

III. RELATIONAL REALITIES

When the things we want hook temptation,
relationships go down the tube (James 1:12-15).

- Lesson #II looked at four progress points in relationships, and how getting stuck in three of them results in huge problems.
- This lesson considers ten desires that hook temptation, and result in sin and death, when they become greater than a desire for God's glory.
- The ten desires are familiar and frequent in our lives, to varying degrees. For the ten vignettes below, the desires have become extreme and obsessive. (They are all completely fictional.)

Desire for power

3 John 5-9

(Strong and assertive voice). Hey there. I'm Rick, but you can call me Rex. Now, I want everybody to stand up. That's right, stand up. Good. Thank you very much. Now you can sit down. That's it.

I was playing hockey over at the Youth Center the other day, and man, I was really good at it. I scored 5 goals. Didn't get hurt at all. Some wimpy guys got hurt, some guy named Frank, but he's just a weakling, it's no wonder.

If Frank would have asked you all to stand up, you wouldn't have. He's got no ability to rule a crowd. He is just a wimp, and I got no time for wimps. I will rule you.

(Frank, challenge this, and then Tom's voice gets really loud.) NO WAY! I WILL NOT TAKE THIS. I'M IN CHARGE HERE. YOU DO WHAT I SAY, AND THAT'S THE END OF THE MATTER!

Wow, don't you guys even get it? I'm the one who has to win every argument. If I don't, I lose, and that's not happening. No way. That's just the way it has to be. The weaklings have to get put down. And there is no weakness in me, uh uh. Just watch and see. I'm in charge. If you challenge me, be ready. Just be ready. I'll rage out and you'll see. You'll see who's got the power.

What kind of temptations hook the desire for power?

- Situations where I can assert my power and look strong
- The ability to control people with rage and anger
- Being superior at yelling or at verbal control.

Desire for affection and approval

Acts 5:29

I'm really wondering about Cindy. See, she's one of my girl friends. She called me and wanted me to help her pick out a dress for her wedding, well she might get married. She's had two dates with a guy. But the problem is, I had to go to work. Now I just don't know....what if she doesn't like me anymore? Do you think she's upset? Maybe I should have told my boss I had something more important to do...oh, no...then my boss would be mad at me! This has just been a horrible day.

(Pick up cell phone). Oh, hi...yes, I heard about the firemen's fund drive, you need me to donate? OF course, how much? A Hundred dollars!!!! Oh, dear, well if you need it. Let me see, this card is maxed out, I've been buying lunch for the gang at work once a week, and charging it to this card. Maybe this one, no, it's maxed out too. I had to buy a lot of presents. You see, I have a lot of nieces and nephews, and they all have friends too, so I had to buy all these gifts, and this card got maxed. But I definitely am their favorite aunt. So that makes me feel a little better. What? You need a hundred? I really don't have any money. Oh, don't get upset with me. Please don't hang up, here's another charge card. You can put it on this one. I wouldn't want you to get upset with me.

Oh boy, I feel so frustrated when I get those bills, but at least that lady on the phone likes me.

1. What kind of temptations hook the desire for affection and approval?

- Considering what people say as more important than obeying God and His Word.
- Saying yes to everything.
- Serving the Lord for the motive of pleasing people and what they will think.

2. In relationships, it would be dangerous for this person to connect with certain other desires. Which of the other desires should a person who battles this one be aware of?

- Being in relationship with a person who enjoys power, who could use and abuse me.

Desire for a partner

Matthew 10:34-39

Hi I'm Tonya. The other day, I just couldn't figure out how to make the coffee. I forgot if I had to fill the pot, and I forgot where to put the grounds... So Tammy was right there! I asked her to help me, that I would just love it soooo much. She was my life saver. Wow, I said, "thank you thank you thank you." She was my hero, I mean she MADE THE COFFEE. Oh, Wow. It was so wonderful, I was so glad we met.

Well, the next day, she made coffee for me again. Of course, I didn't leave her on her own to do it, no way. I stayed with her all morning, and I even brought my work over by her desk so we could be together. We became just SUUUUCH good friends. I went and got coffee for her later, and in the afternoon, I made a pot all by myself, and then I brought her a cup every hour on the hours.

But do you know what happened? Today, she asked me to work at my own station. Oh my goodness! What a meanie! She just rejected me. I am so jealous of her. I wonder what she's doing tonight. I tried calling her 5 times, and I sent her 8 or 9 texts. I mean, I need her so much. I just have to talk with her. Let me try one more time.

(Call on cell phone.)

Hi it's me! You don't know who me is? Well, guess! Oh, come on. You know! It's me Tonya. Yah, you really saved the day when you made the coffee for me. I just love someone who can make a pot of coffee. Will you meet me tomorrow and show me how again? NO? And what do you mean you don't want me to sit with you either?

