

## Lesson 17: Temptations and Trials (part 2)

Objective: The student will explore how temptations and trials affect our efforts to live in a healthy manner.

Sam was sharing with the training group: “Adam and Eve literally hid from God; David tried to hide the evidence by having Bathsheba have sex with her husband.

Temptations involve hiding, running, and escaping. These actions usually occur at the end of temptation’s path. James says that temptations come from our evil desires, desires contrary to what the Lord desires for our life. He shows the path of temptation. Something external connects with our internal evil desires, and we are enticed or carried away. With Adam and Eve, it was forbidden fruit, with David it was the sight of Bathsheba bathing. When time is given to this connection, sin occurs, and as that sin is allowed to grow, it leads to destruction and death. Sometimes this destruction is physical death, but death can happen in many ways. The death of hope; a loving relationship; a ministry; a witness to a non-believer are a few examples of death other than physical death.”

Amy was doing a short teaching on temptations. She and the team had shared the results of their temptations and now were looking together at the path and characteristics of temptations and trials. They hoped to learn from scripture how they could effectively deal with their own temptations and trials.

She continued, “Jesus shows us how to deal with temptations. He too was tempted, but He effectively dealt with the temptation. Let’s study what he did.”

The team then read in the gospels about Jesus’ temptations by Satan. The quick discovery from the team was Jesus’ use of scripture. They realized that the scripture He used was not random but connected to the temptation, indicating that a knowledge of scripture was important in preparing for the temptations of life, and wisdom was needed to determine what scripture would be most effective. They next focused on Jesus’ relationship with the Father. They saw that it was fresh. He had just finished 40 days of fasting. Although his body was in need of food, His spirit was well fed. They discussed times in their life when they had felt spiritually full and how it tended to minimize the desires of the flesh. Their third observation was that once Jesus confronted the temptation with scripture and the resolve of a sure spirit, Satan moved on to something else. The positive part of this was that the power of a temptation is limited. Sue recited **1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.** The warning of this observation is that when Jesus successfully dealt with one area, Satan moved on to another area of His life. The last observation was seen after the third temptation: Jesus commanded Satan to leave, and He left. In Jesus’ power and name, Satan can be told to leave. Fran pointed out that this occurred when Jesus had been closely connected to the Father.

Amy then shared an illustration about the 'courtyard of life.' "Outside, the sounds were loud and people busied themselves with the work of the day, but in the courtyard, there was peace. The sun would shine down through the trees onto areas of grass, flowers, and small garden plots. Within the courtyard there were stone seats where a person could rest and contemplate or converse with a neighbor. Although the outside bustled with activity, loud and confusing, inside there existed the peace, rich and vibrant. This was made possible by the existence of high and imposing walls topped with pieces of glass. Nothing tried to scale the walls, and the peace within was kept safe. There did exist in one portion of the wall a doorway, and although it contained a solid locked door, it would open to those who had a key. They were granted passage from the hectic into the peace. This was not always true. Before the walls, the ground was downtrodden. Chaos easily invaded the area, and there was little peace. Even now there were times when someone was admitted through the door who cared little for peace and would tramp it down. A guard was placed at the doorway to make sure those who entered would respect the peace of the interior. Life thrived in the courtyard and many marveled at its beauty."

"We all need a courtyard for our life; a place that is safe, where truth can live, and where lies remain outside." Amy continued to share how the story applied to life. "Sometimes, however, lies are brought in. The door has been opened or someone we trusted brought it in: a family member, a friend, a teacher, our culture. It becomes like a weed in our garden, and if we don't remove it, it will spread throughout the garden and choke off the other plants. Sometimes the weed started with us at such an early age we didn't know it was a weed. Sometimes we are taught that the weed is good for us; years later we learn that it wasn't good and has been harming us all along.

"When I was a little girl, I was always trying to get my parents' approval. I studied hard in school for their approval, but it seemed I couldn't do well enough as they didn't share approving words with me but instead asked me why I didn't do better. I can still hear their voices and see their disapproval. It was a weed planted when I was very young and developed a strong root system. I worked hard in school but not for knowledge or for my future. I worked hard to satisfy my longing for approval. Later, after I accepted Christ, my parents were partially replaced by my leaders. I sought their approval by memorizing scripture and helping with things to support their work. Sometimes I felt approved, but many times I felt lacking. One day God began to reveal to me how I was seeking people's approval rather than His. I began to study my behaviors and saw that many of them were focused on people's approval. I loved the Lord, but I also had the weed of approval in my life. I began to ask Him how I could

change. I shared this with a trusted sister, and she began to pray with me to help me make some changes. She was the person who shared with me the story of the courtyard, so I began to build up walls by stopping the activities that were most centered on gaining approval.

