

# **The Book of James**

## **Enduring Temptation**

Lesson #3 for October 18, 2014

Scriptures: James 1:12-21; Psalm 119:11; Genesis 3:1-6; Titus 3:5-7; Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22.

1. This lesson is all about temptation! When was the last time we had a Sabbath school lesson entirely about temptation? Have you ever heard an entire sermon about temptation?

We all have experienced it. We resolve not to give in to temptation, but in the heat of the battle, our resolve melts and—much to our own sense of shame and self-loathing—we fall into sin. Sometimes it seems that the more we focus on not sinning, the more powerless against temptation we feel, and the more hopeless our condition appears. We wonder if indeed we are saved at all. It's hard to imagine any serious Christian who hasn't wondered about his or her own salvation, especially after having just fallen into sin. *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath, October 11.

2. We believe that temptation precedes and often leads to sin. So, shouldn't we be focusing more on temptation instead of focusing so much attention on sin and subsequent forgiveness? Traditionally, the church has tended to focus on sin and what can be done about sin *after* it has occurred. That is too late! We need to focus on temptation and how to curb the temptations and, therefore, avoid sin, thus changing our lives so our lives can be more like that of Jesus. (DA 671.2)
3. James 1:12-15 suggest that God can help us overcome every kind of temptation. But, where do temptations usually come from?
4. Read James 1:13-15. We must admit that most temptations come from within. Is sin always preceded by temptation? Or, do some sins just come naturally without even the necessity of being preceded by temptation? If we could recognize temptation quicker and more directly, would it be easier to avoid sin? Do we always recognize temptation?
5. Both temptation and sin start in the mind. We only sin because we choose to do so. No one can force us to sin. (Romans 6:16-18)
6. Would it be true that if we could avoid temptation, we could avoid sin? Read Ephesians 6:17; Psalm 119:11; and Luke 4:8. How does God's Word protect us against temptation?
7. We need to be honest about a few points before we answer that question. It is not a sin to be tempted. Jesus was severely tempted. But, He did not sin. The problem is not the temptation but how we respond to it. Because Jesus was so in tune with His Father, He immediately recognized temptation when it came; and He rebuffed it. Never did the Devil find an advantage in Him. Did Jesus ever have to overcome a bad habit? Did Jesus ever suffer temptations from within? How does focusing on the life of Jesus protect us from temptation and sin? Could we get so familiar with the story of Jesus that when tempted we would immediately recognize the hazard and the danger and, like Jesus, turn a deaf ear to the Devil? Remember that temptation does not become sin until we yield to it.
8. James 1:13-15 tell us that temptation leads to sin which, in turn, leads to death. Each of the verbs there is connected with giving birth. Are we going to allow temptation to give birth to sin in our lives? The Devil would love to take control of our lives until he can destroy us.
9. Look at the first sin on this earth. Trace the story of Eve from the point where she left Adam until she ate the fruit. At what point did she actually sin? When was she tempted? What was her sin? Was eating fruit inherently evil? No! The basic root for sin is turning our trust away from God and placing it with the Devil. The Devil has been exceedingly successful with his deceitful methods. He not only deceived one third of the angels, (Revelation 12:4,7-9) but also

he has won most of the people living on this planet.

10. When we are tempted, what is our response? Why is sin attractive to human beings? What is it in us that responds to Satan's temptations? Is there some defect in us based on how God made us that makes us susceptible to Satan's temptations? No! But, God has given us choice.
11. Ellen White had some very direct words to say about temptation and its results.

By earnest prayer and living faith we can resist the assaults of Satan, and keep our hearts unspotted from pollution.

The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel any one to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion cannot overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness.—Ellen G. White, "Christian Privileges and Duties," *Signs of the Times*, October 4, 1883, par 4; *Mar* 225.6; *OFC* 331.5.

12. Read James 1:16-17. What is the relationship between these two verses and the previous three verses? Who is the Father of lights? (Genesis 1:14-18) What are the most important gifts that God has given you? (Compare James 1:17 with John 3:3.)
13. Let us be very clear. God wants everyone to be saved. Of course, we recognize that not everyone is going to be saved. Far too many of us have fallen to Satan's temptations. So, what is God's answer? Read Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:23; and James 1:18. Is being born again or being born by the Spirit a complete solution to the problem of temptation? How is salvation connected to the new birth? (See John 3.)
14. Agreeing with Jesus, several of the Gospel writers have connected salvation with the new birth. What is necessary for God to deal with sin (Romans 8:3) and to bring us back into harmony with Himself? First, we must understand how we got into this trouble. Read Genesis 2-3. By proving unequivocally who told us the truth in the beginning, Jesus's life and death answered Satan's questions in the great controversy and have made it clear whose side we need to be on if we want to be saved.
15. Read James 1:19-20. How are these verses related to the prior ones? Is the life of one who has been born again always supposed to be under good control? If we lose our temper, have we banned the Holy Spirit from our minds?
16. Why do our words so often get us into trouble? Words can be used in many ways. They can be very helpful, and they can be incredibly destructive. Is it possible for people living in our day to hear the direct voice of God guiding them?

When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, "Be still, and know that I am God." Ps. 46:10.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 363.3; *ST*, August 27, 1896 par. 8; *MH* 58.3; compare *FE* 440.2.

