

06 – OUR OVERALL STRATEGY

- ✓ We've been going through case studies in temptation. (We've looked at six different people, and we've learned something from all of them.) Today, I want to piece together an overall strategy for winning over temptation.
- ✓ Before we do that, I'll say one last thing. (It's important that you understand this.) Satan only shows you the fun side of sin. He never shows you the end results.

Prov. 5:3-6 – “The lips of a seductive woman are oh so sweet, her words are smooth and inviting. (That's the part the devil lets you see.) But in the end she will bring you sorrow, sin will pierce your soul like a sword. She is on a path leading to death, and she will lead you straight to the grave. To keep you from considering your outcome, the outcome is hidden, so you can't see it. Stay away from her. Don't go near the door of her house, lest you lose your reputation and your self respect ... lest you end your life full of regret, and you mourn at the last, when your flesh and body are consumed.”

- ✓ Satan never shows you that part. But thank God, the Word does!

Strategy for Dealing with Sin

1.) Renew Your Mind to What God Says About Sin – (4 Points)

a.) Sin Complicates Your Life

- ✓ No one's life ever got easier by sinning. (Even if you don't get caught, sin *still* complicates your life.) Need proof of that? Just start having an affair. You may not get caught. But there's the lying, the guilt, the sneaking around, the looking over your shoulder, covering your tracks, hoping your wife's friends don't see you. It's exhausting!
- ✓ Look at it this way: Temptation is Satan's offer to take all the joy and peace out of your life.

b.) Following Your Flesh Isn't Freedom, It's Bondage

- ✓ It might feel like freedom in the beginning – (and that's how Satan will “sell it”) – but ask any addict. What starts out as “freedom” ends in bondage and destruction.

c.) Consider Yourself Dead to Sin

Romans 6:11 – “Likewise, think of yourselves as being dead to sin.”

- ✓ Another translation reads: “You must continually view yourselves as dead and unresponsive to sin.” Think About It: That's what a dead person is! Entirely unresponsive. (If you doubt that, test it out! Go to the morgue and yell at a corpse. Insult their mother and their best friend. How will they respond? They won't! They're dead.)
- ✓ You could go to the grave of a friend and offer them everything they used to be tempted with – alcohol, women, money. They won't respond to any of it. Dead people don't respond to temptation. So, when Paul says, “Consider yourself dead to sin”, he's really saying, “Choose to be unresponsive. When sin calls your name, don't answer.”

d.) It's Okay If You Suffer

- ✓ This is a “hard sell” in this generation. We don't *like* to suffer. (We're part of the Burger King generation. We want it, “Our Way, Right Away”!)
- ✓ There's only one problem. The kingdom of God doesn't operate by Burger King's slogan. If I've learned anything over the past 47 years of being a Christian, it's this: God is more concerned with my future happiness than He is with my present comfort. When you say “no” to sin, your flesh is going to suffer. But to God, it's not the end of the world, if we suffer.

Phil. 1:29 – “To you, it's been given, in the behalf of Christ; not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

1 Pet. 4:1 – “Since Christ suffered in the flesh [and died for us], **arm yourselves [like warriors] with the same mindset [of being willing to suffer ...]**”

- ✓ **When you’re willing to let your flesh suffer, sin loses its power.**
(Think About It: The only thing sin has to hold over your head is: “If you don’t yield to this temptation, you’ll suffer! If your answer is, “So what?”, then sin has no more leverage.)

2.) Fall in Love with Jesus

James 1:12 – “Blessed is the man that **resists temptation** ... he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised **to them that love Him.**”

- ✓ There’s a connection between loving Jesus and being able to resist temptation. When you love Jesus, you don’t want to hurt Him or bring shame to His Name. That means: One key to resisting is falling in love with Jesus. How do you fall in love with Him? (I’ll give you two ways.)
 - a.) 1 John 4:19 – “We love Him, because He first loved us.” When you first got saved, you had no trouble loving Jesus, because you saw His love as unconditional! (But somewhere along the line, you started questioning that, and your love cooled down.) Start focusing on how much Jesus loves you, and your heart will respond in love.
 - b.) The second way to grow in love is: “Do the first works” (Rev. 2:5). What are the first works? If I said, “Do the first works” in the context of your marriage, you’d have no problem understanding what I meant. What did you do when you were trying to win your wife’s heart (at the first)? You’d take her to fancy restaurants, bring her gifts and cards (for no reason), you’d plan surprises, and do things just to make her life easier. Those were your “first works” in your relationship with your wife.
 - c.) But what were the “first works” in your relationship with Jesus? Only *you* know. In my case, it would look like this. I’d read my Bible every time I got the chance. I’d be at church every time the doors were

open. I’d work for Him. I’d tell all my friends about the love of Christ.

3.) Be Honest With Yourself About Your Weaknesses!

- ✓ I’m not in the habit of quoting unsaved dead guys, but in this case, I’ll make an exception. Socrates said, “Know thyself”. That’s good advice where temptation is concerned. You need to know your weak areas and the things that trigger you. Avoid the things you need to avoid.

Proverbs 22:3 – “A prudent man **foresees the evil, and hides himself**; but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

- ✓ Here’s my paraphrase of that verse: “Smart people know their weaknesses and set up boundaries. ‘Not-so-smart’ people walk straight into temptation.”

4.) Stop Feeding Your Sinful Desires

- ✓ I once heard an illustration that stuck with me. “Feed the cat, and the cat gets bigger and stays. Starve the cat, and the cat gets smaller and leaves.” Don’t go places or watch things that feed wrong desires.

5.) Decide Ahead of Time, How You’ll Respond to Temptation When It Shows Up – (Daniel 1:8)

6.) Hide the Word In Your Heart

Psalms 119:11 – “Your Word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You .” (Prepare a list of “fighting Scriptures”. Feed on the Word in the area of your temptation.)

7.) Trust God for the Things You Want

- ✓ Make the decision that you’re not going to accept any shortcuts. Believe God for what you need and wait patiently for Him.