

7

PRACTICAL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO AVOID BEING LED INTO TEMPTATION

Introduction

1. A sincere Christian will be pursuing righteousness, godliness and holiness¹ (1 Timothy 6:11; Hebrews 12:14).
 - a. The flesh, though, is always pulling us in the opposite direction: “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:17).
 - b. It is this friction that causes us much grief, as Paul expresses: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (Romans 7:18-19).
2. A sincere child of God does not sin: John writes,

“Whoever abides in Him DOES NOT SIN. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him” (1 John 3:6).

“Whoever has been born of God DOES NOT SIN, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9).

“We know that whoever is born of God DOES NOT SIN; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him” (1 John 5:18).
3. While it is true that a Christian does not walk in sin, it is also true that we do sin from time-to-time. John writes, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). But simply because we walk in the light and only sin from time-to-time is no justification...we are still responsible; we are still guilty; it is still necessary to seek forgiveness through our Advocate: “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).
4. A sincere Christian hates every false way (Psalms 119:104) and abhors what is evil (Romans 12:9), and so he will seek to avoid anyone or anything that will lead him into temptation. For those that hate and abhor sin, this lesson will present seven practical steps you can take to avoid being led into temptation.
5. Human beings have a tendency to: (i) refuse responsibility for their own actions, and, (ii) blame others for their failings (e.g., Genesis 3:12-13). So let us be clear about this from the outset:
 - a. God does not tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13).
 - b. All of us will be tempted and our faith will be tried (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-13), but God has promised that He will not allow Satan to tempt us beyond our ability to resist him (1 Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7).
 - c. When we succumb to temptation and sin, it is because we have allowed ourselves to be drawn away by our own lusts (James 1:14).
 - d. We should also bear in mind the benefits and rewards that victory over temptation brings: (i) perseverance, character, and hope (Romans 5:3-4), and, (ii) the promise of eternal life (James 1:12).

¹ Simply having obeyed the gospel does not automatically mean we are pursuing righteousness, godliness, and holiness. Are you pursuing these things? If so, can you explain exactly *how* you are doing so? To what fruit can you point that is a witness of your pursuit? The truth is, what we so often claim to be doing is not evidenced in deeds. As John might say, “My little children, let us not pursue righteousness, godliness, and holiness in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (cp. 1 John 3:18).

7 PRACTICAL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO AVOID BEING LED INTO TEMPTATION

1. Pray (**Matthew 6:13; 26:31**).
2. Put on the whole armor of God (**Ephesians 6:10-17**).
3. Guard your heart (**Proverbs 4:23**).
4. Exercise self-control (**Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-6**).
5. Do not make any provision for the flesh (**Romans 13:14**).
6. Choose your friends carefully (**Proverbs 12:26; 1 Corinthians 15:33**).
7. Avoid the haunts of the wicked (**Proverbs 4:14-15**).

1. PRAY (Matthew 26:41; Luke 11:4)

- a. John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray, and so it is not surprising that Jesus' disciples also asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (**Luke 11:1**). Jesus then set before them a model prayer, and while much could be learnt from studying it, I just want to focus on one point: one thing we ought to pray is "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (**Luke 11:4**). "This petition expresses the believer's desire to avoid the dangers of sin altogether" (MacArthur).
- b. If we truly have a desire to avoid the dangers of sin altogether, then we will pray for strength to resist temptation *before* it comes. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, returning from prayer, found the disciples sleeping and admonished them to "watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation" (**Matthew 26:41**). A Christian doesn't wait until temptation comes and then pray; he anticipates temptation and prays for the strength in advance that he might not succumb to it.
- c. **If** we have been praying, then our hearts and minds will be sufficiently strengthened to resist temptation: (i) When Joseph was tempted he said, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (**Genesis 39:8-9**). (ii) When Jesus was tempted, He resisted Satan by quoting the scriptures (**Matthew 4:1-11**).

