TEMPTATION & SELF-CONTROL

Let's go to my favorite dictionary: the *1828 Webster's Dictionary*. This is actually part of the definition of temptation and this is why I love this dictionary so much!

> **Temptation** - *the state of being tempted or enticed to evil. When by human weakness you are led into temptation resort to prayer for relief.*

Isn't that awesome? In the dictionary, it says the solution to overcoming temptation is prayer. And that's it for today folks! I hope you enjoyed learning about temptation!

Flip to **James 4** for a very simple definition of Temptation:

> **James 4:17** - *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*

This is temptation. While we might immediately think of Temptation in as lust, that's only a very small part of it. In fact, this simple verse is bringing me to reminisce about the previous week on Integrity. When we know we aren't exercising integrity, perhaps we're being tempted to sin.

Let's jump into the very beginning.

> **Genesis 3:6** - *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

She saw the fruit would satisfy her, it was nice to look at, and it could benefit her and make her better, wiser.

Side bar: This reminds me of a season when I learned about this worldly quest for wisdom. The year was 2021. My husband had just been diagnosed with some kind of sarcoma. It was a large tumor in the back of his shoulder. This was out of the blue and completely blindsided us. Whenever I would send an update out to the people and groups praying for us, I would get tons of questions in response: "What's the next step? Do they know what the recovery is? What kind of treatment does he need? Can't they just take it out? What doctor is he seeing?" I had zero answers for all these questions but the interesting part was that prior to their questions, I did not have ANY anxiety. None. The Lord was speaking to me so much in that season, I had zero desire to think about the details or what the next steps were. It wasn't until all these questions started coming at me that I began to develop anxiety because I didn't know the answers and now, all of a sudden, I felt like I was supposed to! It was during a farrier appointment with the horses that I had the realization.

Our quest of for worldly knowledge—the how, when, what, why, resolution, solution, antidote—that desire came as part of the fall. Prior to eating the fruit, Adam and Eve found peace and security in 1 thing: Who their God was. They knew Him and His heart for them and that's all they needed. And these questions the people were asking were taking me off the narrow path and causing me to look left and right. My eyes were no longer focused on God and His character and I began to sink like Peter in the water.

I think of this story when I think about Eve's desire to be wiser, to know all. Having the internet at our fingertips was one thing but now with AI, we literally have no opportunity to trust God. We can figure out everything on our own! I've heard of people even using ChatGPT to tell them how to converse with their husbands. There's no need for the Holy Spirit to sanctify us. We are no longer desperate for God.

Remember last week when we talked about the "*wilderness*" and the geography of Israel. God brought his people into a desolate place so they could learn utter dependence on him. We are so far from that now. It brings me to say "thank you, Lord, for all the suffering that we can't fix on our own because those are the only places that put us in a desperate position to seek you."

I'm getting back on track now. Eve was tempted and failed. Now flip to **Matthew 4.** Jesus is in the wilderness with Satan. He tempts him in 3 different areas also: his flesh, his visual desire, and his pride of life. In the same order as Eve was tempted. So if Eve was the example of what not to do in the face of temptation, Jesus shows us what TO do.

> **1 John 2:15-16** - *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the* ***desires of the flesh*** *and the* ***desires of the eyes*** *and* ***pride of life****—is not from the Father but is from the world.*

Both Eve and Jesus were tempted. The prayer here is not to avoid temptation; the prayer is for our own accountability, to stand firm in our faith in the presence of temptation, knowing we are victorious because the Holy Spirit lives in us.

> **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 is so important for us to realize. Nothing that we will ever be tempted with is uncommon. You and I are not the exception. It's not "so much harder" for me than anyone else. And here's the promise: God is faithful. He will provide a righteous way out but it's going to require you leaning into His ability and faithfulness. Often, when we're in a predicament, we see Door #1 and Door #2 and we think those are our only two options. Are your eyes watching God close enough to see Door #3 appear? It's probably not the easy option, but it's the righteous one. And we can only see it when we're walking by the Spirit.

