to serve Him!

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

James 1:13-18

Think about this: If you were on vacation and you looked forward to a trip to the mountains, ocean or Disney Land, maybe you just wanted to get out of town was your goal, whatever it was, if you were headed in that destinies general direction and find yourself lost, that you had made a wrong turn, and left the road you were supposed to be traveling on, you know you've got to return. See, you want to get on the right road to get going in the right direction.

It is possible for a person who has had a heart, passionate toward God, to slowly lose focus and that love and start pursuing a life to please self rather than Jesus Christ. Satan loves to toss temptations in our path that would distract us from our true love Christ and create a limited relationship with Him and a less than fulfilling life here. Satan would have us begin a love relationship with things that causes us to turn our head and close our eyes to anything else offered to us from God. This love relationship with Christ is constantly calling us and encouraging us to change or walk away from the temptations of Satan. This love of Christ in us is not attracted to find significance in insignificant things. This love of Christ is absolutely revolutionary, it restructures our inner-most being to live our lives in an unquestionable way of who our God is.

Don't Blame God

James says that in the midst of life's hardships don't blame God. Especially don't blame God for the sins you commit.

"¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone..."

James 1:13

One **three-year-old** had this explanation for being caught in the kitchen atop a chair, eating cookies: "I just climbed up to smell them, and my tooth got caught." In other words, "Don't blame me!"

To say "the devil made me do it" is ridiculous but to say "God made me do it" is blasphemous.

"People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord."

Proverbs 19:3 (LB)

It is not God, it is not Satan, it is not some outside force – it is in us. I know this to be true:

When we don't yield to the Holy Spirit we will find a means to be angry with God.

I find it with those who want to get out of a marriage, those who want to pursue a life of recklessness, those who want to get even with someone else. Satan's first temptation is not with the thing you are tempted with, but the temptation that God has your best interest in mind. For God to tempt me puts God at Satan's level. I want one thing to be unquestionable today and I want to make it loud and clear, **YOU CAN COUNT ON GOD!**

The Deception Of Temptation

It is so easy to become deceived in our world today. Nothing can be more misleading than temptation. It is important to realize, before you can stop yourself from being drawn in by temptation, you have to recognizing when it's happening to you. Without recognizing temptations draw we will simply fall back into shameful habits and failures. Before we know it, our state of being will then dissolve to depression, sleeplessness, anger, procrastination and lowered confidence of the person God has created you to be.

The Three T's

It is important to realize that in James 1:2-12, the author addresses two T's before he introduces this third one.

- 1. Trials:** This first T is found in verse 2:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face **trials** of many kinds..."

James 1:2

Trials are the unrehearsed processes of life. Trials are the price of the prize. It is the process for the harvest of what is expected. One man put it, "There are no free lunches in life." A trial is not the same as chaos if we realize there is a harvest at the end.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9

- 2. Tests:** Tests are the second T in James' teaching found in James 1:3.

“...because you know that the *testing* of your faith develops perseverance.”

James 1:3

While trials are the unrehearsed processes of life, TESTS constantly determines the foundation of the heart. We have seasons in our life that we are hot and cold. The challenge is to be consistent and ready for the test of our life.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

II Timothy 2:15

This statement I'm about to make may seem unrealistic but I believe that we have got to learn to substitute the first two T's, trials and test, with words like “challenges,” “opportunities” or “lessons.”

Creflo Dollar stated:

“The way you respond to a situation determines how long you remain in that situation.”- Creflo Dollar

The truth is, when we are dealing with specific trials and testing of our life it affects our work, our relationships and distorts a hope for our future. It is important that we recognize the symptoms of trials and tests as early as possible, not so we can take steps to avoid them, but how we might properly respond to them.

Larry Holman wrote a book called 11 Lessons In Self-Leadership and he makes this statement:

“I have discovered that the more I accept whatever is going on “now,” the better able I am to turn that moment to my advantage. When I truly live in the present, I notice how much more in control I feel and therefore, how much freer I am to think and act creatively.”

