

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1-18-15 AM NOTES
"YOU CAN BE VICTORIOUS OVER TEMPTATION"
JAMES 1:13-17
#3 in Series, "James: Practical Wisdom"

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV) "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, **who will not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."

Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV) "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin."

*Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each victory will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look only to Jesus, He'll carry you through.*

—H. R. Palmer

I. The Responsibility for Temptation (vv. 13-14)

"We cannot exaggerate the harm that has come to individuals from the teachings of Sigmund Freud, that those who misbehave are sick. We do not hold people responsible for catching the flu, measles, or having cancer. We have hospitals, not prisons for the physically sick, simply because they bear no moral blame for their illness. The reprehensible Freudian implication is clear: if we are not responsible for physical illness, why should we be blamed for crime, a symbol of mental illness?"

—Erwin Lutzer

"We have no one else to blame for our sin. May God help us understand this in a world where there are efforts at every turn to absolve us from our responsibility for sin. We want to put the fault on others or blame our upbringing, our friends, our family, our government, our condition, or anything else we can think of. This doesn't mean different factors don't affect us all in different ways, but the teaching of Scripture is clear: the fault for my sin lies with me. There is a problem at the core of who you are and who I am. In the words of Paul in **Romans 7:18a (HCSB)** 'For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh.'"

—David Platt

II. The Route of Temptation (vv. 14-16)

"Never venture near the door where sin dwells lest you are dragged in."

—William Gurnall

A. Desire (v. 14a)

Luke 22:15 (NKJV) "Then He said to them, 'With *fervent* **desire** I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'"

Hebrews 13:4 (ESV) "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

Romans 6:7a (AMP) “For when a man dies, he is freed (loosed, delivered) from [the power of] sin...”

Romans 7:23 (NKJV) “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

B. Deception (vv. 14, 16)

C. Disobedience (v. 15a)

Romans 6:23a (NKJV) “For the wages of sin *is* death...”

Proverbs 20:17 (NKJV) “Bread gained by deceit *is* sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.”

Hebrews 11:25b (HCSB) “... the short-lived pleasure of sin.”

III. The Replacement for Temptation (v. 17)

Psalms 37:4 (NKJV) “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

James 1:17a (NASB) “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above...”

Psalms 34:8 (NKJV) “Oh, taste and see that the Lord *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!”

Psalms 52:1b (NKJV) “The goodness of God *endures* continually.”

Psalms 86:5 (NKJV) “For You, Lord, *are* good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.”

Psalms 145:9 (NKJV) “The Lord *is* good to all, and His tender mercies *are* over all His works.”

James 1:17b (ESV) “...the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

Malachi 3:6a (NKJV) “For I *am* the Lord, I do not change...”

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As was explained in the first message from James, the same Greek word can be translated test or tempt depending on the context. The Greek word has the basic meaning of testing, analyzing, or proving.

We can be tested, analyzed, or proved through trials or temptations. Both trials and temptations reveal where we are in our walk with the Lord. Just because the same word is used for trial and temptation doesn't mean the two are the same. Trials are sent by or allowed by God to help us mature, to be perfected. Temptations are allowed and regulated by God but temptations are never originated by God. Temptations come from Satan and are intended to entice us to sin. Let me illustrate how this same word can be used in two really different ways. When an evil murderer takes a knife and slashes the flesh of his victim, it is for the purpose of destroying the person that is cut. When a skilled surgeon takes a type of knife and cuts the flesh, it is for the purpose of bringing healing to the person cut. Satan is the evil murder and our God is the skilled surgeon. Another distinction in how this same word is used is that generally trials are on the outside and designed to mature us. Temptation typically is inside – seeking to influence us for evil. To complicate it even more, testings or trials bring temptations with them. When we are tested with financial difficulties, we are tempted to distrust God's provision. When we experience trials of physical illness, we are tempted to become angry with God and compare ourselves with others. When God tests us by waiting to provide what we need, we are tempted to come up with the provisions on our own and leave God out. When Job was tried with almost every trial imaginable, he was tempted by Satan (using Job's wife) to curse God and die and be free from his pain.

Fortunately, we are not at the mercy of Satan when it comes to temptation. We are told that God limits the temptation that Satan (who is called the "tempter" in 1 Thessalonians 3:5) can bring upon us. **1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)** "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, **who will not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."

