

Overcoming Temptations Study

by Paul Cook

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." James 1:12

Overcoming temptations is a skill that every follower of Christ will need to learn. It is fundamental to breaking sexual addiction (and any other addiction) and to successfully living for God. This study will:

- Explore how temptations work
- Reveal the mechanism behind temptations
- Explain biblical strategies for rejecting temptations
- Give practical examples of rejecting temptations

Recommended materials:

- Bible
- Writing journal or notebook

Here is are the main sections in the study:

- Definitions & Purposes of Temptation
- Mechanism of Temptation
- Temptation Response Actions
- Practical Examples of Rejecting Temptation
- Wrap-up

Definitions and Purposes of Temptation

It's important to first nail down some definitions of the words involved with temptation so that we have a clear understanding of the meanings. The definitions themselves reveal important facets of temptations that will help us combat them more effectively.

Tempt: (*Webster's*)

1. "To entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain"
2. "to make trial of : TEST"

Temptation: *pirasmos* ([#3986](#)) - the only Greek word used for temptation in the New Testament

- a. "an experiment, attempt, trial, proving"
- b. "the trial of man's fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy"
- c. "an enticement to sin"

Since temptation is "enticement to sin," we should also consider the words used for **sin**:

1. Hebrew *Chatta'ah* ([#02403](#)): "an offence, and its penalty, occasion, sacrifice or expiation" (*Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Lexicon*)
2. Hebrew *Chatta'* ([#02398](#)): "to sin, miss, miss the way, go wrong, incur guilt, forfeit, purify from uncleanness" (*Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Lexicon*)
3. Greek *Hamartano* ([#264](#)): "to be without a share in; to miss the mark; to err, be mistaken; to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honour, to do or go wrong; to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin" (*Thayer's and Smith's Bible Dictionary*)

Purposes of Temptation: With the above definitions in mind, we can now discuss the purposes of temptation.

1. Block our inheritance as sons of God by enslaving us to sin (Galatians 4:7): From the very beginning, Satan has been attempting to block and destroy our rightful inheritance as sons of God. This inheritance includes dominion over the world (Genesis 1:26-28) and a personal relationship with God. When Satan enticed Adam and Eve to disobey God, Adam

forfeited mankind's dominion over the world to Satan (John 12:31; John 14:30; 1 John 5:19) and was separated from God because of his sin.

Jesus Christ restored peace between God and humanity through his death on the cross and won back man's right to rule over the world. Those who place faith in Jesus can now move forward in taking dominion over the world and subduing it for God's kingdom. Satan resists the execution of man's rightful dominion through Christ and he does everything in his power to thwart man through temptation into sin. Satan aims to keep people enslaved to sin (Romans 6:16) and unable to subdue the world as God intended.

Temptations appeal to our primary sin tendencies of lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). Since he cannot force us to sin, Satan tries to persuade us to sin through clever lies, tailor-made for our specific weaknesses. For example, Satan appealed to Eve's desire for wisdom with the notion that she could be like God if she ate the fruit. Her desire for wisdom and the attractive appearance of the fruit was the winning combination that enticed her to sin (Genesis 3:6).

Following the temptations of our sinful nature will prevent us from enjoying the fruits of our inheritance as sons of God. The Holy Spirit grows these fruits in us and they include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV). Our sin thwarts the growth of such fruits because it directly opposes the Holy Spirit's work in us. Paul wrote, *"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want"* (Galatians 5:16-17 NIV).

Following the sinful nature not only opposes the Holy Spirit, but also it prevents us from being able to please God. Paul explained this in Romans 8:5-8 NIV: *"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of the sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."* With our minds hostile to God, we will not move into our role as sons of God in Christ.

2. Lead us to entertain evil thoughts with our minds: Once we entertain an evil thought, we engage the power of our imaginations and create sin. Our imaginations are powerful tools that God has uniquely gifted us with. Made in God's likeness, our imaginations are scaled down versions of God's imagination. God imagined creation and then spoke it into existence. Likewise, we too can create realities in our imaginations.

When based on evil thoughts, our imaginations are against God. For example, pornography is often the visual bait that Satan uses to get people to fantasize about having sex. Once we're entertaining the thoughts of adultery or fornication, or any other sexual sin, we're essentially committing the sin. Jesus identified this principle of "thought sin" in Matthew 5:28 NIV: **"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** This isn't just limited to adulterous thoughts. For example, Jesus explained that hating another person is basically the same as murdering him ([Matthew 5:21-22](#)). Even Lucifer's sin began in his thoughts ([Isaiah 14:13-14](#), [Ezekiel 28:15-17](#)).

