

# ***GETTING GOD'S PERSPECTIVE ABOUT OUR TEMPTATIONS!***

## **Introduction:**

Are you serious about breaking that sinful habit that rules you? Do you really desire to live a godly life and not have the guilt that you face in your life?

George was involved in an illicit sexual affair, told his counselor that he had tried desperately to break with this relationship. He had prayed to God for strength to overcome this liaison, earnestly pleading that his lust for this particular woman would evaporate. He was submerged in guilt, fear, and shame because he couldn't break the relationship. Eventually, the affair was discovered, he divorced his wife, and brought shame and hurt to both families.

Ken was a truck driver who promised his wife he would quit smoking. He decided to decrease the number of cigarettes he smoked each day until he was free from the habit. He failed so many times that he gave up. Today, he is convinced he can never quit and has no intention of trying again.

Mary was overweight -- the doctor assured her that the cause was not a physical problem, but was due to her overeating. She tried several diets over a period of months. This wasn't easy for her. She unrealistically expected dramatic and immediate results. Repeatedly, she broke her promises to herself. Eventually, discouragement turned to hopelessness, and Mary gave up trying to lose weight.

John was a man with an explosive temper. Sharp words shot out of his mouth, shattering his wife's self-confidence and affection. He over-disciplined his children usually in a fit of anger. As a Christian, he knew better and even decided to change. Once, after a particularly sharp exchange with his wife, he put his fist through the wall. Humiliated and guilt-ridden, he asked God for deliverance from his temper. Vowing to change did not help; neither did his praying. Months later he gave up, saying, "I can't help myself. That's just the way I am."

### **What went wrong in all these situations?**

All these people were Christians, all prayed to be delivered, yet all ended up more discouraged than when they began a determined change. Did God fail them? Didn't God care? The easy answer is to say that they were not sincere in their praying. We say, "Well if they had meant it, God would have helped them." I believe that they were sincere in their praying and in some cases they had even wept. Apparently, sincerity is not, in itself, a guarantee of deliverance.

## **I. THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE FULL EXTENT OF THEIR PROBLEM!**

This is one of the basic reasons why these people reverted back to their old behavior patterns. They wanted victory, but they did not understand how or why God would bring it about. They, like most of us, wanted to overcome a specific habit for their own benefit. They wanted to be free from the symptoms of their problem, but did not want a thorough examination that would reveal deeper problems in their lives which they were unwilling to face. The habits themselves were like a *tip of an iceberg*. There was much below the surface of that which others saw.

**They did not want to face the real issue.** How easy it is for us to want freedom from a particular sin without facing basic issues.

One day a man phoned a counselor. He had been fired from his job. He wanted help to develop his will power. He simple could not get to work on time and had been fired from two previous jobs because of his laziness. A week later the counselor received a phone call from a woman asking advice on how to break up an illicit sexual affair. To the counselors chagrin, the man involved was the one spoken to a week before. His problem of sensuality had affected all areas of his life -- he could not get to work on time was only part of the issue. He was a double minded man, unstable in all his ways and living in deep sin. (James 1:8)

Sinful habits are usually indicative of unresolved conflicts. We must always seek underlying causes rather than treating the symptoms. God uses our struggles with sin to diagnose our true condition. Temptation is His X-RAY machine, discovering the hidden conflicts that need attention.

## **II. THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE WHAT GOD WANTS TO ACCOMPLISH!**

How often that is true of all of us! God has a larger purpose in wanting to show us our inner self. Too often we have a minor purpose in wanting freedom from some besetting sin. We desire freedom from sin to avoid embarrassment, to be relieved of guilt, or to saved a marriage or some other reason.

A man may be dishonest in business; a woman may have had an abortion -- both want to be free from a nagging conscience, but they may not be willing to deal with their basic attitude of defiance of God's authority and their determined disobedience.

### **A. God Desires to Work Genuine Repentance!**

Genuine repentance is not easy. To confess your sins means that you agree with God that you have sinned. (Psa. 51; 32:5) It also means that you agree that the sin must be forsaken. (Prov. 28:13) Those who confess their sins, intending to repeat the same action, are only partially repentant. Such incomplete repentance leads to a downward spiral of repeated failure. There must be a willingness to *part with the sin*, and a **submission** to God's verdict on the matter, even if you might fall again. Apart from such acknowledgement, your intentions are self-centered. You are inquiring how forgiveness will benefit you instead of considering how you have offended God.

### **B. God Desires to Draw You to Himself!**

He wants you to repent, but it is more than that. He wants to use your struggles to lead you into godly living, into a close fellowship with Him. His will is not merely that you be free from sin; He wants to conform you to the image of His Son. Delivering you from sinful habits is only a step in the process. Washing the stains from our lives is His prelude to changing us into the Spirit-filled people God want us to be. (Rom. 6:11-18)

We have a choice to make when faced with excruciating temptation -- We can say, *"I have tried to change before and it hasn't worked, so I'll manage the best I can with my sin. We're all human, you know."* If you do that your sin will be a monument to the false god you have fashioned. You can take your sin problem as a challenge to display God's grace and power in your life. (James 1:2-4)

God does not pass out packages of spiritual victory sent Special Delivery to the person who requests them. Your sin cost Him the Death of His Son. He is not about to hand us spiritual bandages. He uses your struggles to give you a thorough housecleaning, reorganize your priorities. He might be Lord (Col. 1:18; Rom. 14:9) and make you dependent upon His grace.