Here is a true fact: You can never really avoid trials and tests. You can do your best and ignore them, hoping that they will go away and in some ways they do, but they just go underground for another opportunity to pop us and expose themselves at one of the most unexpected, difficult and inconvenient times of your life only to be entangled with the new trials and tests, making the situation bigger and more challenging than ever.

In a book called 'Yes, You Can!' Sam Deep and Lyle Sussman makes a suggestion that seems to echo James' statements in verse two, “*Consider it pure joy...*,” how people would do well to change the way they foresee events that appear to be overwhelming.

“Convince yourself there's something good in it,” they advise, “and look forward to those benefits.”

- 3. Temptations: I believe that temptations are opportunities of escape from trials and testings in our life.** In Romans 5 we can find a clear statement that in Adam we all sinned and we became sinners. Our evil desires imagine all kinds of “good” outcomes if we do certain things. We imagine how good it will feel, how alive it will make us feel, and the like. While at the same time ignore the millions of lessons, the

incredible amount of training and observations that tell us otherwise.

Many people yield to temptation mainly because they underestimated two things:

- (1) We underestimate the components of our own particular make-up**
- (2) We underestimate the power that is tempting them**

1. We Underestimate the Components of Our Particular Make-up

God's desire for us is that we receive the power reserved for us to overcome temptation, and to do it at any cost, even our pride.

**“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!”
I Corinthians 10:12**

It is possible to believe we are standing on God's power when we are standing on our own strength. Paul is not writing this statement so we can doubt what God can do in us. He is saying this so we can doubt what we think we can do in ourselves. Jesus says in John 15:5, “...*apart from me you can do nothing.*”

Gordon MacDonald has written some wonderful books and at one time president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. In one of his books, *Rebuilding Your Broken World*, he writes about a time when he was asked about how Satan might get him. He answered:

“All sorts of ways, I suppose; but I know there's one way he wouldn't get me.” “What's that the man asked?” “He'd never get me in the area of my personal relationships. That's one place where I have no doubt that I'm as strong as you can get. “

A few years after that conversation his world came crashing down. A chain of compromising choices presented themselves, but they seemed so innocent at the time. Choice by choice by choice, each one became easier to make, each becoming gradually darker. And then his world broke -- in the very area he had predicted he was safe -- and his world had to be rebuilt.”

What is the tendency of our personal make-up?

“Over estimating our relationship with God and underestimating our opponent and enemy, Satan.”

Almost all Christians, especially Christian leaders, who have fallen to sexual temptation would tell you that they did not think it could have happened to them.

People say, "It couldn't happen to me." Don't kid yourself the truth is, most of us would probably never have gotten married if we were really able to shut off this need for love, acceptance and affection. But we can't. We are not made that way, we were meant to be loved and to love. Yes it can happen to you. We are vulnerable because our particular make-up says that we need these sort of things.

"So be careful if you are thinking, 'Oh, I'd never behave like that.' Let this be a warning to you, for you too may fall into sin."

1 Corinthians 10:12 (LB)

None of us are immune to the attacks that want to undermine our purpose here on this earth.

"Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

. Proverbs 16:18

The minute we say, "I've conquered that problem," that's the minute I'm open for that temptation.

Robbed: It's like the person who believes he's never going to be robbed, so he never locks his doors, never bolts down his windows, and leaves his money lying all around. Who's going to get robbed? The guy who thinks he's never going to get robbed.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

Jeremiah 17:9

College Students: We all have our price. My deceitful heart tells me that there is no way I would go there. I've talked to hundreds of college students and I asked them, "How many of you, when you were in high school have done something your freshmen year at college that you said that you would never have done?" Hands go up all over the place. Our hearts deceive us.

We should have a holy fear of ever thinking we're beyond temptation.