3. To test our faith: Though God does not send temptation to us (James 1:13), he may allow us to be tempted for a period of time to test the sincerity of our faith. Here are some verses that mention this:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:2-4 NKJV

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 1:6-7 NIV

God will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. Paul wrote, **"God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it"** (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV).

Jesus explained in Luke 8:13 that some people who hear God's word will fall away during temptation because they have no "root." When our faith

is not grounded in the truth of God's word, it will be weak like plants without roots. A key to defeating temptation which will be discussed later in the study is strong faith in the truth (i.e. God's word). If we stand fast in our faith and overcome the temptations, we will bring praise, glory and honor to God. We'll also be "perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4 NKJV).

Personal application and review questions:

- In your own words, what are two definitions of temptation?
- One of the definitions of the Hebrew word for sin, *Chatta'*, is "to forfeit." When we sin, what are we forfeiting?
- In your life what would it mean to subdue the world for God's kingdom?
- What are two purposes of temptation?

Mechanism of Temptation

It is important to understand the mechanism behind temptation so that we can recognize it and take action against it. James 1:12-15 NIV gives us the key details:

¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:12-15 NIV

From this passage, we can identify 4 stages of the temptation process, which we'll examine below.

Stage 1: Drag away and entice

Ironically, our own evil desire drags us away and entices us ("drawn away, enticed and baited" James 1:14 AMP). Often these evil desires can be the actual sources of the temptations we face (Matthew 15:18-19). Consider this example concerning the love of money from 1 Timothy 6:9-10 NIV:

⁹People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Note how the "foolish and harmful" desires led the people away from the faith and plunged them into ruin, destruction and many griefs.

In addition to the evil desires within us, the devil and his servants may also be sources of temptation. Paul explained that these forces are real and primarily spiritual: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). These forces are skilled at introducing tempting thoughts to us that appeal to our natural and/or evil desires. Since they can't make us sin, they hope

to arouse our evil desires enough so that we'll pursue the temptation and sin.

The Bible gives several accounts of Satan tempting people with things that appealed to their desires. For example, Satan tempted Jesus with things like food and power (Luke 4:5-6). Though Jesus was without sin, he still had natural human desires that Satan could appeal to. In Acts 5:3, Satan appealed to Ananias and Sapphira's greed by "filling" their hearts with the idea to lie to Holy Spirit and keep back some of the offering money. Other examples of temptation include [Genesis 3:1-6](#), [Matthew 4:1, 1 Corinthians 7:5](#), [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#), [1 Kings 22:20-22](#), [2 Chronicles 18:20-21](#), and [Proverbs 7:21](#).

Stage 2: Conception. James mentions that our evil desire is capable of conceiving. The Greek word used there for conceive is *Sullambano* ([Strong's #4815](#)), which means "to clasp, i.e. seize (arrest, capture); specially, to conceive (literally or figuratively); by implication, to aid:-- catch, conceive, help, take." Applying these definitions, conception occurs when our evil desires clasp or seize our minds in order to engage a temptation. It is the point when we open the door of our mind to the temptation instead of rejecting it; when we give the temptation a place in our heart instead of treating it like an enemy. Conception can happen as quick as within a few seconds of the temptation.

Stage 3: Sin is Born. After our evil desires conceive, they birth sinful thoughts and/or actions. Usually [sin](#) occurs in our thoughts before we act it out physically. "Thought sin" occurs when we respond to a temptation by using our imaginations to dwell on, embellish or fantasize about doing the act. For example, sexual sin occurs when we respond to the temptation by using our imaginations to speculate about sexual activity based on the temptation source (ex what it would be like, what it would feel like, etc.). This is why Paul stated that our responsibility as Christians includes "**Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ**" (2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV).

Stage 4: Death. Our sin always causes something to die, whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual. God's word tells us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). It is inescapable, yet people continue to believe the lies that the consequences of their sin won't be that bad. For example, back in Eden, Satan told Eve that she wouldn't actually die like God said

and that the forbidden fruit would actually help her be more like God. When Eve sinned, her innocence died, her marital harmony died, her relationship with God died and her peace died (Genesis 3:12-16). Likewise, Satan and his forces of evil continue to downplay the death that will occur in our lives if we sin.

