

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

INTRODUCTION

I saw a bumper sticker one time that said:

“LEAD ME NOT INTO TEMPTATION, I CAN FIND IT MYSELF”

That’s the truth isn’t it!? Is there anybody here that has trouble finding temptation? Temptation seems to be lurking around most everywhere we find ourselves, doesn’t it! (At home, school, the marketplace, on the road, and yes even at Church!)

We certainly don’t have to look for temptation, because it usually finds us—especially in the times and areas of the greatest weaknesses in our flesh! The times when we are most vulnerable!

When it comes to the matter of temptations most folks like to find someone else to try to put the blame on, especially when they actually fall for the temptation or temptations!

Its hard to find folks who will take complete responsibility for their failures in temptations! It is so much easier to blame someone or something else!

It is THAT TENDENCY that we have to try to blame SOMEONE ELSE or SOMETHING ELSE for our sins that keeps us from dealing successfully with the besetting sins in our lives!

For Example—Take people who have an Alcohol problem. People with drinking problems usually have well-rehearsed stories about why they have problems with alcohol. Those stories may range from family problems, to financial problems, to maybe difficulties at work, or to a broken relationship, or to a myriad of other problems they can’t seem to cope with.

Regardless of the particulars of the stories, the conclusion is that their problems are really somebody else’s fault! If certain people or circumstances would change, then they could straighten up and not have their problem, but not until then!

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

The sad result is that by blaming somebody else for their problems, they never get themselves in a position to change! They short-circuit the whole process!

I. SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE!

Passing the buck in regard to temptation and falling for it is certainly nothing new, it started with the very first temptation:

There are two ways to read the first blame game here:

*Genesis 3:12—“...**The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.**” [This way blames Eve!]*

*Genesis 3:12—“...**The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.**” [This way blames the LORD!]*

The very first time man was confronted by God about his sin, he blamed it on someone else—his wife (directly) and the LORD (indirectly)!

Eve responded the same way when she was confronted:

*Genesis 3:13—“**The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.**”*

Blaming someone or something else did not work in the beginning and it will not work now. Even though it was true that the woman did give the fruit to Adam and the serpent did deceive Eve, God held them both accountable for their actions, and then drove them out of the garden! (Genesis 3:23-24)

Blaming someone or something else for our particular weaknesses and temptations may appear to take the responsibility off of our shoulders. But by mentally removing ourselves from a position of responsibility, we also remove ourselves from a position where we could correct the situation!

Until we are willing to take responsibility for our failures, we will be unwilling and therefore unable to do anything about them!

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

**II. COMMON WAYS PEOPLE TRY TO SHIFT THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF TEMPTATION!**

A. “But That’s Just The Way I Am!”

Many people blame **THEIR PERSONALITY** for their inability to deal successfully with particular temptations!

They may word it like, “That’s just the way I am!”

Or they may word it like, “I’ve always been this way.”

The implication is that “I have always been this way, and I always will be! There is no use in my trying to change!”

Often accompanying this way of thinking is a plea to “accept me the way I am!”

This attempt directly or indirectly implicates God! They may or may not say it, but they are thinking it!

GOD MADE ME THIS WAY!!! I want to say:

No! You are a **SINNER** and **SIN** made you that way, not God!

This is usually the case with those involved in sexual sins:

(A philanderer, a pedophile, a homosexual, a pornographer or one who views pornography, a prostitute.)

But, what does God say to these folks?

1 Corinthians 6:18—“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”

Take For Another Example—The person that has a bad temper. God considers the fruit of a bad temper to be sin! The Bible is very clear about this:

James 1:20—“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

Ephesians 4:29-32—“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Colossians 3:8—“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”

God doesn’t excuse our **SINFUL** behavior (**LET’S JUST CALL IT WHAT IT IS!**) No one else should have to either!

Although such behavior may appear to be deeply ingrained into one’s personality, **IT MUST BE CHANGED!**

Can you ever remember hearing yourself think or say, “That’s just the way I am?”

Do you expect people to accept and adjust to your peculiarities? Do you use your personality as an excuse for the way that you are rather than trying to change your behavior?

If you have been saying it or thinking it, it is high time to quit making excuses and begin making progress!

To do otherwise is to rob yourself and others of the joy that comes with the freedom of putting bad habits behind you!

Next week, Lord willing, I’m going to deal with the matter of changing to please God! That’s a whole other sermon!

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

B. *“It’s Everywhere! So What’s The Use To Fight It Anymore?”*

Resignation to the excuse of bad circumstances or a bad environment!

It may be worded in different ways:

“If it wasn’t for the people I have to live near or the people I work with, or _____ I wouldn’t have this problem.”

“If I didn’t have all of this pressure, I am sure I could change.”

“Its not my fault, the people I am around cause me do it.”

“If only my circumstances were different.”

Example—Singles and premarital sex.