- 1. We Underestimate the Components of Our Own Particular Make-up**
- 2. We Underestimate The Power That Is Tempting Us.**

Paul tells us,

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of the this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Ephesians 6:12

There is an exceptional tempting force that has developed and crafted it's methods for hundreds of years. But Satan does not have the power to cause us to yield to his temptations unless we give it to him...but we make it way to easy on him.

"Be careful, watch out for the attacks from Satan your great enemy. He prowls around like a hungry, roaring lion looking for some victim to tear apart."

1 Peter 5:8 (LB)

Watch Your Spiritual Gage

You cannot ignore the fact that this IS a spiritual battle that we are in. Temptation is a fleshly attempt to destroy your spiritual authority in Christ! You cannot be cautious enough to guard your life in every aspect.

"Above all else guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life."

Proverbs 4:23

My daily walk with God is absolutely imperative. It's too easy for me to become distracted and start looking in other directions rather than the journey I am supposed to be on. Satan says, "No one will ever know what you are doing." And that may be true of people that you see, but you will never fool God.

"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."

1 Corinthians 9:27

You can see Paul's concern, not only for himself, but also for those that he is attempting to win to Christ and those he is attempting to influence to share in this ministry of the Good News. He speaks to the Church at Corinth here and you find the most detailed teaching about sexual sin because Corinth, like our culture, was saturated with sexual temptation. Look what Paul said,

"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."

1 Corinthians 10:13

The Consequences Of Temptation

There are so many people today who do not understand and minimize the deception and affect of temptation. It's destructive force will not only take everything you have but it will attempt to destroy everything you are, your identity and honor. It can happen so quick and can take you down so fast that you don't even realize what you are losing until it's all lost in one final swoop.

God is a loving and restoring God. He loves you, there is no doubt about it, but after ignoring warning shots of the Holy Spirit and resisting wise counsel, here are a couple of **consequences for taking this path.**

1. Death

¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

James 1:15

Anytime we feel we must keep something secret, this is a great indicator that sin is attempting to stay hidden and refusing to be confronted. It's not unusual to find anyone unwilling to sacrifice their pride by admitting their struggle with sin to get the help they need. There is great wisdom in these words by **Rick Warren**:

"If you're losing the battle against a persistent bad habit, an addiction, or a temptation, and you're stuck in a repeating cycle of good intention-failure-guilt, you will not get better on your own. You need the help of other people. Some temptations are only overcome with the help of a partner who prays for you, encourages you, and holds you accountable."

He tells Titus, (Titus 2:6) to teach the young men in his church that they must learn to be self-controlled, to be blameless and walk in integrity which is the ability to walk their talk and not yielding to temptation. This is the first qualification of a leader:

"But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality or any impurity or greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. I am jealous for the integrity of God."

Ephesians 5:3

John Maxwell states in his book, *Developing the Leader Within You*, (Chapter 9)

"The first victory that successful people ever achieve or win, is the victory over themselves."

One statement that I heard recently:

"Never ask for a wishbone when you need to develop a backbone."

A sign on an office door made this statement:

"If you could kick the person responsible for most of your troubles, you wouldn't be able to sit down for weeks."

Our lack of self discipline and yielding to the temptations around us brings death. Death to our dreams, death to our relationships, death to our future and eventually death to our life!

2. Separated From The Blessings of God's Kingdom

Paul Tells The Galatians,

"People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols. They practice witchcraft, hate others and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before and I'm telling you again; no one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom."

Galatians 5:19-21

The moment we begin to have victory over our own flesh and our own desires, and become self-controlled, then all of a sudden we can become victorious over other things in life.

There are five lies that we must recognize that assists us in yielding to temptation:

Five Lies That Assist Temptation

- 1. The Lie of Thoughts: What I think about doesn't matter as long as don't act on it.**
The battle for sin always begins in the mind. Always. If you lose the battle in your mind -- your thoughts -- you've lost the battle.

