

Discerning Between Temptation and Sin

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning between temptation and sin, and provides practical advice on how to build a strong family life and raise godly children.

Duration: 33:12

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 4:16, James 1:15

Topics: "Temptation And Sin", "Godly Relationships"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the distinction between temptation and sin, using the analogy of conception to explain how yielding to temptation leads to sin. It also delves into the importance of family life, obedience to parents, and building godly marriages. The focus then shifts to the significance of building a church that reflects God's wisdom through unity and love, showcasing a fellowship that transcends cultural and social barriers.

Transcript

A lot of people get condemned because they confuse temptation with sin and James chapter 1 is a very great chapter on that. James in chapter 1. I say this so that you can be delivered from condemnation. Temptation is different from sin just like to use a medical example, a common example which is the example James uses that is different like every woman has in her body the human eggs that can become a baby.

But it cannot become a baby without conception. Only when conception takes place that egg becomes an embryo and becomes a baby. So James says here, verse James 1.15, lust when it is conceived gives birth to sin.

Otherwise it's not sin. That means if I have, I'm tempted to something, that's like there's something within me that has got the potential to become a sin. Like a woman's egg has a potential to become a baby but if there's no conception there's no baby.

And so for conception to take place there must be a union of something with that egg to produce a baby and in this case is the union of my will. The temptation is there. There's a potential for sin there and my will agrees with it.

Yes, I want it. I sin in my mind. But if a temptation comes into my mind, it's just like an egg.

No baby there. I reject it. I don't want it.

There's no sin. I throw it out. I heard of a sailor in the British Navy who was given a very high-ranking medal in one of the World Wars because when he was traveling near a German ship, the German ship threw a grenade.

You know a grenade is something that you pull out a pin. It's a bomb but it explodes only after say 30 seconds or so in which time you throw it. By the time it reaches the other ship it explodes over there.

So this German guy threw the grenade and this brave British sailor, he knew it takes 30 seconds, he picked it up and threw it back into the German ship and it exploded over there. And they gave him a medal for it, for being so smart. It didn't explode.

So if the devil throws a grenade into my mind which has the potential of exploding and I throw it right back, I say, I don't want that. I'm okay. He threw it at me.

There was a possibility of it exploding but I was smart enough to quickly throw it back. But if I look at it and examine it a bit more, then you're finished. You've got to be pretty quick to throw it right back.

Then it doesn't explode. Did the grenade land here? Of course it did. I threw it right back and it didn't explode.

It did not become sin. So just because a thought came into your mind, you can be sitting in this church and right now have the filthiest possible thought come into your mind. You say, that's not a sin.

You reject it. You say, I don't want it. I don't want it.

It's not me. You rejected it in your mind immediately. You've thrown the grenade right back.

There's no conception. There's no sin. Because many people get condemned on this.

Oh, Brother Zach, such a horrible thought came into my mind. Why didn't you throw it right back? There'd be no sin there. If your will didn't yield to it, you didn't conceive.

See, however much a girl may be attracted to a handsome young man who's keeping on calling her, calling her, calling her, calling her, and she keeps saying no. She keeps saying no. There's no conception.

She never gets a baby. But you ask that girl, did you feel attracted to him? Did you feel attracted to him? Yeah, boy, he was really smart and attracted. Really, I was drawn to him.

But there's no baby. So the fact that you're drawn to some sin doesn't mean you're sinned. There's an attraction.

If there's no attraction, there's no temptation. You know that? If the tree of knowledge of good and evil was filthy, smelly, full of thorns and stinking, like a toilet, dirty toilet, and the Lord told Adam, don't go near that. He said, thank you.

I don't want to go anywhere near it. Why did God make it so attractive? Probably the most beautiful tree in the garden. To ask him, am I more important to you than this attractive thing I created? Was he attracted? Yes.

He was attracted. But she did not sin. When she took it, that's when she sinned.

Remember this, you're attracted to something, you haven't sinned. For example, if God had made every woman in the world old and haggard and white haired and drooping face and ugly and said, don't lust after women. You'd say, no problem, Lord.

Absolutely. Every woman's like that. But God has made some of them so attractive.

And he's saying to you, do you love me, the creator, more than what I created? Same question that came to Eve. Do you love the creator or the created? Almost every temptation. That is the question.

Say no. God, I choose you. That's what you need to say.

There's no concern. Are you attracted? Of course. You don't want to pretend that she's ugly.

That's a lie. How can you say a pretty woman is ugly? Oh, the sunset is so ugly. It's really beautiful.

