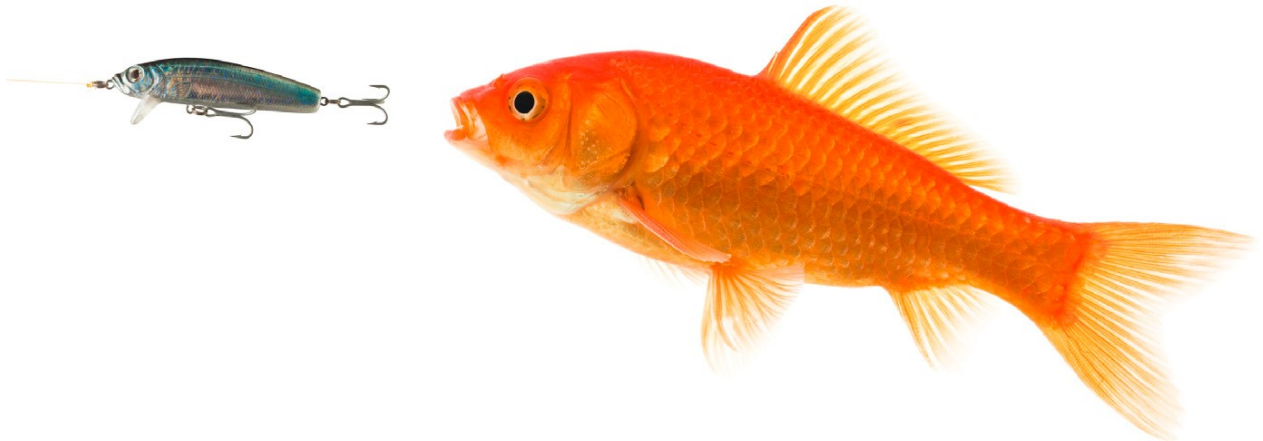


Temptation



Have you ever thought (hoped) that as you grow in your Christian life, temptations would disappear? That is not the case. Jesus suffered at times intensely from temptation, but never once did He sin. He overcame temptation by working with His Father!

Most Christians at times suffer from the following temptations; selfishness, greed, lust, love of money, hatred, envy, etc. What kinds of challenges have you faced in this area?

The Bible says very definitely that you may overcome every temptation if you want to and draw on God's grace to help you. Look up 1 Corinthians 10:13 and answer;

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Every person experiences temptation. | True/false |
| 2. | It's impossible to overcome temptation. | True/false |
| 3. | God will help me overcome temptation. | True/false |
| 4. | God will provide the way of escape. | True/false |
| 5. | God endures the temptation, not me. | True/false |

Very often temptations come when we least expect them. Sometimes they are particularly strong after a great spiritual experience, (e.g. the testing of Jesus after his baptism in Matthew 4:1-11). By knowing and applying the following principles you too will experience certain victory.

How to overcome temptation

1. Recognise the source of temptation.

Have you ever watched cricketers playing a game? The batter must face the bowler and not run from the ball! In the same way temptation should normally be faced and acknowledged. The source of temptation may vary.

Poor health. Elijah felt defeated because physically he was tired and exhausted. What did God do to refresh him? 1 Kings 19:4 onwards.

Sickness and tiredness once dealt with will help you immensely in overcoming temptation. Get enough sleep!

Natural desires. Sometimes our natural desires are evil and we have only ourselves to blame. What personally tempts you?

Reject them. Read Jeremiah 17:9 & 10

Satan and demons. He or they may be directly troubling us and need to be rejected. Whom did Satan use in tempting Jesus? See Matthew 16:23 .

James 4:7 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'

2. Exercise your faith.

'...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith' (1 John 5:

Faith is the confidence we have in God's ability to deal with the situation. When boarding a plane, for example, I have confidence in the plane and pilots to bring me to the desired destination. At times we have hit turbulence, but never once have they let me down. There will be

faith turbulence too when struggle against a sinful habit is so hard but perseverance will pay off when you set your intentions in a godly direction.
1 John 5:13-15.

3. Apply the word of God

The Bible can become a dead, cold collection of stories and sayings or else it can become alive and effective.

How is the Bible described in the following passage *Ephesians 6:17*?

David said, '*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*' *Psalms 119:11*

There were times in my Christian life when I learnt by rote various verses to do with temptation, but when I quoted the verses I often failed. It was discouraging. However I found it helpful to memorise verses relevant to the temptation and get them deeply into my heart. Jesus also applied this principle to the three temptations in *Matthew 4:4,7,10*.

Do this exercise by drawing a line to the relevant Bible verse:

Type of temptation	Verse to learn
Loneliness	Luke 11:4a
Fear	Luke 6:27
Pride	Ephesians 4:29a
Hatred	Luke 14:11
Unforgiveness	Hebrews 13:5b
Gossip	John 14:27

Faith is responding positively to the temptation by quoting Scripture. For example, if you have a problem with loneliness say, 'I thank you Lord that you have said that you will never leave me or forsake me' (Hebrews 13:5b). Put your faith behind the words.

4. Walk in the Spirit.

This really means to let God constantly control your life.

'So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature' (Galatians 5:16). Don't therefore read suggestive material, keep wrong company, or watch TV shows with twisted values as it will open you up to temptation. Verse 16 literally means 'walk in the Spirit and you will never EVER fulfil the lusts of the flesh'. God's Holy Spirit is given to you to be your helper.

How did Joseph avoid the temptation to lust? Genesis 39:6-12.

5. Praise God continually.

The last thing I naturally want to do in facing temptation is to praise God. But that I must! Faith is then released. Hebrews 13:15 mentions a 'sacrifice of praise' to God. Sometimes it takes a great effort (sacrifice) to praise God when the going is difficult, the same is true regarding thanksgiving. There is an old song that goes "count your blessings name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done".

Conclusion

When we fail, and we will at times, don't wallow in self pity or guilt. Mostly we change gradually, growth is a process. Making ourselves accountable to a mature friend about our area of temptation can be very helpful. Confess your failure to God and accept by faith His forgiveness. 'But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right; he will forgive our sins and purify us from all our wrong doing')1 John 1:9). Remember, freedom is yours.