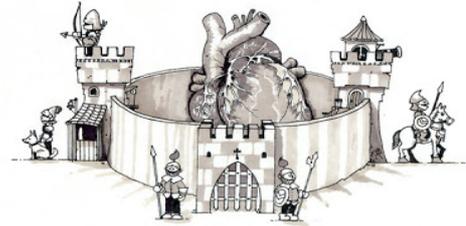
2. PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD (Ephesians 6:10-17)

- a. We are likely familiar with the armor of God: (i) the belt of truth, (ii) the breastplate of righteousness, (iii) the shoes of readiness to preach the gospel, (iv) the shield of faith, (v) the helmet of salvation, (vi) the sword of the Spirit (the word of God), and, (vii) prayer. As the Pulpit Commentary says, "The metaphor of armor is now dropped, but not the idea of the conflict, for what is now insisted on is of the most vital importance for successful warfare. Though prayer is virtually comprehended in most of the previous exhortations, it is now specifically enjoined..."
- b. The reason given for putting on the armor of God is clear: "...so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (**Ephesians 6:11**), and, "...so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (**Ephesians 6:13**). If we are going to resist Satan's onslaughts, then it is vital that we understand his "schemes". Concerning Satan's schemes, Paul says, "For we are not ignorant of his schemes" (**2 Corinthians 2:11**). What are the schemes of the Devil? If you don't know, then you are leaving yourself wide open to attack; you are easy prey.
- c. Paul tells us to "put on the whole armor of God" (**Ephesians 6:11**) and "take up the whole armor of God" (**Ephesians 6:13**). Do you know *how* to "put on" and "take up" the whole armor of God? If you don't, then you might not be wearing the armor of God. This, of course, will leave you defenceless and wide open to attack and defeat.

What are the schemes of the Devil? How does one put on the armor of God? The Christian that is ignorant and without armor is easy prey for the Devil.

3. GUARD YOUR HEART (Proverbs 4:23)

- a. Solomon writes, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). All our thoughts, words and deeds proceed out of the heart. Jesus said, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19). As a man thinks, so it is revealed in his thoughts, words, and deeds (Proverbs 23:7). What proceeds from out of the heart is only what we have allowed to enter it; hence, the admonition to “guard your heart with all diligence”.
- b. Many Christians find they are faced with a myriad of temptations every day that often seem overwhelming: they dwell on evil thoughts that forever spring up like weeds in an unkempt garden, a flow of ungodly words spews from their mouths like water from a bitter spring, and they revel in wickedness like a pig wallowing in its own filth. This is simply because there are no guards on duty at the gates of the heart. (i) Judas did not guard his heart and Satan entered it (Luke 22:3), (ii) a short while after Simon the sorcerer was baptised, his heart was filled with wickedness, and Peter said to him, “you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity” and commanded him to repent (Acts 8:18-23), and, (iii) it is said of Ananias and Sapphira that “Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:1-10).
- c. A Christian that prays “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Luke 11:4) must guard his heart. But how shall this be done?



- 1) Whatever proceeds from out of the heart is only what has been allowed into it. Throughout our childhood we have no control over what comes into our heart, but we do have a choice when we reach adulthood. More often than not, it is a case of clearing out the junk as well as ensuring only good things are allowed to enter. It is a case of putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Ephesians 4:20-24). There are many sources of information that each plays their part in shaping our attitudes and influencing our thinking, which, in turn, affects our speech and behavior: social groups (parents, friends, and associates) and media being the biggest players.
- 2) It is essential, then, to do two things: (i) Clear out the junk. This means we must read and study the word of God and examine all our ways and repent where necessary (Lamentations 3:40), and, (ii) Place guards at the gates of our heart. This means avoiding evil company (1 Corinthians 15:33) and refusing to set before our ears and eyes any media that promotes ungodly attitudes, corrupt speech, and evil conduct (Psalms 101:3). See article at end: “One Reason You Are Bored With The Bible” by Wes McAdams.

One that allows Satan to fill his mind with ungodly attitudes and evil influences, finds himself in an extremely weakened state and it becomes almost impossible to resist temptations.

4. EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL (Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-6)

- a. We all know what is meant by self-control, and in every day life we find ourselves exercising it or not exercising it: (i) Someone makes you very angry, but you restrain yourself and you do not retaliate. (ii) You're supposed to be on a diet, but, coming to the cake counter in the supermarket, you buy yourself two fresh-cream, jam donuts.
- b. If we are going to successfully avoid willfully sinning against God, then it will be necessary to exercise self-control. When James says, “Resist the devil” (James 4:7), he is saying we must set ourselves against him, withstand him, and oppose him (Thayer). We must endure temptations (James 1:12); such would require self-control on our part. We must exercise self-control in regards to our passions (Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Galatians 5:24), thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5), words (Ephesians 4:29; James 3:2-8), and deeds (Ephesians 4:20-24; 1 Peter 1:15).
- c. Such self-control over our passions is not easy and requires great effort (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Consider: if we are unable to lead disciplined lives each day, then how can we expect to exercise self-control when temptation comes? Our daily lives must be ordered and disciplined.

