

# OVERCOMING TEMPTATION (PART 1)

*book forty in the series:*

**THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU**

**DOUG BRITTON, MFT**

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

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- Day One: Understand Sin's Power and Danger
  - Day Two: Embrace God's Call to Holiness
  - Day Three: Pray to See Sin through God's Eyes
  - Day Four: Make a Plan
  - Day Five: Review and Test

**Overcoming Temptation (Part 1):** Book forty in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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# The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

**By Doug Britton, MFT**

Twelve books on “Knowing God”

Twelve books on “Developing a Godly Character”

Twelve books on “Enjoying Healthy Relationships”

Twelve books on “Overcoming Personal Problems”

*For*

Individuals

Small Groups

Churches

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# The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

## **Knowing God**

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

## **Developing a Godly Character**

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

## **Enjoying Healthy Relationships**

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

## **Overcoming Personal Problems**

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

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## Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in "The Owner's Manual to the New You" series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

## Small Group Leader's Guidelines

**Introduction.** These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

**Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions** you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

**Begin and end each study with prayer.** Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

**Review homework.** Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

**Personalize the lesson.** Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

**As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses.** Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

**Get everyone involved.** The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

**Consider breaking up into smaller groups** to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

**Use day five for a review and test.** Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

## Want to Learn More?

**Free online resources:** For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups)

**Small group leader's book:** For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups).

## Day One: Understand Sin's Power and Danger

Do you ever have trouble resisting temptation? The answer should be obvious. Everyone does.

You may be “addicted” to the Internet or crave chocolate chip cookies. You may spend too much money or be obsessed with pornography. You may be tempted to get angry, waste time, shoplift, flirt, lie, get drunk, overeat, fantasize about immoral sex, cheat on your income taxes, misuse drugs, smoke, or gamble.

Whether your temptations are “minor” or life-dominating, one thing is certain—you have them. Another thing that’s certain is that you have given in to temptation and sinned. Everyone, other than Jesus, has sinned.



### There is hope for you

You may feel alone in your failures, thinking there’s something wrong with you, that you’re a bad person, or that you couldn’t possibly overcome the temptations in your life. Don’t give up.

The Bible is full of stories of people who sinned but then turned from sin with God’s help. In fact, much of the Bible was written by men who committed serious sins, sins that hurt many other people as well as themselves.

Look at David, for example. He committed adultery with a married woman, tried to cover it up, and eventually made plans to have her husband killed (2 Samuel 11:1-27). The results were tragic, yet he changed, and God used him to write some of the most powerful Psalms in the Bible.

You will never be “perfect,” but with God’s help you can overcome the major life-controlling temptations you face (as well as many “minor” temptations), and you will begin to experience the joy that comes from a Spirit-controlled life.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

### Discussion questions

1. Have you felt hopeless in the battle against temptation? Explain your answer.
2. Do you sometimes think God can’t use you because of your sins? Why or why not?
3. How can David’s example be an encouragement to you?

### What is sin?

In general, sinning means doing anything that would displease God. The Bible helps us understand the things that displease him.

**The Bible identifies many “universal” sins.**

Although the Bible doesn't name every possible sin, it provides lists that help us. We don't have to wonder if certain attitudes or actions are sinful. For example:

*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)*

Other passages—such as Ephesians 5:3-5, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and Colossians 3:5-8—list specific sins. Another verse breaks sin down into three areas: our cravings, lusts, and boasting. Notice that all three involve a self-centered lifestyle.

*For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. (1 John 2:16)*

**There are “personal” sins.**

Although many activities are clearly sinful for everyone, some things are sinful for some people, but not for others. Let's look at some things we could call “personal” sins:

**Matters of conscience**

You sin when you do something you think is sinful, even if others think it is okay. In other words, when you violate your conscience (Romans 14:23).

**Areas of personal sensitivity or weakness**

If you are weak in a particular area, it may be sin for you, although it is not for others. For example, it may be wrong for you to see any movie, while others are free to watch some movies.

**Sins of omission**

We sometimes think committing a sin only means doing something wrong, but it also means not doing something God calls us to do. God has a purpose for your life. When you choose not to do something you know you should do, or when you live a self-centered or recreation-centered life, you neglect his purpose and are sinning.