What's wrong in saying that? But don't admire it. Don't look at it because you'd be tempted. So the fact that you're attracted doesn't mean it's sin, but don't yield to it in your mind.

It's very important for this. When the day I understood this, it delivered me from unnecessary condemnation. But if you're in doubt whether maybe I did yield, then ask the Lord to forgive you.

But don't live in condemnation that you're tempted or you feel attracted to something. Money. Money is very attractive.

Just like the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It's one of the most attractive things on earth. And the fact that you're drawn towards it, there's nothing wrong in it.

Don't do anything wrong to get it. Don't put money above God's kingdom. Keep it in its proper place under your feet.

Just like gold is on the streets of heaven, I often say, if you can learn to put gold under your feet, you're ready to go to heaven as far as money is concerned. Keep it under your feet. So there's a difference between temptation and sin.

Keep a good conscience. Then we go to the second story. The second story is our family life.

If you're a child at home, as far as you're concerned, obedience to your parents. And that's how we start. Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you.

Jesus honored his father and his earthly foster parents. Mary was his mother, but Joseph was not his father. But God had appointed them.

Jesus honored them and did everything they told him to do. And he's our example. So family life, starting as children, if you want to be a godly boy or girl, start by honoring your father and mother.

Never tell them a lie. If you do something wrong, just go to your daddy and mommy and say, I'm sorry I did that. Please forgive me.

I want to be a better boy. I want to be a better girl. We want CFC children to be truthful children.

Never telling lies. We want CFC children to be obedient to their parents in a world full of disobedience. We want CFC children in school to have the best testimony.

I remember when my youngest son was in school here in Bangalore. I asked him a question once. I said, you know all that you've been in your class now for many years with the same students and you watch them.

I'm sure you know pretty well who are the ones who cheat in examinations. And he said, Dad, I know them. Everyone except two of us.

And we are both from CFC. How sad and yet how happy I was. That's because in our church we kept on teaching you must not cheat in an examination.

It's better to fail than to pass by cheating. All your life you'll have a bad conscience. Do you know the number of letters I get from people who say, Brother Zak, 20 years ago I cheated and passed an examination and got a certificate.

And with that certificate I got a job. The whole thing was based on a lie. What shall I do now? They're tormented in their conscience.

Don't wait for that. It doesn't matter if you didn't get 70%. Be happy with 50%.

But don't cheat. Don't try to get the examination paper through different people who say the paper is out now. If you pay so much money you'll get it.

No, no, no. Parents, be careful to teach your children. Be upright.

And then as you seek for marriage, family life, make sure you young people that you seek for a godly person. I often teach young people the 50-30-20 rule. The 50-30-20 rule is man is spirit, soul and body.

So in evaluating a brother or a sister when you consider marriage, give 50% marks for spiritual qualities. Are they born again? Do they want to follow Jesus? That's not everything, but 50%. And then give 30% marks to other factors like intellectual, same language, intellectual communication ability and social and economic equality.

Because you know we must have an equal yoke. It will be very difficult for a Ph.D. person to fellowship with a completely illiterate girl from a village. They may be both born again, but there will be a lot of incompatibility.

So there is nothing wrong. Man is not just spirit. He is also soul, mind, emotions.

So there must be a certain amount of equality there. But not 50%, 30%. And then 20% for physical factors like age.

People say physical factors are not important. Of course they are important. I mean if you are 25 years old, I don't think you will marry somebody 75 years old.

It's highly unlikely. You are automatically considering age without even thinking about it. You immediately want to know what's the person's age.

And you want to know physical attractiveness is not completely unimportant. It is important to a certain extent, but not the most important. Man is not body, soul and spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5.23 gives you the right order. Spirit, soul and body. So 50% I would say is just my own guideline for spiritual values and 30% for earthly values and 20% for physical attractiveness.

But unfortunately in the world it's not like that. Unfortunately in the world it is beauty and money. And sometimes they look for brains but sometimes they don't.

But it's usually that. So I remind them always of this verse in Proverbs 11.22. Proverbs 11.22. It says a beautiful girl, let me paraphrase it, a beautiful girl who is not spiritually minded is like a pig with a golden ring on its nose. You got it? A beautiful girl who is not spiritually minded is like a pig with a golden ring on its nose.

The nature is the nature of a pig. But it's got this golden ring called beauty. Beauty is actually, if you understand chemistry, you know what molecules are.

You know our face is just full of molecules. And it's a certain arrangement of molecules that we call beauty. That's all there is to it.