Personal application and review questions:

- What are the four stages of the temptation according to James 1:12-15?
- What are the possible sources of temptations?
- What drags us away and entices us?
- Can Satan or his servants make us sin?
- What happens when our sinful desires take root or conceive in our minds?
- What is always a result of sin in one way or another?

Temptation Response Actions

Once we understand the [purposes](#) of temptation and the [mechanism](#) behind it, we now have the challenge and obligation of rejecting every temptation that comes our way. This is much easier said than done! Our [mindset](#) going in will make all the difference in our success in rejecting the temptation.

Our mindset must be one as a son of God*. Regardless of our earthly gender, we are spiritual sons of God in Christ and are no longer slaves to sin. Paul wrote, "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir" (Galatians 4:7 NIV). Jesus was the "firstborn" Son of God (Colossians 1:14-16) and we are the adopted sons who share in his inheritance (Romans 8:14-17).

Part of our inheritance in Christ is dominion over sin. Temptation is an opportunity to forfeit this dominion and re-enslave ourselves to evil desires. Just as God told Cain to resist sin, so we too have the opportunity to resist sin: "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7 NIV). If we let it, sin will rule over us and enslave us to our own evil desires (Psalm 19:3; Romans 6:12-14).

Temptation Response Actions (TRA's): God has given us several immediate actions we can take whenever we are facing temptation. For clarity, I've organized the actions by spirit, body and mind, since temptations appeal to one or more of these areas. If we're able to take at least some of these actions when tempted, we'll increase the likelihood of victory over the temptation. The goal is to initiate these TRA's during [stage 1](#) of the temptation, so that evil desire (in [stage 2](#)) is not able to take root.

1. Spirit: The first thing we can do when faced with a temptation is to **pray for help**. Though we may not feel like turning to God, our prayers will open the door for God's power to strengthen us. Jesus told his disciples, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matthew 26:41 NIV). Our bodies are weak because of the sin nature we inherited from Adam, but we have Jesus as a willing source of help for overcoming temptation. Hebrews 2:18 NIV states, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Jesus was tempted in every way,

yet did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). He knows how to rescue us and help us overcome temptation (2 Peter 2:9). Our prayer for help need not be elaborate. It can be simple and to the point. For example, we can pray, "Jesus help me," or just "Help!"

2. Body: The bodily actions help us sever contact with the temptation source (if it is external). The goal is to get ourselves out of the "hot zone" of the temptation. The bodily actions are also ways of honoring God with our bodies (Romans 12:1). Our bodies, as temples of God's Spirit, are to be used exclusively as instruments of righteousness (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). Paul wrote, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness" (Romans 6:13 NIV).

Flee: The best course of action will be to flee the temptation if we are able. We don't want to hang around and see if we can withstand it if flight is an option. Consider how Joseph fled the house when he was cornered by Potiphar's wife in [Genesis 39:6-13](#). He didn't hesitate to run the moment she propositioned him for sex. Paul instructed Timothy along similar lines concerning lust in general: "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). We can also note here that our choices of the friends and the places we go can greatly help or hinder our ability to prevail over temptations.

Look for the way out: If we are unable to flee the temptation outright, we can look for the way out of it. God promises that he will provide a way out of the temptation for us: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV).

Control our body: Finally, we can exercise our power to control our bodies. If we've been allowing sinful desires to rule us, we may have forgotten that we still retain the power to choose our actions. For example, we can turn our [eyes](#) away from the temptation, cover our eyes, cover our ears, shut off the temptation source, etc. Isaiah wrote, "He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions, Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from seeing evil: He

will dwell on high; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; Bread will be given him, His water will be sure." (Isaiah 33:15-16 NKJV).

3. Mind: Perhaps the most important area of our temptation response is what we do with our thoughts. The mind is our strategic command center in the battle against sin. We can be successful in the body and spirit actions, yet completely lose the battle in the mind.

If we've been habitually practicing sin, our minds may be completely overrun with the sinful thoughts associated with our habit. If we're in that situation, there is hope for recovering a sound mind. The Holy Spirit will help us do this: "**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind**" (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV). Here are some simple steps to foster the return of a sound mind in Christ:

Pray: First we'll need to confess and repent of any habitual sin we've been practicing. We can then ask for cleansing of our conscience from the dead works of sin (Hebrews 9:14), and for renewed sensitivity to sin. Finally, we can ask the Lord to reunite our hearts to fear him and walk in authentic repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). Here is an example prayer to this end:

"Heavenly Father, I thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sins. I believe in Jesus and place my faith in him today. I confess that I've practiced sin in the following ways: _____ (list as the Holy Spirit brings the sin to mind). I turn away from those sins now and commit to living for you. Please cleanse my conscience from that sin with the blood of Jesus and renew my sensitivity to the ugliness of sin. Please unite my heart to fear you and to walk in true repentance. I receive your Holy Spirit afresh. Please restore in me a sound mind and a steadfast spirit. Thank you, Lord! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Meet with God daily: Practice meeting with God each day for a [quiet time](#), taking time to worship, pray and study the word. These actions help detoxify our minds from the evil things we've loaded into them.

