

Regarding pornography:

1. What are some of the hardest issues we face regarding pornography?
2. What void are we often trying to fill with the pleasures of sin? (*emotional pain from death, divorce or abuse, loneliness, sense of insignificance, etc.*) Why doesn't it work?
3. What do you believe is God's attitude toward you in your sin?
4. From what you know about the character of God, what does He do to redeem us from sin? What truths from God's word give us hope for healing and wholeness?
5. Why are we more prone to resist his gracious offer of healing and restoration than we are to cooperate with his Spirit?
6. What advice will you offer to someone struggling with moral integrity? What would be the first thing they need to do?

James 1:13-18

Discussion Group Questions

April 13, 2008

LESSON 2

Dr. Jerry Nelson

For discussion following the sermon on April 13, 2008

The Source of Temptation

Key Points

Sin is alluring. It is a powerful force that offers pleasure; it often makes us feel alive. But this temporary feeling of "life" only leads to death. How can we resist? In this passage we are challenged with:

- Individual responsibility
- Temptation to blame God for our sin
- Temptation to sin
- The progression of evil desires, birth of sin, and death
- Trust in God's character: holiness, goodness, benevolence, immutability, generosity
- The gift of the Gospel

While there are many temptations we are drawn to, this week we have chosen to focus on the issue of moral integrity as one application of this passage. Why? Sexual sin is pervasive in our culture. It is destroying our marriages and our children, and hinders our relationship with God. While the pleasures of sin are enticing, the consequences are devastating. Amidst the guilt and shame we are often tempted to place blame on others, the culture, or even God. Or we are tempted to bury, deny, or cooperate with our desires, ultimately becoming enslaved by our sin.

This week's message is a message of hope, for God always desires repentance and restoration. We see his great love and compassion for us in the power of the living gospel: Jesus Christ. Many are the gifts he provides, including the gift of one another. We are not in this alone! Our challenge is to respond to the Spirit in repentance leading to freedom, rather than resisting his work and living in enslavement to sin.

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- Pray. The evil one is at work to destroy all of our relationships, and this message is not without opposition. Please pray for all who will be leading this week. Pray also that the Lord will guard your heart and mind. We suggest that you contact a close friend and have them pray for you this week and next.
- If sexual purity is an issue that you are struggling with personally, realize that temptation (of all kinds) is part of ministry; as we enter the battle against sin for the sake of the kingdom, we will be tempted. If you do not have someone who is praying for you, who is fighting for your soul, ask someone today to do so.

Group Preparation

- There are two sets of discussion questions. One addresses issues from the text, the other addresses issues related specifically to pornography. Use what is most appropriate for your group.
- This Sunday's presentations may spark a variety of internal reactions, ranging from shame, denial, criticism, anger and guilt, to conviction of the Holy Spirit. Expect them.
- This topic is highly sensitive in nature. You might want to consider separating your group (men and women) for the discussion questions.
- Take time to affirm the attributes of God and acknowledge His power over sin and death.
- You're not in this alone! If you need help, contact any one of us on staff.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why are we tempted to blame God when bad or difficult things come into our lives?
2. Is Satan responsible for every temptation? If Satan is not responsible, who is?
3. The same Greek word can be translated "trial" (1:2) or "temptation" (1:13). What's the difference between a trial and a temptation? (Cf. 1:3-4 with 1:15)
4. Why can't God be tempted?
5. Why is it important that God does not tempt us?
6. Who is ultimately responsible for temptation's path? Who and/or what are we tempted to blame?
7. James uses the word, "desire" when he talks about the progression of sin. What role does "desire" play?
8. Instead of God tempting us, what does he send?
9. How is sin masked to look harmless? What are examples of this?
10. When we blame God for temptations it diminishes who he is in our minds (i.e.. his lack of sovereignty). Why would we still blame Him?