

Overcoming Temptation

Activity:	Duration
Dinner and Fellowship	45 Minutes
Teach the lesson "The 5 Greatest Temptations Men Face."	60 Minutes
Discussion of <i>The Pursuit of Holiness</i>	75 Minutes
Testimonies of Daniel Day Prayers	30 Minutes
Prayer Time	30 Minutes

Leader Notes:

1. The **Lesson** will go right to the heart of the men. As you teach, encourage them to interact with personal comments and reflect on their areas of temptation to prepare for the discussion time.
2. When moving through the questions in the **Application Guide** for *The Pursuit of Holiness*, be sure to make the connection between a life of holy living and spiritual leadership. Also, don't let the guys get overwhelmed by a faulty idea of perfection...keep them focused on progress.
3. Take time to let the guys talk about their experience through the Daniel Days prayer practice. How did it go? What did they hear God say? Did they sense a greater closeness to Jesus?
4. Pray very personally for the men's areas of temptation.
5. The "Stay On Course" questions at the end of the **Application Guide** are for the guys to use with the prayer partners they are assigned for that month.
6. **Special Project for Month 6:** at the retreat, the guys will each give a 30-second "commercial" on any topic. They'll also deliver one 18-minute sermon on a Bible passage of their choice.
7. Hand out copies of *Talk Like Ted* with the **Application Guide**. Also, hand out copies of "The Art and Skill Of Communication" **Study Guide**. Give them each a copy of the **Communication Retreat Preparation Guide**.

Lesson

The Five Greatest Temptations Men Face

The victory over temptation started in a garden with Eve and ended in a garden with Jesus. At both places, the price was high. We too stand in a garden daily with choices to make. One choice glorifies the serpent; the other glorifies the Savior.

Insert illustration

Temptation never ends, but we don't have to give in!

I. The Tempter

(Sometimes it's just us...but there is a Tempter.)

Know your enemy.

A. He has superior subtlety.

Crafty, shrewd, calculating, scheming.

He attacks with the small and sneaky, but not as often in the large and obvious.

Insert illustration

B. He is a **finite** creation.

One place at one time.

He did not exist before creation; God made him.

He was at one time good; he understands our nature.

Not "omni" anything.

C. He is committed to his cause.

It's all he does, and he has energy and vitality like a madman, committed to death.

But, he can only tempt! We are responsible for our own actions.

He doesn't play fair; he's in it to take us out.

D. His base of operations is **external** to human beings.

He is outside the human body as opposed to the Holy Spirit
Don't let him in!

- E. He has the ability to **influence** our behavior.

Through his successes of sin in the world (through temptation), he influences our behavior, but he can't force us against our will.

"The man who is suddenly overpowered by temptation has probably been dreaming about it for a long time."

There is no "surprise" in sin! Example: Affairs don't happen "all of a sudden."

Temptation often comes through a door that has been deliberately left open.

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. ⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:1-8

II. The Great Seduction

A. The hook is **baited**.

Any fisherman in the group?

Insert illustration

Temptations from outside have no power unless there is a corresponding desire inside.

- Gourmet desserts!
- Pornography
- Overspending

What makes resisting temptation difficult for many people is that they don't want to resist it completely.

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. James 1:13–14
v. 14: "enticed" is from a Greek word meaning to bait a hook.

1. Your **vulnerable** area is attacked.

Do you know what it is? Satan does!

And he knows exactly the right kind of bait for your hook.

2. The appeal is to our **sensual** desires.

Sight, touch, taste, sound, smell, and thoughts.

Sin is attractive and appealing.

He doesn't aim at our character.

Carnal vs. spiritual – Sensual (the senses) desires are good when enjoyed as God designed.

Character is a point of strength. He doesn't attack a point of strength. Instead, he goes for the weak area of the senses and the greatest point of appeal.

3. The **consequences** are hidden

The bait covers the hook!

David wouldn't have slept with Bathsheba if he had known that

1. His son would die
2. Uriah would be murdered
3. Tamar would be violated
4. God's blessing removed

B. God's **authority** is challenged.

Satan contradicted God! "Surely you won't die." V.4 to Eve

"Just this once, it won't do damage." Big mistake!

C. You make the **choice**.

"Nothing makes it easier to resist temptation than a proper upbringing, a sound set of values, and witnesses."

1. It is not a **sin** to satisfy God-given natural desires in the **proper** context.

- Hunger
- Sex
- Companionship
- Possessions
- Wisdom
- Success
- Pleasing sights (enjoyable things)

2. The essence of the choice:

Will I or will I not satisfy these God-given desires according to God's given commandments?

Eve answered that question with supreme egotism: She replaced God with self.

She basically said, "I will be in charge of myself." (v. 6)

"I will use the world to satisfy my desires in the way I want to satisfy my desires."

- Teens will say, "You're not the boss of my life."
- Sister to brother, "You're not the boss of me."

The grand question — who will be God?

