

If God Doesn't Tempt Me, Who Does?

by Shane Idleman

The sermon explores the nature of temptation, emphasizing the importance of endurance and reliance on God to overcome it.

Duration: 28:08

Scripture: James 1:12-13

Topics: "Endurance in Faith", "Temptation"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the pervasive issue of temptation in his sermon 'If God Doesn't Tempt Me, Who Does?', emphasizing that while God does not tempt us, we are often led astray by our own desires, the world, and the devil. He highlights the importance of enduring temptation and making wise choices, reminding us that the consequences of giving in to temptation can lead to sin and ultimately death. Idleman encourages the congregation to bring their struggles to light, seek God's help, and understand that temptation is a normal part of life that can be overcome with faith and discipline. He stresses the need for humility and reliance on God to resist temptation and make choices that align with spiritual wisdom.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles, you can change, or turn to James chapter 1, and we left off at verse 8. James chapter 1, verse 8. The title of the message is, If God doesn't tempt me, who does? If God doesn't tempt me, who does? And temptation is a pretty big issue in all of our lives, is it not? Let's just be up front. Everything from overeating, to overworking, to you name it. Being tempted to do the wrong thing.

It's actually not just a daily struggle, often it's an hourly struggle. With the temptation to say the wrong thing, or do the wrong thing, or go to the wrong place, and it's just bombarded with temptation. So I'm going to talk a little bit about that, but first, let me read James 1, verse 9. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation.

Basically a lowly brother is poverty. A person who is poor, he's contrasting the poor and the rich. So let the humble brother, the lowly brother, glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation.

Because as a flower of the field, he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat, that it withers the grass, and its flower fails, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

So if we stop there for a minute, he's talking about the poor are reminded to persevere. In other words, he's saying, lowly brother, poor, humble person, rest in that exaltation, meaning God exalts you, God looks at that state of where you're at. But the rich, if you've been given the gift of wealth by God, he says, make sure you're humble about it, and realize it as soon as a vapor fades, or as a flower is here one day and gone the next, so will everything you've worked for be gone.

And we see in the news, famous golfers, actors, sports figures who die and are forgotten like a vapor. I just heard about a famous golfer that passed away. And you think, well, I hope he knew the Lord, because that's a lot of 18 holes for no reason.

It's just gone. So he's saying, be careful how you live your life. Pursue the right things.

That's what he's saying here, pursue the right things. And I recall, as I was studying Psalm 90 verse 12, the ESV I like to use as well, but I usually use a New King James if I'm reading from James. But the ESV says this, so teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Teach us to number our days. One other translation says, teach us to realize the brevity of life so that we may grow in wisdom. Now this is an interesting verse.

I have to think about this often. Teaching me to number my days, that means the decisions we make, we're planning ahead, we're realizing that we might not have next week, next month, next year. Teach us to number our days and put first things first.

By doing that, you gain a heart of wisdom. You'll make wise choices. So wise choices line up with numbering our days and making our days count.

For example, what about spiritual choices? Lord, teach us to number our days so I should put spiritual things first. I don't know what time you get up or when you spend time with the Lord, but make it a priority. For me, I've got to put it first in the morning.

That has to be the first thing I do. I'm making spiritual investments and I'm numbering my days because it will help gain a heart of wisdom. What about family decisions? Teach us to number our family decisions because they will give us a heart of wisdom.

When we make decisions for our family, what about money matters? What about health choices? You realize you have this wonderful gift that God has given you, right? Your body. And we have to make, teach us to number our days, to make wise decisions in all these areas. So, but the main context there was the rich person.

You better be humble. You better understand that all of this will pass away so you don't waste your entire life. And then verse 12, blessed is the man who endures temptation.

Here's where it's going to get interesting on this topic of temptation. Blessed is the man or woman, right, 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.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted by evil nor does he himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. I don't know if you caught that or not, but this is how temptation works.

Each one is tempted when he was drawn away by his own desire. So I have something in me, for example, that likes chocolate. That's a poor example, but it'll work.

So there's something in me that I'm tempted by this. Right here he says that. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desire.

