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A9 - The Christian Life

The Overcoming Life

Study 1 - Overcoming Temptations

BIBLE READING:

James 1: 13-15; 1 Peter 1: 6-7

KEY VERSE:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

James 4: 7

When we first become Christians we have a new joy, a new love for the Lord and for other Christians. Sadly, we may, sometimes, lose this joy when problems come. What should we do then? Should we give up? We can expect problems as Christians because we are not yet perfect.

When we become Christians we gain new enemies! Non-Christian friends may laugh at us, the devil will oppose us, and our own sinful nature will still be attracted to sin! In this series of Studies, we shall examine some of these problems.

TEMPTATIONS

Temptation is a real problem to everyone, but particularly to a Christian. This is because, now that we are believers, we have a 'tug of war' in our lives. This tension arises from the fact that we have a new nature now, which wants to please God by turning away from sin. But the old, sinful nature, which we had before we became Christians, is still with us and is attracted to the same sinful things which we did before we were saved. Therefore we can still be easily tempted to read or watch content that is inappropriate for a believer. Other temptations could cause us to be sexually immoral, to steal, to lie, to cheat, to lose our tempers, and to be unkind and selfish. ***(See Ephesians 4: 22-24 and Colossians 3: 9-10)***

Being tempted is not in itself a sin. Sin occurs when we give in to the temptation - we like it, think about it, and then yield to it! ***(James 1: 13-15)*** As believers, there are certain things which we can do to help us resist temptation.

1. MEMORISE VERSES FROM THE BIBLE.

This will remind us of what God expects. ***(Psalm 119: 11)*** Jesus Himself was tempted by Satan (see picture), but refused to give in to him. He won victory in the temptations which He suffered by quoting the Word of God to the devil. ***(Luke 4: 1-13)*** Knowing and using ***"the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6: 17)*** will enable us to defeat the devil when we are tempted.

2. SAY "NO" BEFORE GOD TO THINGS THAT WOULD LEAD US INTO SIN.

Titus 2: 12 tells us to ***"renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives".*** An example of someone who did this was Job who made a covenant (an agreement) with his eyes that he would not look lustfully at a girl. ***(Job 31: 1)*** A resolve of this kind, made solemnly in the presence of God, strengthens us in the fight against temptation.

3. KNOW OUR OWN WEAKNESSES.

We should ask God to give us victory over them. Knowing yourself is very important in the Christian life. We are all different and are tempted in varying ways. But we are all expected to resist temptation. This calls for constant watchfulness, as Peter reminds us in ***1 Peter 5: 8-9***.

4. DEPEND UPON THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD JESUS.

In Him we have the power to resist all temptations. We should ***"…be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might"*** and ***"put on the whole armour of God"*** that we may be able to stand against the crafty schemes of the devil. ***(Ephesians 6: 10-11)***

TRIALS

They are different from temptations. A temptation is something which may lead us to sin. Trials are problems and difficulties that come our way. Trials can be sicknesses, family problems, accidents, persecutions and similar things. God allows them to come in order to strengthen our faith and teach us important lessons which will help us to mature as Christians. ***(See 1 Peter 1: 6-7)***

Trials come to everyone, not just to believers. They do not happen because we are sinners or because God does not love us. As believers we are given strength which unbelievers do not have. We have the Lord, who has promised to be with us and never leave us. ***(Hebrews 13: 5-6)*** We have the support of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the faith to believe that any trials, which come to us, deepen our love for God and help us to grow as Christians.

Christ in the Wilderness by Ivan Kramskoy, 1872

This is the fourth of five units on
The Christian Life.

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A9 - The Christian Life

The Overcoming Life

Study 2 - Overcoming Peer Pressure

BIBLE READING:

1 John 1: 5-10; 1 John 2: 15-17

KEY VERSE:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12: 2

Another problem we will encounter as believers is our relationship with the world. 'The world' refers to the present global system in its opposition to God and its rejection of the Lord Jesus. As believers we are ***"in the world" (John 17: 11)***, because we live in the same world as unbelievers. We will need to resist peer pressure from those whose values, culture and lifestyles are against what is taught in Scripture.

