

Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry
Teacher's Guide
Series 1: Lesson #11
"You Were Created to Become Like Christ", Part C
(from *The Purpose Driven Life*¹)

(all green text is for the teacher)

Preparation:

1. Read the section for Day 26-28 in *The Purpose Driven Life*.
2. Review the scripture references in the lesson and related passages in your Bible; there are too many to use in the class, so be selective.
3. Read the teacher's version of the lesson; make notes / changes as desired.
4. Pick up the following from the Jail Ministry Table:
 - attendance/prayer request sheets
 - enough copies of lesson handout for the inmates in your pod (Remember, **do not** staple the pages.)
 - correspondence courses to give out to inmates who desire one
5. Other optional materials to bring:
 - White board marker and eraser
 - Sharpened pencils for inmates to use (be sure to collect all of them before they leave the room)

Before and as students arrive:

1. Welcome students and distribute student handouts
2. Make sure that any inmates who do not have a Bible know that they can fill out an inmate request form to get one that is provided to the jail by the church.
3. Pass the attendance roster / prayer request sheets around.
4. Always extend a greeting of encouragement and hope as inmates are arriving.
5. Open the class / lesson with a prayer.

Focus points for this Lesson:

(main points to emphasize through the lesson and to summarize in conclusion. If white board and marker are available, as you conclude and summarize each point, write it on the board.)

- God uses temptation to develop my character.
- Every temptation is an opportunity to do good.
- Everyone is tempted, even Jesus.
- Temptations are not all around us; they are IN us. They always start in our mind, not in our circumstances.
- God always provides a way out, but the choice is mine.
- I can overcome temptation by
 - refusing to be intimidated or ashamed.
 - recognizing my patterns of temptation.
 - asking God to help me.
 - refocusing my attention away from the temptation.
 - having a support & accountability partner or partners.
 - resisting Satan's attempts.
 - realizing that I am vulnerable.
- Spiritual maturity takes time. I must be patient and persistent.

"You Were Created to Become Like Christ", Part C

Introduction

As with the lessons of the past two Sunday evenings, in our lesson tonight, we will continue to explore our third purpose which is to grow toward becoming like Christ. The focus of this part of the lesson is on the problems and the blessings of temptation.

What exactly is temptation, and what is it not? (Discussion: If students do not bring these points out, be sure to do it yourself. Recall from our last lesson that temptation is from Satan. Temptation is Satan's attempts to entice or seduce us to do something that goes against the will of God. Temptation does not come from God, but He does allow it. Temptation is not a sin.)

Have you ever considered that temptation, instead of being an opportunity to choose to do something bad, could instead be an opportunity to choose to do something good? **How could this be?** (responses) Yes, when we are tempted, we have just as much of an opportunity to do the right thing as we do to do the wrong thing. Every time we choose to do the right thing – God's will – we are growing in the character of Christ, and that brings God great joy! The more we look like Jesus, the more we look like God's sons and daughters.

If we are going to grow in the character of Christ, we must understand what that means exactly by identifying the qualities that He possessed that we should be striving toward. In **Galatians 5:22-23**, the Apostle Paul describes these qualities in what is referred to as The Fruits of the Spirit. A fruit is a product that is produced from growth and maturity. In this case, it is produced by growing and maturing through and by the Holy Spirit and the fruits that grow in us from this process include: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*. As these fruits grow and mature in us we grow to look more and more like Jesus.

Growth and maturity is not easy, however. Sometimes, it can even be excruciating. In the same way that an athlete practices, trains, experiences pain and sometimes even injury in the process of growing to greatness, so must we in our pursuit of growing towards the greatness of Christ. While we can never achieve that degree of greatness, and it certainly won't happen overnight, our growth will be apparent by the good fruits we produce. Sweet, tasty fruit always matures and ripens slowly, and the same is true for us. It will take time. Be patient and persistent.

"God develops the fruit of the Spirit in our life by allowing us to experience circumstances in which we're tempted to express the exact opposite quality. Character development always involves a choice, and temptation provides that opportunity." (p. 202) "We can't claim to be good if we've never been tempted to be bad. We can't claim to be faithful if we've never been tempted to be

unfaithful.” (p. 203) It doesn’t take character to love someone who is lovely and loving to us. But choosing to love someone who has shown outright hatred toward us takes great character.