III. The Five Temptations

A. The Temptation of **Sexual** Lust.

Insert illustrations

Men are visual creatures, continually creating videotapes.

- Movies
- Magazines
- Books (thought pictures)
- Internet
- Women! ...beach, anywhere

"Lust is not noticing that a woman is sexually attractive. Lust is born when we turn a simple awareness into a preoccupied fantasy. When we initiate sexual thoughts into our minds and nurture them, we have passed from simple awareness into lust. Luther put it this way: "We cannot help it if birds fly over our heads. It is another thing if we invite them to build nests in our hair."

R.C. Sproul

"Temptation is sexual attraction to a beautiful woman. Sin is walking around the block for another look."

- No second looks
- Mental videotapes can be "erased."
 1. forgiveness
 2. time
 3. fill with (Godly) "new tapes."

PRACTICAL TIPS:

1. **Admit** your struggle.

Bring it to light.

2. **Recognize** the results.

Ask for forgiveness, counseling, etc.

3. Starve the source.

Flee, get rid of, and build a fence.

4. Take in the Word.

Replace it.

5. Get tough accountability.

Whatever it takes – pastor or boss.

B. The Temptation to Have Power and Control.

Pride is often at the core of this issue.

*"I am the greatest. Not only do I knock
'em out, I pick the round!"
Mohammed Ali*

God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.

⁶*But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6*

¹⁸*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18*

It's okay to have a good self-image and be proud of significant accomplishments.

Pride is a sin of comparison in which we compare our strengths to the other person's weaknesses to make ourselves feel superior.

It is often caused and fueled by insecurity.

God is in control, and you are not.

PRACTICAL TIPS:

1. **Humble** yourself before God.
2. **Practice** admitting faults.
3. Seek to **learn** from others.

C. The Temptation to Love Money.

Insert illustration

Money is not the root of all evil; the love of money is.

Golden handcuffs (great money, job you hate, can't quit.)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ²Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1–2

No such thing as "get rich quick"!!

PRACTICAL TIPS:

1. **Generosity** is a key to financial success!
2. Follow the **10-10-80** principle.
3. Understand that you cannot **serve** two masters.

D. The Temptation to Chase Success.

Is it an Ego issue?

Success is a never-ending chase...you never get there.

What is really important?

- People
- Family
- What you can give? What is your contribution?

³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:33

PRACTICAL TIPS:

1. Determine your **priorities**.

What is your purpose, and what are your values?

2. Keep your **heart** in touch with God's heart.

E. The Temptation to **Forget God.**

The most subtle and most dangerous of all.

God is all too often last on our agenda, left out of our calendars, and gets from us what is left over from everything else.

³⁷Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Matthew 22:37–39

PRACTICAL TIPS:

1. Make a commitment to put God **first**.
2. Pick a specific **time** and **place**.
3. Go for **consistency**.

IV. The Way of Escape

- A. Put on the **Armor** of God.**

Ephesians 6:10–18

- B. **Starve** the Source.**

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

⁴¹"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Matthew 26:41

- C.** Feed Your spirit with the Word of God and **prayer**.

What you feed grows.

- D.** Use the "**buddy system**."

Prayer partner, confidant, close friend

Don't let Satan know you better than anyone else!

- E.** Recognize the **results**.

Eventually, you will get caught, and the price is always high.

Whether in the act or down the road— there is always a price.

Application Guide

The Pursuit of Holiness

Jerry Bridges

Offense or defense? Which is most important? Professional sports coaches will insist that both are important but without offense you will never win the game. This truth has application to your spiritual life. It is important to *“resist the devil, and he will flee from you,”* James 4:7, but that still leaves you running on human fumes, which are short-lived at best. You must pursue God, not just resist the Enemy. You must pursue holiness, not merely resist sin. *Come near to God and He will come near to you. James 4:8*

We all face temptation. Jesus, Himself, was tempted. When it comes to temptation, it's not about if; it's about when. The real issue is whether or not you give in. Draw near to God and strengthen your ability to resist temptation.

Chapter 1 Holiness Is for You

a. What is your practical understanding of the meaning of holiness?

b. Bridges asks a great question and offers three insightful answers.

Why do so many Christians feel constantly defeated in their struggle with sin?

- “Our first problem is that our attitude toward sin is more self-centered than God-centered. We are more concerned with our own ‘victory’ over sin than we are about the fact that our sins grieve God.”
- “Our second problem is that we have misunderstood ‘living by faith’ (Galatians 2:20) to mean that no effort at holiness is required on our part.”
- “Our third problem is that we do not take some sin seriously.” Bridges then makes a couple of brilliant statements, first quoting Andrew Bonar: “It is not the importance of the thing, but the majesty of the Lawgiver, that is to be the standard of obedience.” Then Bridges adds: “Are we willing to call sin ‘sin’ not because it is big or little, but because God’s law forbids it?”

Take a moment to reflect. Are you tempted to qualify sin by large and small and occasionally let yourself off the hook? Are you thereby tempted to play God by calling the shots rather than your obedience being driven by your pure love for God and desire to be like Him? Give a brief personal illustration to explain your answer.

