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Overcoming Temptation

The following is a partial chapter from “Adam & Eve’s Instruction Manual” in [*Slaying Your Giants*](#) by Kent Crockett (Hendrickson Publishers 2013). [Additional stories and more insights concerning overcoming temptation](#) are included in the book.



Read Genesis 3:1-6. If Adam and Eve could have written an Instruction Manual for future generations to read, they could show us how to overcome temptation. Here are **eight lessons** that Adam and Eve would teach us from what they learned in the Garden of Eden.

Lesson #1 You can reduce your temptations by avoiding the places of temptation.

Have you ever wondered why God put the forbidden tree in the middle of the garden? He could have planted it anywhere, but God chose that spot because He wanted Adam and Eve to know exactly where it was *so they could avoid it*. It is always easier to avoid temptation than to overcome it.

Temptations usually begin with a thought to go to a certain place. The temptation began for Adam and Eve when they decided to take a trip to the middle of the garden. Temptation always covers an area that can be entered into. Once we have crossed that invisible line to go into the forbidden area, we’ve entered into temptation.

Every boxing ring has rope around the area where the boxers fight. If you stay outside the ring, you will be safe. But once you enter into the ring, temptation will begin to fight with you. That’s why Jesus said, “Keep watching and praying, that you may *not enter into* temptation” (Matt. 26:41). Watching and praying can keep us from entering into those areas where we will be tempted.

Lesson #2 The door of temptation opens when you decide you want to be tempted.

Have you ever wanted to be tempted? You’re cracking open a dangerous door, which is an attempt to provide for your desires in the wrong way. If a person wants to be tempted, he will think ahead and make plans to be in a place where he can be tempted. It’s hard to be victorious over temptation when you also want to be overcome by it.

One day Bobby’s mother told him to not go swimming in the pond when he came home from school. Bobby told her he wouldn’t, but took along his swimming suit—just in case he was tempted. By thinking ahead and making plans to disobey, he made provision for the flesh.

Adam and Eve did the same thing when they made a decision to go to the middle of the garden. They were some distance away from the forbidden tree when one of them said, “I guess it wouldn’t hurt anything just to take a look at it.” “Yeah, I’m a little curious about it myself,” the other one said.

They made provision for their flesh by deciding to take a closer look at the forbidden tree.

Lesson #3 When you get to the place of temptation, Satan will be waiting there for you.

When Adam and Eve arrived at the middle of the garden, guess who just happened to be waiting at the tree? Satan! How did he know to be waiting for them at that spot? He knew that was the place where they could be tempted. Satan can tempt us easier in some places than others. He likes to hang around the places of temptation.

After I’ve cracked open the door of my mind, Satan can pour in suggestions concerning the temptation. Now I’ve given him permission to speak lying thoughts to my mind, which will seem to make sense. Not every thought that pops into your mind comes from you. The ideas that pull you toward the temptation come from the enemy. So now we see a couple of things are involved in temptation. We struggle with the flesh on the inside and Satan on the outside.

Lesson #4 Once you are “under the influence” of temptation, you’ll become blind to the consequences.

Outside of the area of temptation, we can easily see the consequences of what can happen to us if we yield. But after we have entered into temptation, we get “under the influence” and become blind to the danger. When Eve entered into temptation, she failed to recognize it as such.

“This tree doesn’t look too harmful,” she thought. “It seems to have a lot of good points. It’s good for food, it delights me to look at it, and I’ve been told it will increase my wisdom. I don’t see any consequences if I eat from it.”

After I’ve entered into temptation, I ignore all warning signs. By now I’m totally blind to the consequences. The alcoholic never dreamed he would end up in the gutter when he took his first drink. But he could remember saying, “One drink never hurt anyone.” The fish that took the bait never dreamed a hook was inside and he would end up in the frying pan. But he couldn’t see the man holding the fishing pole at the other end of the line.

Eve never dreamed she would bring down the entire human race as a result of taking one bite from a piece of fruit. Satan’s power lies in his ability to deceive people into believing they can get away with yielding to temptation without suffering any consequences.

Lesson #5 The pull of the temptation increases the closer you get to the forbidden fruit.

Many people want to play with temptation as long as they can, thinking they can walk away from it at any time. But it’s not that easy, because the closer you get to the temptation, the more pull it has.

Adam and Eve had walked to the middle of the garden, and now they were standing under the tree looking at the fruit. The closer they got to the tree, the more likely they would eat the forbidden fruit. It is hard to pick fruit if you are a hundred yards away, but it’s easy if you are at an arm’s length.