In the first two messages we focused on trials that God allows to give us a platform to manifest His glory as He takes us through the trial. Today, we are going to focus on temptation that Satan initiates to expose our weaknesses and to bring us down into defeat. Make no mistake; you will face temptation. Even Jesus was tempted. **Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV)** "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin." In every possible category of sin, Jesus was tempted and yet He was without sin. We will learn a great deal about dealing with temptation by observing how Jesus overcame temptation. The heroes of Scripture were all tempted though some (unlike Jesus) yielded to the temptation. Noah got drunk, Abraham gave in to fear and lied to a foreign ruler; Moses in an act of anger and self exaltation struck the rock to provide water for the people and was consequently not allowed to go into the Promised Land. We could go on to talk about David's yielding to temptation in the sexual area, Peter's denial of Christ, and Mark's defection on his missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas. You can be sure that you will face temptation as long as you live here in this aging body with the programming of the old man (the flesh) and a power in our members called sin. Our task is summarized in the words of an old hymn that I grew up singing:

*Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each victory will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look only to Jesus, He'll carry you through.*

- H. R. Palmer

I. The Responsibility for Temptation (V13)

In the culture in which we live, we have become experts in passing off the responsibility for most everything undesirable while refusing to take responsibility ourselves. One of my favorite authors is Erwin Lutzer. Let me quote him on this subject. "We cannot exaggerate the harm that has come to individuals from the teachings of Sigmund Freud, that those who misbehave are sick. We do not hold people responsible for catching the flu, measles, or having cancer. We have hospitals, not prisons for the physically sick, simply because they bear no moral blame for their illness. The reprehensible Freudian implication is clear: if we are not responsible for physical illness, why should we be blamed for crime, a symbol of mental illness?" [Erwin Lutzer, *How to Say No to a Stubborn Habit*, page 26]. Verse 13

literally says that God is “untemptable”. Because our God is sinless, He could never entice us to sin. I am amazed at how many people try to blame their temptation on God. A common response to adultery is, “If it is so wrong, why didn’t God take these feelings away?” That is blaming God for our temptation and subsequent sin. That tendency to blame is deeply ingrained in our culture. The prominent view of secular psychology (which is still heavily influenced by Freud) has invented all kinds of ways for guilty people to shift blame to parents, spouse, or almost anyone else including God. That tendency to blame others for our sin didn’t start with modern psychology; it started with Adam and Eve. When sin came into the world, Adam blamed Eve (and by insinuation God) and Eve blamed the serpent. We often blame sin on circumstances, others, or trivialize it by saying “It’s just one of those things”.

While Satan is the initiator of temptation, God limits the temptation to a level that is not more than we can bear in His strength. We cannot blame God because He is infinite in holiness and incapable of both being tempted by evil or of tempting others. To blame our sin on God is evil beyond our comprehension and reveals a life with no fear of God. The wording in verse 13 is strong. The sense of the verse is, “Don’t even remotely suggest that God has originated your temptation.” When it comes to our sin, we have no one to blame but the person you see in the mirror every day. David Platt gives a good summary of what I have just said. “We have no one else to blame for our sin. May God help us understand this in a world where there are efforts at every turn to absolve us from our responsibility for sin. We want to put the fault on others or blame our upbringing, our friends, our family, our government, our condition, or anything else we can think of. This doesn’t mean different factors don’t affect us all in different ways, but the teaching of Scripture is clear: the fault for my sin lies with me. There is a problem at the core of who you are and who I am. In the words of Paul in **Romans 7:18a (HCSB)** ‘For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh.’” [David Platt, *Christ Centered Exposition – Exalting Jesus in James*, page 10]. While Satan is involved in bringing temptation, each of us is responsible for whether we resist or give in to temptation.

II. The Route of Temptation (V14-16)

We think of sin as an act, but God sees it as a process that ends in an act. People don’t live obedient, God honoring lives and then one day commit a sin such as sexual immorality. It may appear that way, but there is always a process that has been involved in bringing them to this place. None of us are immune to sin when we begin to make compromises in our actions or in our thought life. The Puritan William Gurnall said, “Never venture near the door where sin dwells lest you are dragged in.” In these verses James lays out the process.