Day 26 & 27

Growing Through Temptation

How does temptation work? It is a four-step process and Satan uses the same four steps every time. His approach is no secret. Back in the first century, Paul said, *“For we are very familiar with his [Satan] evil schemes.”* (**2 Corinthians 2:11**)

This process is described clearly in **James 1:14-16**. As we study what these four steps are, see if you can identify each of them in this passage on your handout. When you find one, circle it and write the step number above it.

¹⁴We are tempted by our own desires that drag us off and trap us. ¹⁵Our desires make us sin, and when sin is finished with us, it leaves us dead. ¹⁶Don't be fooled, my dear friends.

Step one: Satan identifies a desire in us and plants a thought. It might be an evil desire like envy or revenge, but it could be a legitimate and natural desire such as wanting to be loved and needed. Temptation begins with a thought to give in to an evil desire or to fulfill a legitimate desire in a wrong way or at a wrong time. Temptations are not all around us; they are IN us. They always start in our mind, not in our circumstances.

Mark 7: 21-23

²¹For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²²adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God.”

James 4:1

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it the whole army of evil desires at war within you?

This step is found in verse 14 of James 1 where it says, “by our own desires”.

Step two: Satan plants doubt – doubt about God’s attitude toward sin, doubt that God really means what He says about the consequences of sin. The Bible warns us about this trick in **Hebrews 3:12 (CEV)**, *“watch out! Don't let evil thoughts or doubts make any of you turn from the living God.”*

This step is found in verse 16 where it warns, “don’t be fooled”. At this point, we are just pondering the idea, still weighing our options. It isn’t too hard to tell Satan to take a hike because we aren’t deep into it, yet!

Step three: Satan deceives us. Everything Satan tells us is a lie (or a half-truth which is a lie) and the Bible tells us that he is “the father of lies” (**John 8:44**). Satan will tell you what you want to hear. He might say to us, “Go ahead. You need it. You deserve it. It won’t hurt you. No one will ever know. It is only a little sin. Everyone else is doing it. It will feel good. You will have fun.” Satan has tricked us into rationalizing or justifying what we want to do, because we are listening to his lies and ignoring God!

This step is found in James 1: 14 where it refers to our desires “dragging us off and trapping us”. At this point in the temptation process, changing our minds is unlikely and very difficult because we are trapped and being dragged away. Only with God’s power and help can we escape, but we don’t usually call on Him when we have gotten to this point.

Step four: We give in to Satan and choose to disobey God. This is the point when we actually sin. We have listened to Satan and believed what he said. We have contemplated the idea to the point that we have deceived our own selves and turned away from God. Sin is the result. We find this step in verse 15 of James 1.

There is spiritual warfare going on between God and Satan and we are the prize. This eternal war between good and evil and how we deal with it is expressed beautifully in this old Indian parable:

A great old chief once commented to a young brave, “I have two great dogs fighting within me - the black dog that is evil and the white dog that is good.” Surprised, the young brave quickly asked, “Chief, which one is winning?” to which the wise old man replied, “The one that I feed the most!”

Every time we are tempted, we have the choice of which dog we are going to feed. When we feed the *black dog*, evil grows stronger within us and Satan is getting the prize – another soul. When we feed the *white dog*, our character grows stronger and more like Christ who was able to withstand the ultimate temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane. In this case, God is winning and the prize He is receiving are His sons and daughters safe with Him. The choice of which dog to feed is ours. Would you rather be Satan’s prize or God’s? Are you growing to look more like Jesus or more like Satan? How does that make you feel? (You may wish to allow for responses and discussion as time permits.)

Overcoming Temptation

God has promised us that He will never allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle and that He will provide a “way of escape”.

Verse to remember: 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from

becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

In understanding this verse, (1) how do my personal temptations differ from other people's, and (2) what makes the difference in my ability to handle them? (Discussion should include: (1) All temptations are common to mankind, but some things are going to be more tempting to me than to someone else and vice versa. (2) God has promised that we can overcome any temptation, and He is faithful to do what He says, however, we have to choose Him over Satan – to do good rather than evil, and then we can “find the way out” and “not give in to it”.

Here are some specific steps that we need to take in order to overcome temptation:

1. Refuse to be intimidated by temptation. We must not be ashamed or embarrassed when we are tempted. Everyone is tempted. The Bible tells us that Jesus was tempted, but He never sinned. (**Hebrews 4:15**) The closer we are to God, the more Satan will tempt us.

Here are some examples of how we can allow temptation to make us feel like we have sinned when we haven't.

