

James

Junior High Bible Study Guide

Week 1, Day 3

Tackling Temptation

Before you begin...

- Do you have your notebook and pen?
- Do you have your Bible?
- Pray and ask God to help you understand His Word and to help you be a hearer of the Word AND a doer!



God wants you to endure your trials without giving in to your sinful heart.

Trials are certain to come your way. They are unavoidable. But you don't need to panic. No reason to live with worry and anxiety. Trials are necessary. They aren't pleasant, but they are helpful. Our response to our trials is really important.

In order for us to maximize the benefit of our trials, we have to respond in the right way. (See Days 1 and 2 for a reminder)

But... what happens when we DON'T respond to trials the way that we should? What does it look like when we DON'T endure? What happens when we DON'T respond in faithful obedience to God's Word?

There is always potential for us to not face our trials the way God instructs. Every trial brings with it a temptation to sin.

What would that look like?

- You don't have an attitude of joy...in fact, your attitude stinks! You grumble and complain, and you develop a selfish attitude that only cares about one person. That's you.
- This sinful attitude leads you to think that you are on your own. Instead of going to God for wisdom, you try to handle the situation all by yourself. You have the wrong attitude and the wrong help.
- Which of course leads you to focus on the wrong things. You inevitably end up with the wrong perspective on life.
- You become consumed with the rewards of this life, instead of the eternal life to come. You lose sight of the crown of life and the glories of heaven.

At the bottom of this barrel is the belief that somehow God is to blame for the trial in your life.

See why this is so important?

God wants to teach us about the temptation that we face when trials come our way. It's a temptation to ignore God's instruction and respond to our trials in a sinful way.

Let's look at our text this morning. We're moving on to James 1:13-15.



Today's Big Idea: God wants you to endure your trials without giving in to your sinful heart.

James 1:13-15

v.13 tempted: a trial can work in two ways. It can either strengthen the believer or become an excuse to sin. This verse explains that God never attempts to make someone sin. Being tempted isn't a sin. But it becomes a sin when we don't resist.

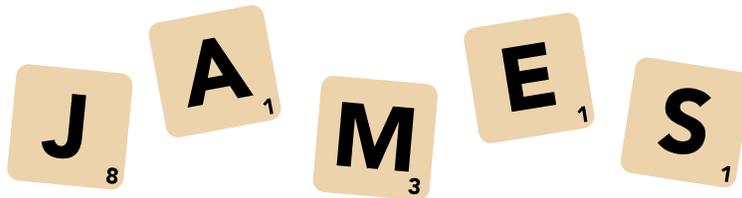
¹³ *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being **tempted** by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*

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**.*

v. 14 desire: this specifically talks about man's lust to fulfill the flesh. Man's sinful nature makes them prone to acquire the means to sin.

v. 15 death: sin produces spiritual death to the unsaved. To the believer, sin may cause physical death.



Weekly Word Challenge

You know the drill. We're still memorizing James 1:5. A few more words are gone. See if you can fill in the blanks without looking.

Memory Verse: James 1:5

If any of you lacks _____, let him _____ God, who gives _____ to all without _____, and it will be _____ him.

Now write the entire verse again in your notebook.

I Have No Idea...

Today's words are **lured** and **enticed** (v. 14).

You should write out your guess in your notebook, then look up the answer. Don't forget to write out a sentence as if you were explaining these words to a friend who has NO IDEA. You could also look in a JMAC Study Bible or ask your parents what this word is all about.



Observations from a Youth Pastor

You may be going through a trial at this very moment. It doesn't matter how big or small, that trial includes a temptation for you to respond in sin. James was talking about perseverance in v. 12. Well, that perseverance that we are to have includes the battle against the temptations of our own sinful hearts. Let me say that another way. God wants you to get through the trial in front of you without giving in to sin.

I used to have one of these books. It was called *Eat This, Not That!* The whole point of the book was to tell you what you should and shouldn't eat from your favorite fast food places. Clever name, right? Most of it was obvious, but every once in a while, I would be totally grossed out at how many calories something I ate actually had in it.



This section is a lot like that book. You can be tempted to sinfully respond to your trial. You can be tempted to say, "God is to blame!" But you can't think that way.

James is going to give us a "Think This, Not That!" Let's look at the first part today.

Don't Think This Way! (verses 13-15)

Read verse 13 again.

No matter how difficult, how challenging, how painful a trial may be, we are to never say that God is the one tempting me.

That word "tempted" in verse 13 is the same word for "trial" that we have seen already. As you saw in the definitions above, trials can work in two ways. They can strengthen you as a believer, or they can lead you to sin. God is in the first response, never the second! When you're tempted to sin, you have no reason to blame God or to think that this trial/temptation is from God!

God does bring trials into your life. Did you know that?

Hopefully you also know that God allows those trials to draw you closer to Him. He does it to strengthen your faith. God never brings trials into your life with the hope that you would sin, or worse, that it would destroy your faith.



