



The Way of Escape

Temptation—the enticement to sin—meets each of us in many different ways every day. You can be certain that, whatever form your temptation takes, it is common to human experience. You are not alone in your struggle to say “no” to sin. It is encouraging to know that others have experienced the same draw to sin and have experienced God’s grace to overcome that temptation. **1 Corinthians 10:13** promises that God has provided a way for believers to escape temptation:

1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

This promise, first given to the church at Corinth so many years ago, still holds true for God’s children today. It is as sure as God’s unchanging faithfulness. God wants you to rely on this promise—especially when you are seriously tempted and it *feels* like you have no choice but to sin. No. You don’t have to sin. In every temptation, there is a way out! God always faithfully provides a way of escape. By God’s grace, you can learn to take the door marked “exit” in the face of *any* temptation.

Like modern-day believers saved out of Hinduism and Buddhism, first-century Christians living in the city of Corinth faced the temptation to worship real, physical idols. In the very next verse (1 Corinthians 10:14), Paul provides a very practical “exit” from the temptation these believers are facing. He writes, “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” Paul encourages these believers, living in a culture hostile to Christianity: “Are you tempted to worship idols? Are you feeling the pressure from your family and the culture to turn back to your old ways of doing things? Wait. Stop. God has faithfully provided a way of escape so that you don’t have to sin: run the other way!”

The first step in responding rightly to temptation is to know what God says about temptation. James 1:13-16 warns us not to be deceived about the way temptation works in our lives:

James 1:13-16 *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.*

We can’t blame God when we face temptation. While God does test our faith in order to mature us (James 1:2-4), He never tempts us to sin. James reminds us that a trial can become a temptation. In times of suffering, we are tempted to doubt God’s love and goodness. In times of suffering, we are tempted to get out from under our trial and find comfort and relief in a way that doesn’t please God.

From James 1:13-16 we learn that every temptation to sin follows the same pattern as the very first temptation in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-13). Eve was encouraged to believe a lie about God (*He is withholding good from you*) and about the end result of her choices (*you will not surely die; instead, you will be like God*). This lie met with a strong desire in her heart: Eve wanted to be wise, like God. And she saw the forbidden fruit as her means to get what she wanted, apart from her relationship with God—the Source of all true wisdom—and in direct disobedience to His will. Temptation happens the same way in our lives: 1) we believe lies and 2) we indulge our wrong desires.

If we are honest, we’ll admit that we often don’t take the way of escape God has provided because we

don't really want to escape the temptation. We want to fulfill our wrong desires. We believe lies like: *God isn't good. I can make this choice and not be hurt by it. God hasn't provided what I need to be truly satisfied. I can't help it; this is just the way I am.* Once we buy into a lie about God, ourselves, or our circumstances, we easily justify indulging our wrong desires and make a willful choice to sin.

But we don't have to follow Eve's pattern. If we know how temptation works, we can better identify the times and ways we are likely to face temptation to sin. We can learn to identify the lies we are tempted to believe and the desires we are tempted to indulge. We know temptation will come. In wisdom, plan ahead to meet temptation with the grace of God. Just as you would identify the exit doors ahead of time so you can get out of a building in the event of a fire, identify God's way of escape in the event of a temptation.

Think about your own life. When are you most often tempted to sin? In what situations do you find it hard to obey? When do you tend to indulge your wrong desires? Remember, circumstances cannot *make* you sin. You *choose* to sin because of what you want. We always do what we love. Ask yourself, "What is it I want so badly that I am willing to disobey God to get it?" Journal your answers in the space below:

<i>I am tempted to sin when...</i>
<i>I am tempted to believe this lie about God...</i>
<i>I am tempted to believe this lie about myself and/or my circumstances...</i>
<i>I want _____ so badly I am willing to sin to get it.</i>
<i>I indulge my wrong desire by...</i>

The way of escape begins with honesty. As James says, "Don't be deceived." Tell the truth about God, your heart, and the temptation you are facing. Fight sin's deception with truth from God's Word. Consider the lies you are tempted to believe. Answer each lie with specific truth from God's Word. If you find this step difficult, please ask a godly adult for help. Journal your answers in the space below:

With God's help, I must believe this truth about God....

With God's help, I must believe this truth about myself or my circumstances...

With God's help, I must deny my wrong desire by...

With God's help, I can demonstrate trust in God by...

Stop and pray. Ask God to change your desires, and ultimately, what you believe about Him. Remind yourself that your particular temptation is “common to man.” You are not alone.

Finally, consider the “way of escape” that God has already provided for you. How will you demonstrate your love for God and trust in Him the next time you face temptation?

Below you will find some practical examples of specific action steps you can take when faced with temptation. Choose several of these “ways out” to adopt as your own. Or get creative and think of other practical steps you can take to find a “way out” when faced with the temptation to sin. Like Paul challenged the believers in Corinth, you can *flee* from sin. Make these action steps part of your own exit strategy. Use the space on the following page to write out your plan. Share your plan with a godly adult who can help you put your plan into action the next time you face temptation.

God faithfully provides a way of escape for His children. It may feel like you have no choice but to sin, but that is not true. There is a way out. Whether you take the way of escape or not is up to you. God promises to give enabling grace to those who choose to trust Him and obey. Victory is found in your obedience!

Practical Examples: “There is a Way Out”

1. **Cry out** to God for help. Express my dependence on God. I will actively trust Him to keep me from falling. Pray for a holy hatred for the sin I am tempted to do. Pray God’s Word back to Him and claim His promises (choose one or two specific verses).
2. **Speak out** loud to myself. Tell my heart truth about God, about myself, and about the end result of obedience or disobedience. Use the specific Scripture I have written out to fight temptation. Read through a selection of verses on the gospel, God’s character, or the Psalms. Listen to recordings of Scripture and/or godly music. (Use a pre-selected play-list or the Dwell app.)