Firstly we need to know clearly what the Bible teaches about how we are to live. We will also face situations and decisions for which the Bible does not provide specific advice. There are, however, principles which will guide and help us stand firm in our faith and convictions.

1. REMEMBER YOUR IDENTITY.

We are accountable to God because He is our Creator. ***"Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth." (Ecclesiastes 12: 1)*** But we also belong to Him, because He has bought us by the death of His Son ***(1 Corinthians 6: 20)*** and now our identity is ***"in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2: 10, 13)***

2. FEAR GOD RATHER THAN MAN.

Our natural tendency is to crave the acceptance of other people and be concerned about what they think of us but we should remember that as Christians our acceptance is found in Christ. ***(Ephesians 1: 6)*** Our focus should be on God. The Bible speaks about ***"the fear of the Lord"*** which means that we stand in awe of Him and give Him first place in our lives. We are told that ***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". (Proverbs 9: 10)*** If we want to be wise in a sinful society, we need to make it our aim to please Him rather than others.

3. KEEP CLEAR OF BAD INFLUENCES.

1 Corinthians 15: 33 states that ***"bad company ruins good morals".*** In addition, we are influenced by what we watch, listen to, browse, follow on social media or read. If we are unsure, we can pray for wisdom ***(James 1: 5)*** and seek help from an older Christian. We should ask ourselves if the activity is honouring to Christ. Our aim should be not just to resist the wrong influences of others but actually to be salt and light to those around us ***(Matthew 5: 13-16)*** and point them to what is right.

4. SIN IS AGAINST GOD.

In the first place, all sin is against God. Joseph understood this when Potiphar's wife tried to entice him into adultery and he asked ***"How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39: 9)*** Likewise David, having committed adultery and murder, ***(2 Samuel 11)*** said to God, "***Against You, You only, have I sinned". (Psalm 51: 4)*** In the New Testament, the prodigal son acknowledged his sinful way of life and said ***"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You". (Luke 15: 18)*** In other words, he recognised that his sin was firstly, and most importantly a sin against God!

5. SIN BREAKS OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

Christians are not perfect - they do sin! ***(Note 1 John 1: 8)*** But our sin does not result in our losing our salvation. Once we are saved, we are always saved. ***(John 10: 28)*** However, when we sin, we lose the close fellowship with God, which we have previously enjoyed. In ***Psalm 66: 18*** the psalmist expresses this by saying ***"If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened"***. Our peace is disrupted, we are full of regrets, our prayer life is hindered, and our relationship with God is spoiled!

Finally, the Key Verse says ***"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...".*** This means that we are not to let this sinful world squeeze us into its mould. As Christians we should become less like our unbelieving friends but more like the Lord Jesus. Ultimately we have a choice to make between loving this evil world and loving God. ***(1 John 2: 15-17)*** We need to pray daily for God's strength to stand for Him and not to compromise with sin.

Answer Sheet

A9 - The Christian Life

The Overcoming Life

Study 1 - Overcoming Temptations

Leader's Comments:

Name: Return address on back of answer sheet

Address:

1. The Study states that when we become Christians we gain new enemies. Who are these enemies?

_____ /3

2. Why is there a 'tug of war' in the life of a believer?

_____ /3

_____

3. Read *Luke 4: 1-13* and then answer the following:

a) How long did Jesus' temptation last?

_____

b) Give an account in your own words of one of the temptations.

_____

_____

_____

c) In each case, how did the Lord Jesus respond to Satan's attack? /5

_____

4. Look again at the Bible Reading - *James 1: 13-15*.

a) What two things can God not do?

i) _____

ii) _____

b) Fill in the missing words to describe the process of temptation.