At first this was difficult because many people had come to rely on my work. But soon other workers began to fill in the areas I left. I focused more of my energy on my relationship with God. He showed me that He valued me, and that I didn't need to prove myself to Him. **Ephesians 2:8, 9: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.** This became one of my focus verses to deal with the weed in my courtyard along with **Jeremiah 29:11: For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.** I was seeking Him but with only part of my heart. The other part was choked with the weeds of seeking people's approval. With time I began to feel satisfied and grew in joy. I increased my activities with my fellowship, but now it was no longer motivated by a hunger for approval. I still struggle in this area and have to maintain boundaries, but I have experienced God's grace and love, and it encourages me to work hard at keeping the door to our relationship open. Often I start out my prayers thanking Him and asking Him to be the desire of my heart. I still struggle when I go home. I so want a close relationship with my parents, yet they still communicate dissatisfaction with the choices in my life. They are confused as to why I am here. They think I am wasting this time in my life. I have to work hard to maintain my wall to keep their words out of my courtyard. Even though I struggle with the changes of being in this country, He has assured my heart that He wants me here."

After this time of study, Amy suggested as a group they search for key verses that may be helpful for each of their temptations. She encouraged them to look for verses that would either be a wall or door, strengthening the wall around the person's courtyard or providing an opening to help and encouragement. During their last break, Amy had written out in brief format each of the temptations that the team members had reported.

*Sue: Language study – Temptations to quit, escape boredom, do what she wanted rather than what she needed; Trial – humble herself to God's task.*

*Lily: Relationship with Chinese man –Temptations to pursue the relationship, conceal it from her sisters; Trial – God's grace to be sufficient for her loneliness.*

*Fran: Anger toward unfair treatment to women: Temptations – Yell at men who mistreated women, feed her emotions with energy and thoughts, judge men she didn't know; Trial – to grow in her love, compassion and forgiveness.*

Amy asked for a volunteer to be first. Sue agreed to be first, and Amy prayed a prayer of blessing for Sue and that the whole team would learn and grow through this time. After the prayer, Lily shared with Sue that she was good at language learning and gave an example. Amy gently confronted Lily, sharing that it is natural for us to protect and encourage our sister, but we need to make sure we are not strengthening the weed with our encouragement. Let us focus on scripture that will empower Sue in battling her temptations. After a few minutes, Fran shared that she had a verse, but that it focused on her relationship with Sue. It was **Hebrews 10:24, 25: and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.** Fran stated that she would like to help Sue with her language learning and that Sue could help her with learning the culture. She shared that for her, learning language was not as difficult as understanding the culture. Together they could both be strengthened in their weak areas. Lily then shared about Christ' humility in Philippians 2:1-11 and how it must have been tedious and boring to be in human form, but through humility He was able to complete the task set before him. Sue thanked Fran and Lily for the verses they shared. Amy suggested they now focus on the next person. Fran agreed to go next, and Amy asked Sue to pray a prayer of blessing for Fran and the team.

After a few minutes thinking about Fran's struggle and temptations, Lily read what she thought would be a door verse. **Hebrews 12:3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

Sue followed this with what she thought would be a wall verse; **James 1:19, 20: This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.**

Amy then asked Lily if she was ready to have them focus on her struggles. Lily said she was ready, but that she felt embarrassed and ashamed about her struggles and how she had tried to hide them from the team. Amy asked Fran to pray a prayer of blessing on Lily. As Fran closed her prayer, she **recited Romans 8:1, 2: Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.**

Sue thought of a wall verse and shared 1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Lily agreed and said that Galatians 6:7, 8 could be a good verse for her and could be the glass shards on top of the wall. She read the verse to the team: **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

Fran shared **Lamentations: 3:22-25 The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your**

faithfulness. “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I have hope in Him”. The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. The Lord knows your feelings of loneliness, and I believe because of His love for you, you can take hope in Him that He will care for you and your feelings.

Amy shared her joy of how God had brought to mind verses that can battle their temptations. She encouraged them to now spend time alone meditating on the verses He has given them to develop some practical action steps to deal with their temptations and trials. She concluded their time of scripture study with **2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17** **Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.**

Later in the day they came back together for a time of praise and worship. Through the time spent together, they grew closer as a team and knew better how to encourage each other. Each of them shared their action steps.

Lily decided to not see the Chinese man again. She would meet with Amy weekly to help her keep that commitment. She also decided to spend more time with local women. She confessed that she had cut back on this so she would have time to be with the Chinese man.

Fran and Sue agreed to meet to support each other in their language and culture studies. Fran planned to memorize and then recite her verses each time she left the apartment and whenever she caught herself feeling angry toward local men. In addition to meeting with Fran, Sue decided to ask other language learners how they worked on learning. She hoped to find some different methods that would encourage her study time. Amy shared that this time together had been one of her actions steps and spending this time to discuss her temptations had been helpful to her and strengthened her confidence in God’s love for her.

She encouraged them to continue to let God enter their courtyard particularly in the trials they were facing. Fran suggested that they come together again in a month to share the progress in their trials and another time of refreshing. They all agreed and closed their time with a group prayer.

### **Small group discussion:**

In this lesson Jesus’ use of scripture was discussed. Now, as a group, discuss action steps He took to deal with other temptations He experienced. Start with His confrontation with Peter where He said, “Satan get behind me!” What action steps do you see Him taking?

As a group identify three Biblical examples of a wall and a door related either to temptations or trials.

**Personal application:**

Who can you open up with and share your current temptations and trials? If possible with this person, set up a regular meeting time for accountability.

Record verses that represent a wall to protect from temptation and door to allow God's love, strength, and wisdom to enter into your trial. Remember that God works in many ways. Scripture is one of those ways; prayer, people, circumstances, and authority are other ways He works.