Here's the difference with Adam. He was not deceived. He sinned with his eyes wide open, in open rebellion against God. So Eve tends to get most of the blame of the fall of humanity but this may suggest Adam is the one responsible, as mentioned in **Romans 5:12** and **1 Corinthians 15:22**.

If the serpent was the agent of temptation for Eve, Eve became the agent of temptation for Adam. Interesting how once sin entered the world, it just keeps traveling downward. Hurt people, hurt people. An object in motion stays in motion, Newton's first law. It only stops if an outside force interferes. The only outside force that can stop the sin cycle is the cross.

Saying "no" to temptation, is saying "yes" to God.

Genesis 3:6 shows us that temptation can come from outside influences and Matthew 4 shows us how to war against these temptations. I want to say one thing. Satan, our flesh, and the world can all tempt us but the only reason temptation even has a hook in us is because of our own fallen nature, so we have a responsibility to do what Paul did in **1 Corinthians 9:27** and discipline our body to keep it under control because. Temptation is real. Sometimes visceral. Some translations say to strictly discipline our bodies like a boxer, to bring it under subjection, to treat our body hard and bruise it to make it a slave, to toughen it with punches, and to train it to do what it should do rather than what it wants to do.

If I'm highlighting this verse my prayer might sound like, "Lord, give my husband singleness of mind as you continue to unveil his purpose and his gifts that he would remain steadfast in all that you have called him to do, and he would continue to listen to You more than any outside temptation that is meant to distract him."

John 17:15 is Jesus's high priestly prayer and even Jesus prays to His Father in regards us. He does not ask for us to removed from all temptation but to simply protect us from the evil one. And that's exactly what He says He does in **1 Corinthians 10:13**—He has already provided a way out. Promise completed. But we have to walk as though the battle has already been won. Because it has.

EXAMPLES

Let's start with some Old Testament examples! Head to **Genesis 39:11-12**. Joseph is working in Potiphar's house and Potiphar's wife is just not taking no for an answer. (I picture her as a bit of a cougar.) She grabs onto Joseph's tunic and tries to seduce him and being the God-fearing man that Joseph is, he pulls this spin move and slips out of his tunic and runs away. What I admire about Joseph is that this encounter seems to happen to so fast that he doesn't even let the thought of "what if" settle into his mind which prevents any roots from beginning to form. He is quick to identify the threat and get out of there.

Whereas David, in **2 Samuel 11** isn't so quick. He's minding his own business, walking along his rooftop balcony when he catches sight of a woman bathing. Now, if I picture Joseph's reaction, I imagine that as soon as his eyes realized it was a lady figure, he would have covered them and ran away. But David stood there gawking. He saw she was bathing. His gaze lingered long enough to conclude that she was beautiful. And then he went out of his way to ask his wingmen about her. And then went even further to send a party of men to retrieve her for him. That's a much longer timeline than Joseph's encounter. A lot's

happening in that 10 minutes. I wonder if at any point conviction entered David's mind, like "maybe this isn't a good idea." My guess is he saw himself as king, he's gotten a little cocky since he's been winning all the battles, maybe he thinks he's able to get whatever he wants whenever he wants, maybe his ego now needs a double door, and maybe he's hardened himself against any thought that might get in the way of his quest.

I think we can all be a bit like that at times and not just with lust. I know I can get so irritated that I'm tempted to gossip or give into anger. Other people might be tempted to hit the bottle to escape uncomfortable feelings. While others may even be tempted to take matters into their own hands because the thought of waiting on God's timing makes their skin crawl. Giving in to temptation can be a conditioned behavior pattern we've created as well. Feel this way, do this thing. What fires together, wires together. It becomes automatic, almost instinctual.

Hebrews 2:18 explains to us that Jesus is completely qualified to help us in our temptations because he suffered through the full extent of temptation and came out the other side of it blameless. C.S. Lewis says it like this,

> *"Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simple does not know what it would have been like an hour later...We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means..."*

If I'm highlighting this Hebrews verse for my husband, a prayer might sound like, "Thank you for your resistance to temptation. We are troubled with this in many different ways to many different degrees, but I thank you that because you resisted, you are the best qualified comforter to help us in times of need. Remind us both that our temptations should be met with earnest prayer to You."

