

The Irresistible Pull of Ungodly Behavior (Temptations Series – Part I)

7/19/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. How would you define temptation?

A temptation is usually something that tries to lure us into doing something we shouldn’t. It is often very attractive and therefore difficult to resist. Temptation is the place where sin gets into our lives if we allow it.

2. Read Matt. 4:1-11. What does this say about temptation and God?

Jesus was tempted in a serious manner. He was literally offered the world if He would join forces with Satan. Notice that the source of the temptations was not God, but Satan.

3. Read 1 Cor. 10:13. In what way does this give us comfort as we face temptations?

While God is not the source of temptations, He does allow Satan to tempt us a part of strengthening our faith. However, He will not allow us to be tempted with more than we can bear.

4. Read Gen. 4:2-7. Pastor Steve divided the discussion into four points. As you reflect on each of them, consider how they can affect our lives.

1) Sin is always crouching at the door

Notice that this is sin, not evil. We always are being confronted with choices, some of which are essentially neutral, but many of which have good and bad options in terms of leading us into situations that cause us to sin. Sin is not something we fall into. Rather, it stalks us relentlessly. Notice that Jesus was tempted immediately after His baptism – immediately after the “high” of having God the Father praise Him publicly.

2) Sometimes we act as a carrier of sin because of vulnerabilities.

What four vulnerabilities did Pastor Steve mention? Give examples of each.

- a. Personality – driven people, antisocial people, passive people, magnetic personalities. Our personalities cause us to act in ways that do not bring out the best in those around us.
- b. Physical conditions – low serotonin (worrying burns up serotonin), depression, low blood sugar. These conditions cause us to act in ways that do not bring out the best in those around us.
- c. Environment/culture – we learn from our ethnic surroundings, from the attitudes, assumptions, and prejudices held by our family and friends. We then pass those along to others, even though they actually lead them to sin.
- d. Virtues – Sometimes God’s gifts can be carried too far. A wise person can become proud of his wisdom and feel the need to show off. A person who can earn lots of money through legitimate entrepreneurship can then hoard that money.

- 1) The way to be rid of the sin is to find the virtue that is opposite to it and exercise it.

The emphasis here is on the positive. One does not overcome the darkness by fighting against it, one turns on a light. Instead of working real hard at trying not to sin, work real hard at trying to do something that is good. If you are doing what is right, you won’t be concerned about what is crouching at your door. Thus, we need to know ourselves and develop positives.

- 2) You can master it.

Simply remind yourself of God’s constant presence. That should help hold you accountable (you can’t hide whatever it is you are doing) and let you know that you are not in this battle alone. Assess where your weaknesses are by reviewing the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5.1-21.), the Seven Deadly Sins ("Lust", "Gluttony", "Greed", "Sloth", "Wrath", "Envy", and "Pride"), or some of the lists Paul put together (e.g., Romans 1:28-32). Again, don’t focus on the wrong, but come up with a plan for action that will take you in the opposite direction doing something good.

5. Given all of the above, how much of the burden is on God (Let go and let God carry our burdens) and how much of what is described above is on us?

Gen. 4:6-7 would suggest we must subdue or master sin. It has a lot to do with choices we make. God is not going to make the choices for us. Thus, this is our responsibility. God will give us the strength and insight if we ask, but we will have to decide to invoke them.

6. In closing, read Hebrews 2:14-18 and Hebrews 4:14-16. Note how explicitly Paul explains the empathy Jesus has for our situation since He went through it too. How does that affect His role as our liaison (high priest)?

He understands what it feels like to be flesh and blood and have the weaknesses that humans possess. He can represent us fairly. Of course, Jesus also knows how He was able to overcome them. We have access to the same Holy Spirit who helped Christ.