There are no cheap, easy miracles. You must want spiritual freedom, not merely for your sake, but for God's sake and God's glory. Only then will you find the victory He promises.

### **III. THEY DID NOT HAVE GOD'S PERSPECTIVE!** (James 1:11-15; Rom. 6:16-18)

There is a big difference between temptation and sin. Choosing to pursue the temptation is sin, but the temptation itself isn't. Even our Lord was tempted.

#### **A. When sinful thoughts enter your mind -- what do you do?**

They come unwelcomed and without fanfare and at that point you have not sinned. Now the crucial test comes. How will you respond to these enticements and suggestions? Will you pursue these thoughts, entertain them, coddle them, enjoy them, and let them be at home in your mind?

Many Christians have the idea that victory over sin means that they will no longer be tempted. Or they think God will change their nature so that they will no longer desire to do evil. Either way, they are wrong. Temptation is not a sin; it is a call to battle.

I recall my own struggles with sinful lusts, as I implored God to deliver me from these passions, I expected God to change my desires so that I would no longer be stimulated when temptations came my way. I was disappointed, God does not change our nature so that we are less than human. Temptation of one kind or another is universal. To pray that we will no longer be tempted is to ask that we die and go to heaven. Since we will always be tempted, we need to learn to handle temptation in God's way.

#### **B. When Sinful Thoughts Enter, This is What You Can DO!**

As you think of that sin you want to overcome, first thank God for this temptation and the opportunity it represents in your life.

1. Don't thank God for the sin. Thank Him for the temptation which gives you a clear-cut opportunity to declare your allegiance to Jesus Christ.
2. Praise, persistent praise, is the first positive step toward overcoming temptation.
3. God is glorified when you accept your circumstances as from His hand. If you cannot thank God for your condition and even your temptation, you are rebelling against Him. Thank God for the struggle; thank Him for the privilege you have to face the temptation for Him. Even if the same temptation comes again and again. You will find this will bring a great measure of victory.

#### **B. Examine Your Life, write down the areas that need work.**

1. What are your basic attitudes?
2. What do you really want?
3. Are you rebelling against some person?
4. Are you upset with your performance, your appearance? Full of self?
5. Do you think you have been shortchanged since you became a Christian? Or since you starting serving the Lord?

6. Are you bitter against your parents, children, husband, or wife? Or boss, working companions?
7. Are you angry at God because He hasn't done what you think He ought? *Spend an unhurried hour taking inventory.* (Psa. 139:23,24) You will discover attitudes that you did not know you had. Bad attitudes effect relationships, brings defeat!

**C. Then, Give Yourself and Your Problem To God, completely to Him!**

1. You must let go, no longer claim right of control.
2. Let go, don't claim a right to be bitter.
3. So doing, God will require you to deal with those attitudes that are wrong, you have uncovered.
4. They are part of the real reason you are defeated. *This may be a painful and long process, but it will be lastingly beneficial.*

**D. Don't Be Afraid of What God Will Require of You.**

1. Whatever God asks of you, He will give you the strength to do it.
2. God will not demand of you more than you can do.
3. His grace, power, presence is there!

**E. Realize Your Ultimate Goal is Not Victory-- But God Himself.** He wants to be your friend, real to you!

1. Ultimately, not even victory over sin can truly satisfy -- Only God can do that, for He has made you to need person-to-person relationships. He is the **Person** in whose likeness we are made.
2. God wants to be your circumference, to be the very **center of your life** and to make your life meaningful and rewarding and to give you the beautiful simplicity of life that serves a sovereign who is both Creator and Redeemer.
3. Victory over sin -- comes from relationship. You and *I must seek to know God and love Him with our whole mind, heart, will, and soul* -- then the freedom we are looking for will become ours. (Jeremiah 29:12-14; Jh 7:37-39)

**Are you thirsty?**

Are you wanting a change? Wanting His fullness for your emptiness -- healing for hurt, wholeness for your brokenness, victory over temptation? Are you thirsty for the lasting, living water, this satisfaction in your innermost self? **The better you know God the more often you will turn to Him.** The more you understand that you are created for fellowship with Him the more time you will spend fulfilling that purpose.

Your life should demonstrate the singleness of devotion that Paul expressed -- *"This one thing I do!"* **Seeing from God's perspective means that you will learn to pray optimistically and in faith.** God has brought this temptation to you for your good. Now thank Him for how He will use it. He wants to build and not to destroy. If He wounds you, it is so that He might heal you in the depths of your being. *Are you serious about breaking with that sinful habit? Why not pray right now, thanking God.....!*