A person is enticed and dragged away by his own _____. When conceived this becomes _____. When fully grown it leads to _____. /5

5. According to *1 Corinthians 10: 13*, what encouragements do Christians have in the temptations and trials that come upon them? _____ /3

_____

6. Summarise in your own words the difference between temptations and trials.

_____ /3

_____

7. Read *1 Peter 1: 6-7* and explain, as clearly as possible, what should be the outcome of the trials that God allows to come into our lives.

_____ /3

_____

THINK: Do you know of a Christian who is going through a specific trial at this time? Could you pray for this person? Are there other practical ways in which you could show your care for them?

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

A9 - The Christian Life

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Study 2 - Overcoming Peer Pressure

Leader's Comments:

1. Explain what the term 'world' means in *1 John 2: 15*. Use the notes in the Study to help.

_____

_____ /3

2. Look at *1 John 2: 16-17* and answer the following questions:

a) What are the three different ways in which we are tempted in relation to the world?

_____

_____

b) Pleasing God brings joy and happiness. Describe the contrast in ***verse 17*** between living for the desires of the world and doing God's will. _____

_____ /5

_____

3. There are two senses in which a Christian belongs to God. What are they?

_____

_____ /2

4. Write TRUE or FALSE after each statement:

a) Fearing God means being scared of Him. _____

b) Fearing the Lord leads to wisdom. _____

c) Pleasing God rather than others should be our focus. _____ /3

5. Look at Section 4 of the Study.

a) What view did all three Bible characters take about sin? _____

_____

b) Name one of the characters and write the words he said about sin. _____

_____

_____ /3

_____

6. 'I used to be saved, but am not any longer, because I did something wrong.'

a) How would you answer someone who said this to you? _____

_____

b) What promise does ***1 John 1: 9*** give us when we are upset about having sinned? _____ /4

_____

7. Answer the following questions:

a) What two alternatives to living life are presented in the Key Verse? _____

_____

b) What do you think this verse means for you today? _____ /5

_____

THINK: In what ways are you aware of peer pressure in your life as a Christian? What practical steps can you take to ensure that you are not swayed by negative influences and remain faithful to God?

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

A9 - The Christian Life

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Study 3 - Overcoming Discouragement

Leader's Comments:

1. Answer the following questions:

a) What three possible answers to our prayers are mentioned in this study?

_____

_____

b) Read ***Luke 1: 5-13*** and explain in what way Zechariah and Elizabeth's experience is an example of a 'not yet' answer. _____

_____

/6

2. In *2 Corinthians 12: 7-9*, when Paul pleaded with the Lord three times that the *"thorn in the flesh"* might be removed, God's answer was, *'no'*. The Lord did, however, give him a great promise. What was it?

_____

_____

/2

3. Answer the following questions:

a) What do you think it means to ***"ask in My name"***? ***(John 14: 13; 15: 16; 16: 23)***

_____

b) Read ***James 4: 3*** and explain why these people's prayers were not being answered in the way they expected.

_____

/4

4. Read *Matthew 7: 7-11*.

a) Write three things that we are commanded to do when we pray. ***(verse 7)***

_____

_____

_____

b) Give one example of what an uncaring parent might do when his child asks for something. ***(verses 9, 10)***

_____

c) What are we told about what our heavenly Father wants to give us? ***(verse 11)***

_____

/6

5. What advice from the Bible would you give to a young Christian who is finding it hard to 'get on with' another Christian, in his family, school or church?

_____

_____

/3

6. Answer the following questions:

a) Read ***Philippians 2: 4*** and express, in your own words, what it means.

_____

b) The perfect example of this principle is the Lord Jesus. What did His concern for others cause Him to do? ***(see verses 5-8)*** _____

_____

/4

THINK: Take some time to pray to God about some of the things that make you anxious and worried. Thank God, your heavenly Father, for His care for you.