Joshua 7:21 tells the story of a man who let covetousness get the best of him. If you read the text, there's

an order of operations. He sees the treasure. He covets the treasure. Then he takes the treasure. Same order David took towards Bathsheba.

I was at one of my holistic doctor appointments one day when I told him I was having problems staying away from sweets. He mentioned this supplement that I could take to make sweet things taste bitter. Incidentally, my daughter got me these little candies for Christmas that are supposed to make sour things, like lemons, taste totally different. I tried it once and it was terrible. My point is this: I want to pray that the my husband's taste buds for evil are repulsed at the mere thought of it. That whenever he sees a temptation—lust, pride, covetousness, anger, whatever—that it makes him gag and terrifies him. I pray the Lord gives him the heart of Joseph.

INFLUENCES

In the OT when God's people come into battle with the Gentiles, God constantly warns them to destroy all the things, or kill all the people, or stay away from their women, or a combination of those and He gives this reason as to why: *"lest they make you sin against me and become a snare to you."* God knew if the people kept those things in their presence, they would become a trap for them. Their pretty carved idols sitting on the shelf would tempt their commitment to a God they couldn't see. The pretty ladies would sway them to follow their pagan gods. Who and what they chose to allow in their lives would have a great influence on their faith and commitment to the Lord. **Exodus 23:33** is great verse to reference for these warnings.

I don't know that I would put these verses in the prayer Bible unless you can get creative with your prayers because, remember, a prayer Bible **only** *encourages, edifies,* or *comforts.* No calling out, judging, shaming, fixing, warning, or passive aggression. I'm mentioning these verses to give you a well-rounded view of temptation, its sources, and our nature to give in to it. Maybe it will shed a little light on why all humans are so prone to give in, not just your husband.

Deuteronomy 7:25 explains that coveting the silver and gold on the pagan idols would result in the Israelites being lured into a deadly trap. God uses the word "*abomination*" here again and if you remember that word from last week, it's a pretty severe word choice.

Proverbs 1:10 is pretty straight forward with its directions: *"if sinners entice you, do not consent."* Imagine

that! We have a choice when tempted! This whole section of scripture from verse 10-19 is great advice for what to do if you ever find yourself in a situation of temptation. It's also a great place to pray for your husband if he has questionable people in his life. Maybe it's not even by his own choosing, like a supervisor or an extended family member. For example, there's a person in our circle that has a great influence on the people around them. God made them with a confident, funny, and strong personality. The kind of person that sets the temperature of the room, you know what I mean? Amazing framework for someone who could do a whole lot of Kingdom-good. But when left unchecked, the same personality can unintentionally lead people down the wrong path. I've warned my husband in the past that before we hang out with this person, he needs to be on guard. He can't let this person influence him because it's bad for our marriage. The temptation hook of cynicism and passive aggressive comments easily becomes directed towards me, it leaves me in a very uncomfortable and hurt mental space, and does quick work of slicing deep wounds in our relationship. The ironic part is my husband had no idea he was being affected by it.

> **Proverbs 22:24-25** - *Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.*

This is what was happening. It's so important that we stay awake and vigilant when we are in the world because the enemy is prowling, looking for someone to devour. (**1 Peter 5:8-9**) He doesn't want to simply make us miserable; his goal is to utterly destroy and kill and his best tactic for that is the slippery slope of sin. One little white lie or unchecked comment starts that sin cycle snowball until next thing you know you're out of control; you're the dead frog in the pot of boiling water, completely oblivious that the water temperature has been rising because you've been slowly acclimating.

That level of sin lies deep within every one of us and the enemy knows exactly how to set it in motion.

If this isn't something you necessarily see your husband struggling with, you can recognize it as a provision from the Lord and write a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for faithfully guarding his heart and mind.

