

“Encountering God: Through Temptation”

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Part 1 of 3, summer focus: We help others follow Jesus when we *worship, grow and influence*.

Encountering God series: What it means to worship God outside the pews.

Sermon journal intro: Temptation is part of life. However, Ben Franklin said it well: “I can’t stop the birds of the air from flying over my head but I can stop them from building a nest in my hair.” We DON’T have to give in when we are tempted. Joseph (Genesis 39) refused to partake of Mrs. Potiphar’s seduction. Jesus prayed in “The Lord’s Prayer” for us not to give in to temptation. He showed it’s possible to resist the power of evil when He was tempted. He always quoted scripture to confront the attack of the devil. Paul said that with every temptation God always provides a way of escape. Money and sex are two major stumbling blocks for us. When tempted, we must learn to run toward God, not away from him. I hope you’ve read the sermon journal intro (+ in your bulletin).

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. Jesus’ temptation was not symbolic, but was a real opportunity to sin. Unlike the first Adam in the Garden, the 2nd Adam remained faithful and did not fall.

3 sources of temptation:

1.) **SATAN.** Satan tried to convince Jesus that His needs could be met independently from God. Satan's plan is to separate people from God. Once that happens, problems with others naturally follow.

I don't believe Satan will appear to us like he did to Jesus in the wilderness. Few of us are tempted to out-and-out bow down and worship Satan. But he comes in a different way. He makes sin look very enticing (not disgusting). Paul said "*Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*" 2 Cor 11:14

2.) **SELF.** "***When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 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 1:13-15 Christians justify all kinds of behavior even when the Bible teaches that it is NOT good. Satan tries to turn our eyes away from God and upon our own desires.

3.) **CULTURE** (the secular world). *Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."* 1 Cor 15:33

With these 3 sources; Satan, our own flesh, and secular culture ("world"), we will be tempted. What tempts me may not tempt you. Some of us are genetically predisposed to certain types of sin. I also think that over time, our major sources of temptation can change.

The "**7 Deadly Sins**" are repeatedly illustrated in scripture. Scripture is full of stories of people who surrendered to temptation. Nebuchadnezzar's pride; Joseph's brothers envy; Moses' anger; David's lust; Judas' greed, Eglon's gluttony (Judges 3), + King Agrippa's sloth (Acts 26:28).

There are other sins of the "spirit" not of the "flesh" in the Bible. Martha's criticism of her sister, Mary, was rebuked by Jesus. Jesus rebuked James and John when they wanted to call fire down from heaven to destroy the unbelieving Samaritans; and for asking that they get the best seats on the right and left hand of Jesus in His Kingdom. Peter lost his courage and gave into temptation not to speak up for Jesus. He was also upbraided by Paul for giving into the people who said you must become Jewish and follow the Law before you could follow Jesus.

What's your greatest source of temptation? "***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 What's the best way to escape? While we are not the Son of God and Jesus had certain

advantages over us, He still faced greater temptations than any of us. Pay attention to what Jesus did. Matthew 4 shows how Jesus handled temptation: 5 Ways of Jesus: (These weren't isolated and random responses – this was congruent with Jesus' life. He was "automated." It was his habit to do these things. He invested in these areas of life so when He had a need there was something in His spiritual account to draw from.

1.) He was **SPIRIT-LED**. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jump to the end. "**Angels**" ministered to him. Jesus wasn't alone. There's a supernatural experience here. Since Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit, we have the same resources to resist temptation that Jesus had. The presence of God changes everything. We must handle temptation like Jesus - through the power of the Spirit.

2.) He **WITHDREW** to the desert. Like teams training in a higher altitude, Jesus put Himself in a place for training. A personal spiritual retreat. Silence. Time alone with God.

3.) He **FASTED** (always linked with prayer). He would not allow anything/anyone to come first in His life.

4.) He knew **SCRIPTURE**. Jesus was aware of misusing scripture, too. He called the devil out on it in this text. Paul advises us to do the same. ***Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.***

Ephesians 6:16-18

5.) The conclusion = He **WORSHIPPED**. Like Martha banging on the pots/pans and grumbling because her sister was sitting at Jesus' feet, we can be diverted into paying attention to the wrong thing. We are built to worship. If we move from worshipping God, we will worship something else (education, entertainment, food, friends, health, music, politics). These are not necessarily bad things. They can have a meaningful place in our lives; but they should never captivate our hearts. Jesus told us to "Seek first the Kingdom of God (KOG) and His righteousness....and all these things shall be added." We should seek to worship God. And this is an act of the will, not the emotions.

Our ultimate temptation is not with the 7 deadly sins – they are only the symptoms of spiritual amnesia. Our biggest temptation is being distracted from the worship of the true God. Few are tempted to bow to worship Satan, but we are tempted to love + serve ourselves and our own kingdoms rather than the KOG. When we stop worshipping God, we neglect prayer, scripture, music, and corporate worship. Pride moves in and tells us that we don't need God. Envy covets. Anger finds expression in our hearts. Lust rules. Greed tells us it's not

God's money, it's ours. Gluttony only wants more. Sloth whispers that there's no urgency. We tend to focus upon "sin management" - overcoming the 7 Deadlies – but they are secondary issues. *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you"* (James 4:8) We cannot be passive. We cannot handoff our responsibilities to worship to someone else. We must participate. We cannot just grab and take. We must give. We must engage. Our greatest temptation is to worship ourselves and our own kingdoms.

2 points:

1.) Jesus wasn't **ALONE**. He was led by the Holy Spirit + the angels came to minister to Him. His worship welcomed the **supernatural**. The Holy Spirit is with us, too. And when we gather for corporate worship, we come together in the presence of others. ***Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another. Hebrews 10:25*** If we go into isolation we are in great peril. Be with other believers. We need one another. I need you. You need me.

2.) Have **CONFIDENCE**. ***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. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16***

After Paul wrestled with his sin problem in Romans 7, he began chapter 8 with this line: *"There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Don't beat yourself up (that's what the devil does). Remember: ***If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9*** God loves us and He is for us. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding for us. God is rooting for us; He always gives us a way out. In our weakness we are strong. When we blow it, we confess and receive forgiveness. The Lord is merciful and He is faithful. Because of this, there is NO situation that should cause us to run from God—we should always run toward Him.