5. DO NOT MAKE ANY PROVISION FOR THE FLESH (Romans 13:14)

- a. Paul says, "...make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14). One makes provision for something by ensuring one has everything in place to fulfill a purpose. "Evidently, the idea is that one is not to take forethought or plan for the satisfaction of the desires of the flesh" (Clinton D. Hamilton). (i) To make provision for the flesh would suggest that one had *already* been tempted and then made plans to succumb to the temptation. (ii) It could be that you are regularly tempted to commit a particular sin and make provision to fulfill it when the temptation comes again.
- b. Another way of making provision is by not removing existing provisions. Example: You realize that you're overweight and so you resolve to exercise self-control and resist all temptations to gorge on sweets, biscuits, crisps, and ice-cream. That's great! The problem is, you have not thrown out all those sweets, biscuits, crisps, and ice-cream that you still have left. By not throwing them out, you have made provision to fulfill the lust of the flesh and when temptation comes, it is unlikely that you will exercise self-control. This ought to tell you something about the sincerity of your resolve.
- c. Paul tells us how we can avoid fulfilling the lusts of the flesh: "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). Do you know what it means to "walk in the Spirit"?

6. CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS CAREFULLY (Proverbs 12:26; 1 Corinthians 15:33)

- a. While it is not wrong to socialize with unbelievers (Luke 11:37; 1 Corinthians 10:27), we ought to choose our friends carefully: Solomon writes, "The righteous should choose his friends carefully" (Proverbs 12:26a). Why? He continues, "For the way of the wicked leads them astray" (Proverbs 12:26b). Paul says something similar: "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- b. So what kind of friend is a good choice and a bad choice? Well, generally speaking, a good friend is one that respects your faith, respects the fact that you don't tolerate foul language, lewd behavior, etc., and one that does not tempt you to compromise your faith (e.g., "Here, one drink won't hurt you!", "Surely it will be okay just to miss one midweek Bible class?", "One night of clubbing won't hurt! After all, we all need to let our hair down occasionally!", "Yes, this movie does have a little bit of swearing and blasphemy in it, but it's a really good film!", etc.). A bad choice of friend is one that has no respect for your faith, beliefs, and no appreciation for the fact that you are pursuing righteousness, godliness, and holiness.
- c. If you choose friends that have no respect for your faith, then it is highly likely they will lead you into temptation. You can avoid such by either being very frank and standing your ground or by increasing your distance with them. In some cases it may be wise to end the friendship (Psalms 1:1; 26:4-5; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

Choose only a few friends of good character, for it is better to have no friends at all than to have many friends that corrupt you.

You don't need a certain number of friends, just a number of friends of whom you can be certain.

7. AVOID THE HAUNTS OF THE WICKED (Proverbs 4:14-15)

- a. Solomon writes, "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on" (Proverbs 4:14-15). We can summarize this by saying "Avoid their haunts" or paraphrase it by saying, "Avoid the meeting places of wicked people". It is not a sign of false piety to refuse to go to places that are designated as *haunts of wickedness*, which men have so designated and which every Christian taught in righteousness knows are not places for a Christian to frequent. God's instruction here is not to enter the haunts of the wicked to prove that "being surrounded by wickedness doesn't affect me because my faith is strong", it is "avoid their haunts".
- b. Some of the haunts of the wicked are obvious – pubs, clubs, proms, etc. Being in bad company and exposing ourselves to temptation is foolish, because we know that "evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Also, it seems hypocritical to pray "lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13) and frequent places where such is likely. Some people will say, "Oh, I often go to such places and it doesn't affect me and I'm never tempted to sin because I'm strong in the faith". (i) It does have an affect because it gradually desensitizes you to sin, (ii) you are calling God a liar because He says that evil company *does* corrupt good habits, (iii) such pride in yourself will result in a fall (Proverbs 16:18; 1 Corinthians 10:12), and, (iv) in your pride and selfishness, you are not thinking of the effects you may be having on your brethren (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).

