

Temptations We Face in Ministry

1 Timothy 4:12 (NLT) — 12 Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. **Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.**

1 Timothy 4:16 (NLT) — 16 **Keep a close watch on how you live** and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV) — 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but **was in all points tempted as we are**, yet without sin.

1 Peter 5:8 (NLT) — 8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, **looking for someone to devour.**

Luke 22:31 (NLT) — 31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to **sift each of you like wheat.**

James 1:14 (NLT) — 14 **Temptation comes from our own desires**, which entice us and drag us away.

Ephesians 6:11 (NLT) — 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to **stand firm against all strategies of the devil.**

I. Everyone of us has a target painted on us

A. The enemy of your soul, your adversary, the devil is out to destroy you, your family, and your ministry

1. He hopes to distract you, discourage you, lure you into some habitual sin and keep you bound up so you will be no good for the kingdom's sake.

2. The enemy knows this truth

Zechariah 13:7 (NLT) — 7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, the man who is my partner," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. **"Strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered,** and I will turn against the lambs.

B. The apostle Paul gives us several warnings:

1. that we should not be ignorant of the devils' schemes.

2. **We must stay alert and be aware of the reality that there is a devil who is out to devour you**
 3. **He warns us to keep a close watch on how we live our lives and our teaching...**
 4. **We are to be an example in what we say, in the way we live, in our love, our faith, and our purity.**
 5. **He cautions us who are called as ministers of the gospel to be careful in how we live our lives because what we do impacts many people**
- C. When ministers have moral failures, or scandals it ripples far beyond your immediate circle of influence. It can rock whole communities, cities and beyond.**
- II. Temptation is the tool the enemy uses to bring us down**
- A. He hopes to trap you in some sin that will lead to your eventual downfall.**
1. **I don't have to tell you that temptation in and of itself is not sin.**
 2. **Even Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are, yet He did not fall to sin.**
 3. **It's not a sin to be tempted, to feel the pangs of temptation...**
 4. **How you handle temptation is what matters most.**
- B. Paul warned us not to be ignorant of the devil's schemes.**
1. **There are certain strategies the enemy uses against those who are ministers of the gospel.**
 2. **There are temptations you will face and must overcome.**
 3. **No one here is immune; we are all tempted**
 4. **Only Jesus is perfect; so there will be times when we give in to temptation, but you must not allow sin of any kind to rule in your life.**

C. As ministers of the gospel, like it or not, we are held to a higher standard

James 3:1 (NLT) — 1 Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.

1. **So, it is imperative that we understand some of the ways the devil will come at us and how we can overcome in the day of temptation**

D. This list I am going to give you today is certainly not exhaustive, but I am certain everyone in this room, called to serve Jesus and His people will be tempted by some if not many of these things.

1. **When you know the enemies' battle plans against you ahead of time you can better prepare for the day of temptation.**

I. People-pleasing.

A. We all want to be loved.

1. **It's a deep-rooted need in all of us.**
2. **As James said temptations appeal to our natural needs and desires.**
3. **This temptation of People Pleasing is rooted in our desire to be loved and accepted by those we minister to or those whose support we depend upon.**
4. **People pleasing often demands compromise.**
5. **We compromise our principles, values and even our mission in order to please someone or some group.**
6. **People-pleasing is insincere, hypocritical and motivated by a desire to be liked instead of by true love.**

B. How can we defeat this temptation?

Galatians 1:10 (NLT) — 10 Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NLT) — 4 For we speak as **messengers approved by God** to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts.

1. **Remember who you are in Christ.**
2. **You are called of God to serve His people; His approval is what gives you the ability to stand in the face of opposition or hardship.**
3. **As a leader you will have to make decisions that some people are not going to like... those called to follow your leadership can endure disappointment**
4. **Just as long as you are living to please God and are earnestly seeking His will and His way with a heart of humility you can overcome this temptation of people pleasing**

II. LAZINESS.

A. Pastors and missionaries and others in ministry are not generally supervised and held accountable like people in other jobs.