A. Desire (V14a)

Some translations say “evil desires” or “lust”, but the word used is simply “desires”. The Greek word translated “desires” is not necessarily evil; it can be a good desire or an evil desire. Listen to another verse where this same word is used: **Luke 22:15 (NKJV)** “Then He [Jesus] said to them, ‘With *fervent* **desire** I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’”. It is simply a strong desire and the context has to tell us if it is an evil or a good desire. A good desire becomes an evil desire when we seek to fulfill that desire in a way or at a time that is outside the will of God. For instance, the desire to eat is good, but gluttony is sin. The desire to sleep is normal, but laziness is sin. Sexual desire is normal and inside marriage it is good to fulfill it, but when it is outside marriage, it is described in **Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)** “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” In addition to a desire that is good unless satisfied in an illegitimate way or time, there are other desires that are evil in and of themselves. These evil desires are produced through a power that has been in man since the first sin came into the world. It is called “sin” (not speaking of a specific act), “the power of sin”, “the law of sin” and “the body of sin”. An example of this power is **Romans 6:7 (AMP)** “For when a man dies, he is freed (loosed, delivered) from [the power of] sin.” **Romans 7:23 (NKJV)** “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” This power called sin produces evil desires such as the desire to elevate ourselves by putting down another, the desire for taking what

another has, the desire to impress with a lie, the desire to take another's life, the desire for vengeance which belongs to God alone, the desire for more and more stuff (greed), the desire to cut a legal or ethical corner to close a deal, etc.

The source of temptation is either our internal desires for that which is good, but to satisfy the good desire in the wrong way or the wrong time, or to have that which is evil. The power behind both of these is the power of sin that is in our members (Romans 7:23).

B. Deception (V14, 16)

The words we are looking at here are “drawn away” and “enticed”. Temptation comes when our internal desires are drawn away and enticed. These two actions are essentially communicating the same truth, but one is using a picture from hunting and the other from fishing. The phrase “drawn away” is translated “lured” in the ESV. It literally means to be drawn to and snared in a trap. The desire comes from within us but then the tempter from the outside seeks to snare us in a trap. He provides an illegitimate way to seemingly satisfy a legitimate desire and he provides a way to seemingly satisfy that illegitimate desire. The word “enticed” means to be baited, deceived, or hooked. We say that someone is “hooked on drugs”. An animal is lured into a trap because of appealing bait. A fish bites into a hook because it is covered by appealing bait. The inner desire is so strong that they charge ahead without caution and are snared. Satan is too smart to go fishing with just a bare hook or to set a trap without appealing bait. The bait blinds us to the consequences of yielding to the temptation. Let's look at a couple of examples. Let's look at the first sin when Eve was tempted by Satan to disobey a direct command of God. She was drawn away and enticed by the bait that the forbidden fruit was beautiful to look upon, it would give her knowledge of good and evil and best of all, she would be like God. The bait was attractive and it concealed the hook of the consequences. What if Eve saw the consequences of her disobedience and her leading Adam to disobey? Would the disobedience have been attractive if she focused on the fact that she and Adam would die spiritually to God and all of Adam's descendents would be born with a spirit dead to God, a power called sin in their members, and a nature of desiring to be their own God? Would the fruit have looked so good if she saw all creation fall, natural disasters, sickness, and suffering? The nature of temptation is that it takes hold of internal desires and draws away and hooks us with sin. How about King David? The bait was a beautiful woman and he was drawn away by his own desires and took the bait and was hooked. What if he had seen the consequences of this hideous sin – the turmoil in his own family and the agony he would experience that he compared to having his bones crushed by the guilt of what he had done (Psalm 32:3)? What if he had been able to view the consequences of how the enemies of God would blaspheme the God he loved because of his taking the bait? What if the man or woman who is unfaithful to their spouse could see the hook, see the trap slam shut and see the devastation caused by their sin? What if the greedy person hooked by materialism could see the emptiness of a life sacrificed for stuff at the expense of ministry, discipling others, and giving sacrificially to get the Gospel to the nations that rebels would become worshippers? Look for the trap! Watch out for the hook! As verse 16 says, “Do not be deceived”. Spend time meditating on the consequences of sin.

C. Disobedience (V15a)

This step involves the will. When desire comes together with deception, a baby is conceived and the baby is sin. Sin is the union of wrong desire with the will. That which is desired, rationalized, and decided is actually done. Sin is the baby and the parents are desire and deception. Do you see that the greatest battle against sin is fought in the mind? If the mind is filled with truth and there is an unfaltering commitment to the truth over the emotions (the desire), then there is no conception of sin. The primary battle is fought in the mind where sin is conceived.

