

Temptation

Intro: Animals “programmed”; instinctive. Humans have free will. This can be a blessing or curse, depending on how it is used. The **only** thing that can keep us out of heaven is sin, and every sin begins with temptation.

1. Temptation: What Is It?

A. Definition: *Temptation is attraction to the suggestion that the best course of action is that which conflicts with God’s law.*

B. Temptation involves a *desire* to act. I am not tempted unless I am *attracted* to a proposal.

1. Jas 1:14 – *“Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”*

2. **Ex:** Philippino children catching money. If someone suggested **I** stand on a cliff and catch change, I’d say, “Are you out of your mind?” I am not tempted.

3. Not every suggestion of evil is temptation; only those which stir a responsive chord within.

C. Temptation, itself, is **not** sin:

1. Jesus was *“in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb 4:15); **“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin ...”** (Jas 1:15).

2. When we begin to *entertain* desires, when we indulge, nurture and treasure them, *at some point along the line intent will be formed.* At that point, we have sinned whether or not we ever have *opportunity* to fulfill our intent. Jesus indicates this when He says: *“whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Mt 5:28).

3. Sin is the **end of a process that begins with temptation.** If we ever hope to get better at practicing righteousness, we must become more aware of what is happening as we are being tempted.

2. Who Is Responsible for Temptation?

A. The ultimate source of evil suggestions is Satan, not God (Jas 1:13).

1. *“The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness ...”* (2 Cor 11:3). Method: Satan uses deceit to make disobedience look plausible, attractive.

2. “Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). Motive: Satan simply wants to consume you and me, just like those Philippino children going over the edge.
3. “We are not ignorant of his **devices**” (2 Cor 2:11). A word meaning “thought out.” Satan *tailors* and *crafts* his enticements to our weaknesses.

B. The agents of Satan:

1. “Get behind Me, Satan!” Who said to whom? (Mt 16:23)
2. Human ministers – 2 Cor 11:13-15.
3. Satan suggests wrong from friends, family, teachers, other Christians.

C. Satan is **very good** at what he does. He has **never failed** to win a man.

3. How Can Satan Be So Effective?

A. In certain situations, temptation ineffective. But in the right circumstances ...

B. The classic example: Peter does what just a few hours before he said he would never do – Lk 22:54-62. Elements:

1. Peer pressure. We are social creatures; we are very much influenced by the opinions, values of others. Peter made his confident assertions when surrounded by Jesus, apostles.
2. Emotions: fear, embarrassment, insecurity. Inflamed emotions short-circuit thinking; we just react. Infatuation, anger, loneliness, euphoria, etc. Other times of weakness: when idle, prosperous, distracted by worldly pursuits. Competition, envy, pride, feeling unappreciated, and a variety of other factors can make us vulnerable to temptation.
3. Remember: In the right circumstances I can fall; sin *always* destroys; be honest with yourself. What am I feeling? What am I thinking? Am I on safe ground? Am I heading in the right direction? Am I getting close to the edge?

C. The good news: God governs temptation – 1 Cor 10:13.

Conclusion: You don’t have to have a college degree to go to heaven, but you have to be smarter than the devil.