So my desire and my enticement, but if I cave into that desire, that's not a good desire, and I begin to cave into it and go in that direction, then that conceives sin. Sin is born. And if you don't abort that sin, what does it do? Like a little baby, it grows and grows and grows.

That's why he says, it gives birth to sin and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Now it's interesting, a lot of people say, Shane, you should tone down sometimes or just be lightened up or be whimsical, tell stories. But I can't because the enemy is going after us.

He's here to kill, steal and to destroy. And when that sin begins to grow in a person's life, sometimes we need to call it out and preach so that God's work can go in and penetrate that heart. So that's the course of sin.

Our desire, we give in, that's the difference between temptation and giving in. If I'm tempted to do something and I don't do it, that's not sin. But giving into that sin, and then once I give in, if I don't abort it, it'll continue to grow and grow and grow and grow.

And that's how sin works. That's why we often talk about confession. Bring it to the light.

Yes, it's humiliating. Yes, it hurts. Yes, it's embarrassing.

But you expose the sin, bring it to the light, it loses its darkness. It grows in darkness, so it loses its power when it's brought to the light. So let's look at this for a minute.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation for when he has been approved. So this tells me that bearing it, enduring it is normal. We have to bear sin.

We have to endure what we're going through, because we don't want to, do we? We want to get rid of that. I don't want to face temptation. I don't want to do anything, but we have to bear it.

We are not trapped. We are not without hope. God will carry us.

God will help us carry the load, but there is a load to carry. Here's the thing about temptation. People fall and they go, oh, I just couldn't help myself.

Yes, you could. Yes, you could. But we don't realize that, yeah, there's a burden to carry.

Ask anybody who's coming off of any type of addiction that it's hell. It is absolute hell, because the body's still craving that. And I just had to do it.

No, you didn't. You didn't have to cave in. You have to endure it.

Endure it means that it's a struggle. Yes, it's difficult, but if you give anybody who's addicted to anything, if you can get them through the first 30 days, it gets much easier. That's one example of how addiction can work, because people don't understand you have to bear it.

How do we keep falling in sin? I can't take this anymore. I can't handle this anymore. And we just start to make these excuses, but God tells us we can endure the temptation.

And it tells us also there is a season. Once we've been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him. But he's also linking in eternal life here, I believe.

So life is full of temptations. We're enduring temptations. We're being soldiers for God, and we receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those.

So thank God there's a season, right? Temptation has a season. And you know if you said no, a few minutes later, you're glad you said no, and it's gone. There's a season there with that temptation.

But here's a key. Temptation in that critical moment, whether it's a few seconds, maybe a few minutes, it's in that critical moment where it's the strongest, is when that's the most important time to say no and walk away. It's in that pinnacle time of when temptation is knocking at the door.

Number two we learn, it's not God's fault. Well there goes some of our arguments, right? Temptation is not God's fault. When we see something we need, desire, or want, our first impulse is to act on it.

The pressure feels unbearable and we cave in. This defining moment is often the most difficult when overcoming temptation. So let no one say, tells me that people were saying at the church, well it's God's fault.

He created me this way. Have you heard that before? God created me this way. I was born this way.

And God just, you know, I'm this or I'm that. And he's saying it's not God's fault. Don't say, oh the Lord is tempting me.

It's our own, we're drawn away by our own desires. So drawn away means to succumb to temptation. And it's often gradual, easy and effortless.

The thing about temptation, do you know why a fishing lure is called a lure? It comes from the word to allure. A-L-L-U-R-E, allure. And look at that little shiny thing.

They bite it, what happens? Right here and it pulls, that's the same thing. So we sometimes get caught off guard because, well it feels okay, it's no big deal. I mean it's kind of effortless, I just kind of walked right into this.

And that's how temptation works. If there was a big flashing sign that said don't do this, here's what's going to happen, nobody would enter. But the devil presents the bait.

When Eve saw that the fruit was good for the eye, or pleasant to the eye, good for food, and desirable to make one wise, she took of that fruit and she ate of it. It looked good, it looked appealing. And here's what happens, we're often too smart to take large, deliberate plunges off, say this platform.