*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. (James 4:17)*

**The “greatest commandment” helps us see the big picture.**

Although the Bible identifies hundreds of sins, under all of them are two key themes: We sin whenever we do not love God or other people in our thoughts, words, or actions. Look at what Jesus said when he was asked which was the greatest commandment:

*Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)*

Understanding this truth can help you identify whether something would be sinful or not.

**Discussion question**

4. How does understanding the greatest commandment help you overcome temptation?

### Is temptation sin?

It usually isn't sinful to have sinful thoughts. Everybody is tempted from time to time. Even Jesus was (Matthew 4:1-11 and Hebrews 2:18, 4:15). What counts is what you do with the temptations. Do you entertain them in your mind, or do you resist them?

Although temptations are not necessarily sinful, there is a point when sinful thoughts or temptations can become sinful themselves. This can happen when you entertain a temptation or sinful thought, turning it over in your mind, dwelling on it, or considering what it would be like to act on it.

### How can you know if something would be sinful?

Sometimes it's not easy to know if something would be sinful. In fact, it's easy to fool yourself and do something although you know deep inside it would be wrong. As the Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)"

#### If you are unsure if you should say or do something:

- Ask yourself:
  - "Would I be loving God if I did this?"
  - "Would I be loving other people if I did this?"
  - "What does the Bible say?"
  - "How would it affect my walk with God?"
  - "How would it affect someone else's walk with God?"
  - "Would it violate my conscience?"
- Ask God: "Would I be sinning? Please search my heart."
- Ask a mature Christian: "What do you think?"

#### Discussion questions

5. Review each of the above points. Which of these points will help you identify sin and resist temptation? Explain your answer.
6. Would it be sinful to tell a dirty joke? Why or why not? Answer this question by asking the six questions in the previous section.

### Consider the consequences of sin

When you are tempted, the sin often seems appealing or fun. Yet as you probably already know, the end results hurt you, and they often hurt people around you. Remind yourself of this fact when you are tempted.

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8)*

**Sin traps you.**

If you commit a particular sin, you are likely to do it again. Once you do something, it lowers the inhibitions or barriers that protected you from that action. Each step you take makes it more likely that you will repeat that step and then take a further step.

*The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. (Proverbs 5:22-23)*

**Sin pulls you down deeper and deeper.**

Many people who are caught up in a sin discover that the evil which once satisfied them is no longer enough. They find themselves continually lusting for more, going deeper and deeper into depravity. They are caught in a vicious trap and often feel powerless to escape.

*Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. (Ephesians 4:19)*

**Sin results in misery.**

Sin hurts you personally. It also damages your relationship with God and your relationships with others. When you disobey God's commands, you suffer—sometimes as a result of his discipline, sometimes because of natural consequences, and sometimes because of the misery that results from separating yourself from God's fellowship.

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8)*

**Discussion question**

7. Have you noticed that sin can look inviting and pleasurable, but after you give in, it eventually results in unhappiness? Explain your answer.

**Guard against self-condemnation**

As you study this book, don't feel overwhelmed. God knows that none of us is perfect. As James wrote, "We all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2). God doesn't expect perfection, but he does expect us to strive against sin. Remember that Christian life is a life of growth.

*And we ... are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

*And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way ... growing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:10)*

If you sin, confess it to God, accept his forgiveness, and ask him to help you do better in the future. Remember, if you confess your sins, God will forgive and purify you (1 John 1:9).

**Discussion question**

8. If you start to condemn yourself, what would God want you to do? Explain your answer.

**Memory verse**

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. (Galatians 6:7)*



5. What is a “universal” sin?

6. What are some consequences of sin?

7. List six ways to evaluate whether or not something would be sinful:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

## Day Two: Embrace God's Call to Holiness

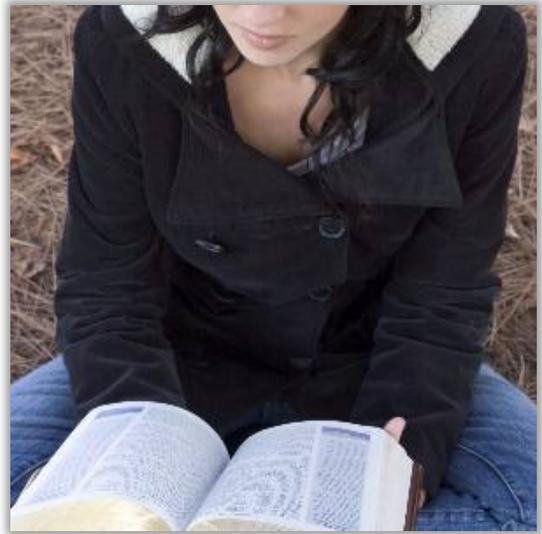
The Bible calls us to be holy, “just as he who called you is holy” (1 Peter 1:15). This command—to be holy just as God is holy—can be inspiring, but it can also be scary because it can seem impossible.

