

This midweek study will explore the biblical understanding of sin and temptation. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: Temptation and Sin

Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet He never sinned but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).

1 Temptation rises from distorted desire and doubt in God's faithfulness (Jas. 1:13-17; 4:1-6).

- ▶ *If sin were a plant, what would its seed be?*

Read James 1:13-17.

- ▶ *According to this text, what is the source of temptation?*
- ▶ *What is the eventual outcome of sin, according to verse 15?*
- ▶ *What does the death described in verse 15 look like, both ultimately (hell) and in this life?*

Answers may include: spiritual numbness, selfishness, inability to treasure Jesus, triviality and frivolity, and so on.

- ▶ *In verses 16 and 17, what did James suggest as a far better way to achieve satisfaction than sin?*
- ▶ *How many good things come from God, according to verse 17?*
- ▶ *Why do you think James emphasized that God is Father in verse 17?*
- ▶ *Why did James go out of his way to point out that God never changes? How does God's unvarying, good Fatherhood help us in specific times of temptation?*
- ▶ *What are some specific instances of temptation where we can remember God the Father gives far better gifts than sin does?*

2 We fight temptation with the superior pleasures of God's promises (Ps. 119:9; Prov. 27:7; Heb. 11:24-26).

- ▶ *Is there ever a time you would turn down free pizza? If a millionaire promised you a thousand bucks for not eating a particular pizza, would you still eat that pizza? Why?*

Read Hebrews 11:24-26.

- ▶ *Why did Moses choose not to enjoy all the riches Egypt had to offer?*
- ▶ *How does Moses' preference for the reproach of Christ parallel the millionaire paying you not to eat pizza? In both instances, what is the superior pleasure?*
- ▶ *How do we find greater satisfaction in God?*

Read Psalm 119:9.

- ▶ *How does Psalm 119:9 encourage us to stay pure? What would be in the Word that would keep the young man from sin?*

Read Proverbs 27:7.

- ▶ *When would the honey of temptation not be appealing to us?*
- ▶ *When are we most susceptible to think the bitterness of sin is sweet? How can we keep ourselves "full" in God?*

3 We also fight temptation best by preventing it (Rom. 13:14) and by fleeing it (2 Tim. 2:22).

Read Romans 13:14.

- ▶ *What did Paul mean when he said to make no provision for the flesh? How do we not allow temptation even to have a foothold?*
- ▶ *What are some common places we are prone to be tempted? What are some people around whom we are easily tempted? Some circumstances in which we are easily tempted? How do we avoid these places, people, or circumstances?*

Read 2 Timothy 2:22.

- ▶ *According to this verse, how do we "fight" temptation? Why is the command in this verse kind of a reversal of what we think of as "fighting" temptation?*
- ▶ *In your experience, what happens the longer you wrestle with a temptation? As we continue to come up against a temptation, do we get stronger or weaker against it?*
- ▶ *What are some examples from the Bible, history, or life of people fleeing temptation?*
Joseph in Genesis 39 would be one example.
- ▶ *What are some real-life ways we need to flee temptation?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *What is the difference between temptation and sin? What is the best way to "fight" sin? What are some specific temptations you will face this week, and how will you resist them?*