But I'm not done talking about external influences to temptation yet! **1 Corinthians 15:33-34** is Paul writing to the people of Corinth reminding them that *"bad company ruins good morals"* and that they need to *"wake up"* and get it together.

If you're praying about the company your husband keeps, this could be a good verse for you. Your prayer might sound something like, "Lord, keep my husband's eyes open that the enemy may not gain any ground in his life through the company he keeps. Cause him to be keen to see the enemy's deception from far off. Thank you for giving him the discernment to know when to walk away should temptation ever come disguised like this."

The end of **2 Corinthians 6** is where you'll find the verse about not being unequally yoked with unbelievers. Their influence is powerful over us and we have to make sure that we spend more time with the Lord and the people walking His ways than we do with those who don't. And if you keep reading, the paragraph that follows is full of blessings that come from following this direction.

In **Galatians 5:7-10,** Paul calls the people out for allowing false teachers to influence them. He says, *"you were doing well! Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"* This word "*hinder*" means to break up the road. Can you picture that? The narrow path you're strolling down suddenly looks like the aftermath of an earthquake, broken and impassable. That's what the wrong crew will do to us. Paul goes on to explain that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." Now, I'm new to making bread but this analogy makes a lot more sense now that I know how to make bread. It is impossible to add yeast to a section of a loaf of bread without the whole thing being affected. Even just a little yeast affects the whole batch. It makes me think of those that suffer with Celiac disease. Some can't even eat food that sat on the same counter top as a loaf of bread because even the slightest wheat protein affects them. Same thing with sin. That "insignificant" white lie, or the back-handed comment that slipped out of your mouth in the heat of the moment—they may seem small but they only breed more sin both in yourself and in others. Remember, once sin is set in motion, it continues until an outside force (i.e. the cross) interrupts its course. This is why repentance is so important.

"Lord, thank you for giving my husband a mind of Holy Spirit discernment. I pray that he sees that as Your divine gift to him and I pray he never takes it for granted. Continue to do Your work in him as he meets new people and makes bigger and more important decisions. Whenever he is tempted or slips, I pray his heart is quick to repent and to get back in alignment with you because he knows that the tiniest of sins begets more sin."

On the totally flip side of power of evil influences, Ezekiel is a great reminder that we can all be positive

influences in each other's lives.

> **Ezekiel 3:21** - *But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul."*

Remember 2 weeks ago when we talked about Honesty? I mentioned there was a Malachi verse that stood out to me because of how it ended. **Malachi 2:6** says that the person who walks uprightly with the Lord will turn many away from sinning. This Ezekiel verse feels like it's echoing the same sentiment. We who walk with the Lord have great power in our actions to turn others from sinning, but we have to do it's the Lord's way. Pull that *Praying Wife PDF* back out if you feel any temptation toward using these verses as weapons against the person you're praying for. **1 Peter 3:1-2.** Commit it to heart—*"even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives…"* Don't try to out Jesus, Jesus. Our job is to pray.

"I pray my husband remains the kind of person that is gentle with his words and acts with integrity in his actions. Use him to bring others to have soft hearts towards You."

Luke 22:31-32 explains that the power of prayer over someone can help keep them on the straight and narrow and full of faith during times of tempting.

"Lord, in the same way You prayed for us in John 17, and the same way I'm praying for my husband today, I pray he grows into a man so confident of Your affect in his life that he boldly prays for and strengthens the men around him."

> **2 Peter 3:17** - *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.*

The people and things we allow into our lives have influence over us. We must be discerning enough to see this or we'll get hooked, snared, and eventually devoured by the enemy. But *how*?

Spurgeon said it this way:

> *"The way to stand is to grow; the way to be steadfast is to go forward. There is no standing except by progression."*

He's saying that the only way to stand firm, be confident in Lord, and remain faithful in the face of temptation is to continue to walk with the Lord and develop that relationship. Passivity will not keep you free from temptation.

HOW

Let's gather some actionable ways to do this! To put it short and simple:

> **Psalm 34:14** - ***Turn away*** *from evil and do good;* ***seek peace*** *and pursue it.*

We have to fear God more than we desire temptation. Just to recap from last week, I'm talking reverent, honoring "fear", not the feeling of being terrified or scared.

