Crushing Temptation (James 1:13-15)

Scope and Sequence

**Doctrine:** Sanctification, Holiness

**Objective**

Students will understand that they give power to temptation in their life but a passion for Jesus can defeat it.

**Memory Verse**

James 1:14

Where does temptation come from?

Worth Repeating: Desire for God always crushes temptation.

HOOK: How to Handle Temptation

Talk about the show Survivor

It is important to know that temptation is not sin; how you respond to temptation can be sin. If you desire to love God above everything else, then you can endure temptation. Desire for God always crushes temptation.

LESSON CONTENT: Live out your faith in the midst of struggle.

I. The Reality of Temptation (vv. 13-14)
II. The Possibility of Temptation
III. How to Crush Temptation

CONNECTION: Temptation is in our lives every day.

We deal with temptation every day. It’s going to happen. The question is, “How will you respond?” One of the greatest truths from this lesson is that Satan cannot make us do anything. He can tempt us but he doesn’t make us sin.

DECISION: Fight Temptation

Based on what was just discussed, what are they going to do with it? Right now, in this quiet place, I want you to identify where you are in your fight against temptation. Prayerfully talk to the Lord as I ask you these questions:

- What is your deepest desire?
- Are there areas of accountability that you need in your life?
- Will you commit to gain some fighter verses to memorize?
**Definitions**

**Temptation**: An enticement to do evil.

**Sanctification**: The work of the Holy Spirit to make believers more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Trial**: An event to try, prove, or test.

---

**Checklist**

- A PowerPoint Presentation for this lesson is available.
- Deal or No Deal slide with music
- Two prizes for the introduction, one being more valuable than the other
- Fishing lure and some different bait

---

**Resources**


---

**Additional Teacher Resources**

It is recommended that if you are going to teach on Scripture memory and temptation that you download these apps and showcase them to your students to help them, or even use them yourself. There are two great apps for Scripture memory. One is called “Fighter Verses,” another is called “Verses.”

---

**Hook: How to Handle Temptation**

**Teacher’s Note**

*Show To introduce the lesson, play a simplified version of the game “Deal or No Deal.” Before the game starts, to determine who will play, a process of elimination is recommended for your group. This is so everyone has a shot at the game. The following steps will help you accomplish your goal:*

- **Play a game of Rock / Paper / Scissors. Losers sit. You play this game until there is one student left victorious!**
- **Give the winners a prize. It could be something really nice and desirable or something simple (you decide).**
- **When the student has the item, introduce something in a box or envelope that is wrapped that you want to trade with them. Explain to the student this could be theirs if they so choose; however, they cannot see what is in the box or envelope. Explain it could be something even better than what they received before. (It could be… based on what you originally gave them.)**
- **Watch as the student tries to decide. Use phrases like “It is so tempting, isn’t it?” or “It’s tempting to take what you have but also tempting to see just what you could get. Deal or No deal?”**

This lesson is about temptation. It is something that happens nearly every day.

It is important to know that temptation is not sin; how you respond to temptation can be sin. If you desire to love God above everything else, then you can endure temptation. Desire for God always crushes temptation.

Let’s turn to the Book of James. It is named James after its author. James was the half-brother of Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary and brother of Jude, who also wrote a book in the Bible. James knew a lot about temptation and faithful living. Let’s listen to him.
To understand the passage a little better we should view the context. The context is the overall picture of the passage of Scripture. James is the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, and he is writing to a church that is spread out because of persecution. He feels the need to write and encourage them to continue to live out their faith in the midst of struggle. He begins the letter by encouraging the church to count it all joy when they suffer various trials. The church’s faith is being tested in a severe way. During this trial it would have been very easy to give in and avoid any kind of suffering by renouncing faith in Jesus. What James is saying is don’t allow this temptation to lead to the sin of disobedience. He desires for the church to ask God for what they lack. There are some very important truths about temptation that need to be covered.

I. The Reality of Temptation (vv. 13-14)

James clearly says in verse 13 “when he is tempted…” not “if he is tempted.” Unfortunately, we cannot get away from temptation. It is something every single one of us will face every day. Daily you may deal with the temptation of anger, dishonesty, impurity, jealousy, or bitterness toward a peer or even a friend. You may even be tempted right now to tune out and check out social media and miss out on what God wants to tell you. However, there are several things to learn from this reality. Desire for God always crushes temptation. There are two powerful points to notice here:

A. Temptation doesn’t come from God.

It is easy to blame God when we are tempted. James wanted to let the church know that they should not blame God for their suffering. God was allowing them to go through trials. If you didn’t receive from Him all the things you wanted would it be God’s fault if you decided to give up living for Him? Absolutely not! This is simply not true according to the Bible. Verse 13b of the passage we read together says that God cannot be tempted, and He doesn’t tempt anyone. If you are telling yourself that it is God’s fault you are being tempted, then you are lying to yourself.