(For more in-depth work on breaking sexual addictions, see our [Freedom Journey I](#) and [Freedom from Masturbation](#) courses)

With those steps in mind we can execute the TRA's for the mind, which are based on 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 KJV:

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”

God has given us the authority and power to take evil thoughts captive and destroy them. A simple battle plan for doing this is:

1. Recognize the lies behind the temptation
2. Take control of the thought and cast it aside
3. Redirect our mind to a pure topic

Recognition: Our daily quiet time will help sharpen our "lie-recognition skills." This special time of learning God's word and meditating on it will help us better recognize the devil's counterfeits and the lies behind them. We do this in partnership with the Holy Spirit who will remind us of the truth and counsel us on what to do (John 14:16,26).

Recognition of the lies can come in a variety of ways. The goal is to simply know what is a lie the instant we hear or see it. That ability comes with time after we've been faithfully feeding our minds on the word and spending time with God. The Holy Spirit will often step in and help us discern the nature of a thought. I've heard the Holy Spirit compared to a baseball umpire. Just as the umpire declares a ball a "strike" or a "ball," so the Holy Spirit may declare the nature of a thought as it comes into our mind. The Spirit may say something like "That's a lie!," or "Danger, steer clear!," or "That's true." Another possibility is that the Spirit may simply remind us of a scripture that bears application to the thought at hand. For example, as Joe's beautiful wife walks into church in a stunning red dress, Joe's friend, Jim may be reminded of Matthew 5:28, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (NIV).

Taking control of the thought: Once we recognize the temptation, we then have the opportunity take control of the thought by not allowing our minds to dwell it or construct fantasies around it. Since our minds can generate evil thoughts in response to a temptation in less than a second, our thought-control actions need to be immediate. Here are some ways to do this:

- Treat the tempting thought as an enemy and give it no mercy. Do not shelter it, protect it or toy with it. This often will go directly against what our flesh wants to do with the thought. The prospect of entertaining an evil thought may "feel" good to us, and that is precisely when we must force ourselves to say "No!" to our flesh.
- Correct the lies with the truth: The truth of God's word destroys the power of temptations and the lies behind them. We can take the same truth that helped us recognize the temptation and apply it as the correction to the tempting thoughts. This is one of the ways of using the "Sword of the Spirit", and is how Jesus defeated the devil in the wilderness temptations (Luke 4).
- Jettison the thought from our minds, just like we would with a rattlesnake we found in our car. The idea is to get the thought out our minds so that we prevent our own evil desires from engaging the thought, dragging us away and enticing us to sin (James 1:15).

The dangers of not taking control of evil thoughts are that sin will be conceived ([stage 2](#)) and that our evil desires will take control of our thoughts.

Redirect thoughts: Redirecting our thoughts to pure topics helps ensure that we keep moving past the temptation and minimize the possibility of letting it back into our minds. The Bible gives us a variety of things we can shift our thoughts to:

- Things above: Colossians 3:1-2 instructs us to focus our minds on "things above." This is a broad category that gives us flexibility to do whatever works best for us. Examples include: thinking about Jesus being crucified on the cross; picturing God sitting on the throne in heaven in all his glory; mentally reciting scriptures that pertain to the temptation at hand.
- Jesus: Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 3:1-2; Colossians 3:1-2). He set the example for us to follow in resisting temptation even to the point of death (Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:15-16). We can look to him for "online help" during temptation at any moment (Hebrews 7:25). Some example ways to do this include picturing Jesus in our mind, praying to Jesus, and recalling scenes from Jesus' life when he defeated temptation (ex. Luke 4, Matthew 16:22-24, John 6:15, Luke 9:53-55).
- Pure topics: Philippians 4:8 gives us some ideas about pure topics: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,

whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (KJV). Paul allowed room for creativity here, so feel free to choose something in those categories that works for you. For example, the topic that I've found very effective is the blood of Jesus. What could be more pure than that? Whenever I am tempted with a lustful image or evil thought, I imagine a scene with Jesus on the cross with his blood being shed for me. At the same time, I repeat "the [blood of Jesus](#) cleanses and protects my thoughts" either audibly or in my mind. This may sound morbid, but it is quite appropriate since Jesus was the sacrifice that atoned for my sins.

