

When Faith Faces Temptation
James 1:12-18 (NKJV)

James gives a clear picture of how our beliefs should inform our behaviors. He takes us to the battlefield of the heart and shows us what victorious faith looks like when we're not merely surviving trials, but when our faith overcomes temptations.

When our faith faces temptation, we must:

Realize the Nature of Temptation

(vv. 12-13)

There are two tenses of temptation. The first one means when some temptations come, they are opportunities to see what's on the inside of us. If we're being fashioned, formed, and disciplined by God and stand up under this temptation, we mature and grow.

The other tense means to endeavor, scrutinize, entice, or test one's faith, virtue, or character by enticement to sin. These cause us to stumble and are not of God.

"God will test your faith, but He will never, ever tempt your character." – Dr. D'Ann V. Johnson

Trials are like ocean waves and are circumstances outside of us. Temptations are like tsunamis and come from urges inside of us. There are circumstances that swirl around us and we stand under them until God says, *"peace be still."* They do not come to take us out but to grow us in faith.

Recognize the Progression of Temptation

(vv. 14-15)

It's not always that the devil made us do it. Often, our own desires and enticements give birth to sin.

"Drawn away" is being lured from one's hiding place (Psalm 91:1). We are lured from the safety of self-restraint and into sin. "Desire" is lusting or longing for what is forbidden or for what is before us. It's not only about sex but can be about money or power. "Enticed" is an entrapment by tricks and wiles that are designed to bait. The result of the union between desire and enticement is sin: failure, offense, and taking the wrong course."

An example is in King David's progression of temptation in II Samuel 11:1 – 27.

Displaced from Assignment

David remained in Jerusalem when he should have been on the battlefield.

Distracted by Weaknesses

David was on the rooftop feeding his lust problem when he should have been on the battlefield.

Desired What's Forbidden

David saw Bathsheba and started asking about her.

Demanded an Opportunity for the Flesh

David sent messengers for Bathsheba and she conceived.

Developed a Plan for Cover Up

David attempted to send Uriah home to his wife so that when the conception became known, it would be blamed on Uriah.

Destroyed the Lives of Innocent People

David then commanded that Uriah be put on the battlefield so he could be killed, and everybody connected was harmed. It is never just about us. David displeased the Lord, and it was evil in the Lord's eyes. The child that was conceived by David's sin died.

"Temptation is never satisfied until something dies." – Dr. D'Ann V. Johnson

Refocus on the Source of Transformation (every good thing)

(vv. 16-18)

The temptation is always to believe that God is withholding something good from us, but God gives good gifts. Temptation exaggerates what we're missing while minimizing what we've already been given. In the story of Eve in the Garden of Eden, we see that because of a desire on the inside, Eve lost an entire garden to get a tree.

Temptation creates instability, but God remains steadfast. We need to refocus on what we already have to see if it's worth losing through temptation. Temptation produces desire, sin, and death, but God produces truth, new birth, and life. Temptation distorts our spiritual vision by making forbidden things appear desirable and God's goodness appear questionable. However, James brings our vision back into focus by telling us to not let temptation blur our vision of God's character. We need to see clearly that God is a good father, an unchanging father, and a life-giving father.