There's a verse in **Matthew 12** that I think about a lot. It's telling a story of a person who exercised a demon from their home. The demon left, the house was clean and swept, but they didn't put God in the house, so because the house remained empty, the demon came back with seven of his friends, all more evil that he was.

Now think about the last time you tried to stop doing something. A bad habit, an invasive thought, even a feeling you tried not to have. People will say, "just stop doing it," "blow it off," "go cold-turkey," or "don't let it bother you." Okay, thanks for the pep-talk; that's read helpful! The act of simply putting-off the negative temptation is very difficult. It leaves us in a "okay, well what do I do know?" I picture that scene from Anchorman where he asks, "what do I do with my hands?"

Just like in Matthew 12, the act of just "not doing" or "putting off" is not enough. The negative action, thought, or feeling needs to be replaced with Truth. To simply "turn away from evil" but be met with a replacement action, and it is: *"seek peace and pursue it."*

I challenge you to think about this when you're writing prayers for your husband. His action of giving into temptation is due to a lack somewhere in his heart or mind. That's the place where we want to aim our prayers. At the root. Fix the root and the behaviors will follows. And like I said last week, when we pray for his heart, we will see many more answered prayers than if we simply pray for behavior modification. Don't get me wrong; praying for his behaviors is totally fine. God knows what the root is, but when we set our heart on a singular behavior and we go years without seeing it change, we can get frustrated, bitter, and even angry at God. To help us keep a soft heart and open eyes to what God is doing in our husband's lives, let's remember that God's #1 focus is healing the heart. And likely, there's a lot of gunk to work on and set straight before the dominoes of healing begin to fall and that behavior you're focused on gets worked out.

Moving on…There are a ton of scriptures that give us the blueprints for overcoming temptation so I'm going to breeze through several:

Psalm 39:1 uses the word "*guard*" twice. It also uses the word "*will*" as if the psalmist drives a stake in the ground and declares this commitment to the Lord. *"I **will** guard my ways...I **will** guard my mouth…"*

I pray my husband has this same conviction driven into his heart and mind. A solid and firm commitment to do whatever it takes to walk the narrow path.

Psalm 119:29 shows us that as the psalmist walks away from sin, he knows he must replace those old ways with new ones and he asks for the Lord to teach him His law.

Psalm 119:37 is the psalmist's plea for God to cause him to stop looking at worthless things and instead give him life in His ways. This reminds me of those little candies I got for Christmas. Cause me to not crave sweets—make them put a bad taste in my mouth—and in exchange for the satisfaction void that going without has caused, make it Your word that fulfills me instead.

Proverbs 4 gives some solid advice:

> **Proverbs 4:23-25** - *Keep your heart with all vigilance,*
> *for from it flow the springs of life.*

Put away from you crooked speech,
and put devious talk far from you.
Let your eyes look directly forward,
and your gaze be straight before you.

Solomon uses some very actionable words here like "*keep*" and "*put away*" and then he gives us the replacement action: to *"let our eyes and gaze look directly forward"*. We are not to get sidetracked with the distractions the enemy is lobbing our way. Eyes on the prize like **Isaiah 26:3** tells us.

Here is another short and sweet remedy for battling temptation:

Proverbs 16:6 - *"…and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil."*

That's it. That's all we need: the fear of the Lord. If you haven't downloaded the *Fear of God PDF* you can do that on the website but it's also in *Scripture Book Vol 1*. We've talked about fearing the Lord being the foundation of many of the topics we've already covered so if you find this a recurring theme in your husband's life, I'd recommend doing a deep dive into those scriptures and asking the Lord how you can support him through prayer in that way.