Like any warfare skill, these "thought control" actions take time and practice to master. The Holy Spirit is always with us to train us and teach us how to bring our thoughts into obedience to Christ. I've found that temptations tend to follow a wave-like pattern. Initially they seem very strong, yet weaken as we resist and reject them. If a temptation seems unbearable, we can take courage that in time it will subside and cease if we stand our ground in faith. If we stumble in sin at any time, we should make a quick return to the Lord and not give up in our walk with him. Practice leads to perfection.

Summary: It may be helpful to jot the summary actions down on a 3 x 5 note card and keep it handy for periodic review:

Temptation Response Actions

1. *Pray for God to help us*
2. *Flee the temptation*
3. *Look for the way out of the temptation*
4. *Control our bodies (especially eyes) and honor God*
5. *Recognize the lies behind the temptation*
6. *Take control of the thought and apply the truth*
7. *Redirect our thoughts to pure topics*

Personal application and review questions:

- Considering Proverbs 23:7 AMP ("For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."), how does our mindset affect our ability to fight temptations?
- In what ways have you allowed sin to gain control over you?
- What are two bodily actions you can take when you are tempted?

- What is one spiritual action you can take when you are tempted?
- What should you do if you fail and fall to a temptation? ([Luke 18:1](#), [Philippians 3:12-15](#), [Revelation 3:19-20](#))

Examples of Fighting Temptation

These examples are intended to illustrate how the Temptation Response Actions could be employed in everyday situations. These are intended to be as realistic as possible without being a temptation source in themselves. If you find yourself being tempted by our examples, please skip this page and go to the course wrap-up.

Law Firm Lady

Setting: Bob is a senior partner at the *Smith & Salmon* law firm. He works with an attractive paralegal, Julie, who is single and in her early twenties. Bob's wife is pregnant with their third child. He is working with Julie on a critical project today that requires frequent interaction with her.

Temptation: As Bob greets Julie that morning, he notices she looks particularly attractive. She smiles as their eyes meet. Out of the corner of his eye he has that 6th sense that Julie's shirt may be open down one button to far. He feels the draw of his flesh to look down her shirt.

Action: Bob also feels the conviction of the Holy Spirit as he is tempted to look at Julie. His conscience tells him, "You're happily married, Bob. Remember your wife and kids. Keep your eyes out of trouble and keep moving." Instead of stopping for a chat with Julie by the coffee station, he decides to say a quick hello and keep moving down the hall toward his office. He doesn't take the second look at Julie. For the rest of the day, Bob takes the precaution of leaving the office door open when he has to talk with Julie about the project.

Chatroom Charlie:

Setting: As a single mom, Sally is usually so busy with work and the kids that she barely has energy and time for anything else. She often feels alone and trapped and longs for companionship and escape. She recently discovered a Christian internet chatroom that helped her feel less isolated. She figured it could even be a way that God might bring a good man into her life. Tonight Sally is feeling lonely. It's been a hard work week and the kids have finally gone to sleep. She decides to visit her favorite Christian chat room to see if anything interesting is going on before going to bed. Shortly after logging in, she strikes up a conversation with "Charlie15," who is apparently married to an overly controlling woman.

Temptation: Charlie seems to be a very caring man who apparently made a poor marriage choice. He seems to genuinely be interested in Sally and she feels sorry for him. Before she realizes it, their e-conversation lasts over an hour. Sally is really drawn to Charlie and seems to share similar interests with him. When Charlie discovers that they are living in the same city, he invites Sally to meet him for coffee.

Action: A few warning flags went up in Sally's mind when Charlie mentioned his marital problems, but it felt so good to have someone paying her attention that she kept chatting with Charlie. Even so, as she continued to converse with him, that feeling in her gut that something wasn't right continued. When he suggested that they meet, she knew that this was the moment of decision. She told herself, "This is how marriages are torn apart. To meet with him would be setting up an affair. That's adultery and I won't do that." Sally declines the offer and politely exits the chatroom without giving Charlie her email address or phone number.

