

What is temptation?

The word “temptation” is translated from the Greek noun “peira.” It is noteworthy that when using the verb “tempt,” the Septuagint and the New Testament often use the Greek verb “peirazō,” which is in the intensive word form that is rarely found in extrabiblical and contemporaneous Greek texts. This intensive form places an emphasis on the tempter’s effort in tempting / testing and conveys a sense of strong, forceful, and concentrated action.

For example, Satan tempts Jesus with food, personal safety, and wealth / dominion (Matt 4:3-9):

And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter (**peirazō**) came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” (Matt 4:2-3, NASB)

1. What is temptation?

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (Jam 1:14-15, NASB)

2. Based on your observations, what makes money the root of all sorts of evil? Is money itself evil?

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Tim 6:9-10, NASB)

3. Carefully observe these passages. How can you be like Jesus and not be tempted or do not succumb to temptation?

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:2, NASB)

if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former way of life, you are to rid yourselves of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Eph 4:21-24, NASB)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Gal 5:16, NASB)

4. When God tempts, what is He testing? How is this different from Satan’s temptations?

Now it came about after these things, that **God tested Abraham**, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” (Gen 22:1-2, NASB)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15, NASB)

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Teacher Notes

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This introduction attempts to show that temptation is not a casual effort. Satan and his demons are making a forceful effort in enticing mankind’s natural proclivities to sin and deceive us into thinking that it is all perfectly normal and good.

1. What is temptation?

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Ask the student: according to James, what gives birth to sin? What makes one susceptible to temptation?

Sin is not simply ungodly behavior, but includes an ungodly desire. Temptation is simply a test of what you desire.

Ask the student: if you didn’t have a desire for something, would a temptation for fulfilling that desire be a temptation?

2. Based on your observations, what makes money the root of all sorts of evil? Is money itself evil?

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Tim 6:9-10, NASB)

Ask the student: is money itself evil?

No.

Ask the student: do you remember what was Jesus’ greatest commandment?

And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ (Matt 22:37, NASB)

Ask the student: what makes money the root of all sorts of evil? Take some time to discuss.

Money enables people to fulfill whatever desire or longing one may have for whatever purpose one may endeavor.

3. Carefully observe these passages. How can you be like Jesus and not be tempted or do not succumb to temptation?

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if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former way of life, you are to rid yourselves of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Eph 4:21-24, NASB)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Gal 5:16, NASB)

Ask the student: what is Paul saying about “renewing your mind?” What do you observe?

“do not be conformed to this world”

“you have heard Him and have been taught in Him”

“rid yourselves of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit”

“in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth”

Renewing your mind is embracing God’s desires and His moral standard.

Ask the student: can you do this on your own?

No. To walk with Spirit means that you are doing this with the Holy Spirit. The principle method is through the Bible, which the Holy Spirit wrote, with diligence. Disciplining the mind is challenging and can be easily forgotten.

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Ask the student: what was God testing of Abraham? What desire was God testing?

Abraham’s desire for God was being tested. Did Abraham’s love for his son outweigh his love for God? Abraham was faced with the temptation of disobeying God’s word to save His son (Gen 22:1-14).

When God tempts, He is only testing if you desire Him. He does not test your desire to sin. Abraham desired God and obeyed Him, and God did not allow Abraham to commit murder.

Ask the student: how does God’s testing of a person differ from Satan’s temptation?

When Satan tempts, the temptation is based on deceit or distortion of God’s word, to deceive you into thinking that it is perfectly fine to express your natural desires. Without a good grasp of God’s word to guide one’s desires, all choices lead to sin.

Not having a sinful desire, and succumbing to it, is the best outcome to temptation and having one’s faith approved by God. Note carefully that it is based on the accurate handling of God’s word.