Last week we touched on **Isaiah 33:15-16** and we talked about how our body parts, or our "*members*" have original-design purpose. Our hands weren't meant to hold bribes, nor our ears hear the sounds of death. In terms of this verse and on the topic of temptation, it gives us great advice for some defensive maneuvers. We can shake out our hands, cover our ears, and shut our eyes as we follow God down the narrow path. I picture this really narrow deer trail. On the left side is fire, dust, and barrenness and the right bombs are going off, people are screaming, and everything everywhere is hot and smokey. Jesus is walking just a footfall ahead of us while we cover our ears and walk with our eyes closed. Maybe we're even humming a little tune to help drown out the noise of bloodshed.

Do we do that in our daily life? What about our social media life? Do we seek out the headlines of warfare and hate crimes or do we blind ourselves to the negative news cycle? Your algorithm knows. Go to the explore tab and see what Instagram thinks you'll enjoy watching.

Real quick, I want to head to **Daniel 4.** I like this verse because of the ending. I mentioned in a previous video that I love verses like this because it takes two seemingly unrelated topics and gives them a direct correlation to one another. Here's the verse:

> ***Daniel 4:27*** *- Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity."*

Did you catch it? Daniel is telling King Nebuchadnezzar to put off doing bad things by putting on the practice of righteousness and showing mercy to others. But why would Nebuchadnezzar want to do that?? *"That there may perhaps be a lengthening of his prosperity."* Hmm, so what you're saying is that the choice of trading in old ways for righteous ways has the potential to lengthen our prosperity? Interesting.

Alright, Matthew is coming in with a 1-2 knockout for us:

> **Matthew 26:41** *- Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

The Greek word here for "*watch*" means to keep vigilant. Matthew is warning us all that temptation can sneak up on you and when it does, we must be quick to react. His advice is that our knee-jerk reaction should be to pray. We often think we're in control, we can handle it, or we're strong enough to resist whatever comes our way. That's our pride speaking. Sure, our Spirit is willing but the flesh is not. Reminds me of **Romans 7** when Paul is talking about doing what he knows he shouldn't do and not being able to do what he knows is right.

Think about your "Potiphar's wife"—meaning anything that tempts you from doing what God told you not to do: lust, anger, gossip, control, envy, pride, etc—when your figurative "Potiphar's wife" enters the room, you need to be quick to discern it's intent, quick to deflect it, and quick to pursue righteousness. This is done by the instructions we get in **2 Corinthians 10:5** - to *"take every thought captive to obey Christ."* Any wrong thought or perception that contradicts the true knowledge of God and the nature of God must go.

Let's not over complicate this though:

> **Galatians 5:16** - *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Simple as that. This is in contrast to walking by the law as the Pharisees did. Their heart was not for the things of God. They were performance-oriented. Their resistance of temptation would have looked more like asceticism. This Galatians 5 type of denial to self is rooted in knowing you're loved and valued by a personal God and the results of that knowledge become a natural ability to no longer entertain fleshly desires.

"Thank you, Lord, for calling my husband to walk in step with Your Holy Spirit. Thank you that this tandem journey saves him from temptations that would otherwise cause him to stumble."

As we make our way through the New Testament, here's a verse with some very practical advice, and I, for one, am proof that these words of Paul actually work:

> **Philippians 4:8** - *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

Literally. Do it. List all the things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Our brains come equipped with a natural negative bias. It's part of our survival features. Paul tells us how to override the factory default though. Are you or your husband quick to judge, criticize, or complain? This verse, my friends, is gold. I learned this through Liz Bagwell's *Rewire Your Brain* podcast. I'll link it in the description below. To start the daily meditations with Jesus where she implements this verse, head to Season 3 and start at the beginning.

Ephesians 6. The whole thing. You can read it on your own but to summarize, it's all about the armor of God. We are instructed to put the **whole** armor of God on in order to withstand the enemy. In **all** circumstances, we are to take up the shield of faith to deflect and guard our whole body against the flaming darts of the enemy's temptations. This is warfare and you would never go into battle without your gear. Remind your husband that he, too, has battle armor. God did not leave him a sitting duck. He gave

him offensive and defensive weapons to guard his heart and mind. And most importantly, he need not waiver or fear because he already has the victory through Christ living in him. (At least he does if he's a believer—and if he's not a believer, *Scripture Book Vol 1* has a ton of scriptures to pray over for unbelievers.)