This past week I read an article of a woman who had no idea her life would have so many challenges and changes, seemingly overnight. One day she realized that she had to admit having an affair to her husband and in the back lash of that confession, she lost it all. Overwhelmed with the reality of her sinful actions and the consequences

of what she had done, she wrestled with the battle of fear, shame and despair. The sleepless nights, the loss of appetite and the journey for it all to end seemed like it was taking forever.

See, she was the last person in the world to expect to commit this kind of life-shattering sin. She grew up in a Christian School, memorize literally hundreds of scriptures and had been involved in ministry for years. Her passion to love and serve God was never in question and having an affair was inconceivable, and the worst sin that she thought she could commit in her life.

She wrote,

“My experience taught me that no matter how sincere our faith or how pure our intentions, an affair can happen to any of us. None of us will ever reach a level of spiritual maturity where we can relax and trust our flesh. Scripture warns us that "the flesh is weak" (Mt. 26:41) and that Satan lies in wait to trip us up (1 Pet. 5:8). If King David, the "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14), fell into adultery, can we consider ourselves immune to the temptation?”

She described her process back to wholeness and healing was a long and hard journey, but God's life-changing truth brought her back into His love and restoration. The woman she looks at now in the mirror today is a different person than the one who was lied to by Satan and tempted her to go astray.

"... but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

James 1:14-15

We must recognize the lies that Satan plants in our minds that may propel us in the direction of yielding to temptation. None of us will ever live up to the overproduced movies or books where everyone has perfect lines and circumstances. Sometimes we just get board with life and in an attempt to escape the monotony we begin indulging in private fantasies.

You may think that your life is so ordinary, but with just a little imagination you can create an episode of full life drama right between your ears, full of passion, mystery and physical beauty. The thing about these thoughts is that they can emotionally stir up other feelings and feed a fire of lust and sinful pleasures. Can you believe that you can have this thought and turn around and quote a scripture or say a prayer without ever realizing just what happened? That's the problem with this lie, you don't recognize the threat that it has on your own spiritual growth and relationship with Christ and others.

Here's the truth: Our thoughts become our actions.

The Process of Destiny

Sow a thought, reap an act;

Sow an act, reap a habit;

Sow a habit, reap a character;

Sow a character, reap a destiny

Scriptures That Deal With Guarding Your Mind:

- "Keep your head in all situations." (2 Timothy 4:5)
- "Prepare your minds for action, be self controlled." (1 Peter 1:13)
- "We take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5)
- "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Romans 13:14)
- Paul tells us to "take the helmet of salvation." (Ephesians 6:17) Why? Because it protects the mind and guards your thoughts.
- Job makes a powerful statement, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully on a girl" (Job 31:1).
- David writes, "I will set before my eyes no vile thing" (Psalm 101:3).

Science has found that whether you think a thought or you experience the thought in action, it makes no difference to your brain. It has the same mental impact.

Neurologically there's absolutely no difference. In Matthew 5:28 (NIV), Jesus said, "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Temptation can so easily become a routine because it offers color to a drab world. Once temptation is stirred up it can consume time, emotional energy, finances and personal responsibilities. You will become more self-centered, detached from your family, from your spouse and from the things that you said you would die for. Our little compromises don't seem that bad and we drift away, sometimes for years, from what we believe to be true and uncompromising. But it can happen.

Satan loves to play on pent-up emotions. I've talked with people who don't have healthy ways to communicate or express their emotions. They shut down in communicating with their spouse and the mind games begin. If they are not fantasizing someone else in their life, they are imagining all the things they wanted to tell them or actions of bodily harm.

Few people fall into temptation overnight. Actually the result of falling into "big" sins is usually the yielding of falling into a series of small compromises in thoughts, choices and behaviors. It always seems so harmless, these temptations that seem so innocent and fun. But they can grow and turn into a horrible monster, a creature of habit that will set a course of destruction for the rest of your life.

