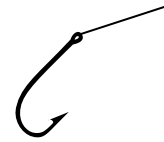


How to Handle Temptation

James 1:13-18



Source of Temptation (1:13-14a)

☐ In James 1:12-13, James transitions from trials to temptation.¹

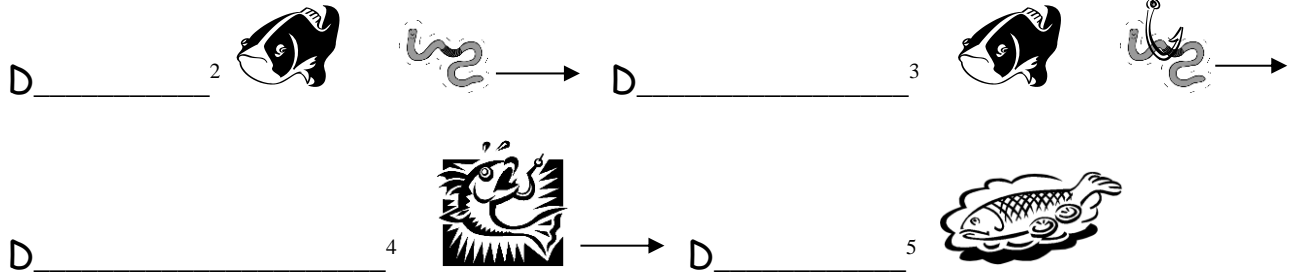
1. Read James 1:12-18. What does James say about the source of temptation? (1:13-14a)

Sequence of Temptation (1:14b-15)

☐ Verse 14 begins, “But each person is tempted when...”

2. What happens in the temptation process? How would you describe the sequence?

☐ Here is one way to illustrate the sequence, each word beginning with a *d*:



¹ The words ‘trial’ (*peirasmos*) in verse 12 and ‘tempt’ (*peirazō*) in verse 13 come from the same Greek root (*peira-*). However, the context demands a distinction. God does ‘test’ His people (e.g., Genesis 22:1, Hebrews 11:17). But God does not tempt anyone. The HCSB captures well the connection between verse 12 and verse 13.

² The Greek word (*epithumia*) translated ‘evil desire’ in verse 14 is generally neutral. In other words, it can mean either good desire or bad desire depending on the context. How can we differentiate between good and bad desires? In this passage, ‘desire’ is clearly bad because it leads to ‘sin.’ Sin may be defined as ‘any action or attitude that is opposed to the authority and moral will of God.’ As believers, we have been forgiven of our sins and received a new life (through Christ’s death and resurrection). However, we are not yet perfect. Our desires are not entirely pure, and we still sin (1 John 1:8). James emphasizes that we are responsible for falling into temptation to sin. Other influences include evil spirits, including the devil (or Satan) who tempted Eve in the garden (James 4:7); and ‘the world’ – that is, the worldview and lifestyle of fallen humanity that are opposed to God (James 1:27, 4:4).

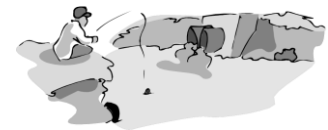
³ The language of verse 14 reflects the fisherman’s attempt to draw fish into a trap – a kind of deception.

⁴ I have used ‘disobedience’ to represent ‘sin’ in general.

⁵ Sin results in death. The Bible is consistent and clear on this point. It is God’s warning from the beginning. He said to the first man, ‘[disobey and] you will surely die’ (Genesis 2:17). Paul wrote, ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Romans 6:23). This includes physical and spiritual death – i.e., separation from life and separation from the Source of life. This is the condition of everyone who has not been restored to relationship with God through faith in Christ. Of course, God’s children are not sinless (1 John 1:8). However, the Christian’s relationship with God is based on Christ’s righteousness, which is ‘credited’ to us through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 4:18-25, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Still, sin in the Christian life harms ‘fellowship’ with God, and has various destructive effects.

Solution to Temptation (1:16-18)

- ❑ Verse 13 makes it clear that God is *not* the source of temptation. What *is* God the source of?
 3. Read James 1:16-18. What does James say about God? How is God's grace contrasted with the temptation process?⁶
- ❑ God is *not* the problem. He is the solution because of His goodness and grace.
 - God is the source of "every generous act and every perfect gift" (1:17a, HCSB).⁷ God is "the Father of lights; with him there is no variation or shadow cast by turning" (1:17b, HCSB).⁸ God does not change like the heavenly bodies he created. He is always good.
- 4. Considering the teaching of this passage (and other passages you may remember), how can we handle temptation? How can we resist being tempted into sin?



📖 "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13, HCSB).

Reflection/Application (Advice for the Tempted)

- Accept Responsibility.
 - Accept responsibility for your own sins (wrong attitudes and actions). Do not blame other people, circumstances, or fate. Certainly do not blame God.
- Change your Perspective and Heart (by God's grace).
 - Change your perspective from the "fish perspective" to God's perspective. God has given us His word and His Spirit to enlighten and instruct us.
 - Change your "diet." Develop an appetite for God, not "worms." By realizing God's goodness and grace (see below), we become more attracted to God than "fish bait."
- Realize God's Goodness and Grace.⁹
 - Reflect on God's goodness, especially the gift of salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - Realize God's grace. The Christian is a new creature, no longer a slave to sin. God gives us the resources to handle temptation. His Spirit empowers us to say "no".

⁶ Verse 18 is in direct contrast to verse 15. Sin gives birth to death (v. 15). God gives birth to life (v. 18). This refers to the new birth (regeneration) that comes through the 'word of truth' – the good news of Jesus Christ. By His grace, God gives life (abundant and eternal) to those who have received Christ.

⁷ More literally, 'every good act of giving and every perfect gift.' Every good thing is from God, and every thing God gives is good.

⁸ These words were used to refer to astronomical phenomena. Of course, much of the change we observe in the heavenly bodies is change only from our perspective. The image is still fitting. Regardless of our changes in perspective, God is always good.

⁹ If you have not received Christ, you are still hooked in sin, which results in death. Trust Christ and be set free! If you have received Christ, your response to temptation is still a serious matter! As Paul wrote, 'Should we continue in sin...? Absolutely not!' (Romans 6:1-2) 'Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But... offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness' (Romans 6:13, HCSB).