D. Death (V15b)

Sin always brings death. **Romans 6:23a (NKJV)** “For the wages of sin *is* death...” That death for those without Christ is eternal death which is separation from Christ forever. Some sin leads to physical death. It also includes the death of relationships in that marriages are broken, any possible close relationship with children dies, reputation and witness dies, credibility dies, and dreams die. Sin is all about death! Sin never brings anything permanently good into our lives. The pleasures of sin are but for a season.

Proverbs 20:17 (NKJV) “Bread gained by deceit *is* sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.” **Hebrews 11:25b (HCSB)** “...the short-lived pleasure of sin.” We choose the action, but we cannot choose the result of sinful actions.

This is the route of every sin whether it is sexual immorality, drugs, alcohol, materialism, stealing, lying, dishonesty, or whatever sin your desires point you toward. [If time read letter from daughter to her Father who left his family for another woman]

III. The Replacement for Temptation (V17)

This is a very important verse! If your approach in dealing with temptation is to try to stop desiring the wrong things, stop thinking about satisfying a legitimate desire in the wrong way, and you’re trying to do it through sheer determination, or trying to stay so busy you just won’t think about it, or even getting an accountability partner to hold you accountable, I think you are likely going to fail. As important as determination is, as important as making yourself accountable to another person is, there is a better way, a biblical way. God’s way is for you to so delight in Him that the wrong desires are replaced by something better. When we delight in Him, something happens. **Psalms 37:4 (NKJV)** “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” When you are delighting in the Lord, He will change your heart’s desire and put His desires in their place. Oh dear people; this is the answer.

I was reading a while back about how trainers train dogs. The trainer will put some meat on the floor close to the dog and then tell the dog “No!” At this point in the training the dog knows that means that he can’t touch this object of his desire. What happens with the good dogs is that they will take their eyes off the meat and fix them on the master’s face. The dog learns to always keep his eyes on the master’s face. Oh that we could learn from a dog!

In verse 17, we see a lot of opportunities to delight in the Lord as James fixes our eyes on the true nature of God with an emphasis on His goodness. After all it was the goodness of God that Satan undermined with Eve to make her vulnerable to his lies and temptation. James describes the Father as the author, the originator of every good and perfect gift. The NASB is better; it says **James 1:17a (NASB)** “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above...” God is indeed good. Everything that is truly good is found in Him. Over and over the Psalmist tells us that the Lord is good. We could go to so many places to see His goodness, but let me just give you a few verses from the Psalms. **Psalms 34:8 (NKJV)** “Oh, taste and see that the Lord *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!” **Psalms 52:1b (NKJV)** “The goodness of God *endures* continually.” **Psalms 86:5 (NKJV)** “For You, Lord, *are* good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.” **Psalms 145:9 (NKJV)** “The Lord *is* good to all, and His tender mercies *are* over all His works.” There are so many more.

James calls Him “the Father of lights”. That was an ancient Jewish title for God that elevates Him to the creator and maker of the sun, moon, and stars. That phrase “no variation or shadow of turning” speaks of what the theologians call “the immutability of God”. That means that He is unchanging. **James 1:17 (ESV)** “... the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” **Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)** “For I *am* the Lord, I do not change.” He was good; He is good; He will always be good. You can trust Him! When you delight in Him, every other desire is then put in its proper place.

CONCLUSION

By delighting in Him, you can be victorious over temptation.

Letter Referred to in II. D.

Sexual Temptation: Will You Stand Tall or Fall Flat?

By Bob Reccord

I will share with you the four justifications and rationalizations I've heard most often through years of helping people grapple with this type of temptation in their lives.