*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.  
(Leviticus 19:2)*

*But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16)*

### Discussion question

1. When you read the command to be holy, how does it make you feel? How do you react?



### What is holiness?

Some people think being holy means walking around in a spiritual daze, unaware of the world around them. Others think it means following a long list of rules. Others think it means never sinning. None of these definitions capture the truth.

The heart of holiness is loving God and living in a way that pleases him throughout the day. One way of looking at holiness is to say we are “set apart” from the world, living according to God’s standards—not the world’s. We are drawing close to God and saying “no” to sin.

- Holiness is loving God (Matthew 22:37).
- Holiness is walking in fellowship with Jesus (John 15:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 1:9).
- Holiness is hating evil (Proverbs 8:13 and Romans 12:9).
- Holiness is striving to please God in all you do (1 Peter 1:15).
- Holiness is striving to live a pure life and maintain a clean conscience (Acts 24:16 and 1 Timothy 1:5-6).

### Discussion questions

2. Has God’s call to holiness been a source of confusion or frustration for you? If so, in what way?
3. Look up the verses under “What is holiness?” and then identify one that speaks to your heart. Describe how it speaks to your heart.

You can see the importance of God’s command for holiness when you realize that if you are a believer, God’s Spirit lives in you. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. Wherever you go, whatever you do, God is present.

*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)*

What gets in the way of holiness? Our sinful nature.

*For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. (Galatians 5:17)*

### Three pictures of holiness

#### **We are commanded to be holy.**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. (Romans 12:1)*

*For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8)*

#### **We are already holy through the gift of Christ.**

*And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10)*

#### **We are being made holy.**

*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (Philippians 3:12)*

*By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:14)*

#### **Discussion question**

4. Why does the Bible tell us to live a holy life? After all, according to Hebrews 10:10 we have already been made holy.

### **Does being holy mean we can't have fun?**

When God calls us to live holy lives, is he saying he doesn't want us to have fun? Not at all. It's true that he wants us to avoid sin. But that's because he wants the best for us.

True joy comes from knowing Christ and being loved by him. We experience his joy when we worship and praise him. Our joy also comes from having a clean conscience, working with our hands, using our minds, enjoying God's creation, and spending time with others. And it comes from playing, reading, sports, listening to music, camping, watching videos Jesus would watch, and countless other activities.

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)*

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)*

## **“We don’t have to worry about sin or holiness. We live under grace.”**

Some say, “We live under grace. Why should we worry about sin? Isn’t that legalism?” They are right in saying we live under grace, not law (Romans 6:14 and 7:6). And they are correct when they say God’s forgiveness is available when we confess our sins. But they are absolutely wrong when they say that sin doesn’t matter, or that grace excuses sin. Grace does not excuse sin. It teaches us to overcome sin.

*Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance? (Romans 2:4)*

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. (Titus 2:11-12)*

### **Discussion question**

5. What would you say to someone who says, “Don’t worry about sin. We live under grace. God isn’t going to hold our sins against us”?

## **Accept responsibility for your sins**

A key step in your journey to overcome temptation is to accept responsibility for your actions. That’s something most of us don’t do very well.

### **Reject your excuses for sin.**

Read Genesis 3:12-13, verses that show Adam and Eve making excuses for their sin. Most of us are like them, blaming others. Here are some common excuses we make for sin. As you read them, circle each one that describes something you have thought or said.

- I blame my parents.
- I blame my genes or my heredity.
- I blame my spouse.
- I blame other people who treat me unfairly.
- I blame social or economic conditions.

### **“But our circumstances affect us.”**

It’s true that our background and current circumstances affect us—but they don’t have to control us. Ask God to help you take responsibility for your attitude and actions. Learn to focus on what God wants you to regardless of your background or circumstances.