1. **Pastors and many other ministers are on call 24/7**
2. **You get calls at all hours of the day and night.**
3. **Many in ministry set their own schedule.**
4. **It is here where the enemy comes to tempt us in ministry to laziness.**
5. **Those of us called to teach the word of God are called to spend time studying and praying in preparation.**
6. **However, many fall to this temptation of laziness, and give halfhearted efforts at study**
7. **Jump online and find a sermon and regurgitate someone else's revelation.**
8. **Sleep in, work half days... the sin of laziness plays out in many ways.**

Proverbs 18:9 (NLT) — 9 A lazy person is as bad as someone who destroys things.

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 (NLT) — 12 Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. **They work hard among you** and give you spiritual guidance. **13** Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.

B. Ministry is work and it requires that we work

1. If you struggle in this area, then make yourself accountable to a couple people who will help you by checking up on you.

III. DISTRACTION:

A. Sometimes pastors and ministers can be very busy doing things they don't need to be doing and are not called to do.

1. The devil loves to keep you so busy and distracted that you have no time to spend in prayer and study.
2. Sermon preparation and research can easily lead to checking the news (I need to be relevant), sports (good sermon illustrations in the sermon world) to watching random YouTube videos, etc.

B. How can you overcome this temptation?

1. Keep your mission and vision in front of you. Remind yourself daily of what God has called you to do.
2. Make an agenda for the day; what do you want to accomplish today?
3. Delegate tasks that can be done by others so you can focus on the main things.

1 Corinthians 7:35 (NLT) — 35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

IV. ISOLATION.

A. It's easy for pastors and ministers to want to keep people at a safe distance, to protect themselves from hurt when people in your church or ministry criticize, gossip or leave.

1. It can feel safer to be isolated, but a shepherd must be among the sheep, to know them and feed them well.
2. And everyone of us in ministry need people who we can lean on in times of trouble.
3. Where does the pastor go when he's having trouble in his marriage?
4. Where does the missionary go when she is struggling with some sin issue?
5. Who can you confide in and be totally transparent?
6. We all need others to help us in our spiritual journey.
7. It doesn't matter how long you have been in the Lord you need others.
8. That's why we are here, GHMA. To be a place you can come to seek friendship, council, and accountability.

V. THE MARTHA TEMPTATION:

A. We all know the story; Martha was cooking a meal, Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus.

1. Martha was distracted with much serving; Mary had chosen the better place.
2. This is the sin of Neglecting personal and family worship.
3. When it's your job to study the Bible, lead people in worship, pray, counsel, etc., it can be tempting to neglect real personal worship and family worship.

B. The Martha temptation is anything which keeps you from sitting at the feet of Jesus every day

1. Mary wanted to be near Jesus to listen and receive.
2. Neglecting our personal time in worship and the word
3. Sitting and meditating on the word we just read.

4. Praying and waiting on the Lord
5. We must go to the well that never runs dry daily
6. We must sit at His feet daily in order to be filled with His Spirit and word.
7. The only remedy to fight the Martha Temptation is time with Jesus.

VI. THE TEMPTATION OF THE MISTRESS OF MINISTRY:

Revelation 2:2–4 (NKJV) — 2 “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; **3** and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. **4**

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

A. Here Jesus commends a church full of *ministry activity*—discernment, endurance, service—but rebukes them for losing intimacy with Him.

B. Lesson: It’s possible to do ministry for Jesus and drift from Jesus. Ministry without love becomes mechanical idolatry.

Luke 10:40–42 (NKJV) — 40 But **Martha was distracted with much serving**, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” **41** And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. **42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part**, which will not be taken away from her.”

