

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

Leader's notes for Page 13 of the student booklet

- Welcome the students and open Lesson 2 with prayer. Ask them how the homework went, and encourage them to keep on doing the homework in order to benefit most from this study as they become immersed in God's Word and apply the biblical principles to their lives.
- Ask for volunteers to recite the memory verse for Lesson 2 (*1 Peter 4:12*). Alternatively, if the students are willing, ask them to pair up and recite the memory verses to their partners.
- Ask for a volunteer to recite the memory verses from Lesson 1 (*Ephesians 2:8-9*). Then, state: **"It is important to review all of the verses that you have memorized the previous weeks. If the verses are forgotten soon after you have memorized them, the purpose of memorizing the Scriptures is defeated. The reason for continuously reviewing Scripture passages is so that they can be recalled immediately when they are needed in the actual situations of life."**
- Ask a student to read *Matthew 28:19-20*. Ask a volunteer to answer Question 1. Then ask the student, **"What is implied by 'baptizing?'"** Answer: "Evangelizing, telling others about the Lord, because baptism comes after salvation." And ask **"What do you see that is significant about the second part of the Great Commission? What are they to observe?"** The answer is in the paragraph below Question 1, with emphasis on "all" that Jesus commanded.
- Then ask the students to spend a few minutes to scan *Matthew Chapters 5-7* and tell you what verses they see that refer to various problems and difficulties Jesus taught the disciples about in the Sermon on the Mount. Here are some samples: *Matthew 5:11* insults, *Matthew 5:11* persecution, *Matthew 5:11* slander, *Matthew 5:22* anger, *Matthew 5:22* name calling, *Matthew 5:23* people upset with you, *Matthew 5:28* lust, *Matthew 5:32* divorce, *Matthew 5:40* lawsuits and people not treating you fairly, *Matthew 5:43* temptation to hate; *Matthew 6:1* and *7* temptation to show off; *Matthew 6:25* worry, *Matthew 7:5* hypocrisy.
- Then ask the students: **"Would you say these are issues we face today? Would you say human nature has changed much since the Bible was written?"** Pause for an answer. Point out how contemporary the Bible is in dealing even with today's problems, tests, and temptations.
- Ask a student to read the next paragraph, beginning with "These are examples ..." through "... devotions, and so on."
- Read the next paragraph beginning with "The wonderful thing"
- Ask a student to read the paragraph under A. The Christian's walk, beginning with "Let's start by finding out ..." through "... walk in Christ."
- In Section A. 1., ask the students to turn to *Ephesians 2:1-10*, but don't read the passage. Then ask a volunteer to read the question after the reference and answer Questions 2 and 3. You don't need to read the paragraph under the questions.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

Before you begin this lesson, ask for God's help in understanding His Word and for wisdom and strength to apply what you learn in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Begin memorizing *1 Peter 4:12* and prepare to recite this passage before the next lesson.

Jesus gave us His plan for reaching the world through being and making disciples. Read the "Great Commission" passage in *Matthew 28:19-20*. What two elements are included in making disciples?

1. Baptizing and teaching them to observe all that He commanded

Jesus said that we are both to baptize (with evangelism implied) and to teach or train others. Telling others about the Gospel is the way believers reach the world, and is included as the first part of making disciples. The second part is to train believers to live victoriously, that is "teaching them to observe" *all* that He commanded.

To see some of what He commanded, scan through the topics Jesus dealt with in the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew Chapters 5 - 7*). He talked about how to face and deal with anger, persecution, reconciliation, lustful temptations, relationship problems, retaliation, divorce, hatred, and worry, among others. He prepared His disciples to deal with and endure the problems of life, knowing that these problems could discourage them or sidetrack them from their mission.

These are examples of the "battles of life" that we still experience today. People sometimes start out the Christian life strong, with the best of intentions of living totally for the Lord. But then certain things happen that tempt them to stray from their commitment. Conflicts occur in the family, there may be clashes with the boss, illnesses may occur, finances may run short, the children may not behave as well as they should, other time pressures may crowd out devotions, and so on.