### **Discussion questions**

6. Whom (or what) have you blamed for your sins?
7. Are you willing to accept responsibility for your actions—regardless of your circumstances or background? If so, will this be easy? How will you remind yourself to do this?

## **Aim for perfection (but don't be discouraged when you don't achieve it)**

This could be a discouraging lesson since no one except Jesus can live a perfectly holy life. God understands that. Just like an athlete, aim for perfection, but be satisfied with getting better. Don't give up because you are not perfect. The only one who could live a perfectly holy life was Jesus himself, and that's because Jesus was both man and God (John 10:30-33 and 14:9-10).

*Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11)*

When you are born again, you are a babe in Christ. God doesn't expect you to immediately act like a mature Christian. However, as you grow, he purifies you and shows you changes to make.

*Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God. (Hebrews 6:1)*

## **Do you know Jesus?**

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

*Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.*

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

## **Memory verse**

*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. (Leviticus 19:2)*

## **Want to learn more?**

### **Free online Bible studies**

Many studies on defeating temptation  
[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/temptation](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/temptation)

### **Book by Doug Britton**

*Defeating Temptation*  
[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/temptation](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/temptation)





## Day Three: Pray to See Sin through God's Eyes

One of the biggest obstacles many of us face in the battle against temptation is that we think it's fun to sin. Even if we don't engage in a particular sin, we fantasize about it, imagining how pleasurable it would be. We forget that although sin may look good at first, once we are hooked, it traps us.

*The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly. (Proverbs 5:22-23)*



### God is grieved when you sin

God is not a passive observer, watching you go through life as if watching a movie. He loves you passionately and wants the best for you. When you sin, it grieves him.

*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. (Ephesians 4:30-31)*

### Recognize that when you sin, you are rebelling against God

Many Christians are casual about sin. This is a big mistake. Sin is serious to God and we must not take it lightly. When we sin, we rebel against—or reject—God.

Remember the example of David and Bathsheba. David had sex with Bathsheba, another man's wife, arranged to have the man killed, then married her (2 Samuel 11:2-27). Later, the prophet Nathan confronted David, and God punished David (2 Samuel 12:1-19).

When David wrote about this incident, he knew he had sinned against the man and his wife, yet he realized that his major sin was against God. He wrote, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:4).

Even when we sin against others, it is primarily God we are sinning against, for he is the one who commanded us to live holy lives.

Paul emphasized this point in his first letter to the Thessalonians. After telling them to avoid sexual immorality, he added:

*Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 4:8)*

### Discussion question

1. Why does the Bible say sin is rebellion against God? Explain your answer.

## Beware of secret sins

You may have given in to secret sins—ones that are hidden from others—while putting on a “Christian” front. You may think there will be no consequences because others cannot see what you do. Yet God sees and promises there will be consequences.

*For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. (Proverbs 5:21)*

*He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)*

## Ask God to help you see sin through his eyes

If you look at sin the same way God does, it makes sin seem less and less appealing. When you see through God's eyes, you will be tempted less often. In addition, you will be able to resist the temptation more easily.

### Discussion question

2. What are some temptations or sins you would like to see through God's eyes? Explain your answer, then take a minute to pray, asking God to help you see them the same way he does.

### Pray to see sin as unappealing or awful.

Ask God to help you see the truth: The things that tempt you are disgusting and ugly. To help make this real to you, think of (1) something that tempts you and (2) something absolutely disgusting, such as eating a slug.

Ask God to plant the image of eating the slug (or whatever disgusting image you came up with) in your mind whenever you are tempted to commit that sin.

### Pray to be revolted by what tempts you.

*Lord, I am embarrassed to admit that sometimes I find (name of sin) tempting. I know it is detestable in your sight, and ask that you make it seem disgusting to me. Please take away all pleasure I have found in this. Help me think and feel about this sin just like (name something you would find disgusting, such as eating slugs), in Jesus' name.*

### Pray to see sin as your enemy.

*Lord, I have treated (names of sins) more like friends than enemies. I confess that I have strayed from you in this area of my life, and ask you to help me know in a deep way that sin is my enemy, in Jesus' name.*

### Pray to lose interest in what tempts you.

*Please take away my desire, Lord, to (names of sins) and help me see these sins through your eyes. I want to be like Jesus. I ask this in his name.*

### Discussion questions

3. What is one thing you are tempted to do and one thing you think would be really gross or unpleasant to do (such as eat a slug)?
4. Would praying to see the tempting thing the same way you see the unappealing thing help? Why or why not?

**Replace pleasant memories of sin with sorrow.**

Do you ever smile as you think about some sins from your past? You may have memories of a sexual encounter, a fight, or a sneaky way you stole something or “fooled” the taxman. If so, a key to your spiritual growth is to identify your actions as sin.

*If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. (Psalm 66:18)*

**Discussion question**

5. Do you think it is a bad idea to fantasize about past sins? Why or why not?

**Get angry at sin.**

The Bible says, “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it” (Genesis 4:7). In this verse, God identifies sin as your enemy. Since sin is your enemy, don’t be passive. Get mad at it and at the devil—the one who introduced sin into the world.

*Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. (Romans 12:9)*

**Meditate on key Scriptures**

Since the Bible is God’s word, it’s vital that we look in its pages to identify what is sinful and see what God says about it. Make Bible reading part of your daily life. As you read, ask God to show you if there are changes you need to make in your life. If he reveals areas of sin, ask him to help you see them the same way he does.

Likewise, if there are things in your life you know are wrong, look up passages that deal with them. Write them out, and memorize ones that speak to you personally. Then read them from time to time, prayerfully asking God to bring them alive in you.

You will probably find verses in the New Testament most helpful, since the New Testament was written to help Christians know God better and grow in their relationship with him. However, there are also many parts of the Old Testament that help us know God better and understand what his attitude is toward specific sins.

*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)*

*Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me. (Psalm 119:133)*

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)*

**Discussion questions**

6. Why do we need the Bible to help us defeat sin?
7. When we read the Bible, we learn what God says. When we read the Bible, does something else happen in addition to learning information?

## Pray to love what is good

Defeating temptation is more than saying “no” to sin. It is also saying yes to a pure heart, a heart that loves what is good. Pray for a pure heart. Make these two verses your personal prayers:

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)*

*Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. (Psalm 86:11)*

### Discussion questions

8. How can praying to love what is good help you see sin through God's eyes?
9. What are some good things you would like to love more?

## Memory verse

*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)*



5. What are some things that tempt you that you would like to look at through God's eyes?

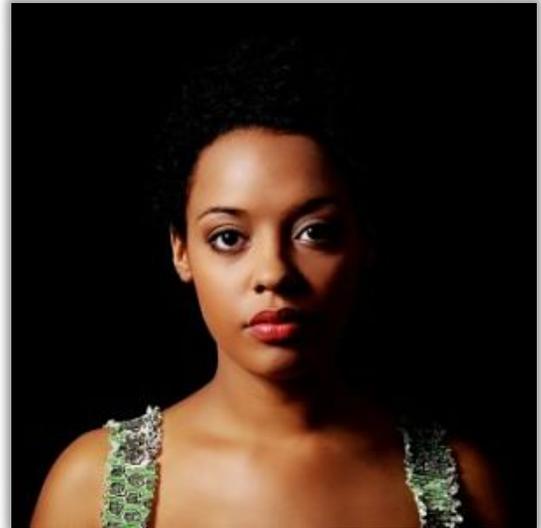
6. Write a prayer naming the things you wrote in question 5. Ask God to help you see them through his eyes:

7. Read the sample prayers in this chapter, then write one out that you want to make your personal prayer:

8. Why is it important to pray to love what is good?

## Day Four: Make a Plan

Sometimes God removes temptation from our hearts miraculously, with little or no effort required on our part. However, most of the time we need to be involved in making the change. In this lesson you will learn how to make a plan to defeat temptation. In the next book in this series, *Overcoming Temptation, Part 2*, you will read practical ways to put your plan into effect.



### Declare war on temptation

Instead of simply saying you want to change, determine that you are going to put everything you have into changing. Let the following verses inspire you to decide to be an overcomer.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. (Romans 12:1)*

*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)*

When you declare war on temptation, be realistic. Don't make a vow to never sin again. Jesus is the only person who could live a sinless life. Instead, declare war on temptation, making a commitment to grow closer to Jesus and actively fight temptation.