Needy Neighbor

Setting: Luke's next door neighbor, Natalie, is a recent divorcee. Luke is married and has two children. Being a good Christian neighbor that he is, Luke offers to help Natalie with any house repairs that come up. One Saturday afternoon, while Luke's wife and kids are at a soccer game, Natalie calls for help with a leaky faucet.

Temptation: "Can you come over *now*?" asks Natalie. Instantly, Luke is aware of the potential compromising situation. Natalie is an attractive woman and has always been very friendly to him. "Lord, please help me," Luke prays silently, as he searches for the answer to give her. The story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife flashes before Luke's thoughts. The red danger lights seem to be going off in his conscience.

Action: For a moment, the idea of being alone with Natalie in the master bathroom is quite enticing, but just then a way out seemed to flash into his mind..."Ah...Natalie, if the faucet can wait a few hours, I'd like to wait until Mary gets back with the kids, so I can bring my son John with me. He's been wanting to help me with those fix-it jobs and I'm sure he'd be helpful with this one."

Spring Break Girls

Setting: Steve is headed home early from work on a Friday afternoon. It's been a great week for Steve, as he has achieved the top sales month for the first time at *HeadhuntersRus, Inc.* It's a beautiful April day in Florida.

Temptation: As Steve gets on the highway, he notices a carload of college girls in a convertible just ahead returning from the beach. From about a half a mile, he can see flowing hair and bikini tops. In the past, it would have been a no-brainer to speed up for a closer look and maybe impress them with his brand new Porsche. In his mid 40's and at the top of his game at work, it's tempting to try to return to his younger days, when he dated plenty of pretty girls that looked good in bikinis.

Action: Steve reminds himself that any one of those girls could be his daughter. How would he feel if some guy was checking out his daughter? "The truth is, those girls are God's daughters," Steve thought. He then remembers the covenant that Job had made with his eyes where he would not lust. Steve, too, had made a similar commitment to God, praying that he would not use his eyes for sin. His first step is to set the cruise control at the speed limit (the Lord had been teaching him driving the speed limit also). As the girls pull away ahead and as other cars zoom past him, he remembers that he hadn't even thanked God for the successful month he had. He prays, "Lord, please forgive me for even thinking about lusting over those girls. I reaffirm my commitment to honor you with my eyes and thoughts. Thank you, Lord, for the best month I've ever had at work! I praise and worship you now." Steve pops in a praise CD and sings the rest of the way home.

Checking-Out at the Supermarket

Setting: John is a single who is adjusting to post-college life and starting his career. John is committed to waiting for the right girl to marry. In college, he dated many girls, and unfortunately compromised sexually with several of them. During his senior year, he got hooked up with some Christian guys on campus who helped him re-establish boundaries for purity and start walking with Jesus daily. John has found that living as a single can be lonely, especially since he's not yet found a church singles group to hook up with.

Temptation: For some reason, every time John goes to the corner supermarket, it seems like all the pretty ladies in town are shopping when he's there. Ever since he committed to sexual purity, it seemed like his attraction to women in general has increased. The lusty magazine covers

in the checkout aisles and the pretty girls who work the cash registers are recurring temptations for John whenever he shops. On this particular day as John is headed to checkout, he notices two registers open – one tended by Krystal, an attractive college-age girl who looks to be slightly on the wild side, and the other tended by Mary, a fifty-something, slightly overweight woman. John instantly feels drawn to guide his cart to Krystal and maybe have a friendly chat with her as he checks out. About the same time, he recognizes the familiar flash of skin from the magazine covers near the registers.

Action: John feels the “tugging” of the Holy Spirit on him for the split second that he contemplates where to steer his cart. He knows that something lustful happens when he looks into the eyes of beautiful women, especially those who look risqué. He gets lost in those eyes somehow. While it may not exactly be fantasizing, he knows that it’s probably not a good thing to be doing. He remembers the words for 1 Corinthians 10:13 – that God will provide a way out of a temptation so that we can stand up under it. John recognizes that sweet Mary is his way out, and obediently turns his cart to Mary’s aisle. Once in the aisle, John remembers his memory verse from Romans 6:19 which says to offer our bodies as instruments of righteousness and not for sin. Instead of looking at the magazine rack, John fixes his eyes on the wall behind the cash registers. He thanks God silently for the way out of the temptations and even prays for Mary, whatever her situation in life may be. He then heads home.

[\(More Temptation Scenarios\)](#)

Wrap-up

I hope that this study has helped you understand how temptations work and how to overcome them. We encourage you to take our other courses as the Lord leads you (see [online courses](#)).