

Temptation

Fighting the Urge

Timothy S. Lane



www.newgrowthpress.com

I can resist anything but temptation.

OSCAR WILDE

Bob prefers order and control over chaos and interruptions. He's been a Christian for years, but he still fights the temptation to be impatient with his children when their needs disrupt his life.

Sally finds solace in a strong drink. She stays sober for weeks, and then suddenly gives in to the temptation to drink all weekend.

John struggles with pornography. He is single and travels for work. When he is alone on a business trip, he sometimes watches sexually explicit shows on the hotel pay-per-view channels.

Kristen is a hard worker. Everyone in the office knows this, but they also know that several years ago she almost lost her marriage because of her work habits. She's trying to balance work and home, but she still fights the temptation to achieve and to be recognized for those achievements.¹

Bob, Sally, John, and Kristen lead very different lives, but they are all struggling with the same thing—giving in to temptation. Can you identify with them? How many times have you tried to change a behavior or attitude only to find yourself doing the same thing again? Do these phrases sound familiar? “There I go again!” “I’ve had this struggle for years, and I just can’t seem to win.” Or “I do okay for awhile, but then I get caught in the same old sin.”

Each of us faces some kind of temptation every day. And, even though our temptations are different, our struggles are similar. We all have daily battles with temptation that stretch into monthly and yearly wars. Can those daily battles against your particular temptations be won? God, in his Word, says, “Yes,” and this minibook will help you to take a close look at what God says about how to win your battle with temptation. Learning how to handle your everyday skirmishes with temptation will prepare you for the times when your struggle with temptation becomes particularly intense. But you can’t win a war against an enemy you don’t understand. So let’s begin

by learning about temptations: where they come from and why they are so hard to resist. You might be surprised by what you find out about you and your temptations.

Where Do Our Temptations Come From?

It's easy to think our temptations come from our circumstances: Bob's tempted to be grumpy because his children are noisy. Sally drinks because she's in a difficult marriage. John indulges in pornography because his job takes him on the road. Kristen spends too much time at work because her boss is demanding. If temptation comes from our circumstances, then we can deal with temptation simply by changing our circumstances.

But is this really true? Think about your life. If you change your circumstances, your particular temptation might change, but you will still struggle to do what's right. If Bob responds to irritating people with anger, then, even when his children are grown, he will still be tempted to get angry at the irritating people in his life.

It's true that our external circumstances bring temptation into our lives, but God says in the book of James

that we succumb to temptation because of what's inside of us (what we want, desire, don't want, fear, etc), not from what's outside of us (our circumstances). When James talks about hard circumstances he uses a Greek word that can be translated either as *test*, *trial*, or *trap*. This is what he says:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face *trials* of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance... Blessed is the man who perseveres under *trial*, because when he has stood the *test*, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

(James 1:2–3, 12, emphasis mine)

Here James is describing one's external circumstances as a trial or test that God allows for the purpose of growing us in grace. But the translation of the Greek word changes in verses 13–15 to *tempt*:

When *tempted*, no one should say, "God is *tempting* me." For God cannot be *tempted* by