But we're easily enticed to take one step at a time, one compromise at a time, one bad choice at a time until we're at the bottom. And many of you know, I've talked about this before, I have a heart for those who are addicted. If you take alcohol for example, it starts at a young age, or teenagers, and then try it now and then, and then years go by, and they realize now they're hooked.

What happened? It was the little compromises. Also with adults, maybe if that's not your vice, anything else can be that where we just begin to be drawn into this, and the first step is easy, and the second step is easy, and the third step is easy, and then we start to get to the bottom. Now we're down here wondering, how did I get here? One step at a time, that's how he operates.

Even when our family life, and our family relationships, and marriage, whatever it is, he'll start to take you down one step at a time, and you know because you have the conviction of the Holy Spirit, convicting, and convicting, and convicting you not to do something. Number four, the end result is never good. The end result of temptation is never good.

When the desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. This is the type of abortion this church approves of. Aborting sin.

Aborting sin. As soon as it begins to well up inside of us, as soon as we've got to abort that, and that's kind of, I might tie it in at the end, but for the service tonight, I was thinking of practical application. Maybe there's some areas that you've been dabbling in too long, playing with too long, and maybe, I don't know, everything from anger to addiction to anything that's on that list, and it's good to bring it to the light tonight.

Let God know during worship, as always I'll probably be in the back maybe, if you need prayer, and just want to bring something to the light. I've seen a lot of affairs stop just in time. But I've seen a lot not stop in time, because they thought, well it's no big deal.

It's not really hurting anything. It's harmless. And then guess what? Months go by, and that's how he works.

We've got to wake up to the fact that he will, that's how the enemy, he's been around a lot longer than you. He's been watching and watching and watching. He's patient.

He'll wait an entire lifetime to kill, steal, and to destroy. Often it doesn't happen overnight. It's a course he sends out.

What normally I've seen many times, what the enemy will do in my life, anybody else's life, first he's going to get you away from the Word of God, and from prayer, and from worship. Whether it's a job, whether it's a person, whether it's, whatever it is, he'll get you away from the Lord, and you're like, I'm too busy for this, and I'm doing all this stuff. And once you're away from the Lord, you don't have the conviction of his words, you're not in worship, you're not, iron's not sharpening iron.

Now you begin to open yourself up for other things, because you're not being led of the Spirit. Because you can't be led, as I talk about Sunday, by the world and the Spirit. One or the other is going to be leading you.

And I've referenced it probably a few different times, many of you will remember if you've been at the church for a while, but there's a good book out by Steve Farrar called Finishing Strong, and he interviewed, or somebody interviewed 250 of the top Christian leaders who fell into sexual immorality, or

fell into financial abuses, or in any ways they were in this position of leadership and they fell. Number one on the list was no more devotional time. I'm too busy.

I'm too busy. And then he brings in pride, that'll never happen to me. See what happens when you get away from God's word, you get away from worship, accountability, transparency, you're hiding things.

See that'll never happen to me. That's pride and arrogance, and the enemy works in that because it starts to twist your thinking. And a lot of people don't realize this, pride and walking away from God will actually twist your thinking.

You're not thinking according to God's word, you're thinking according to the prideful nature that is governing us at that point. So that's how it usually happens. He pulls us away from God, because I've never seen a marriage fall apart where the husbands and wives are into God's word, and praying and worship.

Now one is maybe and one isn't, and I know there's people here who aren't married and this might not apply, but overall the enemy will take you away from God and then slow choices. Well I know I shouldn't do this, but, I know I shouldn't do this, but, and that's the process. It works on just about everybody that is open to it.

And again the end result is not good. You can't say, I don't want to get involved because you're already a target. People tell me this, well Shane I don't want to get involved, it doesn't matter.

You are already involved. As a Christian, as a believer in spiritual warfare, you are already involved. You are part of the battle.

You're either winning or you're losing. Or you're caught in the middle for a minute, or a couple of days, you're caught in this struggle. But God offers hope in this struggle.

And I could list, I thought about different areas for many people. Temptation is anger in some of us, is a temptation. Do you know that? That anger can be a temptation.