2. The Lie of Change: This lie says that all I need is change for happiness. It plays out like this,

- "I would be happier with someone else."
- "I would be happier if I lived somewhere else."
- "I would be happier if I worked someplace else."
- "I would be happier if I were somebody else."

The list is endless. It is the Lie of Change. Do you need change? Absolutely, but do

you know what that change is? Probably not. That's the dangerous things, change because of boredom or frustration only moves your situation, it doesn't really change it.

This subtle thought is easy to think. What would it be like to live somewhere else. What would it be like to have another job? What would it be like if I could reinvent myself. What would it be like if I was with someone else?

Our busy lives, our friends, our society for that matter contribute to our lonely, disconnected and frustrating homes and marriages. This Lie of Change is subtle and very consistent. It doesn't give up very easy. You can dwell on the dissatisfaction of your marriage, your job, and even of yourself that it will bring death.

The Truth: When we expect other people or other circumstances to make us happy we will become disappointed in the process.

- I would be treated differently over there.
- People would respect me if I were to move there.
- I would have a deeper relationship if she was part of my life.

We can create so much self-pity and entertain so much deception that when opportunity comes for your needs to really be met, for thing to really turn around, you cannot allow it to happen or you will not permit to happen. Right in front of your eyes you have eliminated the true and only means of your real success.

Only Jesus can satisfy you! There are no perfect Hollywood lovers. There are no perfect people without flaws. There are no perfect jobs without trials and testings. Everyplace you go, everyone you meet has their own set of weaknesses and character flaws. If you find something so different than what you are experiencing and frustrated with, you will more than likely be shocked at what you had never had to settle for!

In John 4:13-14, a woman crossed Jesus' path whose yielded lifestyle to temptation had taken her through five marriage. She had five husbands, and at this particular time, was living with her new boyfriend. She was yielding to the Lie of Change and was on a search for that "perfect someone." The void in her heart, perhaps shame and frustration, led her into dark, hopeless dead ends. She was empty. She was so thirsty for something alive.

Jesus saw her need and told her,

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 4:13-14

Jesus knew that whatever she longed for, whatever she was willing to give up her life and reputation for would never satisfy. But true satisfaction could only be found in the love that He had to offer. The truth, we can only be the happiest when we cultivate a relationship with the One who knows you better than yourself, our creator. Our whole search in life is to discover our creator and in discovering Him, we find ourselves!

- 3. The Lie That Life Is Passing You By: I deserve something better than this!** What a trap. I have seen this lie rip so many people apart, so many homes and marriages

shredded and shattered. It has been so painful to watch young men miss great opportunities in their life that would make them leaders, influencers of communities and regions, even wealthy because they could not wait for the fruit of their labor to have a full harvest.

Minimize the pleasure of sin and maximize the consequences of it.

"There is pleasure in sin for a season."

Hebrews 11:25

Sin is like sugar, it gives you a rush and then it drops you on your face. Sin is fun. Nobody would do it if it were not fun. There wouldn't be any temptation if there wasn't some kind of pleasure in it. The Bible even says there is pleasure in sin, but it's just for a season. You have your kicks, then you have your kickbacks. What are the kickbacks?

"Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

James 1:14-15

Randy Alcorn accumulated a list of consequences of a moral failure in Leadership Magazine. He says,

"Whenever I feel particularly vulnerable to sexual temptation, I find it helpful to review what effects my action could have: grieving the Lord who redeemed me; dragging his sacred name through the mud; one day having to look at Jesus, the righteous judge in the face, and give an account of my actions; following the footsteps of people whose immorality forfeited their ministries and caused me to shudder; losing my wife's respect and trust; hurting my daughters; destroying my example and credibility with my children; causing shame to my family; losing self respect; forming memories and flashbacks that could plague future intimacy with my wife; wasting years of ministry training; undermining the faithful example and hard work of other Christians in our community; and on and on."