The wonderful thing about God's Word is that it goes directly to the heart of these issues. God designed us and provided the "user's manual," the Bible, for how we can live with the peace and joy He intended us to have, regardless of the circumstances. Do we still sin? Yes. We already know this by considering how many times we fail to love God's way. Is it always easy to live God's way in spite of our feelings? No. But the Bible and the Holy Spirit provide the resources we need to have hope and victory in these difficult situations. We need to recognize that tests and temptations are a regular part of life and then apply God's practical principles in the power of the Holy Spirit to have victory.

A. The Christian's walk

1. Let's start by finding out what God says about our walk (some versions use "live" instead of "walk") as a Christian. There are many passages in the New Testament about the believer's walk in Christ. Read *Ephesians 2:1-10*. What do *verses 2* and *10* say about our walk?

2. Verse 2: We used to walk according to the course of this world.

3. Verse 10: Believers are created to do good works.

Before we came to Christ, we walked according to the ways of this world. But God made us alive together with Christ (*verse 5*). He transformed us, enabling us to walk by faith (*Galatians 2:20*), and even prepared the good works for us to "walk in" (*Ephesians 2:10*).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

Leader's notes for Page 14 of the student booklet

- Read Question 4 and ask a volunteer to answer the question. Then ask a student to read the paragraph under Question 4 beginning with “Our motivation for good works”
- Ask a volunteer to summarize the illustration beginning with “A woman had” If no one volunteers, you can prompt them or ask a student to read the first three paragraphs of the illustration, beginning with “A woman had ...” through “... her new husband.”
- Ask another student to read the last paragraph of the illustration beginning with “The key application”
- Ask the students to turn to *Galatians 5:16*, but you don't need to read the verse. Ask a student to answer Question 5.
- Ask a student to read and answer Question 6.
- Ask a student to read the paragraph under Question 6 beginning with “The Spirit and” State: “**Does this sound like there is a daily battle going on?**” Students should not have any problem acknowledging that yes, the daily battle between the flesh and Spirit is real.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

What does *Ephesians 2:4* say that our motivation for good works should be?

4. *We do good works because of God's great mercy and love for us.*

Our motivation for good works is His great love and mercy toward us. Our works are in response to God's love, not an attempt to pay Him back. We can never pay God back for the priceless gift of salvation. We serve the Lord out of deep gratitude. Perhaps an illustration might be helpful.

ILLUSTRATION: A woman had a very unloving husband. Every day before he went to work, he would make a long list of tasks she was to complete before he returned home. No matter how hard she tried to complete the tasks, she never was successful. So, every night he would scold her for what he considered a very poor performance. Her life with this husband was very hard. After a time, the husband died and a few years later she married another man who was kind and loving. They had a wonderful relationship and she was very happy.

One day as she was cleaning their home, she came across one of the lists of tasks that her former husband had written for her to do. As she looked at the list, she was amazed to discover that while she could not complete the list for the former husband no matter how hard she tried, she was now accomplishing *all* those things for her new husband.

The key application of this illustration is that before salvation, it was impossible to keep the Lord's commands consistently. When you are saved, you have a loving relationship espoused (engaged) to the Lord. Following Him is not a matter of merely following a set of rules. Following His commands is not an exercise in legalistic dos and don'ts. It is not a way to earn our salvation or to gain favor with God to balance out our sin. It is a loving response to what God has so amazingly and marvelously done for us. It is now a matter of loving obedience in the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

2. What does *Galatians 5:16* say about our walk?

5. *If we walk by the Spirit, we will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

God says that we are to walk by the Spirit so that we will not carry out the desire of the flesh. But even though we have been crucified with Christ, and have a new power to resist sin that we did not have before, our fleshly desires are still with us. What does God say in *Galatians 5:17* about our daily struggle with sin?

6. *The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that we do not do the things we please.*

The Spirit and the flesh are set against one another, and it does not take very long for our flesh to show itself. We are tempted to respond to our own spouse with impatience, to be angry with our children, to argue with the boss, and to be fearful about financial matters or an illness. We can exhibit, even as believers, behavior that is very similar to the deeds of the flesh referred to in *Galatians 5:19-20*. There are many ways that our old manner

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

Leader's notes for Page 15 of the student booklet

- Ask a student to read the paragraph beginning with “3. Thankfully, God also ...” through “... fruit of the Spirit.”
- Ask a student to read and answer Question 7. You don't need to read the Scripture passage.
- Next, pose a question to the students, stating: **“It is one thing to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit when things are going well; it is quite another to exhibit the fruit when it is not easy. So here's a question. Give me some examples of when exhibiting the fruit is easy and when it is hard. We'll take just three of them, love, joy, and patience as examples. Give us an example of when it's easy to love.”** (An example answer might be “when someone has done something nice for you.”)