B. Temptation is personal.

Temptation comes from something we don’t have and think we need. It is a personal desire. It is an enticement to do evil. Temptation’s power comes from me. The problem we have today is we cannot grasp the concept of accepting blame. We can’t accept the fact that we are responsible for sin. Man has wanted someone or something to blame for their problems since the beginning.

Have a student read Genesis 3:9-13.

Did you see that!? Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the devil! In the beginning of this chapter it is Satan, the serpent, who tempted Eve and drew her away. Now you may be thinking, “Aha! There it is! Satan is the one to blame when I am tempted!” Remember, based on our passage of Scripture that is not the truth.
We will see later in this lesson that Satan does tempt; however, he is not to receive the blame for us falling into the trap of yielding to temptation. Temptation actually comes from our own desires. It is personal. We have tried to blame God for our problems or even our circumstances. We even try to blame Satan. Truthfully, it is neither of them. Verse 14 of our text has helped us narrow this down. It is us.

The word “desire” in this verse means an uncontrollable rage or desire. You may think, “Well that means I can’t help but sin!” Here is the encouraging part of this truth: temptation does not mean sin. Hebrews 4:15 lets us know that Jesus was tempted in every way like we are, but He did not sin!

Here is the truth that needs to encourage you: Satan cannot make us do anything! Our own desire should be set on something or someone greater than ourselves. Desire for God always crushes temptation. When we do not have a desire or love for the Lord then temptation has an advantage over us. There is a stronger possibility to sin. We will call this the possibility of temptation.

II. The Possibility of Temptation

Illustration: Bust out the fishing lure and some bait. Give the students this illustration while waiving the bait in their faces. Ask students if they enjoy fishing…

Do you enjoy fishing? To fish you must bait a hook to entice the fish to bite. The bait must be attractive to the fish you are trying to catch. Most baits are specific to specific fish. It's great deception.

Sometimes you use a lure, like this (hold up lure). A lure plays on the fish’s desire and attracts them. Some fishermen have been known to use fingernail polish with glitter in it to paint their lures. The sparkly paint causes the fish to bite! You bait the hook, or use a lure, attract the fish, the fish becomes enticed, and becomes hooked! It's the greatest feeling to hook a big fish!

I wonder if Satan feels the same way when we are hooked?

All sin starts somewhere. It is born out of something. James says it is your personal desire that has lured you and when it is accepted and acted on, then the result is sin.

In 2 Samuel 11 we have an unfortunate example of the King of Israel being enticed and tempted to the point of sin. David saw a beautiful woman bathing on her roof and sent and inquired about her. David’s lust over a beautiful woman quickly escalated to adultery, then a cover up, then even murder. James 1:14 says we are “drawn away.” David was drawn away. It means to set off course from where you are supposed to be. It’s as if you are on a track and you veer off course. A very powerful Bible verse is Proverbs 3:6 (have student read). God’s Word says He will make your paths straight if you acknowledge Him in all things! Desire for God always crushes temptation.

Do not allow anything to detour you from God’s path!

Verse 15 of our passage shows a progression. First you are tempted, then you sin, then there is a path of destruction. Sin only leads to both physical and spiritual death. Sin is a broken command of God.
If you lie to your mother tomorrow you are probably not going to drop dead. The truth is, according to Romans 5:12, that physical death exists because of sin. Spiritual death also comes as a result of sin.

This is the possibility of temptation. It could wreak havoc in your life. What are some of the effects of sin? *(Let students respond. Possible answers: loss of privilege, sexually transmitted diseases, death of a friend, jail time.)*

Do you see the pattern? Sin only leads to **death**. However, the great news of the Gospel says we gain the gift of mercy. Mercy steps in and does not give us what we deserve. According to Romans 6:23 we deserve death for our sin, but God gives us grace! We do not deserve this but the grace of God brings us salvation! Thanks be to God for the great news of Jesus taking that death for us on the cross and showing us mercy and grace we don’t deserve!

III. How to Crush Temptation

There are some things we can take from Scripture that will help us overcome temptation. We cannot overlook verse 12 of the text.

*Read James 1:12.*

The crown of life is promised to those who endure temptation or testing by the love of the Lord! Pastor Warren Wiersbe talks about testing and temptation. He says that “Testings or trials on the outside may become temptation on the inside.”

Temptation and trials often run together. It is often temptation that brings us to an inward trial or testing of whether we are going to sin. Passing the test given by temptation **cannot happen** without a desire for and love of God. This promise of “the crown of life,” speaking of eternal life, is given to those who love God. This is the key! There is a direct connection with those who win over temptation and those who love God. It is because they are the same person.

Victory over temptation is choosing to love God more than whatever is luring you away to sin. It is choosing to love God more than yourself. A desire for God always crushes temptation. Your victory is not found in a decision you make not to sin; your victory is found in a Person! His name is Jesus.

If He is our victory, then shouldn’t we be running to him? Shouldn’t we want to know Him and whatever we can do to be like Him?

