

June 11, 2017

Temptation 101, James1:12-18

James' definitive teaching continues to spur believers on to an unwavering faith. This week's topic is temptation: who's responsible, who is not responsible, and the dangerous path it takes. We'll end where we began last week: Believing God's *absolute goodness* enables us to say "yes to joy in trials" and "no to temptation" so we may realize the good gifts He intends for us.

1. God is not responsible for temptation.

Whether God controls circumstances or may allow them – is not today's debate – but rather to understand that circumstances are NOT what tempts us. Trials and temptations, though dissimilar, are related, meaning what is a "perseverance-producing" trial for one is a "sin-producing" temptation for another. The difference is our response, which is from us not God.

2. We are responsible for temptation.

Temptation is irrelevant to God's nature. The enticement to sin comes from us. It comes from our own weaknesses to which a circumstance can appeal to. Given the same difficult situation, not everyone would respond (or be tempted to respond) in the exact same way. One may choose bitterness, the other gratitude.

3. Temptation is designed to harm us (leads us toward death).

James reminds us that yielding to temptation starts us down a road....that if we continue on it...has a final destination of death. What started small, continues to grow, consuming a lifestyle and character so we are no longer living for nor serving Christ. Don't be dragged down by temptation. Sin always wants to work toward death.

4. God gives better gifts.

God doesn't give us temptation...rather, he gives us good gifts. He is the Father of light with no shifting shadows. We've seen his goodness in the gift of his son Jesus, in the story of the gospel, and in the life that he has given to us through the word of Truth.

Do not be deceived, but seek to understand these things so you may better respond to temptation. We pursue or act on a temptation *only* because it *appeals to a weakness* within us. Yet we can stop the progression of sin by saying "no" when tempted and "yes" to believing God is good...all the time.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you blamed God for your temptations? Who else or what else have you blamed in temptation?
2. If God can't be tempted, how was Jesus tempted? (Hint: There was an attempt to tempt, but if there is no evil in God, there is nothing evil can appeal to within his nature).
3. Does seeing the path temptation leads to give you pause for how you may have viewed a temptation you willingly gave into? Explain.
4. Share a time when you said "no" to a temporary pleasure or happiness (a temptation) that led to increasing joy?

5. What practical steps can help us “take responsibility” for our temptations?