

## The Book of James

### Session 2: James 1:13–18

#### **OPEN**

**What's something you have bought that you really shouldn't have bought?**

**What made you want to buy it?**

**Why do you think you shouldn't have bought it?**

**Leader:** *Avoid any hint of accusation here. Keep it light, non-threatening, but circle in on the idea of temptation. How do we get tempted to do things it would be better not to do?*

#### **READ**

Read James 1:13–18.

**Leader:** *Read it aloud yourself, or ask someone you know who is a confident reader. Ask the others to listen carefully and/or follow along.*

#### **WATCH**

Show Session 2: *James 1:13–18* (8 minutes).

#### **DISCUSS**

Earlier in the chapter, we learned that God uses trials to help us grow. But here James is talking about temptation.

**What's the difference?**

**Why is it important that we NOT blame our temptation on God?**

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about temptation in the following Bible passages:  
Genesis 3:1–7; 1 Corinthians 10:11–13; Hebrews 4:14–16

**What do we learn from Genesis 3 about how temptation works? What does it prey upon? How does it succeed?**

**What do we learn from the two New Testament passages about how God helps us withstand temptation?**

**According to Francis Chan, how is temptation like fishing?**

Here's what he said:

It's this picture of a fish going for the bait, like being lured. Something in him going, 'I want to go for it, I want to go for it.' We know that feeling—something that we know is wrong, but we want it anyways. There's something in us that longs for something that God says is wrong or evil, but we want it anyway. You have a choice at that moment. Just like that fish that's being lured away, either I go and I grab it, or I swim away.

**Verses 14–15 describe something we might call the “life cycle of desire.” What are the stages?**

**Does “evil desire” always bring forth “death”? How does this happen? What examples could you give?**

**In light of this, what's the best way to deal with our “evil desires”?**

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about desire in the following Bible passage:

Romans 6:11–13

**How is this teaching in Romans 6:11–13 similar to what we read in James?**

**How is it different?**

Francis said in the video:

[James] says that's what sin's going to do to you. It's going to look so good and you're going to anticipate, "this is going to bring me pleasure" but every single time it's going to lead to death. At some point, whether in this life or the next, it's going to end in this awful depression of, "Oh, I thought it was going to end well." And it ends in death and misery—and that's why he says in verse 16, "Do not be deceived."

**Do you agree with that? Have you found that true in yourself or others?**

Take note of "in this life or the next." Scripture acknowledges that sin can sometimes yield short-term pleasure, but it always ends in death. Always.

**Why do you think James suddenly starts talking about "every good and perfect gift" in verse 17, after talking about evil desires? Is he just changing the subject (which he does sometimes), or is there a connection?**

**Why does he call God "the Father of lights"? What does that have to do with giving gifts? How has God "brought us forth by the word of truth"?**

**What does he mean by "first fruits of his creatures"?**

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about the themes of James 1:17–18 in the following Bible passages:

Genesis 1:3; John 1:12–14; Romans 8:22–23

**How did God create the “lights”?**

**What does the passage in John tell us about being “brought forth by the word of truth”?**

**What does the Romans passage tell us about “first fruits”?**

**Leader:** *Try this as a way of putting together the mixed metaphors of verses 17–18.*

We are tempted by desires that glitter in front of us, promising fulfillment but leading only to the valley of the shadow of death. Don't be deceived by this flashy temptation. The gifts that are good and perfect come from our heavenly Father. He doesn't just glitter and fade; He shines on through all eternity. Remember how He created light in the first place. He merely spoke, and there was light. His Word is that powerful; it gives birth to things. So don't listen to the tempter's deceptive words; instead, listen to the true and powerful Words of God, who actually gives us birth through His Word. That's right: we have new birth in Jesus, who is the “Word made flesh.” So, yes, it's difficult to live with the desires of our flesh, but our Father is recreating us in the image of His Son. And so we are the pioneers of redemption, the first fruits, the initial offerings to God. The whole physical world is being reborn for the glory of God, and it begins with us.

**LAST WORD**

What God gives you is better than whatever is tempting you.

**Do you believe that? Why?**

It’s hard to believe that when you’re being tempted. We get easily distracted by the glitter, right? The promises of pleasure cause temporary blindness. But James tells us not to be deceived. Remember: God gives us a whole new life that is infinitely better than anything the tempter can offer.

We often assume that the best way to fight temptation is self-discipline. Grit your teeth and do the right thing. Just say no. And there’s nothing wrong with saying no. But maybe there’s a better approach—not just saying no, but saying YES to the kind of life God wants to give us.

In our closing today, I want you to think about your best strategy to fight temptation. You will be tempted—no question about that.

**What can you do to prepare for temptation?**

## **LIVE IT OUT**

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

**Memorization:** Learn 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15–16; Matthew 26:41; Psalm 51:10; and/or another verse that applies to a particular temptation you struggle with.

**Journaling:** Write about your temptations and how you respond, but also about the joys you experience when you resist temptation. How does your relationship with God grow and soar when you trust Him?

**Prayer:** Think about others you know who are being tempted. Pray that God will strengthen them. But don't let these be proud prayers—"watch yourself, or you also may be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). Include The Lord's Prayer in this devotional time, with special focus on "Lead us not into temptation."

**Accountability:** Look for others you can share your struggles with. Can you arrange to meet with them every week or two, and let them know how you're doing? Fighting temptation can be a lonely business, but it doesn't have to be. When you know there's someone else holding you accountable, it might give you additional strength.

**Joining or Volunteering:** Our culture is full of temptations, and there are many whose lives have been ravaged by greed, lust, pride, or addictions of various sorts. There are also ministries that help those strugglers. Is there one you could connect with—as a volunteer, donor, or fellow struggler?