Rationalization No. 1: "I Can Handle This"

It's never ceased to amaze me how we can become so arrogant as to think, I can handle this,

and I won't let it get out of hand. If you believe you can handle temptation and not let things get out of hand, ask yourself these questions:

- Are you ready for the fact that your spouse won't be able to invest his or her trust in you again for a very long time? You'll have to go to immeasurable lengths to rebuild that trust, and-even then-you'll never be sure that it's 100 percent returned. A cloud of distrust will follow you wherever you go, for as long as you go.
- Are you ready to sit down and explain to your children why you did what you did and watch the shock, hurt, disbelief, anger, and hopelessness in their eyes and faces?
- Are you ready for the very real threat of sexually transmitted diseases? With AIDS being at epidemic proportions today-a disease for which there is no cure-are you willing to risk your life (and your spouse's life) for a few moments of pleasure?
- Are you ready for the emotionally ragged edges that will be left in your life if your spouse leaves you? How will you handle the ruptured relationship that will leave so much damage and hurt that regardless of how you look on the outside, a part of you will always be dying on the inside?
- What will you say to your parents? Are you ready to sit down and face them eye to eye and share with them honestly about such a stupid decision? What would it take to ever rebuild a relationship with them?
- Are you ready to surrender the respect of your colleagues, friends, and family members?
- If you're in ministry, are you ready to face immediate dismissal and being cut off from working with others who are called to do God's work?
- Can you handle explosive anger from the family of the one with whom you had the affair? What if the anger gets out of hand?
- Can you handle the shame that will be brought to your family if you fail morally? The gossip, the criticism, the glances that make you wonder what people are thinking or saying?
- What if other couples who are now friends begin to distance themselves from you and your spouse? Even if your marriage survives your moral failure, your friends will never see you the same way.
- Are you ready to handle the long journey of confrontation, restoration, and healing? It won't happen overnight. In fact, it won't even happen in a few months. For the pleasure of the moment, you will spend the price of years.

If you're playing with temptation, you'll need a mega-calculator to count the cost of what you'll really have to handle.

Rationalization No. 2: "God Wants Me to Be Happy"

I'm amazed at how often I hear this statement. Yet when I hand my Bible to someone and say, "Show me where the Bible says that," I have yet to find anyone who can point to the Scripture claiming that God's primary goal for our life is to be happy. Instead, God's Owner's Manual is clear that His primary desire for our life is that we be holy.

What does that word mean in the twenty-first century?

It's not complicated. To be holy simply means to be set apart for a special relationship and service for God and to act accordingly. "Service" does not necessarily mean you must go into the ministry. It refers to the opportunity for God to use your life and mine in a special way to accomplish eternal things that will make an eternal difference in ourselves and others.

Imagine that! You and I have the opportunity to experience a difference made by God in us, we can make a difference in others, and we can see those differences impact the future... even after we're gone. What a mind-blowing potential! And yet, many are willing to throw it away for a few moments of fun.

God calls us to be holy so that we can avoid tragic consequences and, instead, experience a

personal relationship with Him and be usable by Him.

- In Leviticus 11:44, God challenges us to be holy: "I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy."

- In Hebrews 12:14, God says, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men, and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

There it is again. God wants such a transforming change to take place in my heart that the resulting actions and attitudes in my life tell His whole story. And it's for my own good because here's what's ironic: He promises in His Word that if we strive to be holy, we inevitably will be happy. Yet if our focus is on being happy, we will rarely be holy.

One additional caveat-being holy is not about obeying rules, jumping through hoops, living up to somebody else's expectations, or having your name on a church's membership role. Being holy is having God so busy at work on our inner being that He's changing our want-to's.

- We will want to be different.
- We will want to act differently.
- We will want to have more biblical attitudes.
- We will want to follow God's Owner's Manual to operate at maximum effectiveness and to avoid major breakdowns.

The choice is ours. Preventive maintenance can go a long way!

Rationalization No. 3: "I Don't Want Anybody to Get Hurt"

I can't believe the number of people who've told me this in the midst of all their loved ones getting hurt. But I know one thing for sure: There's no such thing as a safe affair. I have yet to see the affair from which anyone walks away uninjured. More realistically, the shrapnel flies everywhere and wounds everyone in sight.

A friend of mine had this very line of reasoning. He was brilliant off the chart. He'd played college football and started on a winning team. He was well liked and successful in his work. But, tragically, he was drawn into smut on the Internet. Finding pornographic site after pornographic site, he was sucked into the tangled web of sexual illusion, and his wife never had a clue.

But it didn't stop there. The porn sites led to the chat rooms. The chat rooms led to intimate discussions. Discussions led to invitations to meet. And a liaison led to an affair.

