

How To Handle Temptations

Mark Antony was known as the “silver-throated orator of Rome.” He was a brilliant statesman, magnificent in battle, courageous, and strong. And he was handsome. As far as personal qualities are concerned, he could have become a world ruler. But he had the very vulnerable and fatal flaw of moral weakness, so much so that on one occasion his personal tutor shouted into his face, “Oh, Marcus, oh, colossal child! Able to conquer the world, but unable to resist a temptation” (Charles R. Swindoll. *Three Steps Forward Two Steps Back*. page 85).

Some of us remember Len Bias, All-American College basketball player at Maryland. He was the second overall draft pick in 1986. He was compared to Michael Jordan who was in his second year at Chicago. Len Bias was selected by the Boston Celtics on June 17 and died two days later from a cocaine overdose. Some sportswriters said Len Bias was the greatest player not to play in the NBA.

To not overcome temptation is to abuse God given talent.
To the degree you can overcome temptation you honor God.

Joseph in Genesis 37-50 lived the exact opposite of these men was a huge spiritual success.

The importance of Joseph is seen in that one quarter of Genesis is devoted to Joseph’s life story.

Only 2 chapters describe the creation of the universe.

Only 1 chapter depicts the fall of Adam and thus the entire human race into sin.

But 13 chapters are devoted to Joseph’s biography. Joseph’s story begins with Joseph being his father’s pet, next as a nameless slave in Egypt and finally to his promotion to the Vice Presidency of Egypt.

Joseph’s success, however, was not handed to him on a silver platter. The Psalmist said, “The word of the Lord tried Joseph.”

Joseph is the classic example how a Christian can overcome BOTH trials and temptations.

Genesis 37-39 present two helpful contrasts.

In Genesis 37 and 39 Joseph’s Trials and Temptations are contrasted. In Genesis 37, Joseph is tried by God and in Genesis 39, Joseph is tempted by Satan.

The second contrast is in Genesis 38 and 39.

In Genesis 38, Judah, Joseph’s older brother yields to temptation.

In Genesis 39, Joseph does not yield to temptation.

1. There is a Difference between Trials and Temptations

A. Trials are hardships from God that test your faith

- 1) James 1:2-3 speak of trials.
- 2) Joseph was tested by God in Genesis 37 through Joseph's jealous brothers to make Joseph a stronger Christian. Later Joseph will be able to say to evil brothers, "You thought evil against me; But God meant it unto good." Joseph said in regard to his trials not temptations to sin.

B. Temptations are tests from Satan that motivate you to be bad by promising something good.

- 1) James 1:13 differentiates between trials and temptations.
- 2) Joseph in Genesis 39 was tempted by Satan through Potipher's wife.

2. Temptations are Inevitable (1 Cor 10:13)

A. All Christians and unbelievers are tempted.

- B. The monk who cloisters himself behind the walls of his monastery and never has contact with the evil world system is tempted just the same as the believer who has to push and shove with worldly temptation on his/her job.*
- One Bible College advertized it was located 200 miles from any sin. Sorry! Not true!

3. Temptation comes Subtly in Various Forms

1 John 2:16 gives three different types of temptations

A. Lust of the Flesh. That was the problem Potipher's wife was struggling with.

B. Lust of the Eye. This is the lust for things.

C. The Pride of Life. This is the lust for a name, authority, power, or control over others. (Joseph's temptation came in the first category. You may be vulnerable in the other areas.)

D. Temptations are Joseph's coat, they are variegated, not just one color.

4. Temptation can be overcome by the fruit of the Spirit-Temperance or Self-Control.

A. Genesis 38 and 39 stand in stark contrast.

- 1) In Genesis 38, Judah, Joseph's older brother, fail to temptation because of inner

weakness. He reminds of what the British writer, Oscar Wilde once said, “I can resist everything except temptation. The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.”
2) In Genesis 39, Joseph correctly handled temptation through his God given inner strength.

B. In Genesis 37 and 38, Judah pictures the Christian out of fellowship with God because of unconfessed sin growing weaker and weaker spiritually until he commits a heinous sin.

Look at the progression of sin in Judah: In Genesis 37:11, he is envious. In Genesis 37:26-27, Judah is greedy. In Genesis 37:28-36, Judah lacks love for his parents. Finally in Genesis 38, Judah marries an unsaved woman from Canaan and then commits incest with his daughter-in-law, Tamar. This is where Judah slammed rock bottom and repented in 38:26. And because God is a God of grace, God brought good out of evil when Judah repented. In Genesis 38:29, the son born to Judah and Tamar was named Pharez. In Matthew 1:1-16, the genealogy of Jesus is recorded by Matthew which includes Judah and Pharez.

C. Genesis 39:1 begins with the contrast “And Joseph.”

5. How Did Joseph Succeed Where Judah Failed with the Same Type of Temptation?

Joseph practiced what later in the NT James would write in one verse and reduce into a two point formula for victory over temptation: James 4:7 “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

A. Evidence of Joseph submitting to God is in 39:2, 3, 5 and 23.

This section begins and ends saying “the Lord prospered Joseph.”

1. Prospering in the OT is connected to the Word of God as in Psalm 1:1-3 and Joshua 1:8

2. We submit by reading God's Word. Before the Word of God was written, God communicated through dreams and visions as with Joseph in Genesis 37. When Christ was tempted three in the wilderness, He rifled back God's Word three times

B. Joseph Resisted the Devil

1. Joseph Refused to Expose himself to Temptation. In Gen 39:8-10 Joseph refused "to be with her" (39:10).

a. Joseph practiced what Paul would later write in Romans 13:14 "Make not provision for the flesh in regard to its lust"

b. I guess chaperons is an old fashion idea in our permissive society. But it is still a good idea for young people and adults. Joseph was no super saint. He did not trust

himself so he built boundaries in his life so that later in life he had no regrets.

c. Proverbs 7:21-22 warns adults about exposing ourselves to temptation. Be careful hanging out at water coolers.

2. Joseph Fled from Temptation in Genesis 39:11-12.

a. Joseph had to physically remove himself

b. Again, Joseph was practicing what Paul would later write in 2 Tim 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts."

Illustration: Sometimes you have to grab your hat and run

Proverbs 5:8 "Remove your way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house."

If certain kinds of music and its lyrics weaken you to temptation then flee.

If certain TV programs bring before your eyes that which weakens you, the join Job with

the covenant he made in 31:1 "I made a covenant wit mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid."

If there is a certain person in your life who weakens you as a Christian because of his or her non-christian principles then flee that person.

Conclusion: Before Joseph could rule others as Prime Minister he had to rule his own passions. Through the Holy Spirit wrought self-control every Christian can face his own

temptation tailor made by Satan

The songwriter encouraged, *“Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin, each victory will help you some other to win, fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue. Look ever to Jesus He’ll carry you through. Ask the Savior to help you, comfort, strengthen and keep you. He is willing to aid you, he will carry you through”*