

Connect360: Overcoming Temptation

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- *Lesson 2 in the Connect360 unit “The Making of Authentic Faith: Wisdom that Works” focuses on James 1:13-18.*

No test or temptation which leads to sin can be of God. Sinful temptation is the work of evil to make God’s people fall. James makes it plainly clear that no one who experiences such temptation can blame God for their situation. But if God is not to blame for temptation toward sin, then who is?

Scripture reveals two answers to this question. First, Satan tempts humanity toward sin and destruction. Satan is referred to as the tempter in New Testament (Matthew 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 3:5). To be sure, Satan has a vested interest in tearing down the faith and growth of God’s children.

Human inclination toward sin

However, James made it clear Satan is not solely to blame for temptation to sin. Our fallen nature loves to excuse sin by proclaiming, “The devil made me do it!” But the truth is this sinful bent lies within human nature itself. James is quite clear on this fact: that each person is dragged away by his or her own evil desire. Once the evil desire takes root in the heart, it crosses the line from temptation to sin. While godly perseverance leads to maturity and completion, sinful indulgence leads to death. It is no wonder the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed the heart of a person deceitful when he said, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Jesus also reiterated the fallenness of the human condition when he stated,

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” (Matthew 15:19). While the heart of a person is the source of evil desires, all is not lost. Temptation becomes sinful when it blossoms into evil desire. However, to be tempted is not a sin. Mercifully, God is with us in the midst of our temptations and provides the rescue we need.

Paul encourages believers to remember that “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). God does not lead us to evil temptation, but he does provide a way out so we can endure the trial of temptation for our betterment and growth.

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