

Sermon Series: **INSIDE / OUT: The Book of James (1:13-18)**

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

What is the biggest skill required to catch lots of fish?
When a fish is tempted by the bait, it does not understand that there is a consequence. People can be the same, but they don't have to be. Relate this to your life.

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God!*

1. Discuss the meaning of temptation (for help see the summary). Why should we not be surprised when we are tempted? (James 1:13; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Cor 10:13)
2. Why are temptations so alluring? How do we recognize a temptation?
3. What is often our initial reaction when we yield to temptation? What is faulty with this reaction? (John 10:10; James 1:1).
4. Explain how temptation can lead to sin. (James 1:15; 1 John 2:16; 1 Cor 6:18; 1 Cor 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; Romans 8:5)
5. What choices do you have, and what plan can you put in place to resist taking the bait of temptation? What about Christ's example? (Gal 5:13; 1 Cor 3:16; Heb 10:24; Rom 13:12)
6. Read Romans 6:13 and think of yourself as a grand piano, played by Christ, or by a gorilla.

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

The Main Thing:

What is God saying to me about temptation? What will I do about it?

- What are the primary lures that bait me?
- Do I have a choice to take the bait, or not?
- What are my choices?
- Who is affected by my choices, and how?
- What will my plan be?
- Who can help?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV):

James 1:13-18

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. ¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

John 10:10

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Romans 6:13

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness... **8:5** Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires... **13:12** The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

1 Corinthians 3:16

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?... **6:18** Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body... **10:13** 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.

Galatians 5:13

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

1 Timothy 6:11

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:22

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin... **10:24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds...

Sermon Study Summary

James, the half brother of Jesus writes a pastoral letter to the people who were once part of his congregation and who were being persecuted because of their faith in Christ. In James 1:1-12, he talks about our faith being tested through trials. In James 1:13-18 he writes about a second way our faith is tested – through temptations. While trials are typically challenges or hardships that come to us externally, temptations are typically desires that come from within us. Every trial brings temptations with it. How we respond to trials and temptations will both strengthen our faith and draw us closer to God or they will have the opposite effect. James helps us to understand the nature of trials and temptations and shows us how to respond to them in a God pleasing way.

John Ortberg uses the metaphor of fish who are lured to take bait. Once a fish takes the bait, he is finished. Fish have been falling for the bait for centuries; never learning. When it comes to temptation, we humans never learn either. Throughout the Bible we are told stories of men, like Cain and David, took the bait presented through temptation and faced painful and devastating results. Today our newspapers are full of such stories and we wonder how this happens and why this keeps happening to so many people. James (v. 13-18) implies that the heart of the issue is a failure to take the temptation to sin seriously and he gives us a strategy for overcoming temptation.

The first step that James gives us is – Expect to be tempted. (v. 13) Even though temptation can lead to sin, temptation, itself, is not a sin. It is, however an invitation to do something wrong. Even Jesus was tempted (Hebrews 4:15). Sin doesn't take place until we act on the invitation.

The second step to overcoming temptation is to accept responsibility for our sin. (v. 13) One of the reasons we keep caving in to temptation is because we try to excuse ourselves by blaming someone or something else. Sometimes we blame God. When we blame, what we are really saying is that we have no control over our sinful choices; that we can't help it; it is our built in weakness. What we are really doing is blaming God. James makes it very clear God does not tempt or entice us to sin. His very nature is contrary to this and He can't violate His own nature. God wants us to grow closer to Him and in our faith in Him. One of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to reveal the heart of His heavenly Father to us (John 10:10). Satan, on the other hand, will do anything he can to separate us from God (John 10:10). He will do all he can to entice us to take the bait offered in temptation. This is why we pray in the Lord's Prayer for God to lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. Besides blaming God, some people try to justify their sin by blaming other people or circumstances. Sometimes our background, past events, or present circumstances can make us more vulnerable to giving in to temptation but James makes it very clear that we alone must take responsibility for the actions we take. Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire (v. 14).

The third step in resisting temptation is by understanding how temptation leads to sin (v. 14). The first phase of temptation begins with an evil desire. Warren Wiersbe says "temptation is an opportunity to accomplish a good thing in a bad way" – outside the will of God. Brian Clark says an evil desire refers to ONE ultimate desire which makes us most vulnerable to temptation and this desire can be traced back to the book of Genesis. Before Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they had one ultimate desire – to love and live for God. After the fall they died spiritually and their desire and the desire of everyone since then has been to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong – to be our own god and to call our own shots. This desire is what James refers to as evil desire (v. 14) and every other evil desire stems from this desire. The second phase of temptation is deception. Verse 14 uses the words "dragged away" and "enticed". "Dragged away" and "entice" imply deception. Temptation carries with it some bait that appeals to our natural desires and this bait can be so appealing that we often turn a blind eye to the pain, sorrow and hurt that it is linked to. The third phase of temptation is disobedience (v. 15). James uses the analogy of birth. A desire is conceived in the womb of our mind (temptation). If not dealt with (2Cor. 10:5), it will grow and give birth to SIN and death. What we thought would bring us so much joy and happiness actually breaks our heart. James pleads with us to not be deceived (v 16). While sin may seem appealing for a while, it never delivers what it promises. The fourth step in overcoming temptation is to keep our trust in the Lord (v. 16). Unlike Satan, God wants to pour good gifts into our lives. He is with us and He will never leave us or forsake us. He does not deceive us or trick us. He is the Father of heavenly lights, He is not only the Creator of Life but He is the SOURCE OF LIGHT itself. We can totally trust Him.

What does it mean to put our trust in the Lord? First it means to trust in God's word (v. 18). God births light, peace, meaning and satisfaction in us through the Word of Truth. The common thread to living in victory during trials and to living in victory over temptation is the Word of Truth. We need to believe that everything that is truly good and right in life comes from God and that the world has nothing to offer that can even come close to the life that God offers. How do we resist temptation? We need to make a plan in advance about what we will do when temptation baits us. We need to be serious about trusting God's word and not the world. We need to put our faith in Christ and not our culture. We need to deal with temptation right away (1 Cor. 8:18, 1Cor. 10:14, 1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:22). We are not victims. God will strengthen us if we call out to Him. We have the right, the authority in His name and the power in Him to say NO. We must avoid focusing on sinful desires and instead focus on Jesus and His agenda (Rom. 8:5). We need to be in close relationship with other Christ followers (Heb. 10:24). In Romans 13:12 the Apostle Paul challenges us to live with the awareness that the day of the Lord is approaching by focusing our thoughts, mind and energies on Jesus and living all out for Him. We must intentionally spend time with the Lord and look for opportunities to do His work (Gal. 5:13). Ultimately, each of us has a choice to make.

Will we present ourselves to Christ, the master pianist who will produce the beautiful music of His Life through us OR will we hang on to our old nature with the discord and destruction that it produces? What will you choose?