You arrange the molecules a little differently and it's not beautiful anymore. So you look at a pretty woman and say, arrangement of molecules is okay there. That's all there is to it.

The real person is inside. So don't get taken up with the arrangement of molecules. And it says it's like a golden ring.

Now supposing you see a pig with a golden ring and say, ah, that golden ring, I want that golden ring at any cost. And you marry the pig. Don't be so foolish.

That's what happens to a man who just looks at a pretty girl and doesn't bother about whether she's godly or not. So that's the second stage of family life. And then after you get married, it's so important that husband and wife live in a godly way with each other.

And I want to tell you, the Bible teaches there's only one way for two people to become one. In the Old Testament, it was impossible. It was impossible.

Not difficult. Impossible. Because man's flesh is so strong.

The veil was not rent. You cannot be one with each other in the outer court or the holy place. You can be one with each other only in the most holy place.

When the veil is rent, that means the flesh is crucified. If two people crucify their flesh, they will become one. If one of them is not willing to crucify the flesh, they will not become one.

Like I say, if two hands, like husband and wife, will always fight. Clapping is like fighting. But if one, any one of them, husband or wife, is willing to die, to self, there's no sound.

You can wave it as much as you like. The other person refuses to fight. So if one person in a family refuses to fight, there is peace.

If both refuse to fight, there'll be fellowship. If both refuse to die, there'll be clash. If one refuses, if one is ready to die, there'll be peace.

If both are ready to die, there'll be fellowship. So it's on the cross that we become one. The Bible says in Ephesians 2, Jesus stretched out his hand and brought Jew and Gentile together to become one on the cross, to become one.

Ephesians 2, verse 14 and 15. He destroyed the enmity that is in our flesh. There is an enmity in our flesh that makes us clash with one another, husband and wife, wife and husband.

That's why whenever people get married, every marriage, in the early days and years, there's conflict. That's why whenever newly married people get newly married, I always tell them, two most important lessons in marriage is, ask forgiveness quickly and forgive quickly. Ask forgiveness quickly, forgive quickly.

And never go to bed without settling matters. Never go to bed angry with each other. This is how we are building the second story.

Now you may not accomplish this overnight. You can. It's very easy to ask forgiveness.

It's only pride, only pride that prevents a person from saying, I'm sorry. That is my mistake. Please forgive me.

How can we do it better? You try saying it. It's very, very difficult for those words to come out of your mouth. They'll get stuck in your throat somewhere there.

But that's one of the secrets of happiness in the early years of marriage. And as you go on in married life, you become more willing to recognize that I'm an imperfect person, married to an imperfect person. And if I think there are so many peculiarities in this partner of mine that I have to bear with, please remember there are equally great peculiarities in you that he has to bear with, or she has to bear with.

And if that person is keeping silent, you can also keep silent. Otherwise, you think that you're the only one who's bearing with problems in the other person? No, he's bearing with problems with you and she's bearing with problems in you also, brother. So don't be taken up with how much you have to bear with your partner.

So our family life is very important. You can't build a church. You can't have a glory in the church before you have glory in your personal life and glory in your home.

Then we have the glory in the church. So it's very, very important to build a home. That's why we have so many meetings for families in all of our CFC conferences.

Very, very important. Husband and wife must learn to live together and be an example. It won't come overnight.

It may take many years, but determined to get there. You know how some people go to the gulf or work in different places and for years and years and years they are saving money? Many of you have done that. And finally, maybe before you retire, you build a house.

And you're so happy. You saved enough money to build a house for your retirement. Isn't that wonderful? In the same way, work in your marriage.

Save, save, save. Like the person saves and saves and saves. Slowly, slowly, slowly you come to a life of happiness together.

A little taste of heaven on earth. It takes time. You can't start building a house the very first year you started earning your salary.

No. But you save a little bit, save a little bit, save a little bit. Finally you got your house.

How many years it took? Some of you it took many years to build your own house. In the same way, to build a good family life, be patient. Just like you're patient to save and save and save and save.

Deny yourself, deny yourself, deny yourself. One day you'll have a wonderful heavenly married life. Even then, there may be the occasional slip up.

Don't worry. But your marriage will be more like heaven than like hell. So very important that in our church, we have godly homes.

The strength of a church is not the number of people that sit there, but the quality of the homes that constitute that church. How good are these homes? Not perfect homes, but homes that are pressing on to perfection. That are saving up money to build a perfect house.

That are pressing on to humble themselves and ask forgiveness from one another. And in the home, the other thing is the way we bring up our children. We want another generation to grow up carrying on the same truths.