“OK, when is it difficult to show love?” (Example: when someone has been consistently mean to you or ignores you)

“Let's try joy. By the way, we'll define what we mean by joy in Lesson 4. When is it easy to have joy?” (Example: when nothing breaks down, the kids are obedient, and you're not exhausted at the end of the day)

“When is it difficult to have feelings of joy?” (Example: when none of the above is true)

“How about patience? When is it easy to be patient?” (Example: when lines are short at the store, or when you succeeded in choosing the fastest line)

“When is it difficult to be patient?” (Example: when you chose the slowest line or when you're in a big traffic backup)

“You get the idea. God didn't say to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit ‘except when’ We are to exhibit the fruit regardless of circumstances.”

- Leader read Paragraph B. “The daily challenge ...” Then read the last sentence of the second paragraph beginning with “So let's see what God says ...” through “... and temptations.”
- Ask a student to read ***1 Peter 1:6-7*** and answer Question 8.
- Ask a student to read Subparagraph a. beginning with “The word in this passage ...”
- Ask a student to read ***1 Peter 4:12-13*** and answer Question 9.
- Ask volunteers to answer Questions 10 and 11.

NOTE: *Most people will remember an unexpected trial that they have experienced, but don't put too much pressure on the students to talk about the trial in front of the group. Some people may not be ready to talk about an event that may be very personal to them.*

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

of life comes out, even though we are new creations in Christ. We still sin. Our worldly inclinations are still there.

3. Thankfully, God also shows how different we can be as believers, by being filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (*Ephesians 5:18*) and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit. List the characteristics of the fruit here, from *Galatians 5:22-23*.

7. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

The extent to which we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit is an indicator of our walk with Christ. It demonstrates our love and gratitude in response to what God has done for us. As we develop a regular pattern of walking in the Spirit, of exhibiting the Spirit's fruit, we grow in maturity and are better equipped to help others. God allows trials in our life as part of the maturing process, as we will see in the next section.

B. The daily challenge of tests and temptations

Every believer will encounter trials in life. Satan seeks to defeat you by tempting you to trust your own wisdom, to live according to your self-centered feelings, and to gratify the desires of your flesh. In contrast, God's will is for you to be an overwhelming conqueror in all of these trials for His honor and glory.

Your daily walk with Christ is filled with opportunities either to walk by your fleshly desires or to walk by the Spirit. Just as Jesus prepared His disciples for this battle, God wants to prepare you (to equip you) to have victory. So let's see what God says about the nature of trials, tests, and temptations.

1. Read *1 Peter 1:6-7*. What is more precious than gold?

8. My faith bringing praise and glory and honor to Jesus Christ

- a. The word in this passage for "test" or "refine" means to be proved, such as metals are tried by fire and thus are purified. The word "prove" does not mean to show to be true or false as in "prove it to me," but it is used in the good sense and means to "show forth." The emphasis in this passage is to prove someone good and acceptable.

- b. Read *1 Peter 4:12-13*. What does God say about trials in this passage?

9. We should not be surprised when trials come because they are for our testing.

- c. Can you think of any trials that you have been "surprised" by in your life?

10. Answers will vary.

What does this passage tell you about that trial?

11. I can rejoice at the revelation of His glory.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

Leader's notes for Page 16 of the student booklet

- Ask a student to summarize the first paragraph of the illustration about purifying gold.
- Leader read or summarize the next three paragraphs beginning with "In the same way ..." through "... in your life." **NOTE:** *Instead, you may wish to play the Living Victoriously DVD video segment from Lesson 2, entitled "The Purpose of Trials" which lasts for three minutes, 45 seconds.*
- Ask the students to take a moment and silently thank the Lord for a particular difficulty they are now facing or have recently faced.
- Ask a student to read **James 1:13-14** in Subparagraph 2.
- Ask other students to read and answer Questions 12-13.
- Read Paragraph a. beginning with "It is important ..." through "... but did not sin."
- Leader read Question 14 and ask a student to answer the question.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

You should not be surprised when trials come, even when they are intense and seem fiery. Consider the following illustration.