We need to realize the our problem is not our circumstances or environment, but rather our unwillingness to take responsibility for our sin!

Until we are willing to do that, we can change friends, or jobs, or whatever and still end up being molded and controlled by our environment!

To put the blame for our sinful habits on our circumstances is to allow someone or something to control our destiny in that particular area.

We can make the conscious choice to hand the direction of our life over to SOMEONE or SOMETHING that we cannot change and thus cannot control...but listen to me, we cannot absolve ourselves of OUR responsibility before God!

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

Certainly, there comes a time to change jobs or friends or whatever is contributing to our problem. But we must come to grips with the fact that we are responsible for our behavior.

C. *“It Is Because Of The Family I Grew Up In.”*

This can also be worded in different ways:

“If you knew the kind of family I grew up in, you would understand why I am this way.”

“If you had known my mom (or dad), you would know why I act the way I do.”

An increasing number of believers have good insight into why they act and react the way they do in given circumstances and relationships **because of the many books on counseling or because of counsel they have received from counselors.**

Gaining this insight into the past CAN BE a positive step in correcting problem behavior when it is acted upon.

Unfortunately, it seems that many people use this insight as an EXCUSE rather than a tool to aid in the process of change.

They shift the responsibility for their sins from themselves to their parents or siblings or other family. *“If my parents...or my brothers and sisters... hadn’t treated me the way they did, I wouldn’t have these problems.*

It is only after we take responsibility for our actions that we are able to change them! Until that time, any effort to improve will only be a half-hearted attempt!

By the grace of God things can change!
But, we have to be willing to let go of the past!

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

We must be willing to see sin for what it is and prepare to deal with it, no matter what the excuses that we may have tried to use for it in the past!

As long as we hold on to well-rehearsed excuses, things will stay the same!

Your parents may have intentionally or unintentionally set you up for some of the problems you are facing today. However, YOU are the one responsible before God to deal with the things in your life that need to change!

D. “The Devil Made Me Do It!”

The late comedian Flip Wilson most recently popularized that phrase back in the late 60's or early 70's.

But, this excuse has been around since the beginning. That is basically what Eve was telling God!

Since we know from last week's message that Satan has something to do with the temptation process, it makes sense that he would be the one to blame!

But we need to be aware that the devil cannot make us do anything!

The Bible reveals to us that Satan is a deceiver! Jesus called him the *“father of lies”* in John 8:44! But, understand that Satan's only power over us is through manipulation and deceit!

If he could actually make us do things, he wouldn't need to go to all the trouble of deceiving us! When he dangles the right bait in front of us at the right time, we become so tuned in to our fleshly desires that we feel as if something is drawing us toward sin; but it is not a power that literally controls us!

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

In each case we choose to disobey!

If Satan could make us sin, the temptation process would be unnecessary!

Example—There is a difference between my tricking you into jumping off a cliff or pushing you off a cliff!

Think about the last time you were tempted to sin. Did you suddenly discover that you were sinning or had sinned?

Were you in the process before you ever thought about it? Or did it begin with a thought; then a feeling; then maybe a little struggle; then the actual sin?

Nobody held Eve down and forced the fruit down her throat; and nobody holds us down and forces us to sin, either! We choose to sin of our own free will!

E. “Lord, How Could You?”

Many believers, some intentionally and some unintentionally, blame God for temptations. In actuality, we are ultimately blaming God when we blame anything or anybody for our weakness in a particular area.

God allowed us to be born into our family. God allowed us to meet that group that keeps getting us into trouble.

God allowed us to meet that individual we finally became involved with.

God knew what kind of personality we would have. If we thought about our sin long enough, we could all find a way to pin the blame on God!

**OVERCOMING TEMPTATION:
PART 3—WHO IS TO BLAME?
JAMES 1:13-15**

But scripture is clear that God is not the cause of our temptation!

James 1:13—"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:"

III. SO, WE CANNOT SUCCESSFULLY SHIFT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR SIN!

A. Adam And Eve Tried It And It Didn't Work!

B. We Can Try It But It Will Not Work!

**C. Each Of Us Will Give An Account One Day!
(2 Corinthians 5:9-10)**

Paul's motivation for pleasing God was the knowledge that he would eventually have to stand before Him and give an account of his life.

Paul wasn't counting on being able to excuse his shortcomings because of his tough childhood, his various persecutions, his long nights alone a sea, or his tireless work for God's kingdom.

He was expecting to meet God head-on with no place to run and no alibis to try to absolve himself.

Conclusion

Have you fallen into the habit of making excuses for those "easily besetting" sins....those recurring sins in your life? Have you begun to believe your own story so much that you don't even feel convicted anymore over sin that used to drive you to your knees in confession and repentance? Have you convinced yourself that God understands your particular situation and surely He will not hold you accountable? Don't kid yourself!

Who is the one to blame for your failure to deal successfully with temptation? You are! To face up to that simple fact is to take a giant step toward overcoming temptation!