



Overcoming Temptation.

One of the areas that many people struggle with even as mature Christians is in the area of temptation and sin. Whatever anyone says to you there are no simple solutions or answers to the question of overcoming temptation in real life. However there are a number of things that we can do that can lead us down a pathway of victory when it comes to temptation. We follow a Saviour who always overcame temptation and had the victory. As disciples who follow in His footsteps, learning to apply the victory He has already won is one of those key disciplines that we have to learn and live by as a Christian. Make no mistake, it takes commitment, discipline and a willingness to put Jesus first before our own needs. But if we persevere we will see the Holy Spirit and Jesus transform our lives.

Discuss - (In group / or small groups)

Q1) What do you think are the main temptations that people in our society are subject to?

Q2) How do you think giving into temptation affects us?

Q3) Do you think there is a formula for overcoming temptation? If so what?

Fact 1 - All of us will be regularly Tempted.

Temptation in and of itself is not a sin. Scripture declares that all of God's people will be tempted at times in their lives. In fact one of the truths within Scripture is that Jesus Himself was tempted and yet was without sin. As Christians who live in the real world we WILL be tempted by the fallen world we live in. At certain points of weakness in our lives, the world, demons, and internal desires will tempt us to step outside of God's hedge of protection and step into sin. A temptation is actually an opportunity to show God how much we love Him. If we are tempted and yet because of our desire to honour and please God, do not give into it, then what we are declaring is that our Love for Jesus is more important than our desire for pleasure or sin.

Matthew 4 v 1 – 11 _____ Hebrews 4 v 14 – 16 _____

Fact 2 – The root of temptation lies within us and is stimulated by the outside world.

One of the important ways that we learn to stand against temptation is by knowing ourselves and our weaknesses well. Everyone of us has areas of our lives, particular to us, that are our places of weakness that will be tempted. As we grow up, our character and behaviour is shaped by both positive and negative experiences. As a result of this, urges, desires, character flaws are created that leave us more prone in certain areas to doing wrong. This leaves us with a real vulnerability to be regularly tempted at points of weakness by the world and demons. Scripture makes it clear that if we give into temptation then it is because we have chosen to use our freedom of will in that way. One of the ways we can begin to stand against temptation is by being honest with ourselves and recognising the desires, urges and character flaws within us that make us weak in particular areas.

James 1 v 12 – 18 _____

Fact 3 – To overcome temptation we must cut out it's root.

It is a simple fact that for most temptations to be realised and sin to occur, there needs to be some external stimuli. It is this stimuli that develops the urge – that engages the mind and sinful thoughts – that leads to sinful action. One of the ways that we can stand against temptation is to cut out at the root, the stimuli, that would encourage us to think about sinning in that particular area. In Matthew 5 v 29 – 30 Jesus talks about plucking out eyes and cutting off hands because of sin. What he is not doing here is encouraging us to bodily mutilation – but is saying that sin is serious and we must be aggressive in cutting out anything that will cause us to get into habits of sinning. In other words he is saying do not put yourself in a place where you will be tempted at your points of weakness, Matthew 5 v 27 – 30 _____

Fact 4– Walk close with the Lord - Overcome temptation and sin.

The real key to victory over sin is simply to stay close to God in worship, prayer and His Word. Intimacy with God develops within us a sensitive understanding of, what is sin and how God feels about it. As our love and desires for God grows we find that more and more we do not want to sin, because we know that sin displeases God and our desire is to bring pleasure to Him.

Fact 5 – We have a Choice :- To justify or Give Up Sin!

One of the problems we have as Christians is that we are incredibly good at justifying our sinful desires and habits. The reason for this is that deep down we want to please God and know that sin and sinful habits are wrong. If then the desire of our hearts is to carry on doing something sinful, then we can often work harder to justify it to ourselves and prove that it makes no difference to our faith. Scripture declares to us that our heart is a deceiving organ that can lead us off the narrow path of righteousness that Jesus has established. For any change to take place in our lives and victory to be won over temptation, there is an absolute need for us to recognise our points of weakness. We need to admit to ourselves that sin is sin and even though it feels good, it is not fitting for God's people to play around with temptation. The process of resisting the devil and the internal weakness that are points of temptation, can only happen if we are honest and admit our sins to God.