- c. There are many places a Christian is at liberty to frequent, but, still, wisdom and caution ought to be exercised: (i) You may enjoy going to a football match or some other sporting event, but at some events there is a lot of swearing, rude songs, and even racist chanting; not an environment in which a Christian wants to be found! (ii) It may be that you like going to the theater or cinema, but what if turns out to contain a swearing, blasphemy, violence, etc.? Time to leave! (iii) You like eating out, but what if the people at the next table start to get rowdy and lewd? Time to leave!

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: ...**to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**

Conclusion

1. As we continue to pursue righteousness, godliness, and holiness, we experience a great battle within between the flesh and the Spirit, and it is this friction that causes us much grief and distress; we find that to will is present, but we fall short. True, we do not walk in sin, but we do sin. When we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father who pleads our case and we can find mercy and forgiveness through Him.
2. A genuine child of God is greatly distressed when he sins; he hates sin. Thus he prays, “Lead us not into temptation” and seeks to avoid every situation where temptation is lurking. What steps can we take to avoid being led into temptation? Pray, put on the whole armor of God, guard the heart, exercise self-control, make no provision for the flesh, choose friends carefully, and avoid the haunts of the wicked.
3. Two things of which we should be careful are (i) that of seeking to justify our sin: “Well I’m only human”, “I just couldn’t help it, the temptation was too strong”, “Everybody else is doing it!” etc., and, (ii) blaming others: “He made me do it”, “My dad said it would be okay”, “The Devil made me do it”, and, (iii) blaming God! “You made me this way!”
4. If we are sincerely pursuing holiness and we pray “lead us not into temptation”, then will take every necessary step to avoid people and situations where temptations abound. If we do sin, it is essential to take full responsibility because if we seek to justify our sin, blame others, or even blame God, then we will not be able to obtain forgiveness.

Seven Practical Steps You Can Take To Avoid Being Led Into Temptation *by* David Cambridge
ONE REASON YOU ARE BORED WITH THE BIBLE

by
Wes McAdams

Can I be totally honest with you? There have been times in my adult life when I have found reading the Bible...boring. At times I've watched Netflix or scrolled mindlessly through social media because I found these things more enjoyable than Bible study. I probably would have never admitted out loud that I was bored with the Bible, but my actions spoke louder than my words. This is something about which I'm incredibly ashamed, because the problem was not with the Bible, it was with me.

Here is one thing I've discovered about why people are bored with the Bible and how to fix the problem.

Entertainment Is "Junk Food"

First of all, you need to understand that entertainment is like junk food for your heart, soul, and mind. Social media, video games, Netflix, television, and even sports and hobbies are all enjoyable, but they do very little – if anything – to nourish you. In fact, they often spoil your appetite for spiritual things.

My mother used to warn me not to eat junk food before dinner because it would spoil my appetite. She was right. It wasn't just that it filled me up. It was that the more I ate junk food, the less I wanted nourishing food. I craved the junk food. After all, it's hard to eat a carrot after you've eaten a candy bar.

The same is true with entertainment. The more of it you "consume," the more it will consume you!

Scripture Is A Nourishing Feast

Scripture, on the other hand, is like a nourishing feast. It is like meat and vegetables. It not only tastes good, but it is good for you. But unfortunately, you're not hungry for it because you've ruined your appetite. You've watched college basketball for hours on end, but now you have to force yourself to read the Bible for just a few minutes.

One of the most important things in the whole world is reading God's word, but it shouldn't feel like a chore. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul wrote to Timothy:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Many of us are completely malnourished spiritually. We are not equipped for every good work, because we are too busy entertaining ourselves. We would like to find Scripture as exciting as we know it is, but we simply do not have an appetite left for the feast God has prepared for us.

How To Solve The Problem

The solution is simple, but it requires discipline and self-control. If you find entertainment more enjoyable than reading the "living and active" Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), then it is time to go on a fast or at least a strict diet. When you come to the realization that your diet is unhealthy, you have to cut out the junk food.

This means it is time to put away the smart phone, turn off Netflix, DVR the college basketball game, and maybe even go on a social media "fast." A little bit of entertainment – like a little bit of junk food – may be no big deal, but when it is affecting your appetite, it is a very big deal!

I can already hear people saying, "But I only watch things that are wholesome and I only use social media to connect with other like-minded Christians." Hey, me too! But that doesn't mean these things are not still negatively affecting your attention span and ruining your spiritual appetite. And remember, even reading a religious blog article does not take the place of actually reading the Bible.

Before long, you will once again see the Word of God in its proper light and say like the Psalmist in Psalm 119:103-104a:

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding."