

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read James 1:13-18 aloud. As an additional exercise read a paraphrase of this passage from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson. His rewording might give extra insight into these words of James.

1. James opens with a discussion of trials (1:2-12) and then transitions into a discussion of temptation (1:13-18). What is the relationship between these two topics? How are they alike? How are they different?

See Bible Notes for additional comments.

How might one go about telling the difference between a trial and a temptation?

2. James alludes to our tendency to accuse God for temptation (13). However, who or what does James say is to blame (14)?

Why do you think people try to blame God (and others) during times when they are tempted?

How do you think God feels when blamed for a person’s temptation?

What might be some other responses we could have towards God instead of blame?

3. Describe the process of temptation according to James (14-15). Pay attention to key words, images, tone, etc.

See Bible Notes for additional comments.

What do we learn about temptation from this description?

Has this been your experience of temptation? Why or why not?

Based on this description how might believers resist temptation?

4. James’ language here describes a life and death battle. Do you think temptation is viewed as a life and death matter today? Why or why not?

Do Christians need to recover a sense of the severity that James uses to talk about temptation? Why or why not? If you say yes, then how might believers do that very thing?

What other ways might you imagine describing temptation today? In other words, paraphrase what you hear James saying about temptation.

5. In between two segments of this text (13-15, 17-18) James says, “Do not be deceived” (16). To what do you think James is referring?

What is the relationship between temptation and deception? How do they work together?

What are some ways in which Christians can fight against deception? Are there any clues given in our passage?

6. James ends his discussion of temptation by talking about the character of God and believers (17-18). Who is God in this passage? Who are believers according to this passage?

Why does the character of God matter when discussing temptation? Why does the character of believers matter when discussing temptation?

What are some ways to remember who God is and who we are on a daily basis as we struggle with temptation?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What is the best advice you would give to someone who is currently struggling with temptation?

Resources

Bible notes

The Greek word for “temptation” in our passage today (*peirasmos*) is the same word James uses for “trial” in the previous passage (1:2-12). Herein resides a needed challenge for Christians to discern the difference between trials and temptations in their lives.

In some versions James 1:13-15 is translated “evil desire” when describing the temptation process. However, in the original Greek, the word “evil” is never used. James only speaks of “desire.” This subtle detail is important to note because not all desire is inherently evil. There is also such a thing as good desire (e.g., Lk 22:15, Phil 1:23, 1 Thss 2:17).

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Play the “Tasty Temptation” Game

Prep: Find the sweetest, tastiest dessert you can find (fresh baked cookies, a bowl of chocolate candy, etc.). Place it in another room.

Activity: Sit the kids down at a table and talk to them about their favorite desserts. Describe the dessert. Why do they like that one? Once you have them good and hungry fetch the hidden dessert and place it in front of them where they can reach it, but tell them they cannot yet taste it. Keep talking about desserts until they are obviously distracted by the dessert in front of them.

Read James 1:13-18.

What does James say about temptation? What role does desire play in the process? Is desire always bad (like for a dessert)? How can it be good? How do you think God does and can help us when our desires are bad and lead us toward temptation?

Close with a prayer asking God for help against temptation. Oh, and yes, then you can eat the dessert!



August 15, 2010

LIFE Group Guide

James 1:13-18 – Hook, Line and Sinker

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

The theme: **Temptation is a never-ending battle we all face. Yet, James reminds us that we do not fight this battle alone. God stands as a generous Father willing to grant us help in our struggles with desire. Through reliance on him we become models of what it means to live in relationship with God.**

This week Kevin’s sermon reminded us of the deadly process of temptation. Desire, when misdirected, can lure us down a path that weaves through sin and eventually arrives at death. However, as Christians, we are given the promise of a God who overcomes death and darkness with life and light. This week we consider the character of ourselves as well as the character of God in the battle of temptation.

Leadership tip: Temptation is a touchy subject, but also a universal one. Therefore, this week presents an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, everyone will be able to relate to the words of James (we all struggle). On the other hand, temptation is often avoided as a talking point because it pushes believers to vulnerability. As a way to walk this tight rope this week do not force individuals to talk if they are not comfortable doing so. However, if someone in your group is willing to share then lead the way in setting the tone by offering them a comforting, listening presence. Life Groups are places for people to experience the love of God no matter where they are on the journey of faith.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ In honor of the new school year let your group “take roll.” First, everyone gives his or her *full* name (yes, this includes middle names). Second, let people tell how they were named (a family name? a celebrity name?).
- ❖ Overflow is currently underway at College Hills. Take some time to discuss how those in your group are planning on serving during this season. How might your Life Group serve together?



SERVE AND REPORT

In the last Life Group guide there was an insert about *Overflow* encouraging leaders to be looking for opportunities of how you might be of service to someone within the church or community.

You may be wondering though, “What do I do once my Life Group finds a place to serve?” Hopefully this insert can help.

Once your Life Group finds an opportunity of service then we are asking you to do two things. First, go serve! Organize a time and place and be a representative of God in your local setting through service. Hopefully as many as possible from your Life Group can enjoy this experience together.

Second, report your service! Over the next few months we want to be gathering the range of experiences people are having because of *Overflow*. So we ask you to take at least one picture of your service event and write up one or two paragraphs summarizing what you did and who was involved. The hope is to display to the entire church on *Overflow* Sunday all that College Hills did during this season of service.

Please send your pictures and paragraphs to Wilson McCoy at wmccoy@collegehills.org and if you have any questions or comments you can call him at 615.444.9502. Thanks for your leadership and involvement in this season of *Overflow*.



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