

## About That Temptation You Face ...

*Good evening, afternoon. Let's all grab a chair and begin this week's meeting of Temptations Anonymous. Who'd like to begin?*

*"Hello. My name is Murray ..."*

*"HELLO, MURRAY!"*



*"I'm new here, and I hope you can help me. I face a temptation like no other. We all face temptation, but this one is unique. It is incredibly powerful, and I can't help it."*

At this point in the fictitious scene, I'd like to do my best Rod Serling impression, interject myself into the story, and correct Murray's mistaken belief.

- His temptation is *not* unique.
- His temptation is *not* so powerful he can't overcome it.

You may know someone who feels that way. It may be you. Many people resign themselves to being defeated by a sin. It's not that they rationalize the sin as if it's OK; rather, they're tired of the struggle and just quit fighting it.

While the particulars of a temptation you face may be unique, the nature of the temptation is not. In 1 John 2:16, the apostle John lumped the things of the world (i.e., the sins that tug at us) into three broad categories:

1. The lust of the flesh – things that tempt us toward selfish pleasures.
2. The lust of the eyes – things that tempt us with a desire (greed) for things.
3. The pride in one's possessions – things that tempt us to be prideful, to run after recognition and applause, and to brag about our stuff.

I've given a truncated description of these areas of temptation. For the moment, though, let me stress that any temptation we face can be placed in one of these categories. We even see these three areas of temptation in the first temptation, the one Adam and Eve faced. Eve was tempted in these three ways.

"The woman saw that the tree was good for food [**lust of the flesh**] and delightful to look at [**lust of the eyes**], and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom [**pride of one's possessions**]. So, she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (Gen. 3:16).

The fruit appealed to their fleshly appetites, it was pleasing to their eyes, and by it they could possess wisdom. From the very

beginning, others have understood the types of temptations you face. As Paul said, "No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity" (1 Cor. 10:13).

I'm sorry if that burst a bubble, thinking you are special in this matter, but I hope you'll take encouragement from that truth. We can support each other because we know what the struggle with sin is like. Even better, Jesus understands your struggle with temptation. He's been there.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus understands the ways we are tempted because He's been there. Look at how Jesus was tempted in Matthew 4:1-11:

- **The lust of the flesh** – "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" (v. 3). Hunger is a natural desire, but Jesus was tempted to abuse His power in a lust for food.
- **The lust of the eyes** - "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will give his angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" (v. 6). Jesus was tempted toward this pleasing picture of adoration from the people; it looked good and pleasing, especially since it would bypass the journey to the cross.
- **The pride of one's possessions** – "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me" (v. 9). Jesus could have it all—and right then!

Jesus knows how hard temptation is. He loves you, desiring that you stand victorious over temptation. Earlier, I quoted 1 Corinthians 10:13, but I only quoted half of it. The second half contains a wonderful truth: "But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

You cannot stand up to temptation on your own. You must depend on God. Seek Him and you'll find the "way out" He provides. He walks with you, to support you. "For since he himself has suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

**Father, when temptation comes knocking on my door, a part of me wants to give in. But another part of me wants to please You and stand firm. Help me to lean on Your love, grace, and power. Show me the way out, the way to avoid the temptation. Point me to the way that honors You. Amen.**