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Daily Devotional - Monday, February 17, 2025 - A Lack of Humility

FEBRUARY 17TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

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The book of Proverbs warns us to avoid pride: “Pride brings a person low” (29:23) and “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (16:18). These are serious warnings, but this one is the most grim: “The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished” (16:5).

Ananias and Sapphira illustrate this truth. They were tempted to lie about the price of the land they had sold and thus the nature of their gift to the church. Why? Pride. They wanted to be praised for their generosity. They’d missed the point of the early church sharing resources and giving to those in need for the sake of the gospel (Acts 4:34–37). They’d also missed the point of giving as an act of worship to the Lord (Matt 6:1–4).

The two conspired to hold back some of the money and lie about it. Their sin was public and deliberate. Peter went so far as to say that Ananias’s heart was filled or controlled by Satan (5:3–4). The couple’s pride, dishonesty, and lack of generosity cost them their lives (vv. 5, 9). The early believers needed to learn that they were not playing a social game. The “great fear” that “seized the whole church” (vv. 5, 11) was

a valid “fear of the Lord,” indicating a proper respect and reverence for His glory. Verse 11 is actually the first occurrence of *ekklesia* (“congregation” or “church”) in the Book of Acts.

We can try to fake generosity or worship, but God knows our hearts. When we are tempted to treat these matters lightly, the story of Ananias and Sapphira should warn us away from pride and toward proper humility before the Lord and others.

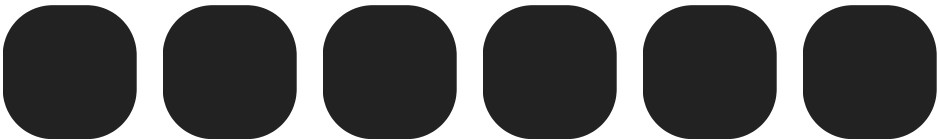
In this age of social media, posing and pretense are strong temptations. What are some practical ways we can combat this prideful desire to look good and receive praise? How can we be authentic?

Loving God, teach us how to follow You wholeheartedly, without hypocrisy. By Your Spirit draw us together, inflame us with a desire to do Your will, and to be Your faithful people in the name of Your Son, our Lord.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, February 14, 2025 - A Lack of Love

FEBRUARY 14TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, February 14, 2025 - A Lack of Love

Who do you view as “the enemy”? In Jonah’s day, Assyria was Israel’s despised enemy. While the country was not as militarily strong as it had been or would become, it was still a threat. Assyria would conquer the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. As the *Moody Bible Commentary* summarizes: “Assyria was a hated and cruel nation. To bless them was to curse Israel in Jonah’s mind.”

So Jonah’s jaw likely hit the floor when God commanded him to prophesy to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria (vv. 1–2). He was tempted to disobey. Why? A lack of godly love. He knew that if he brought a message of judgment, the Assyrians might repent and then God might relent or even forgive them (Jonah 4:1–3). Frankly, he didn’t want that to happen. He preferred to see God’s judgment crush Israel’s enemies.

Jonah’s failure didn’t lie in misunderstanding the situation, but rather in not trusting the Lord and not imitating His grace and mercy. Jonah loved as normal humans do. We love our own group, our own people. But Israel was supposed to be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:3). And as Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount, our “neighbor” might be our enemy (Matt. 5:43–48). God’s love is far greater than human love. Jonah knew that, but he chose the wrong direction.

Jonah fled in the opposite direction, directly disobeying God’s command (v. 3). What did he think would happen? After all, God is everywhere (Ps. 139:7–12). Did he really think he could stall or derail God’s plan? God could have given up on Jonah or sent another prophet. Instead, the same love that pursued the Assyrians pursued Jonah—via a storm and a pagan ship’s crew. The Lord showed grace and mercy to His sinful prophet.

Why did Jonah resist God’s command? Why was it so difficult for him to preach to his enemy? What does this teach us?

Jesus, You tell us to love one another as You have loved us. Yet, we confess how difficult it is to care deeply for the well-being of others. Like Jonah, we are quick to judge. Show us the “Ninevites” You want us to reach.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, February 11, 2025 - A Failure to Resist

FEBRUARY 11TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, February 11, 2025 - A Failure to Resist

The first failure to resist temptation happened in the Garden of Eden. Where was this garden? We don't know, but many suggestions have been put forward. They include locations in Armenia, Iran, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, India, Venezuela, and Iraq, as well as Charleston, South Carolina, and even the North Pole!

While we may not know exactly where the Fall took place, we are familiar with the story: God gave Adam and Eve one rule—not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, taking the form of a serpent (Rev. 12:9), tempted Eve. She ate the fruit and gave some to Adam who joined her in disobedience. What can we learn from their failure to resist temptation? First, we become vulnerable to temptation and deception when we call God's words into question. That's how the serpent began, by saying, "Did God really say...?" (v. 1). Notice how Eve then misquoted God by adding to the original prohibition, "and you must not touch it" (v. 3). In fact, her legalism only weakened her for Satan's next move. The serpent contradicted God's words and slandered God's motives: You won't die, he insisted, in fact you'll gain knowledge and everything that God is trying to keep from you (vv. 4–5). Finally, he appealed to her pride, "you will be like God." Not surprisingly, pride was central to Satan's own fall (see Isa. 14:12–15).

We see the basic dynamics of temptation here. This temptation was surrounded by lies; they promise what they cannot deliver and suggest that disobedience is better than obedience.