I've seen so many people who had the future in their grasp but they got distracted and made someone else or their job or town the source of their happiness and missed their full destiny in God. They looked for a better wife, a better husband, a better job, a better church, a better town. The terrorizing strategy of this lie is to get you to believe that you might never have an opportunity like this again and you had better jump at the next offer that comes your way.

Here is the truth: We have probably already received more than we deserve. I can't tell you how many stories I've heard how people didn't realize what they were losing. They didn't realize the friends that they would be leaving who had loved on them and nurtured them through so many difficult times. They didn't realize that there would be so many new things that would need to be defined that had already been understood in past relationships.

D.L. Moody was a great evangelist in the last century. One day he was asked, "Of all the people you come in contact with, who gives you the most trouble?" He said, "D. L. Moody. I have the most trouble with myself."

A sign on an office door read,

"If you could kick the person responsible for most of your troubles, you wouldn't be able to sit down for weeks."

There are hard life lessons to learn, but there are harder ones you never want to learn, and those who believe in the Lie That Life Is Passing You By is one of them.

We really don't deserve better. I don't even deserve a second chance. But the good news is that God has an amazing plan for our lives.

"...he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."

Psalm 103:10

It's that same grace of God that first saved us that is the grace that restores us. I can put my affections on Christ and true happiness, better than anything this world has to offer, will be mine. I fall into this lie when I am not looking toward Christ for the purpose and direction of my life.

- 4. The Lie Of Exceptional Worth: When I feel exceptional, I think I'm special.** This is the dangerous thinking that comes through Hollywood that says, "Just follow your heart." This influence of thinking was left over from the 60's and it is best stated this way, "If it feels good, do it." But today, we have sunk a whole new level of deceit, it would best be stated this way, "If it feels good, it must be right!" This lie is having a hay day with our youth, with men on their jobs and on our college campuses.

Getting positive feedback, getting notoriety and strokes of attention can be an addiction that you can crave and be in bondage to. You will forsake family, neglect yourself and even walk away from God for the exchange of words that you have so desperately hungered for. Words that say you are beautiful. Words that describe your incredible productive power. Words that promote and recognizes your knowledge, wit, personality, status, with honor and awe...to the point that you become entrapped to performing on that level, while you are slowly headed for a disastrous crash.

This lie is so dangerous because when it is not working out at home you can always find that one person who will give you that "exceptional feeling," through their words. I'm not saying that you need to stop talking to people who encourage you, but to stop meeting with people who will tell you what you want to hear. The people who will not tell you the truth are not really your friends. Real friends will tell you to go home to your family. They will tell you to stop going around and talking to everyone else and go to the person you are really having conflict with. The deception of the Lie of Exceptional Worth is that you can eventually find enough people around you that will reinterpret even the word of God so you can stay on your path of destruction.

This lie excuses your responsibility to act biblically. It refuses to resolve conflict. It ignores all the signs of coming disaster. It teaches you to see only marginal losses instead of total destruction. We can absolutely become "Flattered to Death!"

The more you get the attention you want, the more you learn to manipulate others for it. And in the process you get used, not loved. You believe you are special, but you are deceived and you may get what you want but it will not satisfy. This Lie Of Exceptional Worth is a terrible temptation.

Amy Grant: I remember reading an article written by Amy Grant. She was describing a concert she did at the then, Texas Ranger Baseball Stadium in Arlington, Texas. She said as she stood in front of thousands of people who were singing along that were absolutely involved, and the Lord spoke to her heart and I'll attempt to paraphrase: He said, "Remember Amy, when you are at you highest, you are really never as good as you think you are." And then He said, "Also remember at your lowest, you are never as low as you think you are." Tomorrow is another day.

We exchange ourselves for Exceptional Worth. You are not consumed with each other, you are consumed, full of lust and greedy with an appetite for sex. One is willing to give the flattery while the other is willing to exchange their whole body to hear it.

"For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people."

Romans 16:18

You have to realize that is it more important that you receive the truth and grace of God and not feed the vanity or fill our self-worth with short lived and empty words of admiration.

- 5. The Lie That I Won't Get Caught: We somehow believe that we can actually escape the consequences of our sins.** When we have, minor failures in our lives, the consequences do not fall in one huge chop! I think this is the grace of God that gives us a chance to fall on our faces and get back up, brush ourselves off and walk after Him. But ignoring these simple minor failures leads us to huge ones. When we do not feel the full impact of our actions up front, we have a tendency to think that is was not that big of a deal. We learn to hide this habit of yielding to temptation. We don't really need anyone's help, we can do it alone. We can get our life back on track any time we want. It really isn't anyones business.

The Truth: God will expose my sin. I may have been able to keep this hidden life concealed from even my dearest friends, but I was only kidding myself if I thought God wasn't paying attention.

"You may be sure that your sin will find you out."

Numbers 32:23

The reason God will expose your sin is because He loves you too much to leave me on a path of destruction. He knows the consequences of what you are doing. He knows that if your sin remains hidden you will never see how ugly it is to Him. You have no idea how much this secret is affecting your life, with those around you and with God Himself.

Look at the issue of pornography.

- 40 million Americans regularly view Internet pornography
- Every second 28,000 people are viewing porn.
- 20% of men and 13% of women admit to viewing porn at work.
- In 1998 there were 72,000 pornographic Internet sites.
- Today there are over 4,000,000.
- 25% of all on line searches are porn related.

- U.S. annual sales of pornography top \$13 billion.
- It is \$96 billion worldwide.

In a Christianity Today Leadership Journal survey:

- 37% of pastors say porn is a struggle for them.
- 51% say it is a temptation.
- 25% of all calls to Focus on the Family's "clergy care line" were porn related.
- Average age of 1st exposure to Internet porn is 11 years.
- 90% of 8-16 year olds have seen online porn.

(Sources for the above statistics: 2008 Top Ten Reviews <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html#anchor1>; August 25, 2005 Christian Science Monitor; Leadership Journal Winter 2005 p8)

To bring your present condition, coming out of the darkness and into the light will hurt initially, it may embarrass you, even humiliate you, but true repentance means to confess my yielding to temptation to God and those I had wronged. **When we own up to our sin, God will own up to His Son Jesus, and began to turn the ashes of your life into the beautiful person He created you to be. He taught me that the only sins Satan can use against me are the ones I hide.**

Biblical Strategies For Overcoming Temptation:

The Bible provides clear strategies for maintaining moral integrity and a life that can be lived to be a testimony for God.

"This is our boast. Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God."

2 Corinthians 1:12

Paul makes an important statement here that should be one of the main goals of any believer. He is saying, "I don't have to question or worry in my mind how I have acted in front of you or interacted with you. My integrity stands for itself, I have nothing to hide, and it reflects the character of God, in holiness and sincerity."

This should be the goal of anyone who calls Jesus Christ their Lord.

Restoration From Failure

- 1. Repent:** I truly believe that everything in the darkness, that is hidden is Satan's territory, but God can do anything when our life is placed in the light. Repenting is taking responsibility for who you are today. To truly repent you can't blame your parents, your boss or your spouse. You have to take responsibility for yourself.

"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."

Proverbs 28:13

Look at yourself right now at what you are, you didn't get there by accident.

What we are today is what we decided yesterday. And we will be tomorrow what we decide today.

Recently a psychologist surveyed around six hundred prison inmates. Of all he surveyed he said not one of them said they were personally guilty. He said, "I found the most innocent people on God's earth in prison." To repent is taking responsibility for yielding to temptation that separates you from God.

Paul was talking to the

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus."

Acts 3:19-20

You can not become "saved" or develop a relationship with God until you admit, "I am a sinner. I have done wrong. I am guilty. I am the one to blame. I'm the one who deserves hell. I'm the one who deserves death. I am the guy. It is me."