And there's a great law in scripture. Either scripture is right or it's wrong. If you believe scripture is right, it says in Proverbs 22 and verse 6, train up a child in the way he should go.

And when he's old, he will not depart from it. Now you can say, well, we can't say that will be true of all children. Some children are different.

Then it should be train up a child in the way he should go. And some of them, when they're old, will not depart from it. Some may depart from it.

But that's not what the Bible says. Train up a child in the way he should go. When he or she is old, they will not depart from it.

You train them up in a particular way, in godlessness, they will become godless. You train them up in a godly way, they will become godly. Now, don't give me examples of exceptions to the rule.

You're contradicting scripture then. I want to tell you, let God be true and what? Every man a liar. That's what it says in Romans chapter 3. Let God's word be true and every other testimony people give is a lie.

Train up your children when they are young and start when they are one year old. Teach them to obey. Teach them to speak the truth.

They may have ups and downs. Of course, they'll have ups and downs. We all had it.

They'll struggle a bit, particularly in their teenage years and twenties. There'll be some struggles and all children, some rare children escape it. But otherwise, there will be that rebellious teenage spirit in some, maybe your daughter or your son.

But in those are the years when you should be their friends. Don't just rebuke them and shout at them. Hug them and kiss them and love them and pray short prayers with them.

Don't pray long prayers with your teenage, difficult boys and girls. Just short prayers. Lord, just bless my little daughter or bless my son.

That's enough. And love them. They're going through this up and down stage and say, I'll never be disappointed with you, my girl, my son.

I'll never be disappointed with you. I don't care what you do. There's nothing you can do that can make me, stop me from loving you.

Whatever you may do, it'll never stop me from loving you. Impossible. You know, we must say good things to our children.

They face a world where they hear negative, negative, negative things in their school. Sometimes they're not good looking and other people look down on them. People bully them in school.

Where should they get encouragement at home? Do we encourage them? We rebuke them, correct them. I believe we must correct them and ten times for every correction there must be ten encouragements. Very often it's the other way around.

One encouragement and ten corrections. No wonder our children are discouraged. We feed them, clothe them, educate them and push them to get good marks and all that.

But the most important thing is to encourage them. Correct them and encourage them. Boy, that's great.

You know, like your little child comes to you and says, Dad, I discovered today CAT is cat. Wow. You say, really? Do you react like that to your child? Or do you say, Oh, I knew that long ago.

That's the way to drive your child away. Be excited when he says, Four of fours are sixteen, Dad. Did you know that? Oh, really? You got to be a good father to your parents, to your children.

Train your child the way he should go. And when he's old, he will not depart from it. Yeah, we want our children to grow up and teach them the scriptures.

Teach them the instruction of the Lord, fathers especially. Give them a picture Bible to read on their own and ask them questions. Don't ask them complicated questions, the sovereignty of God and all that.

Just ask them simple things like, which they can understand, you know, who was Jesus' mother and ask them easy things. You see an answer and who was Mary married to and little things like that. And like that, go on to ask other things.

You know how many books there are in the Bible, things like that, and stimulate an interest in them to study the scriptures, to know the scriptures. And then as they grow up, you can teach the principles of scripture. Why don't we cheat? Why don't we fight back with people who fight with us? So once you've got

the family life, then we go to the third story, the church.

The church is God's ultimate purpose of His love for us, as He loved Jesus, leading us to keep a good conscience, building a family. The ultimate goal is to build the church of Jesus Christ. That's why we concentrate so much on building the church.

And we don't want to build a church as a congregation. The same glory that is in the ground in the first story, second story, we want that glory to be in the church. That's why you have a responsibility to make sure the glory is in your personal life.

You have a responsibility to make sure the glory is in your family life. Then we all come together, glory will automatically be in the church. Because we are trained in our home.

Elders, the Bible says, elders are trained in their home. 1 Timothy 3, to bring up two or three children, so that they can lead a church of 70-80 people. But if they can't even bring up two or three children, how will they bring up 70-80 people? So the training in the home, that's what 1 Timothy 3 says by the way.

So the training in the home is a preparation for ministry in the church. That's exactly what it says. We experience the glory at home and then we can bring that glory into the church.

But if you don't have the glory at home, you are going to bring a theory to the church. Let's repent. You know the solution to everything is repentance.

There's a wonderful solution. Repent. Don't say, but there are reasons why.