VICTORY

We spend a lot of time as Christians pleading for God to deposit the fruit of the spirit onto us, as if that's the only way we're going to get it. "If I'm anxious, God must supernaturally pour peace on me, right…. now." I hope we all realize that God has already given us His peace when the Holy Spirit came to dwell in us. We have to receive it and more often than not, there are things we need to do to experience this peace.

For instance, **Philippians 4:6** says "*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" Verse 7 then tells us that the result of doing that is *"and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

In the same way that we already have the peace that we long for, we already have the victory over temptation! We just have to act and walk as though that's true. And that's where I think we fall short more often than not. We tend to walk around with a victim-mind, and I don't mean that in a harsh way, but an honest way. Myself definitely included in this. So to combat this natural thinking, let's look at some scriptures that tell us the battle is already won.

Isaiah 54:17 declares that *"no weapon formed against you shall prosper when you refute every tongue that rises against you."* This is war, ladies! Use this verse to remind your husband that he is already victorious in the places where he feels the weakest. Feed him words of life as much as you feed him protein for dinner. Your encouragements are like spiritual protein for him.

Luke 10:19 is the concrete fact that Jesus has already *"given us authority to tread on serpents, scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy."* If your husband isn't walking like he is a victor, remind him that through Christ in him, he is powerful against any and all threats, schemes, and temptations that come his way.

Romans 6:6 reminds us that our old self is gone. Done. Buried. We are no longer enslaved by sin! So why

do we keep wrestling with it like it has us in a choke hold? To feel like this is to have the wrong mindset about why Jesus died for us. Man, am I convicting myself right now and thinking about that sugar craving I get after dinner and how I'm just wasting my energy giving it any foothold in my life. If I think about it in a more serious matter, the real temptation comes with the knee-jerk reactions and automatic patterns I've spent the last 40+ years creating, like being quick to snap, voicing annoyances out loud, raising my voice to my husband. I'm going to stop there before I air out all my dirty laundry. For those temptations, I have to remember that God's grace is patient and kind and it's going to take time to learn how to live free in certain areas of my life. That's part of the sanctification. But for things that I *know* are wrong, yet I give them more space in my mind than they need, those things need to be shut down.

It's like **Romans 13:14** says: *"make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."* End of story. Just don't do it. But it's so hard to just stop doing the satisfying thing!

Pop quiz: *How do we just "stop doing it"?* Back to Matthew 12. Remember, in order to put off the evil thing and keep it away, we have to put on the True thing. In the case of this verse, it's the command to *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ."* By choosing to walk in step with Jesus, the fleshly desires are naturally starved.

Back to **1 Corinthians 10:13** - God has already made a righteous way forward for you. A way around the obstacle of temptation. And you **will** be able to endure it! Any voice that tells you that you have to give in is not the Lord's.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 promises divine protection from the enemy. The enemy is on God's leash here because the Lord is faithful and Jesus already prayed back in John 17:15 that He would keep us from the evil one. Do you really believe that? If the answer is yes, do your actions and thoughts behave as if you believe it? In other words, is this just head knowledge or is this deep-rooted experiential knowledge for you? What about for your husband? Let's draft our prayers to encourage him in this area, but in order to do this effectively, you need to believe it for yourself as well.

Here is another if/then statement verse:

> **James 4:7** - *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

If you submit yourself to God, then you can resist the devil. Not the other way around. Holiness and evil and not coexist in the same space. Submission can be a touchy word in our cultural context. Spurgeon spoke about submission to God like this:

> *"If he were a tyrant it might be courageous to resist, but since he is a Father it is ungrateful to rebel."*

I did a little dive into 1 John 2:13. It's not a verse that I think I have ever used in any real life application but I enjoyed the plunge into it. Let me read it for you first:

> **1 John 2:13** - *I am writing to you, fathers,*
> *because you know him who is from the beginning.*
> *I am writing to you, young men,*
> *because you have overcome the evil one.*
> *I write to you, children,*
> *because you know the Father.*

John speaks to 3 groups of people, all different, not necessarily in age but in spiritual maturity.