2. Reprove: The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines reprove as: "to scold or correct usually gently or with kindly intent, to express disapproval of."

I want you to get this, it is one thing to repent, but you have got to agree with what God says. Too often we respond like a child who was caught and we pout, knowing we did wrong but frustrated with the restrictions. On the other hand we can get caught yielding to temptation and attack ourselves to demoralize and humiliate ourselves in an attempt to create change.

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."

Matthew 10:32

I didn't see some chains fall off of me until I started calling things the way God called them in a disapproving way. It may seem like the oddest thing to do and you may feel like a huge hypocrite, but out of your mouth you need to say, "I take no pleasure in this." "This is not the goal for my life and I will not take joy in this."

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Romans 10:9-10

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9

Many people take shame, they take guilt and then they will attack themselves with an arsenal of disapproving and slanderous words and statements, attempting to motivate themselves away from those pleasures and temptations. But you must reprove, speak it into you. Speak like you are healed, not deceiving yourself as if you haven't just crossed a sinful line in your life, but one that agrees with the Word of God and what He says about you. This is not so you will feel "better" about yourself, but it is to literally speak "freedom" into yourself, the healing power of God's Word.

Speak What God's Word Says About Jesus

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”

Hebrews 4:14

Speak What God's Word Says About His Word

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Psalm 119:105

Speak What God's Word Says About The Holy Spirit

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”

John 16:13,14

Speak What God's Word Says About The Believer

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.”

Psalm 84:11

“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19

3. **Replace:** Whenever you are tempted by errant thoughts, stop and replace them with truth. You've got to find a means for addressing your thoughts and finding balance in your life.

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:22-24

You have got to go somewhere else in your mind...but not to sin. Not dwelling on sinful sexual or relational escape, nor escape to mental role playing destructive behavior.

“Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 12:21

I have also given a few close friends permission to ask me questions and hold me accountable to living out these truths. Above all, I seek to remember that only Jesus, the living water, can fill my deepest longings to be loved and valued.

4. **Reinforce:**

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the body is weak.”

Matthew 26:41

Look what Jesus doesn't say here. He doesn't say, "Watch and pray so you will not fall into **sin.**" He says, "Watch and pray that you don't even fall into **temptation.**"

You reinforce your potential to resist Satan's temptation by watching and praying. As you are seeking God, you can ask, "God, where am I resisting your voice. Where am I refusing your fullness in my life. Show me what I am blind to and restore my sight."

Also, don't put yourself in a situation where you can be tempted. It's not an issue of are you going to give in or not, but rather, when are you going to fall into that temptation? You reinforce your potential when you are **scheduled with your day and accountable with your life**. Those two things have a huge bearing on how you respond with temptations.

Plato said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

You show me a person that is self-disciplined and I will show you a person that welcomes accountability, welcomes others coming in and examining their life.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist and Wesleyan movement actually started what we call LIFE Groups in churches. Every week, in these LIFE Groups he would ask four questions:

1. What known sins have you committed since we last met? If there is such, what shall we do about it?
2. What temptations have you faced?
3. How were you delivered from these temptations?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you are uncertain whether it was sin or not?

In a survey of 1300 senior executives in America, they were asked what was the most important characteristic in a person. Out of 17 options, **integrity** was chosen by 76 percent as the top quality to have. Reinforce integrity, self-discipline, holiness by surrounding yourself with men and women of like character!

For me to reinforce Christ in my life, to live with integrity and self-discipline, I need to establish standards that I will live by that can be stated, here are just a few:

1. **"I will live what I teach." "I will do what I say."**
2. **"I will be honest with others."**
3. **"I will put what is best for others ahead what is best for me."**
4. **"I will be transparent and vulnerable."**

Restoration From Failure

1. **Repent**
2. **Reprove**
3. **Replace**
4. **Reinforce**

Wrap-Up: Break The Cycle, Be The First Fruit!

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

James 1:16-18