The moment you justify yourself, Jesus said about the Pharisees, you are those who justify yourself. You are those who always find an excuse to prove that you are not at fault. A tremendous tendency to say that.

Well, Brother Zag, my children go astray because the world is like that. I have a bad company and some children are like that. Of course, it's not my fault.

No, no, no. I am perfect. Well, it will never go well with your children.

Till you humble yourself and say, that was my fault. 100%. I am not going to like Adam blame Eve or blame the school or blame that person or blame that person.

You will ruin your children that way. Go fall before God and say, Lord, my fault. Forgive me.

What can I do now? And there will be a solution. Do you know that there is not a single problem on earth for which you can say, God has no solution. I don't care how serious your problem is.

There is a solution with God. And that's how we are going to build the church. And that's what we have found through 40 years of building this church.

Do you know what all problems we have faced in this church? From the beginning, only Ian and I know. Later on, some of the others present. All types of problems, even in the construction of this building.

Practical problems. So many problems. But we believe that in every problem, there is a solution with God.

If we need money, we don't ask for it. We never ask for money once, even when we built this building. We never sent a letter asking people to give us money.

No. Or that any such hints or any such thing. We said, God has a solution with God.

I don't know how he is going to do it, but he will do it. And if he doesn't do something, we don't build a building. Simple.

We want to glorify God. That's all. We don't believe in buildings.

We believe in the family of God. So we want to build a church which is like a family, which functions together, like the members of our body working together, cooperating with each other. And like we heard the other day, when one stretches, you know how there are muscles here on top of my arm and muscles underneath.

So now these muscles are going to pull, the muscles underneath saying, hey great, I'm going to yield. Sure. You want to pull? I yield.

And then when they pull, this muscle says, you want to pull? Sure, I yield. What cooperation? And there is no noise also. You know, when you hear noise here, it's called arthritis.

And sometimes among some brothers, you hear a noise. There is a lot of arthritis in the church. We got to get rid of it.

It says in Ephesians. I'm not joking. You read in Ephesians 4 about the joints.

Have you heard about the joints in Ephesians 4? And the problem in the joints is called arthritis. Ephesians chapter 4 speaks about building the body. It says here in Ephesians 4 and verse 16.

From Christ, the whole body is fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies. According to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body in the building up of itself in love. When you are working together with another brother, the most important picture you must keep in mind is this.

In working with any brother or any sister, noiseless, arthritis-less fellowship. Joints, that which every joint supplies. Look at the number of joints there are in your fingers.

In one finger alone, one, two, three. All of them work. Do you hear any noise? That's how our fellowship must be in our church.

Working together. No competition. When it's not, I'm the senior brother.

You better yield every time. You'll go around like this. That's the problem in some churches.

So what if you're the senior brother? Sometimes you have to yield. Sometimes he has to yield. This is fellowship.

This is between husband and wife, the same thing. Or give and take as the world says. What a great need there is my brothers and sisters for God Almighty.

I'll conclude with this verse to show the devil a church that functions like that. It says here in Ephesians 3, God wants to show his manifold wisdom to the rulers, that means the evil rulers in the heavenly places, the devil and his, it's called the spirit forces in heavenlies in chapter 6 and verse 12. The evil forces in the heavenly places are mentioned here in Ephesians 3.10, that God wants to show them through the church

his wisdom.

God's wisdom is that which brings love and unity. And God says, hey, Satan and all your demons, look at that church down there in that little village in India or that little town in India. Go and look at that church, Satan.

Do you see my wisdom there? You see all those people are so different from each other? You see out there in the world the Malayalees and Anglo-Indians never get together, never function with each other and the Tamils and Telugu's and others don't work together and the Marathis and the Tamilians they have nothing to do with each other, but go and see that church. And you see that other church, that's not a graduates fellowship, that's a fellowship of graduates and illiterate people all in one church, black and white and everything else. One church.

Go and see that church. You see my wisdom? That is what God is displaying through the church. He's showing off, just like he said about Job years ago.

Have you seen Job, Satan? Satan says about all these crooked people, hypocrites? Yes, but how about Job? And today when the devil says to God, look at all these preachers asking for money, begging for money and swindling poor people. Yes, but have you seen that church? Look at all those churches full of disunity. Yes, but have you seen that one? That's what God is looking for.

I hope you have a burden in your locality to build a church like that, to build a family like that, to build a life like that. May God help us. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, please help each one of us to take to heed to what we have heard today, that we shall preserve the glory generation after generation in our church. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/bh9g1vtvJ4A.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/discerning-between-temptation-and-sin/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net