“God made every one of us sexual beings, and that is good. Attraction and arousal are the natural, spontaneous, God-given responses to physical beauty, while lust is *a deliberate act of the will*. Lust is a choice to commit in our mind what we'd like to do with your body. We can be attracted or even aroused without choosing to sin by lusting. Many people, especially Christian men, feel guilty that their God-given hormones are working. When they spontaneously notice an attractive woman, they assume it is lust and feel ashamed and condemned.” (p. 205) They have become intimidated into thinking that they have sinned when only the temptation to sin has occurred. If, however, they allow the thought to linger and grow, it certainly has the potential to become sin.

We are all distractible and Satan knows how to use that. Sometimes while we are praying, from out of nowhere, we may have a bizarre or evil thought that pops into our mind. Our response is to feel alarm and shame. That is exactly what Satan wants. He plants the thought to distract us from our focus on God. He fears our prayers and wants to stop them. We must not be intimidated by this temptation. We simply need to refocus our thoughts on God rather than getting our thinking all caught up in why we had that thought – which is exactly what Satan wants us to do.

2. We must recognize our patterns of temptation and be prepared for Satan's attacks. Satan knows us well. He knows our weaknesses as well as when and where to attack. To counter His attacks, we must have a plan for how to avoid the situations and circumstances where we know we are most likely to be tempted. As the saying goes, “If you don't want to slip, stay

out of slippery places". How often do we know we are setting ourselves up for trouble, but we do it anyway? How smart is that?!

3. We must request God's help. God is there 24/7 waiting to help us, but He will not without our request. Temptations keep us dependent on God because we can't fight them without His help. Our pride and our shame keep us from asking Him.

Can you think of an example of how pride would keep someone from asking God for help? (Response and discussion) Can you think of an example of how shame would keep someone from asking God for help? (Response and discussion)

4. We must learn to refocus our attention when we are tempted. The harder we try to fight a temptation, the more we are actually feeding the temptation and the stronger it takes hold of us because of the amount of attention we are giving to it. **Example:** The reason most diets fail: They keep the dieters focused on, even obsessed with food - what to eat, what not to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, where to eat, etc. A great deal of the dieters' attention is focused on food, so of course, they are hungry and want to eat!

Here are two good strategies for refocusing our attention when we are tempted:

- 1) Ignore it! One way to ignore the temptation is literally to walk away from the situation. If you don't want to be tempted, don't stay and listen to gossip or sit through a sensual love scene in a movie. Leave!
- 2) Replace it with something better. The best way to replace tempting thoughts with something better is to read or quote scripture. When we start quoting scripture to Satan, he won't stay around long!

Give an example of a temptation you often fight and how you might use one of these strategies to refocus your attention the next time you are being tempted? (Responses and discussion)

5. An excellent method to help overcome our struggle with a recurring or persistent temptation is to seek help from a godly friend or support group. **(Emphasize here that some struggles such as addiction or criminal behavior require professional help, not just the support of caring friends.)** When we are struggling with a problem and we aren't getting better on our own, we need to enlist the support of others to encourage us and to hold us accountable. Satan uses our pride to convince us that we "have things under control" and that our problem is unique and no one else could possibly understand. However, "whatever we can't talk about is out of control." (p. 213) It is humbling to admit to someone else that we have

a problem, but pride is the reason we aren't getting help and aren't getting better. Satan has us right where he wants us!

Ask yourself these questions: What am I pretending isn't a problem in my life? What am I afraid to talk about? Do I need to humble myself and seek the help of godly people who can support and encourage me and hold me accountable? (Questions are for reflection only, unless someone feels the need to respond.)

James 4:6b-7a (NLT) *"God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble." ⁷So humble yourselves before God.*

As long as we are full of pride, we will be under Satan's control!

6. We must resist Satan. The rest of **James 4:7b** says, *"Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you."* How do we resist Satan?
 - a) By accept God's salvation. We can't say no to Satan until we've said yes to Christ because we have no power of our own.
 - b) By using the power in God's Word. Satan fears it. Use it boldly to send him running.
7. We must realize that we are all vulnerable. Given the right circumstances, anyone is capable of sin. We must always be on our guard and avoid placing ourselves in the way of temptation. It is easier to stay out of temptation than to get out of sin. We are reminded of this in **1 Corinthians 10:12 (NLT)** *If you think you are standing strong, be careful, for you, too, may fall into the same sin.*

Verses to remember:

*God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. **James 1:12 (NLT)***

Summary

As long as we live on this earth, we will be fighting in the battle for our soul between heaven and hell. We should not go looking for temptation because enough is going to come our way as it is. Temptation is not a sin, but what we choose to do or not to do with it will determine whether it becomes a sin or a means of growing our character. If we choose not to be intimidated by temptation, to ask God for help, to refocus, to resist, and to be humble, our character grows stronger and we become more like Christ which is our third purpose for living.