He addresses the *fathers*, the spiritually mature. These are the ones with experiential knowledge, the knowledge that has become wisdom and resides deep within our hearts and minds and is the foundation from which they live their lives.

Then he speaks to the *young men*, the front-line workers. These are the men from whom the greatest effort, strength, and costs are expected. They're in the trenches experiencing God's word in real time. He reminds them they already have victory over temptation and the evil one.

Then he addresses the *children*, the immature in faith and the ones still in need of instruction. This is when roots are growing and we begin to see ourselves as dependent children on a loving Father.

It might be helpful to find your husband in one of these categories and then manage your expectations and prayers in accordance with their spiritual maturity. The children may need prayers that encourage their

faith and trust in God before they can even think about standing against the face of temptation. Fathers, on the other hand, should have a pretty good understanding of the power of evil and the effects of playing with the fire of temptation. In other words, they should know better but the enemy knows our greatest weaknesses even when no one else does. I would start here by praying for any windows or doors that your husband may have left open to be closed. Remind him of his armor. Remind him he is a victor through Christ. And for the group in the middle—the young men—continue to fan into flam their hunger and endurance for the things of the Lord and reminding them who they are in Christ—an overcomer—could be the confidence they need to right any wrong thinking they may have about their abilities.

And I will leave you with this verse:

> **I John 4:4** - *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

Every single one of us who have the Holy Spirit living inside of us are *"overcomers."* God in us is greater than the temptation of all the world. But we're human. We forget these things especially if we're being challenged in other areas of our lives like feeling insecure about finances, appearance, and purpose. The lies in our heads can get loud and feel very real to the point that we believe them more than the truth.

This is where our partnership with the Lord on behalf of our men is truly important. I'm sure a lot of the temptations our husbands feel are things they don't want to recognize, much less talk about. I would advise you to keep your prayers more general or vague and let the Lord do the convicting. Maybe put an emphasis on gratitude for who your husband is right now and God's great plans for him. If you're praying about an area of his life you have talked about together, I think it would be suitable to name it in your prayers. But remember to tread lightly. Call down the promises of God more than you call out the deficiencies in your husband. You can never speak too many words of life over him. And pray in faith, as if God has already done what you're asking him to do!

> I know a prayer Bible can seem daunting at first, but don't be **TEMPTED** to stop now! If we stick with it and write **2-3 prayers a day** *(use your Polite house 20*

minute candle to help you stay focused!), the Bible will practically build itself in the form of a Prayer Bible with 140-180 handwritten prayers.

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CLEAN YOUR HEART

Use this on days that feel hard or create a daily rhythm of surrender and begin every prayer session with it.

This is not a moment to perform, produce, or prove anything. Quiet yourself before God and intentionally lay down pride, distraction, control, and any known sin. Confess what Holy Spirit brings to mind. Release your own agendas, assumptions, and expectations. Choose humility. Choose obedience. Ask God to empty you of self so He can fill you with His Spirit. Do not move forward until your heart is surrendered and your spirit is yielded.

Lord, thank your calling me to draw near to You in this way.[1] Your Word says the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working[2] and You hear the prayer of the righteous.[3] I know my sins have made a separation between You and I.[4] If I cherish sin in my heart, You, Lord, will not listen.[5] Therefore, let me test and examine my ways.[6] Lord, weigh my spirit,[7] for even a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.[8] Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting![9] Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.[10]

[Selah - pause, listen, repent, forgive, receive grace]

Thank you for cleansing me from what is dishonorable, that I am a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to You, and ready for every good work.[11]

[1] James 4:8; [2] James 5:16; [3] Proverbs 15:29; [4] Isaiah 59:2; [5] Psalm 66:18; [6] Lamentations 3:40; [7] Proverbs 16:2; [8] 1 Corinthians 5:6; [9] Psalm 139:23-24; [10] Psalm 51:10; [11] 2 Timothy 2:21

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