In the next days, we'll look at people in the Bible who failed to resist temptation. Just as Paul wrote that Eve's deception is a warning for us (2 Cor. 11:3), so these other biblical examples can teach spiritual lessons in what not to do.

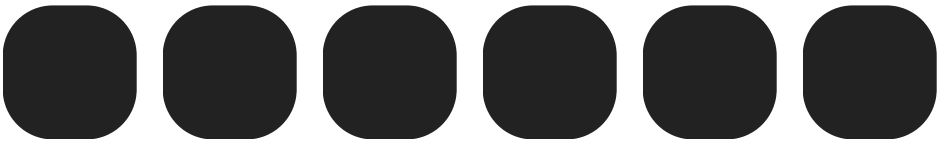
What do we learn about temptation from Adam and Eve? What lessons can you take away from this narrative?

Adam and Eve's disobedience in today's reading reminds us, Lord, that there's nothing about us that You do not already know. Give us courage not to hide from You, but to come to You with all our doubts and fears.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, February 10, 2025 - Bolster Your Immunity

FEBRUARY 10TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, February 10, 2025 - Bolster Your Immunity

Science has found many ways to boost our immune systems. One method? We can eat more jalapeño peppers. If that sounds too spicy, other options include apples, cranberries, garlic, and chicken soup. My favorite choice is music. Studies have found that both performing and listening to music can positively impact our immunity.

Spiritually, we also need healthy “immune systems” to guard against temptation. First Corinthians 7 gives a specific example of the principle we learned yesterday—we must be on guard against Satan. The context here is marriage. A husband and wife by mutual consent might set aside the gift of sex in order to devote themselves to prayer. This is well and good, but if overdone, warned Paul, it can create an opening for Satan to tempt them.

How? Through a lack of self-control (v. 5). The desire for sex, which should be fulfilled exclusively with one’s spouse (vv. 2–4), might in this situation of temporary abstinence lead to a desire for adultery, pornography, or another form of sexual immorality. This temptation includes sin in both thought and deed. As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).

The background principle here focuses on mutual submission and obligation (v. 3). In marriage, the husband’s body belongs to the wife and vice versa (v. 4). This is not an excuse for selfish demands by either spouse, but rather a recognition that sex within marriage is an exclusive, mutual right and a God-given protection against lust,

immorality, and sexual impurity. Such things were apparently common in Corinth (v. 2), as they are in our own culture. Husbands and wives need to take care that good actions with good intentions don't create gaps in their spiritual "immune systems."

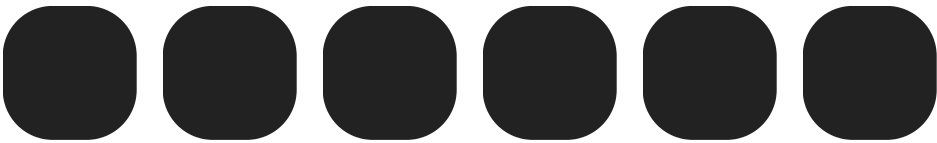
What steps can you take to bolster your spiritual immunity? Why is Paul's advice so important for a marriage?

Jesus, thank You for sending the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth whom we can trust and who cuts through the lies and shame the enemy throws at us. We thank You, Holy Spirit, that Your voice is stronger than the voice of the accuser.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, February 6, 2025 - Guard Against the World

FEBRUARY 06TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, February 6, 2025 - Guard Against the World

When I was young, while fishing with my father and grandfather, I hooked a large muskie. My little fishing pole bent under the strain, but I managed to reel it in close to our boat. But the muskie escaped before we could get it in the net, and it became “the one that got away” in family stories for many years after.

In this world, we are a lot like that muskie, tempted by colorful baits and lures. In Proverbs 1, we read about evil men enticing a person to “ambush some harmless soul” (v. 11). They’re scheming to rob, swindle, or otherwise exploit their victim for their own greedy and selfish purposes. It sounds like a criminal plan, and it is, but there’s more to it than that. This is basically the way our fallen world works. Fallen people tend to “look out for #1” and do whatever they can get away with.

How should we as followers of Christ respond to worldly temptations? First, we should stand our ground. “Do not give in to them” (v. 10), wrote Solomon. “Do not set foot on their paths” (v. 15). Second, we need to keep our eyes open. Those who choose evil are spiritually blind (v. 17). Even a bird can see and avoid a net or trap set in plain sight, but not the “sinful men” in this narrative. Wrong goals, wrong methods, wrong actions, wrong results—all these temptations are to be righteously avoided. After all, sin is self-defeating: “They ambush only themselves!” (v. 18).

Proverbs 16:29 summarizes: “A violent person entices their neighbor and leads them down a path that is not good.” Finally, the best defenses against such temptations include wisdom, versus the foolishness behind wickedness; and love of God, versus the love of power and material benefit behind worldliness (see also 1 John 2:15–17).

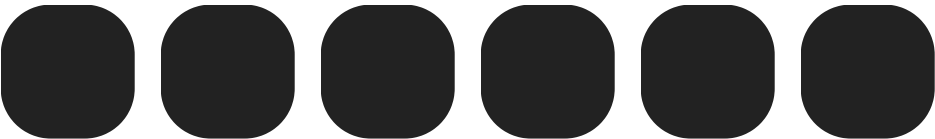
What colorful but dangerous “lures” are we sometimes tempted with? According to Solomon, what is our best defense against temptation?

Christ Jesus, Your love and wisdom are the best defenses against temptation. Help us remember that when we face temptations, Your love protects us, and Your wisdom shows a way out. May we walk in Your truth!

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