What? Oh, no. She hung up the phone.

Now, it is time to take matters into my own hands. I'm going over to her house to look in her window and see what she's doing. I just need her so much! I can't live without her. I've got know what she's doing. I should probably bring my pistol along in case she's in trouble.

What kind of temptations hook the desire for a partner?

- The approval of ditziness
- Femininity in men
- Learned helplessness
- Someone who is willing to take care of me
- Someone who lets me become possessive and clingy

In relationships, it would be dangerous for this person to connect with certain other desires.

- Each other – they find someone else who likes to be depended on, and who wants to depend on them.

Desire for public admiration

James 3:1-2

See if you can figure out who I was. Everybody went crazy when I walked on stage, especially all the girls. When I shook my hips or rolled my knees, wow, the world went nuts. Lord amercy, I felt my temperature rising. I tell ya, I knew people loved me – girls would faint just because I got on the stage. I didn't even have to start using my voice.

Inside I was really pretty shy, but I needed to know people loved me, so I would do anything that they found entertaining. I wore wild outfits that got crazier as I put on weight. I was driven by the desire for larger and larger crowds to adore me.

I died a pretty lonely death. The drugs killed my heart. But I couldn't stand it anymore. You see, it wasn't the fame that drove me to hiding behind all the drugs, it was the fear. I was afraid I would lose the fame, the public admiration. Even more than being addicted to the drugs, I had become addicted to being the center of attention. The idea that other rock stars were more popular than me was too horrible to consider. So, I covered the fear with drugs and wild party life. Yah, the highs felt good for the moment, but if I ever let myself be real, it was too horrible. I had become trapped inside my desire for public admiration, and it killed me.

What kind of temptations hook the desire for public admiration?

- People who let them be the center of attention
- Being good at something that people admire, and using it to get self glory instead of glorify God.
- An audience that pays attention to me.
- Not finding someone who will hold me accountable to private conversation.

Desire to exploit others

Mark 10:42-45

Hey baby. There you are, I've been looking all over for you, the woman of my dreams. Good to see ya doll. You are looking just gorgeous. If you were a new hamburger at McDonald's, you would be McGorgeous.

Can I ask you something? You gotta be tired cuz you been runnin through my mind all day. I need help, there is something wrong with my eyes. I just can't take them off you. And I need a map. I just keep getting lost in your eyes. You're eyes are bluer than the atlantic ocean and baby, I'm all lost at sea.

I wish I could rewrite the alphabet. Yup, I would make a change. I would definitely put U and I together. How about it baby? You must be a broom, cause you just swept me off my feet.

What's your mom's phone number? I just want to call her and thank her for giving birth to such a wonderful daughter.

I must be lost, I thought paradise was further south than this. And you must be lost too angel, this isn't heaven, but this moment is a piece of heaven on earth. Would you touch me so I can tell all my friends I've been touched by an angel.

Baby, thank you. I can see that I am the man of your dreams. OK, lets' go out to the parking lot for a while, it's dark, noone will see us. I've got a brand new van. Just beautiful. And, I promise. I promise, I'll marry you and fulfill all your dreams. We will look so cute standing behind a wedding cake. Together forever, I promise babe. I am not after anything but to take care of you.

I know it's not what we should be doing, but you see, I'm different. I love you and this can only make us stronger. When you hang with me baby, the old rules don't apply. I fly by my own set of rules, and everybody flies with me.

What kind of temptations hook the desire to exploit others?

- People who let themselves be manipulated.
- People who listen to promises without watching lives.
- People who are also looking to break the rules.
- People who are looking for a leader.

Desire for prestige

James 2:1-9

Hi. I'm Donna. Welcome to my house in Spaulding Lake. Come on in. Yup, this is my place. Isn't it beautiful? All my friends used to have apartments, but they started buying houses, so I got another job just so I'd be able to buy a house too. And let me tell you, my house is bigger and better. Let me give you a tour. Here's my new furniture. My friends got some nice living room furniture from Raymour and Flannigan. They couldn't really afford it, and you now what? That stuff is really cheap stuff anyway. My furniture is handmade from Kittingers. Don't you love it?

Oh, you got a new washer and dryer? Ask me if I care. I got one too.

Wanna see my new ring? I know, it's just exquisite, isn't it. I know, the diamond is huge. But I know, you can't help it if I have such good taste. Oh, by the way, yours is so cute, just a cute little thin g.....

Oh, I was wondering if you would pray about something. You know how Sue always gets praised for serving at every event? I think I over heard her complaining in the bathroom about how she doesn't even like doing it! And you know how she always comes to Bible study with all her homework done? Well, I think she just does it because she wants to look good. She doesn't even like doing it. She really needs prayer for a better attitude.

Well, I gotta go. See ya, wouldn't want to be ya.

