

*This week we are discovering what practical wisdom James has to share about dealing with temptation. James is insistent that the way we live matters, holy living matters; but there are numerous things that draw us away from love, righteousness and mercy and towards sin: this is the process we call temptation. **Read James 1: 13 – 18.***

**1. The Source of Temptation. Verses 13 – 15.**

- God is not tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone, He is incapable of any contact with evil. It might seem logical to blame an all-knowing God for our falling into sin but that ignores His gift of our free will and the fact that we have an active rôle in our own lives. Three ways of looking at temptation:
  - It's produced internally by our own 'evil desires' and then fed by our external actions.
  - Legislating our lives to get a hold over temptation is so difficult because the 'evil desires' are so strong. Only by relying on the Holy Spirit to help will we get anywhere with resisting temptation.
  - The Greek word for desire is '*epithumia*' and it can be a very strong yearning for something good. So our desires might be good but they can become all-consuming.
- When desire receives the assent of the will, sin is 'born' and the accumulated sins of a sinful life lead to death, which is the exact antithesis of the 'crown of life' given to those who endure trials (verse 12.)

**2. The Temptation of Jesus.**

- Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert for a 40-day fast, **Matt. 4: 1-11**. He was very hungry so the devil tempted Him to provide food for Himself, to prove His identity as the Son of God and to claim His inheritance: all the Kingdoms of the world and their splendour.
- All these things Jesus could do or had been promised Him. He responded to Satan with scripture.
- Knowing Jesus was Divine, Satan couldn't tempt Him to do bad things, so instead he tempted Jesus to desire good things, things that were rightfully His – but not in the way God wanted Him to have them.
- This can happen to us too. We may not be really tempted to do something awful but do we want to provide for ourselves and our family, to make a mark in the world, to realise our inheritance? YES! But do we want to do it God's way? NO! God's way is hard, out of my control and rarely immediate.
- Jesus' earthly path meant a life of rejection, abuse and betrayal: it ended in humiliation and crucifixion.

**3. God, the author and Giver of all Good Things. Verses 16 – 18.**

- 'Don't be deceived' is a bit like 'Now look here'! Or 'listen up'! Every good giving and every perfect gift comes from our heavenly Father who, unlike us, never changes. The gift and the way it is given are faultless. God knows what is best for us and what will lead to our sanctification.
- God chose to give us new life through 'the Word of truth': the Bible. It pays us to get to know our Bibles better so that through it the Holy Spirit can minister the Truth to us and help us overcome temptation.
- However, there will inevitably come a time when we messily succumb to temptation again. What then?
  - Instead of sitting in failure with a perverse sort of pride, remember God forgives when we confess our sins: **1 John 1:9** and knows how fragile we are: **Psalms 103: 14**. Ask Him to cleanse and forgive us.
  - Before the Last Supper, Jesus washed His disciples' feet, explaining to Peter that his body was clean, it was just his feet that were messy. If we're children of our Heavenly Father, we are washed clean of sin by the death of Christ once and for all, but we'll make mistakes and end up with 'mud on our feet'.
  - Jesus will clean us up and we should be doing the same for each other: the journey of life together means being willing to be embarrassed, to show each other mercy and give us all the freedom to fail.

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**Questions for Discussion.**

1. Can you think of some Biblical characters who were severely tested by God? Were the ultimate purposes of God in their lives thwarted by the testing?
2. In tempting Jesus, what was the Devil trying to get Him to do? Look at how Jesus' perfect answers revealed He knew exactly what the devil was aiming for.
3. Can we think of a time when everything was going wrong in our life: how did we feel about God at the time? Did it ever occur to us that the experience might lead us towards becoming more like Jesus?
4. Do we see trials as a gift? Do we trust God to always give us whatever is best for us?
5. When we 'fail again' are we willing to let others 'clean us up' and willing to do the same for them?