As his daughter turned nineteen and left for college and his son was fifteen, my friend walked out on his family and his life. I well remember the devastation that happened just a year ago. The emotional shrapnel flew in all directions, and yet, amazingly, my friend still believed that his relationships with the kids shouldn't have been affected at all. He emailed his nineteen-year-old daughter, saying that he really still loved her and wanted them to be close again-at least, in their hearts. Can you imagine this line of reasoning?

His beautiful daughter, heartbroken and shattered, responded to his email. If you think no one gets hurt, just read this:

I cannot comprehend the sincerity of anything you say anymore, Dad. You say that you love me, yet you, knowingly, hurt both me and my family. You say that you would die for me, but you were unwilling to live for me. You say that you miss me, yet it is you who left and abandoned me. I am learning that words are a cheap commodity... especially, your words.

I am angry with you for living a life of deception and for going against everything you have ever taught me to be true and right. I disrespect you as a man, a husband, and as a father. You are a coward for not being willing to sacrifice something for the love of your own children. More than anything, I pity you. I pity you for throwing your life away for lust. You had every earthly thing a man could ever dream of: a loving family, two adoring children, a wonderful job, respect in our community, and all the possessions you could ever want. Yet you had a void in your life. Instead of filling that

void with Christ, you allowed sin to fill it. You are caught inside a cloud of deception. I hurt for you because I know that one day, you will look back at your life and realize all that you lost... for nothing. And I am afraid for you because I know that God will deal with your sin in His time and that it will be far worse than any earthly punishment or grief you could encounter. You are in a dangerous position by not fearing the Lord. I cannot allow you back into my life until you have a change of heart. As much as it hurts me to push you away, I believe that it is necessary for my healing. I don't believe that my brother and I are really a necessity in your life as you claim. I recall the many times, while growing up, that you convinced us that a parent could not desire anything more than love from his own children. Obviously, you have changed your mind-if you ever really meant those words in the first place. You seem to have no problem trading us for a replacement person. No matter how many times you say that you love me, I cannot believe the words without seeing the actions.

As disappointed and upset as I am, I will not cease to pray for you. I will pray that God will soften your heart. I will pray that you will not find the true peace or contentment until you are right with God. I will pray that one day, before we die, you will have a change of heart and lifestyle and that our relationship can be renewed. I will pray that, in time, God will grant me the grace to forgive you.

In the meantime, I will learn to live again. I will learn to trust and depend on the Lord to be my Father. I am thankful that God is a Father who will never betray, deceive or hurt me. Life will be different and difficult, at times, but I am confident that God will provide for Mom, my brother, and me. Each day will get a little easier and a little less painful to face.

Wow! And my friend thought no one would ever be hurt. Do you have the same deception rolling around in your mind?

Rationalization No. 4: "You Just Don't Understand My Situation!"

Perhaps this is the most common deception of all. People think their circumstances are unique.

- "It's different with me."
- "If you had to deal with the spouse I have, you'd understand!"
- "You don't know the stress I'm under. I've just got to have relief."
- "I don't feel the love anymore like I used to."
- "This person really understands me."

Do you know what's so amazing about all these statements and many more just like them?

It's that, while people claim their situation is unique, they never use any unique reasoning. It's all the same old thing, just repeated by a different set of lips.

Facing the Reality of Sexual Temptation

What are the answers to these rationalizations? Here are a few ways to face the reality of sexual temptation: 1. Get honest. There must be a willingness to confess and confront the issues and facts as

they really are. Wrong has to be called "wrong," and sin has to be called "sin." While it may be an old term, it's an ever-present reality.

2. Admit you need help. One thing that's become obvious through the years is that someone can't be helped unless they feel they need it. You can't dance around the issues, because the issues are critical and life-threatening. There's no time for games.

3. Make yourself accountable. Invite into your inner life a few people who love you enough and are courageous enough to ask you the hard questions. People who can tell when you're putting on a front. People who won't settle for answers like, "Everything is OK." Remember, most often people will hold you accountable only if you grant them the right to do so.

4. Take the long view. Getting on the other side of bad choices isn't a casual stroll.

Instead, it's more of a marathon run, and you must be willing to pay the price and take the time to get things back in order. But, trust me, the run is worth it if you're willing to step up to the plate, once and for all, and start the journey.

Can you imagine Joseph rationalizing a decision to sleep with his boss's wife? The next time you're tempted to rationalize or justify in order to cover your bad choices, think again. Maybe the best choice is to face reality.

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