Chapter 2 The Holiness of God

What is the danger of “cultural holiness,” and how is that different than the holiness of God? Have you ever slid into cultural holiness? Briefly explain.

Chapter 3 Holiness Is Not an Option

There is a holiness that is given to us and a holiness that is expected from us. Please explain the difference. How would you rate yourself on the holiness that is expected from you?

Chapter 4 The Holiness of Christ

Bridges quotes John Brown: "Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervors, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills." Bridges continues: "Neither does holiness mean, as is so often thought, adhering to a list of 'do's and don'ts,' mostly don'ts. When Christ came into the world, He said, 'I have come to do Your will, O God.' (Hebrews 10:7). This is the example we are to follow. In all of our thoughts, all of our actions, in every part of our character, the ruling principle that motivates and guides us should be the desire to follow Christ in doing the will of the Father. This is the high road we must follow in the pursuit of holiness."

This is rich, deep, and potentially overwhelming. Reflect for a moment, and jot down a couple of thoughts about what you believe the will of the Father is for you today. Meaning: not His overarching will for your life, but what is He asking of you today?

Chapter 5 A Change of Kingdoms

This chapter gives an excellent Biblical explanation of the tension between death to sin (Christ did for us) and resisting sin (what we do for ourselves.) Take an honest moment and write down what temptation or sin you are "resisting" right now.

Chapter 8 Obedience Not Victory

As a leader, if you were offering guidance to a Christian who told you they were “defeated” by a chronic sin they just could not stop, what would you say?

Chapter 9 Putting Sin to Death

Bridges gives a great set of four questions in this chapter that help guide us in knowing right from wrong and help discern the “gray” areas of life.

- Is it helpful — physically, spiritually, and mentally?
- Does it bring me under its power?
- Does it hurt others?
- Does it glorify God?

Try using these questions on one issue this month...jot down a brief note about what you discovered.

Chapter 10 The Place of Personal Discipline

What is your plan for your "devotional" time? (Bible and prayer) Tell how often and what you do.

Chapter 11 Holiness in Body

How would you describe your control over your physical body and appetites?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Weak

Strong

Give a brief explanation of your answer.

Chapter 12 Holiness in Spirit

Which of the following is your greatest struggle?

- Envy
- Impure thoughts
- Jealousy
- Anger
- Bitterness
- Critical
- Selfish
- Moody
- Rebellious
- Dishonesty
- Unforgiving
- Greed
- Slothfulness
- Other _____

What progress are you making?

Chapter 13 Holiness and Our Wills

"It is the will that chooses to yield to temptation, or to say no. Our wills, then, ultimately determine our moral destiny, whether we will be holy or unholy in our character and conduct."

Solomon said: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." Proverbs 4:23

How do you "watch over your heart?"

Chapter 14 Habits of Holiness

No question for you. Just soak in these great insights.

...sheer human resolve has never once broken the shackles of sin. God has provided us with wisdom, however, such as found in some of these paraphrased thoughts from Bridges.

- Good habits are reinforced by frequent repetition.
- Beware of exceptions — the "just this once" idea is a dangerous one.
- A life of diligence in all areas is needed to conquer your tougher struggles
- Don't be discouraged by failure.

This is important not only to relieve any possible interpretation of ascetic legalism but to understand that, on occasion, you will fail, and God will be there for you when you do. (Don't be discouraged by failure) The key is to find that your failures are from taking higher ground, not repeated issues that control you.

Chapter 15 Holiness and Faith

How are faith and holiness connected to one another?

Chapter 16 Holiness in An Unholy World

How are faith and evangelism related?

Chapter 17 The Joy of Holiness

Holiness is not about a life of drudgery but, ultimately, a life of joy. In what way have you experienced the joy of the Lord that comes from holy living?

So, what does all this "holiness stuff" have to do with leadership? Everything. Living a life committed to truly following Christ (progress, not perfection) is the foundation upon which we earn the privilege of leadership. Anything short of that is to lead from your own talent and power...which is obviously a big mistake. To lead with God's anointing results from a life dedicated to His will. To lead (and live) with joy is found clinging to the vine!

Stay on Course

"It is important to know that there are two pains all of us must consider. You cannot escape them both, and you always trade one for the other. The first pain is the pain of Discipline, and the other is the pain of Regret. The pain of Discipline comes first, and the pain of Regret comes after. Here is the best reason for trading the pain of Regret for the pain of Discipline: Discipline weighs ounces, and Regret weighs tons!"

*E. James Rohn
Adventures in Achievement*

Accountability Questions with Your Prayer Partner

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17

1. Are you spending time alone with God?
2. Is your love for God increasing?
3. Is your thought life pure?
4. Are you walking in total obedience to God?
5. Are you continuing to grow?
6. Are you giving more than you're receiving?
7. Have you been completely truthful with all your answers?