

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“Common Mistakes We Make When Tempted Pt.1”

By Brian Meade

One of the great challenges to the Christian’s faith is the constant barrage of temptation that comes from the devil’s direction. We are taught by God in the Bible to expect it (2 Timothy 3:12), to resist it (James 4:7), and not to let it overtake us (1Thessalonians 3:5; James 1:12), and yet there are times when Christians yield way too easily to temptation’s call. Some may do this because they tend to make the same mistakes, time after time, without ever learning what they are doing wrong.

But we all need to learn from our mistakes in an effort to do better. To the Christian— who loves the Lord and wants very much to please God— temptations are an unwanted hindrance to our spiritual lives.

The fact remains, how do we better ourselves in enduring temptations to sin? I would suggest: by looking back in hindsight and discovering what we could have done differently to stay out of sin. We may not ever reach perfection in this life, but we should strive to be perfect (1 John 1:8-10).

We may not stop sinning completely this side of eternity, but we can limit the mistakes we may make (as best we can) that render us vulnerable to every whim to sin. When we do this, it will give us an advantage in this war!

#1 Not Preparing To Face Temptation On A Daily Basis.

Satan never stops to take a holiday from his work in tempting all of humanity to sin (1 Peter 5:8-9). That’s why we must be prepared to face temptations every day! And if we fail to prepare everyday, do we not invite failure in facing temptation? As someone once said, “If we fail to plan, we are planning to fail.” That’s generally true in most areas of life, and also in the spiritual as well. We need to be alert, sober, and diligent— even from the very start of every day.

The question then comes, how do we start our day? Most people, who are not Christians, generally never think about the fact that the Devil is out on the prowl, behind the scenes working against us. But does the Christian use the knowledge of the unseen battles to see the need to prepare our hearts and minds to withstand Satan’s schemes? (2 Corinthian 2:11)

Do we remember the need for our spiritual armor as we should? Paul told the Ephesians (and us too) to wear the armor God supplies (Ephesians 6:10-18). If we are in a spiritual battle, and we are, do we not need to be intentional in using the weapons and armor every day? Paul said to Christians, “*Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*” (Ephesians 6:11) If Paul told them to intentionally put these on, then it is something that is *not* automatic for the Christian. In order to effectively use the sword of the Spirit, we must study and become skillful in its use.

Just like an army that goes out unprepared or ill-equipped to meet the opposing enemy will quickly be defeated — so will we be defeated in the spiritual battle, if we fail to prepare! May we avoid this common mistake by our



neglect or apathy in failing to prepare. But rather let us do all that we can to be ready, all the time. We prepare for temptation by:

(1) Study, Meditation, & Memorization of God’s Word.

Careful study to know what exactly what sin is, how God looks at our sins, and examples of God’s punishment for sin will help reinforce the need to withstand temptation in our own lives.

We are also strengthened when we read the example of David in Psalm 119:11, “*Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You.*” God’s word is a very effective weapon for us, as we follow Jesus’ example. He used it skillfully against Satan’s temptations in Matthew 4:1-11. Particularly, in verses 4, 7, and 10, Jesus uses the phrase “*It is written*” to answer every temptation. In order for us to do that, we must have a good knowledge of the Scriptures. That’s why Bible study prepares us to face temptation and is a safeguard to our spiritual life.

(2) By praying every day for God’s help.

Jesus taught His disciples the need to go to prayer in times of temptation when He taught them how to pray in Matthew 6:13, “*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*” At Gethsemane, Jesus instructed the disciples, “*Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation.*” (Mark 14:38) We still need those words today! We can only do so much in our own strength— we need the help that God can and will provide!

(3) Knowing our convictions beforehand.

In order to be properly prepared to withstand temptation, we need to know what we believe sin is, and have that firmly in our minds. We need to have deep convictions about what is immoral behavior— so that it can be avoided as much as is in us! Christians should already know that drinking alcohol, even in what some call moderation, is still sinful (Galatians 5:21); that fornication is always sin— even if two people are in love or about to be married (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4); that gambling is a sin even if it’s for charity or in small amounts (Colossians 3:5); that forsaking the assembly of the saints for trivial reasons— when we are not sick or having to work or hindered beyond our control— is sinful (Hebrews 10:25).

Take the example of Joseph in Genesis 39:7-9, “*It came about after these events that his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”*”

I want you to notice in that reading, that Joseph already knew what he believed about what Potiphar’s wife intended to do. He called it “*great evil*” and sin against God’s law. He didn’t have to think or question about it, “Is this really a sin?” We need to know these answers well before being tempted with strong desire to do commit any sin. If we don’t know, we’re unprepared.

And having little or no convictions about moral sins is exactly what Satan would love for us to have when he tempts us. But when we are strong in our convictions, we are able to withstand and endure temptation without yielding.

#2 Running Away From Spiritual Protection.

Once we have God’s protection in our lives, it is a grave mistake to run away from what builds us up and makes us strong in times of temptation. But isn’t that what many people (including myself) have done, at least at times, to give in to the desires for sin? (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:7-9)

I do believe we can all look back to those times and say, “I wished I had grabbed my Bible and read it” or “I wished I had gone to God in prayer for help with this temptation.” But the fact remains, that we didn’t do those things. Why? Because we ran from God’s protection instead of running to it.

One story from the Old Testament illustrates this very well— the story of Jonah. In the Beginning of the book of Jonah, God calls Jonah to preach His word to the city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:2). But instead, Jonah has other plans, “*But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.*” Jonah’s desires, was not God’s desires.



That is exactly where Jonah went wrong, and that's where we go wrong in fleeing "from the presence of the Lord." We should always want to be just as near as we can be to God, and the doing of His will, so we can withstand temptation better!

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris, Karey Trimble.
Katie Ward Coburn.

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Paul Johnson
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #1: "Sacrifices for the Kingdom of God"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Fred Johnson
The Book of Acts (Jason Longstreth)
Page 29, Question #1

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Fred Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Lee Busby
Psalm 62:6-8
Song Leader: Paul Busby
Lord's Supper: Doug George
Assisting: Paul Busby & Chris Callahan
Singing Service: Men of the Congregation Lead in Singing
Invitation: Fred Johnson
Closing Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

May 1st:

Auditorium Bible Class: Russell Briggs
Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther (Mike Willis)
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Invitation: Adam Harris
Song Leader: Dan Cottrell
Closing Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.