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Expect Temptation

Genesis 39

“Lead us not into temptation,” I whispered—a part of my morning prayer. Then I stopped. *What an enormous request*, I thought, *and what a strange one. Surely God would not lead me into temptation, or maybe he would—for the strengthening of my soul.* A dozen images leaped to my mind: my hidden weakness, my most vulnerable spots, my fears. “Not there,” I begged God, “or there, or there,” and shuddered. “Surely I could not resist that.” Gradually my breathing slowed and I went on, “but deliver us from evil.” (“Yes, please do,” I whispered.)

Temptation comes to us: maybe not in its worst shape, but it comes. We can take comfort in Paul’s promise that God “will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear,” but even that reassurance is followed with the words, “when you are tempted, . . .” (1 Corinthians 10:13). We might as well expect temptation and fortify ourselves. Prepare to resist—for it will come.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What kinds of temptations seem to be a natural part of your ordinary living?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. All of us know of situations that would tempt us to do wrong. If you were to pray “Lead us not into temptation” what specifically might you be thinking? Talk to God about this.

At one stage of his life Joseph found temptation at almost every turn.
Read *Genesis 39*.

1. This chapter includes three scenes (vv. 1-6, 7-18, 19-23). What temptations was Joseph likely to face in each of these situations?

2. Focus on verses 1-6. What was good and what was difficult about Joseph's situation in Egypt?

3. God is mentioned several times in this section. How did he reveal himself and to whom?

4. Even though Joseph was a slave, he was given much power and responsibility. What temptations related to power and responsibility do you see today?

5. Focus on verses 7-18. What forms of sexual harassment did Joseph have to cope with from Potiphar's wife?

6. In verse 9 Joseph explained to Potiphar's wife why he refused to sleep with her. What values undergird those reasons?

7. What values could help people today resist the many sexual temptations of our era?

8. What practical steps can God's people today take to resist (or avoid) sexual temptation?

9. Focus on verses 19-21. Joseph did the right thing, yet he landed in jail. What does this suggest about the practical aspects of resisting temptation?

10. What new temptations would have faced him in prison?

11. God was with Joseph in prison, just as he had been with him in Potiphar's house. When have you sensed God's presence—even though everything else seemed to be going wrong?

12. Joseph seemed to expect temptation—at least enough to resist it. What temptations have you learned to expect?

13. What are some ways that you can prepare to resist temptation?

Pray aloud the Lord's Prayer. When you come to the line "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," pause for a time of silent meditation and personal prayer. Then finish the prayer aloud—as your closing note of praise.

Now or Later

Make a list of current situations that tempt you to sin. (Review sins of thought, word and action.) Prayerfully consider how you might prepare yourself to resist those temptations.

Study the passage below; think your way through it phrase by phrase. Thank God for what you find there.

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)