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet
A9 - The Christian Life
The Overcoming Life
Study 4 - Overcoming the Devil

Leader's Comments:

1. Answer TRUE or FALSE:

a) The devil is equal with God, in power. _____
b) The devil is ***"the god of this world"***. _____
c) Christians have the Holy Spirit within them. _____
d) The devil never tempted the Lord Jesus. _____
e) The Lord Jesus never yielded to temptation. _____

/5

2. Read *Hebrews 2: 14-15*. These verses tell us two things which the Lord Jesus achieved by His death. What are they?

_____
_____

/4

3. Read *Ephesians 6: 10-17* and answer the following questions:

a) Why should we put on the whole armour of God?

_____
_____

b) List the six pieces of armour which are mentioned.

_____/_____/_____
_____/_____/_____

c) What spiritual meaning is given to the following pieces of armour?

i) The shield. _____
ii) The sword. _____

/6

4. Answer the following questions:

a) When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He answered each of the devil's suggestions by quoting from the Old Testament. Read ***Matthew 4: 4, 7, 10***, and write the three words which Jesus repeated in each of His answers.

_____

b) In what ways can the Bible help us, in our battles with Satan? _____
_____
_____

/5

5. The devil's final downfall is described in *Revelation 20*. Read *verses 1-3 and 7-10*, then write short answers.

a) List the names that are used for the devil in ***verse 2***. _____
b) For how long will the devil be bound? _____
c) What name is given to his prison? _____
d) On being released, what will he do? _____
e) What will then become of the devil? _____

/5

THINK: Is there a particular area in your life in which you are being tempted at the moment? Can you think of any practical steps you could take to avoid this? Ask God for His help to overcome this temptation.

Return your completed answer sheet to:

TOTAL = /25 UNIT TOTAL = /100

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A9 - The Christian Life

The Overcoming Life

Study 3 - Overcoming Discouragement

BIBLE READING:

Luke 11: 1-4, 9-13; 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7

KEY VERSE:

"Casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you."

1 Peter 5: 7

In your new life as a Christian, it is possible to be discouraged or to lose heart. One area in which this happens is in the matter of unanswered prayer. At the beginning, we are often eager and enthusiastic, praying for many things, and expecting God to answer. After a while, however, we notice that some of our prayers are not answered in the way we would like. For example, we might pray for someone to be saved or for someone to be healed and these things don't happen! What's wrong? Doesn't God love us anymore? Has He not heard us?

We need to be aware of these important principles when we pray:

1. GOD'S ANSWER MAY NOT BE WHAT WE EXPECTED.

There are three answers to prayer - 'Yes', 'No' or 'Not yet'. Both 'No', and 'Not yet' are answers! When God does not give us what we ask for, it does not mean He has not heard our prayers. In this sense, there is no such thing as 'unanswered prayer'. For an example of a 'Not yet' answer, think about Zechariah and Elizabeth in ***Luke chapter 1***. For an example of a 'No' answer, see Paul's words in ***2 Corinthians 12: 7-9.***

2. WE PRAY 'IN THE NAME OF JESUS'.

The Lord Jesus taught His disciples, ***"Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do…". (John 14: 13)*** We must not think, however, that merely ending our prayers with the phrase, ***"In the name of the Lord Jesus"*** means we are using a spiritual formula which will always get us what we want. Praying 'in His name' actually means that we acknowledge His sole authority. Selfish motives, therefore, have no place in our prayers! ***"You ask and do not receive, because..." (James 4: 3)***

3. WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO IMPOSE OUR WILL UPON GOD.

God is greater than we are, He is sovereign, and has the right to act in accordance with His own will. That is why we should always pray, ***"Not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26: 39)*** If the Lord Jesus prayed that, how much more should we! We acknowledge that what we ask for should be given in line with His will. ***(1 John 5: 14)***

4. WE DON'T ALWAYS KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR OURSELVES.

God, our Father, does! If parents see their child lifting a sharp knife they will immediately remove it. In denying their child what is dangerous, they are being kind. Likewise we can count upon our heavenly Father giving us what is best. ***(Matthew 7: 7-11)***

Another area in which discouragement may arise is in our relationships with other people. We may discover tensions in family life, or relationship difficulties in college or work. Even in church life, people may not have the attitudes to us that we expected. What help can we get from the Bible when we are discouraged and upset by such problems?