ILLUSTRATION: Years ago when Amy Carmichael was ministering in India as a missionary, she went to a goldsmith to find out how gold was purified so that she could understand how God “tests” or “proves” us. The goldsmith placed in the pot old jewelry, gold bars, and ore, which all seemed to have varying degrees of purity. She watched as the gold was being melted in a pot placed over an intense fire. As the material in the pot heated, smoke began to rise from the pot. The goldsmith explained that if she would look down into the pot, Amy would notice scum floating on the surface. The scum, he explained, is called “dross” and must be burned off. At one point, Amy asked the goldsmith how he would know that the gold was purified. He answered that the gold would be pure when he could look down into it and see a perfect reflection of his face.

In the same way, God tests or proves believers so that they may reflect the image of Christ in their lives.

Looking beyond the illustration of Amy Carmichael’s writings, remember that the goldsmith is not finished with the gold, even when it has been purified. He then molds, forms, pounds, and etches the gold to make it into something useful and beautiful. God does not necessarily remove us from a circumstance, but while we are being purified, He continues His work in our lives to make us useful vessels for His service.

16

L : 37

We are going to study more about tests and temptations, but right now, you may want to pause and give Him thanks for the difficulty you are now facing and how He is using it in your life.

2. Read *James 1:13-14*. Who is *not* the source of temptation?

12. God

In this passage, what *is* a source of temptation?

13. Our own lust (fleshly desires)

A temptation, which does not originate from God, is an enticement for you to disobey God’s Word and to gratify your fleshly desires. When you yield to temptation, you inevitably experience consequences.

- a. It is important to note that temptations, in and of themselves, are not sins. We know this because we read in *Hebrews 4:15* that Jesus was tempted, but did not sin.
- b. Read *1 John 2:16*. What are the three areas of temptation listed here?

14. The lust of the flesh

The lust of the eyes

The boastful pride of life

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

Leader's notes for Page 17 of the student booklet

- Ask volunteers to answer Question 15. Example answers could include: Lust of the flesh “eat an extra piece of chocolate cake.” Lust of the eyes “covet someone’s house, car, or relationships.” Pride of life “Boast about an accomplishment.”
- Ask a student to read the next subparagraph beginning with “Every difficult circumstance”
- If time permits, ask volunteers to answer Question 16.
- Optional: You may also wish to play the Lesson Summary DVD video segment for Lesson 2. You should review the segment yourself before playing it to the group.
- At this point, end the lesson and:
 - Assign the students to study Lesson 3.
 - Assign them to memorize *I Corinthians 10:13*. Also, remind them to review the memory verses from the previous lessons.
- State:

“You will benefit most from this study if you keep up with the weekly study and the homework. That is one of the main objectives — to help you become immersed in God’s Word and to apply the biblical principles to your life. You can be assured that if you do the homework, and if you put into practice what God says to you through His Word in this study, you will be a changed person.”
- Leader read the last paragraph on Page 17.
- End in prayer.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TESTS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PROBLEMS?

- c. There are many types of temptations. Can you give an example in each of the above categories?

15. Answers will vary.

Every difficult circumstance that comes into your life can be seen as a test from God or as a temptation to sin (either through your own flesh, the world, or through Satan). So in every difficulty, your choice is either to stand firm and grow in Christlikeness or to sin and suffer the consequences. To respond biblically to the circumstance, you do not need to focus on trying to determine if it is a test or a temptation. Rather, in every difficulty you have an opportunity to practice Christlikeness by obeying God's Word, thus giving honor to Jesus Christ.

- C. What was the most significant truth you learned in completing this lesson?

16. Answers will vary.

17

L : 39

- D. For the next lesson:

1. Before starting the next lesson, be sure to recite *1 Peter 4:12* to someone.
2. Study Lesson 3 and answer the questions. Do a little bit of the lesson each day.
3. Check your answers in the back of the booklet.

In Lesson 3, we will look at an example of a problem that develops in the life of a student and see that problem from a scriptural viewpoint. We'll also learn more in Lesson 4 about the hope we have in seeing and responding to tests and temptations God's way.