C. Those of us in ministry must understand that it is seductive.

1. You get accolades from the masses when you preach a good sermon
2. People admire you when you are successful in ministry.
3. The more attention and affection you get in ministry the more you want to pour into it.
4. After a while the ministry gets the best of your time, attention and affection, and there’s not much left for your wife and family

5. The church/the mission/ the ministry has become your mistress/lover.
6. You must guard against this temptation.
7. Be sure you are putting things in their right place.
8. Are you taking a sabbath rest every week?
9. Are you still dating your wife/husband?
10. Do your children get quality time with you?
11. Do you go to their soccer games and cheer them on?
12. Do you take family vacations to spend time with those you love.
13. The church is the bride of Christ, not the bride of the pastor. But the pastor can become more committed to the church and her needs than to his wife and her needs.
14. The best person to ask if you have fallen to this temptation is your family.
15. If you have fallen to this sin, repent of it and make a plan to change things.

VII. THE TEMPTATION OF PHYSICAL PLEASURE

1 John 2:15–16 (NLT) — **15** Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. **16** For the world offers only **a craving for physical pleasure**, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

A. Sexual sin has brought down many in ministry

1. The craving for physical intimacy and sexual pleasure has driven many to porn addictions, fornication, adultery

B. But it's not just sexual sin

1. "Temptation always builds on a natural desire...

2. The temptation is to use your own gifts to satisfy your own flesh.

3. This is the first temptation of leadership and you're going to face it many, many times in your life."

C. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO OVERCOME THE TEMPTATION OF PHYSICAL PLEASURE/SEXUAL SIN

D. 1. Guard Your Private Life

1. What's cultivated in private will eventually appear in public.

2. Private holiness sustains public ministry.

Proverbs 10:9 (NLT) — 9 People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will be exposed.

E. Avoid Emotional Entanglements

1. Many falls begin with emotional rather than physical intimacy.

2. Set clear boundaries with the opposite sex: meetings in public, doors open, accountability partners, etc.

F. Accountability and Transparency

1. Every pastor needs at least one person (mentor, elder, or accountability partner) who can ask hard questions.

2. Isolation breeds temptation; confession brings freedom.

James 5:16 (NLT) — 16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

G. 4. Remember the Cost

1. Sexual sin destroys ministries, families, reputations, and souls.

2. The short-term pleasure cannot compare with the long-term pain.

Romans 6:23 (NLT) — 23 For the wages of sin is death...

H. Stay Intimate with God

1. A vibrant prayer life and Word life strengthen spiritual resistance.

2. When the heart is full of Christ, it has no room for counterfeit loves.

VIII. MATERIALISM: I SEE IT I WANT IT

1 John 2:16 (NKJV) — 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

1 Timothy 6:6–10 (NKJV) — 6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. **8** And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. **9** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. **10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Titus 1:7 (NKJV) — 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money **11** whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, **teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.**

A. Financial greed leads to false teaching. It tempts ministers to distort doctrine to attract followers, funding, or influence.

Luke 12:15 (NIV84) — 15 Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

B. Greed is deceptive—it hides behind “good” motives, even ministry success. But Jesus warns that life and meaning are never measured by abundance.

IX. STATUS: I want to be admired; I want to be envied

Galatians 1:10 (NIV84) — 10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

A. Paul contrasts two masters: God and the opinions of people. A minister who seeks admiration becomes enslaved to the crowd’s applause, rather than to Christ’s call.

John 12:43 (NIV84) — 43 for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

B. Even religious leaders in Jesus' time struggled with this temptation. They longed for honor from others, and it blinded them to God's glory.

X. Let me remind us all:

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT) — 13 The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. **He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand.** When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

A. Cultivate your passion for Jesus

- 1. Worship daily**
- 2. Seek to hear God's voice through reading and meditating on God's word.**
- 3. Get accountability partners**
 - a) Find people who are spiritually mature that you can confide in and share your struggles; people who will stand with you, not judge you, but pray for you and ask tough questions.**
 - b) Global Harvest Ministerial Association can offer help in this area. We provide a place for people called and serving in ministry to receive teaching, encouragement, accountability. We will discuss this with you further as we finalize our plans to launch our international branch called Global Harvest International.**

Let's Pray