1. WE MUST RECOGNISE OUR OWN WEAKNESSES.

Difficult relationships can often be improved if we are humble and admit that we are not perfect! Paul teaches us that we should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. ***(Romans 12: 3)***

2. WE MUST CONSIDER OTHERS.

The principle of ***Philippians 2: 4*** is that we should not be selfish, but that we should put the interests of others first. To pray for those with whom we are having difficulties is always a big step towards restoring harmony. Note the words of the Lord Jesus in ***Matthew 5: 44***.

3. WE MUST ALWAYS ACT IN LOVE.

"Love is patient and kind." (1 Corinthians 13: 4) Just as the moving parts of an engine need to be lubricated with oil, so all human relationships work more smoothly when 'lubricated' by the love of God.

The Christian life is not always an easy one. God never promised it would be! He has, however, assured us of His unfailing presence and He wants us to cast all our anxieties on Him, for He cares for us. (Key Verse)

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A9 - The Christian Life

The Overcoming Life

Study 4 - Overcoming the Devil

BIBLE READING:

Ephesians 6: 10-20

KEY VERSE:

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

1 Peter 5: 8

Who is the devil? Is he real or just a figment of the imagination? Is he relevant to us today, or just a hang-over from the Middle Ages?

The teaching of the Bible is that the devil, or Satan, is indeed a very real spiritual being! Unlike God, he is not all-powerful, yet his power is so great that the Scriptures call him ***"the ruler of this world". (John 12: 31)*** and ***"the god of this world". (2 Corinthians 4: 4)***

The devil is determined to stop us from being effective as Christians and to cause us trouble. (See Key Verse) He is an evil enemy and his aim is to destroy God's work and His people. In his wicked intentions he is served by multitudes of demons or evil spirits.

To help us overcome this ruthless foe, here are some things of which we should be aware:-

1. SATAN IS NOT THE MOST POWERFUL BEING IN THE WORLD.

God is! God's power exceeds Satan's! God allows Satan only a certain amount of power. As a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in you, and therefore you need not fear Satan. ***"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4: 4)***

2. SATAN IS A DEFEATED FOE.

As we struggle to overcome Satan's power in our lives it is very helpful to remember that he is, right now, a defeated foe! His defeat came about because ***"the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil". (1 John 3: 8)*** The Lord Jesus in His death on the cross gained the victory over Satan and secured our release from his power. ***(Hebrews 2: 14-15)*** The evidence for his defeat lies in the truth that the Lord Jesus has been raised from the dead!

3. SATAN CAN BE RESISTED.

When you became a Christian, God sealed you with His Holy Spirit and has given you the spiritual power to overcome Satan if you want to. The tragedy for many believers is that they sin because they want to, not because they have to. God always gives a way of escape if we look for it. ***"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4: 7)***

4. SATAN NEVER WANTS THE BEST FOR ANYONE.

He is out to spoil your new life for God. We should always remember that he is the ***'master-deceiver' (2 Corinthians 11: 14)*** and the ***'father of lies'. (John 8: 44)*** We should constantly be on our guard against his subtle tactics! He has no intention of giving you anything good!

5. SATAN IS A SPIRITUAL ENEMY.

He must be fought with spiritual weapons. These weapons are, faith in God, prayer, the Word of God, (used like a sword against the devil) and all the other items of spiritual armour listed for us in ***Ephesians 6: 10-18***. You cannot fight against Satan without God's help. But God wants us to gain victories and He will help us, if we rely on Him.

Satan's power is very real and should never be played with. Christians should never have anything to do with ouija boards, seances, horoscopes, signs of the zodiac (astrology) or anything that is questionable in its origin. We must keep away from all these things, for they are the means by which Satan has entrapped many people. ***"Abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5: 22)***

This is the fourth of five units on
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