

SICK OF EVIL • Week 4: Hall Pass to Harm

Daily Briefing • Day 1 of 5 • Temptation is not Sin

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

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.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Sunday drew a hard line between walking in righteousness and stumbling. Today we draw a different line, the one between being tempted and giving in, because a lot of people carry guilt for something that was never sin in the first place. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank You that You have given me an example of how to handle temptation in Jesus. Thank You for clarifying that my temptation is not the same thing as sin. I pray that You would help me not to embrace temptation. When I experience temptation, I ask Your help in seeing higher-level, longer-term desires and choosing delayed gratification over immediate gratification. I pray, asking for this help in the name of Jesus. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

When it comes to temptation, a lot of people carry guilt they were never supposed to be carrying. The desire shows up uninvited, the pull toward something they know is destructive, and they immediately conclude something is wrong with them spiritually. "If I really belonged to God, I would not even want this."

However, the good news is that this is not what Scripture shows. Experiencing temptation is not the problem. Embracing temptation is.

The proof is in the life of Jesus Himself. Right after His baptism, before He ever taught a crowd or healed anybody, He went into the wilderness and was tempted for forty days. The tempter came at Him three separate times, luring with hunger, pride, and power. Real offers, aimed at real appetites. Later in the Bible, the book of Hebrews declares Jesus' innocence over His whole life, including that episode: *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15). Sit with that. Tempted in every respect. Still without sin. If temptation itself were sin, that sentence could not exist.

So the question stops being whether you feel the pull and becomes what you do once you feel it. Which raises the practical question: how do you actually not embrace it, when the pull is strong and indulgence is right there?

Here is something worth understanding about your own wiring. You are usually running at least two sets of desires at the same time. First, lower desires are immediate and loud. Get drunk tonight. Send the text you should not send. Speak the insult that wins the argument. Lie to protect your reputation. They promise relief right now. Alternatively, upper desires are quieter and slower. Be a person of integrity. Have a marriage that thrives for decades. Raise kids who trust you. Stop contributing to the rot in our culture. Honor God with your one and only life.

Both sets are real. Both are yours. The difference is mostly a matter of the timing of pay and payoff. Lower desires pay immediately and charge you later. Upper desires cost you now and pay for decades. Maybe you've noticed that many of the illustrations God uses in the Bible are agrarian. Seeds take a long time to take root, grow, and bear fruit. That is why temptation almost always feels like it is winning: the payoff is usually immediate and visceral.

Notice what Jesus did in the wilderness. He was genuinely hungry after forty days without food, and the devil's offer to turn stones into bread was brilliantly aimed exactly there. Jesus rejected the bait by naming something He wanted more: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). He did not white-knuckle it. He answered a lower desire with an upper one. That is the move, and it is available to you too.

READ & MEDITATE

Hebrews 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Matthew 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Read Hebrews 4:15-16 and notice the sentence does not stop at sympathy. It ends at a throne you are invited to walk up to. Then read Matthew 4:1-4 and notice who led Jesus into the wilderness in the first place, and notice He does not argue with the tempter. He declares truth that names something He wants more.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment is far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Jesus was tempted in every respect and remained without sin. Both halves of that sentence are true at the same time.

Have you been carrying guilt for being tempted rather than for anything you actually did? What have you been beating yourself up for wanting, even though you've stood firm and refused to indulge?

Lower desires pay immediately and charge you later. Upper desires cost you now and pay for decades.

Name one lower desire that consistently gets loud in your life. Be specific about what it actually offers you in the moment.

Now name the upper desire it is competing against. What kind of person, marriage, family, or life are you actually after that this thing keeps costing you?

Fill in the blank from Hebrews 4:15:

but one who in every respect has been _____ as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.

What does it change about how you approach God by knowing that Jesus knows the pull from the inside firsthand rather than just knowing about it?

Jesus did not out-muscle the tempter. He answered a lower desire by naming a higher one out loud.

When temptation shows up this week, what specific upper desire could you name out loud in that moment? Write the actual sentence you would say. (TIP: use Google to find Bible verses addressing your upper desire. You can then copy Jesus' strategy and quote truth at the temptation.)

Hebrews does not end with sympathy. It ends with an invitation to walk up to a throne and ask for help in the moment you need it.

When you are in the middle of being tempted, is prayer your first instinct or your last resort?

What would actually change if you asked God for help during the pull instead of asking forgiveness afterward? Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. As we've read, God's ear is not dull. Talk to Him like He is listening and wants to hear from you.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite 1 Corinthians 10:13 from memory:
