



by Annalyse McGee

[This article is taken from a verbal presentation Annalyse made to her high school classmates this year.]

Scriptures: James 1:12-14, Matthew 10:22, Matthew 5:16, 1 Peter 2:12

Introduction

I am going to begin by reading you a Bible verse from James 1:13-14 that says, “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.”

Every single day, we as humans, not only Christians, face temptation in many different forms. Sometimes we may not even realize we are being tempted in the moment, and as a result, we make bad decisions. The definition of temptation is — “The desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise.”

The first and most well-known example of temptation in the Bible is Adam and Eve. So think, they lived in a perfect world, with no sin and without the influence of anyone other than themselves. There was literally no other human on the earth to peer pressure or tempt them except for each other.

But still, they both managed to succumb to temptation and ruin their futures completely. First, think about how badly they messed up. Then think about this, if they were susceptible to temptation in a faultless earth, that contained no sin at all, that just shows how much more difficult it is for us, who live in a fallen and completely sinful world, to say **no** to bad ideas, or even be able to just recognize evil in the first place. This is why we need to be able to acknowledge the bad, and gravitate towards the good. In order to acknowledge the bad, there are certain questions you must ask yourself before you make a decision, if you are unsure if it is right or wrong.

So, if you think you are being tempted to make a bad decision, ask yourself these questions:

1. Will this affect my relationship with God? Will my sin cause me to drift farther from the Lord, or get closer?
2. Would this glorify God or will His light now be shown through this? Would other people be able to watch you do this and think, "Wow, they must love God!"?

3. How severe are the consequences going to be?

I believe that when most people think of temptation, they think of more severe situations and peer pressure, when in reality, temptation can be the smallest choices we make every day. For example, you are tempted to talk about someone behind their back when all your friends are doing it, and you may not even think it's wrong. Majority of people will just do it subconsciously without thinking twice. Another example is being tempted to go hang out with your friends all night, knowing you have untouched homework at home. Even feeling the need to disrespect or talk back to your parents when they say something that you might not agree with.

Even though it may not seem ideal at the time, you will be happy you did the right thing later on down the line. Looking back you will probably realize how bad the consequences or outcome would have been, and you will be glad you said no. The Lord rewards those who obey him. So, consequences don't always have to be bad, they can be a good thing.

James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” Similarly, Matthew 10:22 says, “and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

If we remain steadfast in our beliefs, and do not allow them to be changed by the opinions and words of others, we will be pleasing the Lord and doing ourselves a favor, even if it does not seem like it at the time. There is a reason God has commanded us countless times to refrain from sin and temptation, because not only can it harm us, but it can harm our relationship with Him. Once you start going down the wrong path, it is extremely difficult to come back, and the longer you’re gone, the more difficult it is. You stop communicating with God, stop worshipping Him, you cut off any ties with Him, and begin to forget how important He is to you. All of this can happen because of one bad decision, maybe even an accidental one.

This is why we need to be able to easily tell if a decision is good, or if it will hurt us down the road. That is why there are the three questions to ask if you cannot decide if what you are going to do is pleasing to the Lord.

1. Will this affect my relationship with God?
2. Would this glorify God or will His light now be shown through this?
3. How severe are the consequences going to be?

So I am going to break each of these down individually.

Question 1: Will this affect my relationship with God?

First, would this affect your relationship with the Lord? Normally, there is an obvious answer to this question. If you cannot decide whether or not this is a good or bad decision, you probably should not do it. Your relationship with the Lord will always trump every other relationship in your life. You may make a bad decision because of a relationship you have with someone else, whether you are trying to save it,

impress someone, or something else. But as bad as it sounds, everything in your life is temporary, including the people. You need to put more focus and effort into the only eternal relationship in your life, which is with the Lord. Damaging that relationship can happen quicker than you think, as one bad decision leads to another and another and so on until you are majorly separated from God.

Question 2: Will this glorify God?

Second, would this decision glorify God? Matthew 5:16 says, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.” Another verse like this is 1 Peter 2:12, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” This states that in everything we do, we need to bring some form of glory to God. Someone is always paying attention to you, and people should be able to look at you and see your actions and see God through them. If you

know that your decisions will not show the light of God, that is an automatic sign to not do it. This is pretty self explanatory as anything related to sin definitely does not bring glory to God.

Question 3: How severe are the consequences going to be?

Third, what will the consequences be, and what is the severity of them? If you know good and well that something is only fun in the moment, and you have full knowledge that it will come back to hurt you after, don't do it. It doesn't matter how exhilarating it is, consequences can be way more severe than you think. Even if you think no one will find out, and there will be no consequences, you are wrong. Everything you do, good or bad, has some form of a consequence. It may be physical, it may be a punishment, there can be a multitude of outcomes. It may not even be on this earth, it may be when you're standing before Jesus.

So now that you can identify whether or not something is a sin, how are you supposed to get out of a bad situation so you are no longer tempted? Some situations are ten times easier to get out of than others. Sometimes you simply just have to walk away and you are away from the problem and are no longer tempted. Other times though are much more difficult. Some of the most difficult times to say no and walk away are when you are with friends or people you look up to. Majority of teenagers like to be liked. Sometimes they will do stupid things and go to stupid lengths just to impress people or get attention. You may think, "Oh, I would never do that", but there is probably at least one person who you care about so much, who you want to impress so badly, that you would cross a multitude of lines just to gain their attention and/or approval. The main problem with having many close friends and being desperate for attention at the same time is that you would do almost anything to even slightly impress them. You can easily be tempted into making bad decisions because you don't think twice about following those who you look up to or are surrounded by.

Conclusion

This is why we need to always have our eyes open and recognize when we are being tempted. By asking yourself the three questions when you are in a tough situation, you can identify temptation and find a way to remove yourself from the situation.

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