

## Lesson Two

# WHEN GOOD MEN ARE TEMPTED

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There is a much deeper, more serious problem going on inside the walls of the church and in the hearts of the men inside that church than I ever could have imagined. It began a process for me—a process that lasted decades. I read every single book on the subject of sexually addictive and compulsive behavior that I could find; I talked with specialists and therapists around the United States; I met with men in small groups; I surveyed thousands of people, both men and women, all over the United States, to discover as much as I could about sexually compulsive/addictive behavior, so that I could see if there weren't some key principles that would enable men—good men, followers of Jesus Christ—to be able to resist the temptations to compromise themselves morally.

The good news is I was able to find those principles—principles that are based upon not only Biblical research and personal experience, but the best psychological studies that are out there.

### I. The temptation cycle (James 1:13-15):

- A. It is important that we understand the temptation cycle and have a strategy to be able to break that cycle.

- B. There is a four-stage temptation cycle (identified in the Book of James) and a four-stage addictive cycle (identified by psychologists); they perfectly coordinate and coincide with one another.

1. Stage One:

*Enticement* (term used by James)

*Preoccupation* (term used by psychologists)

- a. Enticement – imagining how good something is.
- b. Preoccupation – takes place when we find ourselves obsessing over something we've done in the past that gave us pleasure and imagining what it will be like in the future.
- c. The only part of our person that is being used is our mind; it is our imagination.

2. Stage Two:

*Conception* (James)

*Ritualization* (psychologists)

- a. **Conception – When the \_\_\_\_\_ of the behavior is conceived in the mind and involves a physical activity, we move from a thought to the conception.**
- b. Ritualization – a seemingly harmless act that precedes acting out (e.g., surfing the internet without accountability).

### 3. Stage Three:

*Birth* (James)

*Acting out* (psychologists)

- a. When we go from enticement to conception, (from preoccupation to ritualization), we can be sure 100% of the time we will act out.

### 4. Stage Four:

*Death* (James)

*Shame* (psychologists)

- a. Death – separation or alienation/isolation. When we begin to act out sexually in a sinful sort of way, we are isolating ourselves from God, from our wife if we're married and from our close friends. In essence, we are choosing an illusion of intimacy for real intimacy.
- b. Psychologists don't use the term *death*; they use the term *shame*.
  - Guilt is when I feel bad about what I've done.
  - Shame is when I feel bad about who I am.
- c. If I do something that I consider to be wrong enough times, I become ashamed of that; I become a man who has a shame-based personality; I become a person who wants to hide.

d. \_\_\_\_\_ is a dangerous thing, and the tragedy is that churches can oftentimes become an environment that actually encourages shame.

- As believers in a church, we have a very high moral standard.
- There are certain behaviors that are very taboo, like sexual sins.
- Because we don't want other people to see us as unspiritual or less spiritual than them, the temptation within the context of a church is to pretend we've got our act together a whole lot more than we do.
- We end up living behind this mask of spirituality.

C. Jesus taught us to ask God to never let us have an opportunity to sin when we have a desire to sin.  
(Matthew 6:13) If opportunity and desire intersect, we will almost always make a bad decision.

II. When good men are tempted, they break the temptation cycle:

A. By controlling their thoughts. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

1. Neural pathways – the pathways that are created in the brain when we think a thought.

2. When we stop thinking a thought, that neural pathway in our brain is going to begin to fade, and eventually it will disappear. (Romans 12:1-2)
3. We control our thoughts by:
  - a. Rejecting all lies and impure thoughts. We are able, by the grace of God, to have pure minds.
  - b. Meditating on scripture. (Psalm 1:1-2; Joshua 1:8-9)

**B. By removing all \_\_\_\_\_. When we're strong, we must guard ourselves from times of weakness. (1 Corinthians 6:18)**

1. It's essential that we protect ourselves from rituals, triggers and temptation.
2. By removing the ritual, there is no opportunity to act out.
3. You've got to identify *your* rituals, and you have to ruthlessly and aggressively get rid of *every* ritual.

**III. When good men are tempted, they \_\_\_\_\_ with their band of brothers. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)**

- A. The idea that we can stand alone is ludicrous—it is crazy.

- B. We need brothers to provide us with strength, support and encouragement.

**IV. When good men are tempted, they receive divine healing. (James 5:16)**

- A. There are experiences that you've had in your past that have wounded you; that wound needs to be healed in order for your compulsive behavior to be under control completely.
- B. I encourage you to get alone with the Lord, and as you're praying, go back to that moment, as painful as it was, and invite Jesus to join you there. Go there with the expectation that He is going to heal you.

**V. The enemy may take your life, but he's not going to take the freedom that you have as a new and good man in Jesus Christ. I challenge you, on this day, to come up with a specific strategy to break the temptation cycle, to lock arms with a band of brothers and to seek healing from the Lord.**

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To learn more about Bill Perkins and his book, *When Good Men Are Tempted*, visit [billperkins.com](http://billperkins.com).

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

Share your answers with your group.

1. Talk about your week, briefly identifying the highlights or the concerns, or give an update on anything you talked about last week.
2. Discuss an idea from this chapter that stood out to you. How does it relate to your life?
3. Identify a time when you were tempted by a thought. Was this thought translated into action? If so, did a ritual result from that action?
4. Identify a time you felt isolated because of the guilt or shame you had after giving in to a temptation.
5. How might you help other men (in your group or in other parts of your life) resist the negative triggers in their lives which can result in destructive behavioral patterns?
6. Identify one temptation that you currently struggle with. How can your group help you resist that temptation?
7. James 5:15-16 states: "The prayer offered by those who have faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will heal them. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. So confess your sins to one another. Pray for one another so that you might be healed. The prayer of a godly person is powerful. Things happen because of it." How do these Bible verses apply to your life?