Additional Scriptures

from Day 26: Growing Through Temptation

John 8:44

1 Peter 5:8

Matthew 26:41

Ephesians 6:10-18

1 Thessalonians 5:6,8

1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8

Ephesians 4:27

Hebrews 4:15

Hebrews 4:16

Proverbs 4:26-27

Proverbs 16:17

Psalms 50:15

from Day 27: Defeating Temptation

Job 31:1

Psalms 119:37a

Proverbs 14:16

Romans 12:21

Hebrews 3:1

2 Timothy 2:8

Philippians 4:8

Proverbs 4:23

2 Corinthians 10:5

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

James 5:16

1 Corinthians 10:13

Romans 3:23

James 4:6-7a

Ephesians 6:17

Jeremiah 17:9

Day 28 - Conclusion It Takes Time

Verse to remember: Philippians 1:6 (NCV)

God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again.

Each of us is a work in progress. "Spiritual growth, like physical growth, takes time. While we worry about *how fast* we grow, God is concerned about how strong we grow. God views our lives *from* and *for* eternity so he is never in a hurry. Discipleship is the process of conforming to Christ. Christlikeness is the destination where we'll eventually arrive, but our journey will last a lifetime." So far we've studied three aspects of this journey – believing (our relationship with God), belonging (our relationships with others), and becoming (our discipleship). Everyday, God wants us to become a little more like Him. (²Day 28)

There are no shortcuts to maturity. Think about the growth of a weed and an oak tree. It only takes a few days to grow a large weed to maturity, but it can be easily broken because its stem is not strong or pulled up without much effort because its roots are shallow. It can be beaten down by a storm, eaten up by an insect, and wither away in a drought. By contrast, it takes decades to grow an oak tree, but when it is mature, it is incredibly strong. Its strength comes from roots that go deep into the ground as well as very hard but resilient wood. Over the years it will weather strong storms, survive insect attacks and live through

drought, all threats to its survival which ultimately cause it to grow stronger and stronger.

In what ways can we compare the maturing of our character to the growth and maturing of an oak tree? (Responses and discussion.)

We need a lot of time to grow to maturity because: (1) We have a lot to learn and a lot to unlearn. (2) It takes time for us get past our pride and humbly face the truth about ourselves. (3) It takes time to develop good habits and qualities. God is patient and we must be, too.

If we will cooperate with God, the process will be much smoother and easier. Some ways that we can do this include: (1) Believing that God is working in our life even when we don't see it or feel it. (2) Keeping a notebook or journal of lessons learned; keeping a list of our prayers and God's answers. (3) Being patient with God and with ourselves. (4) Not getting discouraged.

Regardless of how hard it is or how long it takes, we must persevere in growing to be like Jesus. God created each one of us to be His child. Whether or not we are is up to us. One day, the Lord will come again. How wonderful it will be on that Day of Judgment to stand before the throne of God and be recognized us as one of His children because of our resemblance to our brother, Jesus, His only begotten Son!

1 John 4:9 (NLT)

God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

There is a spiritual war going on inside each of us, and the outcome is in our own hands. The outcome only has two options, however. God wants us because He loves us and wants us to live in a relationship with Him for eternity. Satan wants us to destroy us and leave us in torment for eternity. Which one do you choose?

Additional Scriptures

Ephesians 4:13

Colossians 3:10a

Habakkuk 2:3

2 Corinthians 3:18b

Deuteronomy 7:22

Romans 13:12

Ephesians 4:22-25

Colossians 3:7-10, 14

1 Timothy 4:15

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Psalms 102:18

2 Timothy 3:14

Hebrews 2:1

James 1:4

Closing the lesson / class:

Close the lesson with a **prayer**

Offer the booklet, "**Am I Saved?**" to any who may want a copy.

Offer **correspondence course packets** to those who desire them.

Let inmates know that **if they desire to be baptized**, they should fill out an inmate request form on which they should indicate that they wish to be baptized by someone from Snellville Church of Christ. Invite them if there is time to stay and talk with you about this after the others leave.

References:

¹Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life***. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

² Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life Prayer Journal, Days 19-21***. Inspirio, 2002.

All scripture references are from <http://www.biblegateway.com/>