17. What would happen if we always offered a silent word of prayer before entering into any major discussion with others? How much of our conversation is God-directed? How often do we get in trouble with our words? Read Proverbs 15:1; Isaiah 50:4; Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; and Colossians 4:6. What did the crowds who followed Jesus and listened to Him think about His words? Words can be very powerful, but they can also be dangerous. There is certainly no place for Christians to use vulgar language. We should avoid those who use such words. Since we can never take back words that we have spoken, it is always best to ask for God's guidance whenever we are going to say anything of major significance.
18. Read James 1:21. How do you understand this verse? What happens if God implants His word in our hearts? Is that the same as being born of the Spirit? How do we put away all impurity and separate ourselves from wickedness? The word translated "put away" can also mean to remove clothing. (See Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22,25; Colossians 3:8; Hebrews 12:1; 1 Peter 2:1;

Acts 7:58; Isaiah 64:6; James 2:2; and Zechariah 3:3-4.) What is Zechariah 3 suggesting should happen to the our old, filthy rags representing our sins? Get rid of them!

19. Notice the contrast between Zechariah's picture and the popular Christian image that we just need to cover our dingy, old, soiled garments of sin with Christ's righteousness! Does anyone in real life just cover up his old clothes with clean clothes? Is Zechariah's metaphor another way of saying we need to be reborn? What does it mean to put on Christ's righteousness? If we put on Christ's righteousness and do our best with the Holy Spirit's help to live like Jesus, dying daily to our old sinful ways, wouldn't that be like a new birth?
20. But, let us remember that we cannot do this on our own. The new birth is always the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as we are not responsible for our first birth, we are not responsible for the new birth. But, in the case of our new birth, we have a choice. We can allow God to implant the Holy Spirit in our lives, or we can refuse to allow Him to do so.

The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.2.

If you have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 67.3-68.0; *LHU* 274.4.

21. So, if we allow Jesus to come into our lives and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the new birth, how do we come to regard sin? Consider the following words.

God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man; but however trifling this or that wrong act may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God. Man's judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. (*Steps to Christ* 30.1) Compare Luke 18:9-14.

22. And what happens if we have our own little pet sins which we keep repeating?

Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire, persistently cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. Every sinful indulgence strengthens the soul's aversion to God. The man who manifests an infidel hardihood, or a stolid indifference to divine truth, is but reaping the harvest of that which he has himself sown. In all the Bible there is not a more fearful warning against trifling with evil than the words of the wise man that the sinner "shall be holden with the cords of his sins." Proverbs 5:22. (*SC* 34.1)

23. Do we really believe that "Then their evil desires conceive and give birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15, *GNB*) Could Seventh-day Adventist

Christians living this close to the second coming allow their own evil desires to do this to them? As human beings, we can be very clever at rationalizing sin. But, God has provided a way of escape. How often do we use it? (Ephesians 6:17; 1 Corinthians 10:13)

24. Why is it so much easier for most people to spend an hour watching television or surfing the Internet or even reading a novel than it is to spend an hour reading the Bible or the writings of Ellen White? Do we clearly recognize what benefits are available as a result of spending time with God and His Word?

A nickel per verse—that was the deal young Barry’s mother made with him and his brother. For every Bible verse memorized, they were five cents closer to their goal of buying a big Snickers candy bar or Sugar Babies, a soft, chewy milk caramel candy. In order to reach their goals faster, the boys combed through their Bibles, looking for the shortest verses to memorize! But one day, memorizing Scripture became more than just a way to buy candy.

“ ‘When I was 13,’ ” remembers Barry, “ ‘I memorized Proverbs 1:10, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” That very day, two young men from my neighborhood asked me to “help them get back at someone.” I felt the power of Proverbs 1:10 reverberating in the corners of my spirit, and on the strength of that verse, I refused to go with them.

“ ‘They didn’t just get back at someone, they murdered someone,’ ” Barry said. “ ‘Their sad saga was played out on the evening news and the judicial conclusion was life in prison. One of the gentlemen, in fact the gentleman who asked me to go along said, “But, I didn’t do it, the other guy did it.” But it didn’t make any difference; they both received the penalty of life in prison. This means that had I gone along with them, even if I had stood there quoting Scripture, I would have received the same penalty’ ” (Barry Black, quoted by Arcadia Kust, “Senate Chaplain Barry Black Speaks at Christ Church of Oak Brook,” *Doings Weekly*, July 23, 2012, <http://burridge.suntimes.com/news/13950434-418/senate-chaplain-barry-black-speaks-at-christ-church-of-oak-brook.html>).

Because of the power of that verse and of his determination to claim and follow it, rather than living out his life behind bars, Dr. Barry Black serves as the sixty-second chaplain of the U.S. Senate.—*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, page 37-38.

25. We look with horror on the possibility that a young boy could do something foolish and spend his life in jail. But, in reality, how does that compare with Christians who fritter away their lives in “little sins” and end up losing eternal life?
26. Could you make a list of the evil desires in your own life? Have you experimented with God’s ways of overcoming those evil desires? How much time each week do we spend getting better acquainted with Jesus and working on our faith relationship?
27. Memorizing Scripture has almost become a lost art. Is it time for us to resurrect that lost skill? There is a free app available on the Internet that can be very helpful in memorizing Scripture. Go to <http://Scripturetyper.com> to get the details. If you do not have a computer, try putting passages of Scripture or perhaps paragraphs from Ellen White on flash cards and memorizing them.
28. Hasn’t the time come for Christians to abandon their evil desires and stand firmly on holy ground? Is that really possible?

© 2014, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged.

[Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last Modified: August 30, 2014

Z:\My Documents\WP\SS\TG-Hart\James\SS-3-James-2014\_10\_18-Fin+.wpd