What are some real things you can do to know Jesus more? Before answering this you really need to ask yourself… Do you really want this? You have done the “quiet time” thing…. But have you really? Are you actually desiring to fall deeper in love with Jesus, or is it something you just think about on Wednesdays and Sundays? So, do you really want to crush temptation?

- Every student desperately needs a personal walk with Jesus. What does that look like? Having a daily **time with God** will only make you stronger spiritually. Is there an actual slot in your day when you read the Word of God? Do you seek it like it’s a treasure? Because it is!

You also need to build a prayer life. Consistently bring your heart to the Lord in prayer. If you struggle with temptation and you are not seeing victory in your life, then talk to Him about it. Like, literally talk to God aloud. He is there! Listening!
Desiring to grow closer to you. So what are you waiting for?! Being spiritually strong enables us to endure temptation.

- **Memorize Scripture** to be equipped to fight off temptation with power. Why is it that we can memorize so many words by listening to songs? What about movie lines? What about knowing the lifestyles of the actors or actresses in those movies? Like really?! Or even sports stats from your favorite athletes? Is it because you are so interested in that stuff?

What about the Word of God?! Whose Author is the Creator and Giver of Life. Within the arsenal of your heart need to be daggers of God’s Word to throw at temptation.

However, all too often the Holy Spirit goes to stand at our defense and runs to the arsenal of our heart to grab a verse we have committed to memory and all that’s there is John 3:16…maybe. David said in Psalm 119:11, “Your Word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You.”

Another example to follow is Jesus Himself! In Matthew 4:1-11 you can read where Jesus is tempted by Satan, enticing Him to do evil. Every time Jesus speaks He is quoting Scripture!

How much Scripture do you know? What are your “fighter verses”? We are in a battle! It’s time we arm ourselves with God’s Word. We are called to holiness. We are called to become more like Jesus. May we be filled with His Word.

---

**Connection: Temptation is in our lives every day.**

We deal with temptation every day. It’s going to happen. The question is, “How will you respond?” One of the greatest truths from this lesson is that Satan cannot make us do anything. He can tempt us but he doesn’t make us sin. There are a few things we need to remind ourselves of and identify as believers.

1. **What is your deepest desire? (James 1:14)**
   James says in 1:14 that you are *drawn away* by your own desires. If this is the case, then what is your desire? Are there some things you can identify in your life that you desire more than Jesus? Is He the one that is drawing you or is it something else?

   There may be something in your life that you need to rid yourself of. It could be a relationship. It could be that you need accountability in some areas of your life. Maybe you need to put a lock on your phone or computer to not allow you to look at some websites. It could be that you spend too much time playing video games and not enough time investing in your relationship with Jesus.

   You need to decide right now to aim the desire of your heart at Jesus. He said in John 14:15 that if we love Him we will keep his commands. If we love Jesus, then we will do what He says. This is where the strength comes from!

2. **Memorize fighter verses to guard your heart with the Truth.**
   We must follow Jesus’ example and use Scripture to endure the enemy’s attacks. You need to land on three fighter verses to help you fight temptation. There are two phone apps from which you can choose. One is called “Fighter
Verses.” The other app is called “Verses.” These are fantastic tools for Scripture memory and will certainly help you if you struggle with memorizing.

The reason we need these verses in the arsenal of our hearts is because we often tell ourselves lies. God however gives us His Word to show us that there are truths to combat these lies. Here are some examples:

- **The Lie: You keep falling...you’ll never have victory.**
  The Truth: (Have a student read Philippians 1:6.)
  We have confidence that Jesus isn’t finished with us yet. He won’t stop helping us gain victory until He returns to gather us to Him!

- **The Lie: You can’t change; this is just the way you are.**
  The Truth: (Have a student read 2 Corinthians 5:17.)
  When you believe in Jesus Christ, you are made new! The old desires will start to fade away and the new desires, our love for Jesus, will start to grow stronger!

- **The Lie: This temptation is too difficult for you.**
  The Truth: (Have a student read 1 Corinthians 10:13.)
  We all face similar temptations. You are not alone in the battle against temptation. God is faithful, and He provides ways for you to overcome. He is with you and if you turn to Him you will not be overcome by temptation.

### Decision: Fight Temptation

**Teacher's Note**

As you close have students bow their heads in prayer to make these commitments to the Lord.

Based on what was just discussed, what are they going to do with it? Right now, in this quiet place, I want you to identify where you are in your fight against temptation. Prayerfully talk to the Lord as I ask you these questions:

- What is your deepest desire?
- Are there areas of accountability that you need in your life?
- Will you commit to gain some fighter verses to memorize?

Talk in your small groups about some good fighter verses to memorize. You can talk to your leader to help you identify ones that speak to your specific struggle, or you can use the three we shared in the lesson. Write these in your Bible or put them on your home screen so every time you look at your phone you can work on memorizing them.

If you have a Smartphone, tablet, or other device, would you commit to downloading “Fighter Verses” or “Verses” and begin memorizing Scriptures this week?