What kind of temptations hook the desire for prestige?

- People who admire me for the social standing
- People who are looking to keep up with the Jones's
- People with the love of money.
- Advertisements
- Credit cards that let me buy what I can't afford.
- Mortgage companies that give loans that can't be paid.

Desire for achievement

Proverbs 16:19; Rev. 3:17

Hi my name's Jim. I only have a minute, so let's get this done. I'm in my second year of college, and just about finished my bachelors degree. I should be able to pick up the one class I need during the summer. Only problem would be, I work at least two jobs in the summer, and I play in a band, so I'll have to structure everything just right to get it all done.

Should work out just fine though. I'll be entering the masters program as I start my third year of college. Pretty good for a sophomore, huh?

It's really important for me to succeed. There are things that get in the way, like I don't see why I have to be at church all the time. I don't have time to serve like the retired people, I'm trying to make something of my life. If I can pick up an extra job and become a manager at my other job that would be more important, you know?

What, go relax with you? Just hang out here tonight after we're done? Go grab a coffee? I'm sorry...I really want to but I just don't have time for it.

Tomorrow night? You want to just have a fun evening? What's the purpose? I don't know, I'd feel really guilty about not getting anything done. Sorry, not this time. I really need to get this stuff done.

What kind of temptations hook the desire for achievement?

- Being with other people who never take time to relax and have fun.
- Parents who make kids feel guilty if they don't achieve a certain level.

Desire for perfection

Luke 10:38-42

Hi, I'm Rose. Some people think I'm a goody two shoes, but really, I've just got my act together. After all, what's our purpose here, aren't we supposed to be good? I mean, especially here at church. But, I do a good job of everything, and I can teach you how to do better too. Let me give you a few examples.

I'm super organized, and if you need lessons, I'd be happy to give them to you. I've got this fancy organizer here, and there's no reason why anyone needs to not have their act totally together.

Another thing, is, I'm always on time. You should see all the people who come late, I watch them. They have a big problem. They are just selfish and focused on themselves, and have no consideration for people like me. I could help you stop procrastinating and do everything perfect like I do.

My car is always neat as a pin. I know where to buy these little bins for things you might need – like you could have a bin for gum, a bin for your cell phone, a bin for your CD's, a garbage bin, a bin for note paper and a pen.

Do you get the picture? There's no reason why you can't be as perfect as I am! Oh, some people say I'm obsessive, but only about the important things! And I am all about helping you too. Just give me a call and I will give you lessons. And if you don't, well, you are obviously a loser. I'll get you back somehow.

What kind of temptations hook the desire for perfection?

- The mindset that girls are better “sugar and spice and everything nice, that's what little girls are made of”
- Defining perfectionism apart from God's standard.
- Making a personal definition of good that meets my standard.

Desire for self sufficiency

Hebrews 10:24-25; Eph. 4:1-6

My name is Chris. A few years ago my Dad passed away. It's not a big deal though, I didn't even cry at the funeral. He was a good man and I would like to have him around but I'm perfectly fine just by myself. I don't understand why men in the church try to befriend me. I'm ok, I don't need anyone like that. Sometimes I leave church early to avoid them, it's easier and saves me from another awkward conversation. People say you need love, but look at me, I'm perfectly fine without it. Even if I did get close to anyone they would probably just die or leave my life. Not that I would care or anything its just easier this way. Commitment just makes life more complicated.

What kind of temptations hook the desire for self-sufficiency?

- Boredom
- Being allowed to run from one thing to another.
- Never being forced to stick to follow through on commitment.
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Desire to restrict life

Acts 1:8

Ugh, I cannot believe Pastor Bob just called on me. Who does he think he is? I just want to blend in. I don't want anyone to notice me! I was so embarrassed. And I'm supposed to tell people about Jesus? I mean if they ever ask me about him, I wouldn't deny it, but I could never really talk about him. That's just not something I could ever do.

It reminds me of the other day when my boss (at Burger King) asked me to take the cash register. It was crazy. I was so afraid I would make a mistake, and in front of all those people! Oh, man. I had to ask people what they wanted....and I just know I said it all wrong....and I'm sure all those people in the line (there was whole family) were talking about me their whole meal. I'm back to flipping burgers where I never have to talk to anybody.

And talk to a girl at church? Are you kidding? That's just a little too scary. I know I would say all the wrong things.

But you know, there's a girl on the internet that keeps sending me pop-ups. She says she can really make me feel special. Now that sounds safe to me. I should try it.

What kind of temptations hook the desire to restrict life?

- Situations where I can just blend in with the crowd.
- Never being put in situations where I have to make a mistake and learn from it.
- Over protective parents.
- Living in an unreal world – facebook games.
- Soap operas, romance novels.
- Internet relationships
- Porn