



Empty Hands, Full of Grace

A Five-Day Devotional

September 7 - September 11, 2026

Temptation is something every follower of Jesus encounters, yet we often underestimate how quietly it can shape our hearts. What begins as a seemingly harmless choice can gradually become a habit, and a habit can begin to influence our desires, our relationships, and our walk with God.

Jesus speaks honestly about the seriousness of sin—not to frighten us or leave us feeling condemned, but to call us toward freedom. Throughout this week, we will consider how temptation begins, how we can interrupt its patterns, and how the Holy Spirit gives us strength to choose a different path. Most importantly, we will remember that when we stumble, we do not run away from Jesus. We run toward Him.

Holiness is not about earning God's love. It is about responding to the love we have already received through Christ. As we take temptation seriously, may we also take God's grace seriously. His warnings protect us, His Spirit strengthens us, and His mercy continually calls us home.

Monday, September 7

Take Sin Seriously

8 And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. - Matthew 18:8-9 (ESV)

Jesus uses strong language to make one truth impossible to ignore: sin is not a small inconvenience, and temptation is not a harmless game. His warning calls us to recognize that the consequences of sin far outweigh the cost of resisting it. When something repeatedly draws us toward compromise, Jesus calls us to take it seriously enough to make a change.

This is a call to honest and decisive discipleship. Temptation often arrives disguised as something ordinary—a conversation that becomes secretive, entertainment that weakens our convictions, friendships that normalize unhealthy choices, scrolling that produces envy, or ambition that quietly pushes faithfulness aside. Jesus loves us too much to allow us to treat what harms our relationship with Him as trivial.

Today, let Jesus help you see the stakes clearly. Not so that you live in fear, but so that you can live in freedom. God's warnings are acts of mercy, and His desire is to lead us toward life, joy, and holiness.

Reflect:

What is one area of temptation that you have been treating as “not a big deal” that Jesus may be asking you to take more seriously?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, give me honest eyes to recognize temptation and courage to respond wisely. Lead me toward the freedom and holiness You desire for me. Amen.

Tuesday, September 8

Recognize the Trailhead

14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. - James 1:14-15 (ESV)

James reminds us that temptation is often a process. Desire becomes enticement, enticement can lead to sin, and sin ultimately brings consequences. That is why compromise so often begins with something small: one conversation, one click, one choice, one justification. Temptation rarely announces where it is going. It simply asks us to take the next step.

The good news is that we can learn to recognize where that path begins. Pay attention to the moments when your guard is lowest —when you are tired, lonely, stressed, bored, or looking for approval. Temptation often attaches itself to legitimate needs such as rest, connection, accomplishment, or comfort and then offers a counterfeit way to satisfy them.

Wisdom means learning your own “trailhead.” When you recognize where temptation begins, you can choose a different first step. God wants more than regret after we fall; He wants to teach us wisdom before we fall.

Reflect:

What situation, emotion, habit, or time of day most often becomes the starting point for temptation in your life?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, help me recognize temptation early. Give me wisdom to choose a faithful path before I take the next step. Amen.

Wednesday, September 9

Close the Door

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. - Romans 13:14

Scripture doesn't just tell us to resist sin; it also teaches us not to make temptation easier. Paul tells us to avoid making room for desires that pull us away from God. Sometimes the wisest response is to change our surroundings, routines, relationships, or habits before temptation has an opportunity to grow.

That kind of obedience can feel costly. It may mean changing a routine, stepping away from an unhealthy influence, limiting something that repeatedly becomes a stumbling block, or choosing integrity when another path seems easier. But Jesus reminds us that what we give up for faithfulness is never greater than what we gain through freedom.

Practical repentance is not punishment; it is protection. When we remove what repeatedly trips us, we are not making our lives smaller. We are making room to live with greater peace, integrity, and joy before God.

Reflect:

What is one practical boundary you could establish this week that would make it easier to resist a temptation you regularly face?

Prayer:

Lord, give me courage to make the changes I need to make. Help me trust that Your boundaries are meant to protect and lead me into freedom. Amen.

Thursday, September 10

Walk by the Spirit

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

- Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

Resisting temptation is not simply a matter of having enough willpower. It is about learning to walk with the Holy Spirit. God does not merely tell us to live differently; He gives us His Spirit to strengthen us when our own strength feels inadequate.

Walking with the Spirit means depending on God in the moment. When temptation comes, we can pause and pray before we speak, click, respond, remain, or justify. Over time, the Spirit also begins to shape our desires—teaching us to love what is true, practice patience, resist envy, and develop self-control.

Today, practice turning toward God before you need to be rescued from a decision. You do not have to prove your strength to Him. You can simply ask for His help. Every small moment of dependence is another step in learning to walk with Him.

Reflect:

What simple prayer could you repeat today whenever you recognize temptation beginning?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, walk with me today. Give me strength in the moments of temptation and shape my heart to desire what honors You.
Amen.

Friday, September 11

Come to the Throne of Grace

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. - Hebrews 4:15-16 (ESV)

Jesus is not only the One who warns us about sin; He is the One who understands our weakness and offers mercy and help. Hebrews reminds us that because of Christ, we can come confidently into God's presence—not because we have everything together, but because Jesus has made a way for us to receive grace.

This changes how we respond to temptation and failure. We can be honest with God about what draws us, where we struggle, and where we have fallen. Grace does not make sin unimportant. Instead, grace gives us the courage to repent, begin again, and keep walking with Christ. When we fail, we return. When we are tempted, we ask for help. When we are weary, we depend on His strength rather than our own performance.

End this week by remembering where our hope truly rests. Jesus has already carried our sin, and He continues to meet us with mercy. Holiness is not an attempt to earn God's love; it is the fruit of being loved, forgiven, rescued, and strengthened day by day.

Reflect: What would it look like for you to draw near to Jesus today instead of allowing shame or failure to keep you away?

Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for Your mercy and grace. When I am tempted or when I fail, help me run toward You rather than away from You. Amen.

A Little Encouragement to Share

If these devotional reflections have encouraged you, challenged you, or helped you see God's Word in a new way, consider sharing this booklet with a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone who might need a little encouragement this week.

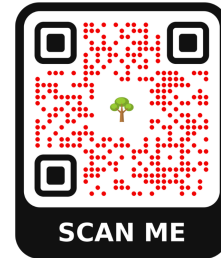
Sometimes a simple word of faith can make a difference.

Want to hear more?

Watch the message that inspired this week's devotional and continue the journey with us in worship.

Scan the QR code or visit:

<https://stpeterchapin.com/connect/online-worship>



You're Always Welcome at St. Peter

We would love to have you worship with us. Whether you've been part of our church family for years or you're simply looking for a place to worship, you are welcome here.

Sunday Worship
8:25 AM — Blended Worship
10:30 AM — Traditional Worship

Pastor, Christopher Metze
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Chapin, South Carolina

Come as you are. Come worship. Come grow with us.