Notebook Time (Don't forget to write your answers down!)

Look up 1 Corinthians 10:13. We see the same word for trial/temptation.

- What does this passage tell you about temptation?
- What does it say about God's role in your trial?

James is highlighting a characteristic that we all have in common. Blame shifting. We all have it. We're all good at it, although some are better than others. You probably notice it in your siblings more than yourself. They love to blame you for everything. But you have it too. You have this inherited ability to pass the blame.

You should read Genesis 3:12. Go ahead, I'll wait.

Adam and Eve both ate of the fruit that God told them not to. And when God confronts them, Adam says, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate."

And then God asks Eve, "What is this you have done?" And she says, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Did you catch it? Eve blamed Satan. And Adam...much worse... blamed God.

We all have a tendency to blame shift. The problem is, we can eventually point the finger at God, like Adam did. It's bad enough when you blame your brother for everything. James was worried that these believers would eventually blame God for the trial they were in. God is worried about the same thing for you and me.

When trials hit us hard, and they will, we're tempted in the same way. God insists that we get this:

You can't think like this. God is not to blame. God is not responsible for your temptation to sin.

God is in NO WAY responsible.



Notebook Time (Don't forget to write your answers down!)

- Write out 1 John 1:5 in your notebook. How does this help you think about God and your temptation to sin?

We need to set our minds on the reality that God cannot be tempted by evil. God does not tempt anyone, and He has no desire for evil. Think about it this way: since temptation is an impulse to sin, God cannot be seen as the source. God is not susceptible to any desire for evil. He cannot be infected or contaminated by evil. God is not attracted to it or drawn to it. You should never think that God is responsible for the sin in your life.

Your sin is on you. Read verse 14 again.

Let's try to understand what James is saying.

How are you tempted? James says that you are lured and enticed. I don't know the last time you went fishing, but you catch fish with bait. Worms on hooks. Little plastic fish with hooks all over them. I've never understood how a fish could be so attracted to a lure...but they are. They are attracted to those worms and lures. Animals and fish are lured into the trap or onto the hook because they can't resist the bait. It is just too attractive!

It's the same with us and our temptation. Why is the bait so attractive? Because of our own desires. Because of our own sinful flesh. The bait is just so tempting. We see the opportunity to blame shift, to blame others, to blame God...and we bite...we bite hook and all.

The words in verse 14 are crystal clear. James says that you are to blame for giving into temptation. The fault is entirely yours. It is your own desires that entice you. When you take the bait, it leads to sin.



Notebook Time (Don't forget to write your answers down!)

Although this passage is talking about our sinful response to a trial, we get some good insight into how sin works. In your own words, write out this progression like you're explaining it to a friend who has never heard this before.

A Moment for Clarity

Just to be clear, temptation does not equal sin. Don't think that way, either. When you don't turn away from the bait, it **LEADS** to sin. This is what verse 15 is saying.



When thoughts linger a little too long, they lead us to sin. If we aren't thinking right, that sin can lead us down a dangerous road. And at the end—we're blaming God for EVERYTHING!

It leads you in the opposite direction of where you want to be. God is using this trial to draw you closer. Your sinfulness wants to lead you further away.

Let's try to get our thoughts wrapped around this. Trials are going to happen.

The right response to trials:

- *leads to spiritual growth and endurance*
- *leads to wisdom and to righteousness*
- *and ultimately to God's reward of eternal life*

A sinful response to trials:

- *leads to spiritual apathy and laziness (Think deteriorating. Like your room if you never cleaned it...yikes!)*
- *leads to a lack of wisdom and a greater desire to sin*
- *ultimately leads to death*

This death is the opposite of the eternal life that God wants to reward the faithful with. It's an eternal death. It's eternal punishment and separation from God in hell. This is why James pleads with us in verse 16: **DO NOT BE DECEIVED!**

We can't think this way. We can't think that our sin is someone else's fault. We can't think that God is tempting us to sin. **WE** can't blame God! We have to stop taking the bait.



Notebook Time (Don't forget to write your answers down!)

How has this passage changed the way you think about your sinfulness? Jot your answer in your notebook.



What did you learn?

God wants you to endure your trials without giving in to your sinful heart. We can't think that God is the problem.



Diggin' Deeper

For those who want to do a little bit more. Read 1 John 1:5–2:3. Make as many observations about sin as you can.



Put It into Practice!

Temptation to sinfully respond to our trials is a real thing. We need to know how to respond. Especially what not to think. What are some thoughts you've had about a recent trial that are tempting you to sin? Take a few minutes and write down your answers in your notebook.



Pray

Today I want you to do something a little different. I want you to take the next few minutes and **WRITE OUT** your prayer in your notebook. Pray for the same things you have been, but write it out like you are going to send God this prayer when you're done. I think you'll find that it can really help you focus.