You feel that you're tempted to get angry. You're tempted to just get the last word in and there's a temptation and you're wanting to fast, but here comes a chocolate cake. And you're wanting to get your life back on track, but here comes Budweiser.

And you're wanting to, you know, all these things, it goes across the gamut of what temptation, the enemy doesn't care what he uses, but he'll use something. Pride and arrogance, that is a big temptation. It's very hard, as I said before, to humble ourselves and say, I was wrong, I need to work on this.

And God will use that area in our lives to actually humble us, to go through temptation to humble us. And that's what I want to get to on a little bit of this. Testing, on this scripture, he says, let no one say when he is tempted that I'm tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. Now this is interesting because we know that God tests us, that's clear, and tempting and testing is often, they often go together, but, and it depends, you can read different commentaries, but in my opinion, James is saying here that you cannot blame God. God is not tempted by evil, nor is he tempting anyone.

He's not going to throw you in a situation and say, haha, I knew you would fail. I'm not going to, he's not going to tempt you in that way. Life, with life brings temptation.

God doesn't need to do it. It's almost like, say we have some chocolate at home, like the example of chocolate, right? And I tell my kids, you know, it's in the kitchen, you're not going to have any more today. Am I testing them? Am I testing them? I mean, pretty much, right? I mean, put the choice out there.

I'm not really tempting them because, in essence I am, because there's chocolate in the kitchen, this happens actually, this is a real story. There's chocolate in the kitchen, you can't have it, not today, so there's a tempt and a testing. But what about if I go in and as they're about ready to go to sleep and say, look at all this chocolate, right here, right on your bed, and here's a cup of ice cold milk, right here, but don't you dare touch that until tomorrow.

See, that's just not fair. And you won't see God put you in situations where you won't be able to endure it. Scripture reference for that, yes, 1 Corinthians 10.13, no temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man, and God is faithful.

See God is faithful, don't worry about the temptation, God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. So, that tells me I can say no.

Here we go, we've got to eliminate that excuse again. I just couldn't help it, I had to give in. No, God says you can bear it, I am faithful, I will not put you through something that you cannot bear, something that you cannot turn away with.

But with the temptation, God will provide the way of escape also, so that you may be able to endure it. There's that word again. See, if you go into temptation like this, here's how I would go into it.

Okay, God has provided the way, and it's in two letters, N-O. Okay God, I have to endure this, yes this is going to be difficult, this is going to be challenging, but God you're faithful, you're going to help me endure this, and I look at this as a test. Test, the temptation is a test.

So, see temptation, Jesus was tempted, Jesus was tempted, in all points like we are, yet he was without sin. So the temptation presented itself, but he turned from it and said no. So that's, the temptation itself is not the sin, it's when you act upon it.

So if a thought comes in your mind, that might make some of you feel better, and you go, not to say the thoughts are good, any thought, but if a thought comes in you're like, where did that come from? Oh my goodness, I'm not going, that's not right Lord, take that away please, and you refocus, and you move on to the next thing, but if you sit there and you dwell on that thought, and begin to bring that thought to fruition, and concentrate on it, then you're crossing that line from temptation, now is you're going to probably cave in, because where your thoughts go, your feet follow. You're not strong enough, I'm not strong enough to sit and dwell on something, for minutes, or even hours sometimes, without taking that step. When we obey God, He strengthens us.

When you say no, it strengthens you for the next time. That's the point I wanted to really get to as well, I'm glad I wrote down this evening. When you say no, you're building self-discipline.

When you're saying no to this, no to that, you're guarding yourself, you're enduring temptation, actually it makes it easier for the next time. But once you cave in, and there's a consistent pattern of giving into the

temptation, does that temptation then become stronger or weaker? Stronger. So the more you give into something, it gets stronger and stronger and stronger, that's where the word stronghold comes from the Bible.

It's got a strong hold on you, or on me, because we've given into it consistently and over a long period of time. I really like that quote I read Sunday from Andrew Murray, just as water ever seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment that God finds you abased and empty, His glory and power flow in. Any time you overcome temptation, you will have to go from a spot of arrogance to a spot of humility to overcome it.

