

*This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of sin and temptation.
Use the following outline and activity to lead a midweek event for your students.*

Essential Doctrine: Temptation and Sin

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet He never sinned, but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation (Matt. 26:41) that may lead us to sin, and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).



Scripture: Psalm 119:9; Proverbs 27:7; Hebrews 11:24-26; James 1:13-17; 4:1-6



Christ Connection: *Joseph was his father's beloved son who was betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery. Jesus is the Father's beloved Son who was betrayed by His own and died on the cross to rescue us from our sin.*

1 Temptation rises from distorted desire and doubt in God's faithfulness (Jas. 1:13-17; 4:1-6).

Desire is an appropriate thing when directed toward an appropriate object in an appropriate measure; temptation takes the breeze of desire and turns our hearts toward something other than God. James pointed out that temptation comes from our own hearts, not from God; temptation rears its head when we desire to take God's place (1:13-17). Temptation whispers to us that we will make ourselves happier than God will. But James reminds us that good gifts come from God, not from anyone or anything else (v. 17). Knowing God is the source of all delight cuts off the temptations, sin, and strife James described (4:1-6). Note that James ended by reminding us God provides good things (grace) to those who humbly look to Him, instead of themselves.

2 We fight temptation with the superior pleasures of God's promises (Ps. 119:9; Prov. 27:7; Heb. 11:24-26).

Proverbs 27:7 tells us that when you're hungry, you'll eat anything; but if you're full, even honey is unappealing. The best way to kill temptation is satisfaction in God. The best way to be satisfied in God is to know and rest in His magnificent promises (Ps. 119:9). Moses gave us a great example of someone who smothered the fire of temptation (Egypt's treasures) with the blanket of God's sweet promises (Heb. 11:24-26).

3 We also fight temptation best by preventing it and by fleeing it (Rom. 13:14; 2 Tim. 2:22).

Throw mulch over the garden of your life so no weeds of

temptation have opportunity to grow (Rom. 13:14). Set good boundaries. Stay away from certain places. Avoid certain people or websites. When temptation does rise, run from it (2 Tim. 2:22)! We rarely win when we step into the ring with temptation. When temptation starts (gossiping, lust, irritation), run away—even physically if necessary. Remove the wax of your flesh from the heat of temptation.

Opening Activity

You'll need crayons and various sources of heat. Maybe some matches, a lighter, a light bulb, a candle, or even the interior of a hot car or open sunlight. You'll also want some paper towels to catch dripping crayon wax.

Give the crayons and paper towels to the students. Show them your heat sources (lighters, matches, outside, etc.). Tell them their job is to melt crayons as many ways as possible. (*Note: If you don't want to actually melt crayons, you could just ask your students the different ways they could melt a crayon.*)

Once they've melted crayons (and, hopefully, cleaned up the wax), ask them what the common denominator was for melting crayons (heat). How much heat did it take? How close did the crayon have to get to the source of the heat?

Start drawing analogies to the lesson. Heat corresponds to our desires. Melting corresponds to sin. Does heat automatically mean melting? Not if the crayon is far enough away. Same with desire not turning into sin. How do we re-solidify the crayon wax? By removing heat. We resist sin in a similar way—by turning away from temptation.

This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of sin and temptation. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: Temptation and Sin

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet He never sinned, but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation (Matt. 26:41) that may lead us to sin, and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).

1 Temptation rises from distorted desire and doubt in God's faithfulness. (Jas. 1:13-17; 4:1-6)

Read James 1:13-17.

- *What is the source of temptation?*
- *What is the eventual outcome of sin (v. 15)?*
- *What does the death described in verse 15 look like, both ultimately (hell) and in this life?*

Answers may include: spiritual numbness, selfishness, inability to treasure Jesus, triviality and frivolity, and so on.

- *What did James suggest as a far better way to achieve satisfaction than sin (vv. 16-17)?*
- *How many good things come from God (v. 17)?*
- *Why do you think James emphasized God is Father (v. 17)?*
- *Why did James go out of his way to point out God never changes? How does God's unvarying, good Fatherhood help us in specific times of temptation?*
- *What are some specific instances of temptation where we can remember God the Father gives far better gifts than sin does?*

2 We fight temptation with the superior pleasures of God's promises. (Ps. 119:9; Prov. 27:7; Heb. 11:24-26)

Read Hebrews 11:24-26.

- *Why did Moses choose not to enjoy all the riches Egypt had to offer?*
- *To Moses, what was the superior pleasure? How is this an example for us?*
- *How do we find greater satisfaction in God?*

Read Psalm 119:9.

- *How does Psalm 119:9 encourage us to stay pure? What would be in the Word that would keep the young man from sin?*

Read Proverbs 27:7.

- *When would the honey of temptation not be appealing to us?*

- *When are we most susceptible to think the bitterness of sin is sweet? How can we keep ourselves "full" in God?*

3 We also fight temptation best by preventing it and by fleeing it. (Rom. 13:14; 2 Tim. 2:22)

Read Romans 13:14.

- *What did Paul mean when he said not to make plans to satisfy the flesh? How do we not allow temptation to have even a foothold?*
- *What are some common places we are prone to be tempted? Around whom are we easily tempted? In what circumstances are we easily tempted? How do we avoid these places, people, or circumstances?*

Read 2 Timothy 2:22.

- *According to this verse, how do we "fight" temptation? Why is the command in this verse kind of a reversal of what we think of as "fighting" temptation?*
- *In your experience, what happens the longer you wrestle with a temptation? As we continue to come up against a temptation, do we get stronger or weaker against it?*
- *What are some examples from the Bible, history, or life of people fleeing temptation?*

Joseph in Genesis 39 would be one example.

- *What are some real-life ways we need to flee temptation?*

WRAP IT UP

- *What is the difference between temptation and sin? What is the best way to "fight" sin?*
- *What are some specific temptations you will face this week, and how will you resist them?*