Willpower grows weaker as you get nearer to the temptation. Just as Superman weakens as he gets near the Kryptonite, you will weaken when you get near the temptation. Martin Luther once said, “Don’t sit near the fire if your head is made of butter.” The closer you get to the fire, the hotter the fire feels to you. Cutting off the temptation by killing the thought at the beginning is the key to breaking free from temptation’s pull.

Lesson #6 You must run away from the temptation instead of trying to resist it.

Adam and Eve had gone to the wrong place and were considering eating the forbidden fruit, but they still had not sinned. Most people in this situation would attempt to resist the temptation by trying not to do it. The Bible however, never instructs us to “try not to do it.”

When we try not to do something, we are like the country boy who was lying under a farmer’s apple tree looking up at the apples. The farmer saw him from a distance and said, “Hey, you! What are you trying to do, son—steal my apples?”

The boy yelled back, “No sir, I’m trying not to!”

Most of us are trying not to. The harder we try not to, the more we fail. When we “try not to” we’re attempting to resist the temptation using the power of the flesh. This is absolutely the wrong thing to do because our flesh actually wants to yield. The very thing that got us into the temptation is now trying to get us out of it!

Trying to resist temptation in the flesh is like trying to fight off a lion with a leg of lamb. The flesh is the wrong weapon to use in fighting temptation. The spirit is willing, but the *flesh is weak* (Matt. 26:41). The flesh makes an attempt to resist, but its resistance isn’t strong enough to overcome temptation’s pull. Oscar Wilde once said, “I can resist everything but temptation.” So can you! That’s why we need to find a different battle plan than “trying not to do it.”

Any time you get into a conversation with temptation, it will talk you into doing it. Rather than “Just Say No” in your attempt to resist, “Just Run Away” from it. Adam and Even needed to run out of the area where they were vulnerable. That’s what you need to do when you are being tempted. You must flee *out of the area of temptation*. You must exit the area you have entered into. Joseph found the way of escape when he was being seduced by Potiphar’s wife. He didn’t stand there, trying to push her away. He fled from her presence and ran out the exit door (Gen. 39:12).

Lesson #7 Forbidden fruit leaves a bitter aftertaste.

Eve thought, "Well, I guess one little nibble never hurt anyone." She bit into the fruit and then gave it to Adam. After he ate, their eyes were opened, and they were ashamed of what they had done. Shame always follows sin. It was the first and the last bite of the fruit they ever enjoyed.

The most delicious bite of the forbidden fruit is the first one, and we think the pleasure will continue with the second bite. But the second isn't quite as good as the first, so we take a third bite, trying to recapture the original thrill. Each bite gets progressively less satisfying but the compulsion to eat increases until we *must have the fruit even though we don't enjoy it anymore*. At this point, we are now addicted to forbidden fruit.

Lesson #8 If you will eat the fruit that God has provided, you won't be hungry for forbidden fruit.

God had given Adam and Eve all the trees of the garden to eat from except one. If they had been eating from the fruit God had provided for them, they would not have been hungry for the forbidden fruit.

When God created Adam, He gave him a hunger drive and then He provided fruit trees to satisfy his hunger drive. Temptation is trying to fulfill a legitimate God-given drive in an illegitimate way. When Adam and Eve became hungry for forbidden fruit, they were attempting to satisfy their hunger drive in an illegitimate way.

Suppose you go to your grandmother's house for Thanksgiving and she has just baked your favorite dessert, homemade apple pie. You are about to cut yourself a piece when Grandma says, "You can't have that now. We're about to eat and you can have it for dessert."

After eating a couple of helpings of turkey and dressing, you push yourself away from the table. You're so full that you have to loosen your belt. Then Grandma brings you a large piece of apple pie and places it in front of you.

You groan and say, "Please take it away. I don't want it. I'm full."

Just a short while ago you were craving the pie and now it's repulsive to think about. What happened? Your hunger drive has been fulfilled, so the temptation is no longer there.

What works with your hunger drive also applies to your sex drive and every other need in your life. If you will fulfill these drives in the right way, you won't look for the wrong ways to meet these needs.

The Key to Victory over Temptation

Galatians 5:16 says if we will walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the desire of the flesh. We need a power greater than ourselves to displace our selfish desires. The only thing that will displace the desires of flesh is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit inside our hearts.

I knew a man who was involved with drugs when he surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. Not long after his conversion, one of his former acquaintances offered him some drugs. When he looked at the drugs in other man's hand, what he used to crave was now revolting to him. "I had about as much desire for those drugs," he told me, "as if he had offered me manure!"

What happened to him? God changed the desires in his heart. When you yield to the Spirit's control, the Lord puts His desires within you to want what He wants. You can't walk in the Spirit and the flesh at the same time. It's one or the other.

Perhaps you keep losing your battle with temptation. Change your strategy. Don't say no to temptation, but say yes to Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, you can and will walk in victory.

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