It's hard, but it's important to humble ourselves in that temptation. Lord, I'm not strong enough. Lord, I don't want to do this.

Lord, I need your help. You have to humble yourself, because willpower is not enough. Willpower can get you through some things, discipline, yeah, willpower, but in the end, it is not going to be enough to overcome that temptation.

So here's a practical application. And what we usually do on Wednesdays, the message is a little bit shorter, and during worship, we can focus on the practical application. So if God doesn't tempt me, who does? Here's who tempts you.

The flesh, the devil, and the world. It's not bad enough that I just have the flesh tempting me and pulling me. Now I've got the world, and I've got the devil.

All of these things working against me. So here's what you do. When it comes to the flesh, you choose the opposite of what the flesh wants.

You have to fight the flesh in order to starve it. You don't keep giving in that fuels the flesh. You have to starve that flesh.

That's why I promote fasting so often. Fasting will kick any addiction from pornography to drug addiction. When you fast from food, the body, you starve that desire of the flesh.

The flesh has to take a back seat to the fast. And the devil, the Bible says, resists him and he will flee. So if there's demonic oppression, if the devil's coming in and bringing, you resist him and at some point he will flee.

So many times we don't know, is it the flesh? Is it the devil? What's going on here? Well, it could be both at work. We just don't know. We know that our weapons are not here that we see.

Our weapons are spiritual. And then with the world, you avoid the world's influence. You avoid its pull.

See the world is going to pull me away from God. So if God is here, the world's going to pull me away from God. So if I just give in and allow the world to pull me in, that's going to be the influence.

Or if I allow God to pull me back, that's going to be the influence. I'm allowing one or the other to influence me. Now next week we're going to talk about, let me see if you have your Bibles, James 1. I think I wrote down, when you go through trials, you are especially vulnerable to deception.

So when you go through a trial, well I'll just have you finish reading a little homework after James. James 1, just read James 1 and into James 2. Next week we'll talk about when you go through trials, you are

especially vulnerable to deception. That's when the enemy comes in, when we're going through that trial.

So that's the practical application for today. If God doesn't tempt me, who does? We tempt ourselves. It's already within us.

And the world tempts us and the enemy tempts us. So we can't blame God, we have to take full responsibility and follow all the advice that James gives here. He also brought in advice from Paul in Corinthians that no temptation has overtaken you but what is common to man.

So everything you're going through, other people have went through. Everything you're feeling, other people probably feel. The same temptations, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life.

Those are the three areas he's going to get you. What the flesh craves. You know what it is because you have a problem in that area.

I don't need to preach it, right? There's nobody agreeing in this sermon, I'm going to have to preach this on Sunday. We know what the lust of the flesh is. It's the areas where the flesh pulls us.

You've got to have safeguards there. The lust of the eye. With the eye, why are we in a spending epidemic or economic epidemic or the fracturing of the economy, everything because of the lust of the eye.

Bigger, better, more, bigger, better, more, bigger, better, more. We want to buy, buy, buy, buy, buy. I've got to have this, I've got to have this.

In the lust of the eye. So he's going to come in whatever the flesh wants, something that, keep me up with the Joneses. You can remember that.

Do you do that? Ever think about that? Do you want a bigger house? Do you want to live in Leona Valley? Those of you who live in Leona Valley, you already live here but some of us, oh that would be nice. Too bad the houses are double the price. Five acres on a ranch, lust of the eyes.

Which can't, not necessarily a bad thing sometimes. But if you're, if God's not in it, it's a bad thing. If you're desiring things that God's not in.

So the enemy comes in, in the flesh, the lust of the eye, what the eyes want, keeping up with the Joneses, and then the pride of life. That's where else he'll come in with the pride of life. That's why Andrew Murray's quote throughout the Bible, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and due time he will exalt you.

So I think it's going to be good during closing worship if we just focus on some areas where we need to humble ourselves. Where we don't want to, God bring the spotlight on this area of my life and humble me. Lord you've got to humble me in this area in order to change me and we come during worship and we humble ourselves before God.

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