### Discussion questions

1. Can you promise God to never sin again and expect to be successful? Why or why not? If you can't make an absolute promise, what should you do instead? Explain your answer.
2. Read Psalm 119:30 and Romans 6:11-13. What is the message in these verses?
3. Are you willing to declare war on temptation? If so, what does that mean?

### Establish a “partnership” with God

There's a big problem with deciding to overcome temptation—we can't defeat it on our own. Our human nature is too fallen and weak. We need God's help. When you seek God's help, in a sense you establish a partnership with him. He is the senior partner, and you are the junior partner. He supplies the power, but you must do your part.

*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Philippians 2:12-13)*

The Bible gives us many examples of this partnership in action. For example, God told Joshua, “I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses” (Joshua 1:3).

Although the Lord gave the land to the Israelites, they had to take the steps necessary to get there, then they had to fight for it. God helped, but the people had to play their part.

If the temptation you are fighting seems impossible to overcome, be honest with God. Pray “Lord, please help me.” Better still, pray, “Lord, with your help I will overcome this.”

#### Discussion questions

4. What does it mean to establish a “partnership” with God to overcome your temptation?
5. What is your part? What is God’s part?

### Pray if you are double-minded

Have you ever wanted to live a holy life, but part of you partially wanted to hang on to a sin? Most of us have been in that place. We can identify with Paul’s words:

*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (Romans 7:18)*

If you are double-minded, pray to become single-minded. God will honor your honesty.

*Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. (Psalm 86:11)*

### Find a prayer partner or join a support group

One of the best ways to defeat temptation is to find one or more mature persons of the same sex to get together with. You can study together, encourage each other, pray for each other, hold each other accountable, lovingly confront each other, and confess to one another.

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)*

Don’t hold back from asking someone to partner with you because you are embarrassed by what you have done or what is tempting you. You can be sure that anyone you talk with has also had to deal with serious personal sins or temptations. In fact, there’s an excellent chance he or she will ask you to pray for a temptation in his or her life.

#### Discussion questions

6. What support group could you join to help in your battle against temptation? Are you willing to join it? Why or why not?
7. Who is a mature Christian person of the same sex you could call when you are tempted? Would you be willing to call this person? Why or why not?

### Make concrete plans

Many people do not go beyond good intentions or vague plans. They may say “I’ll try harder” or “I have to do something about this.” But they don’t go any further.

Don’t stop with good intentions and prayer. Make concrete plans about how you will battle temptation. When you combine prayer, determination, and plans based on God’s word, you will change.

*The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways. (Proverbs 14:8)*

*An upright man gives thought to his ways. (Proverbs 21:29)*

### **Discussion questions**

8. Have you ever had good intentions but been unsuccessful in your battle with sin? What do you think the problem was?
9. Why is it a good idea to make concrete plans?

### **Pick one or two temptations to work on.**

People who want to change often make long lists of things they plan to work on. The most common result is that they get discouraged and give up. It's usually more effective to choose one or two things to work on, then add more once you are successful.

### **Make a worksheet for each temptation.**

On a separate sheet of paper, write a plan to overcome a specific temptation. Choose some of the ideas in this book, then add more ideas as you read the following book in this series, *Overcoming Temptation, Part 2*.

#### **Step 1**

Write the temptation.

#### **Step 2**

Analyze why you sin. Even if a temptation seems to come out of nowhere, if you pray and think about it, you can usually identify steps leading up to your sin. Go through each of the following steps to analyze why you sin.

- Identify whom you are tempted to sin with. (Are you more likely to sin when you are alone or when you are with certain people? Do you give in to peer pressure?)
- Identify when and where you are tempted. (Is there a certain time of the day or week when you are more likely to sin? Where are you usually tempted to commit this sin? At home? At school? On the job? Somewhere else?)
- Identify why you are tempted—your excuses for sinning. (Do you justify your sin? Does it seem it “just happens”? Do you realize you are rebelling against God when you sin?)
- Identify the first steps you might take on the path to sin. (What is your thought process before you sin? What are your first steps?)

#### **Step 3**

Choose one or more Scriptures dealing with this sin that you will memorize.

#### **Step 4**

List preventive actions you will take. (The next book in this series, *Overcoming Temptation, Part 2*, discusses steps you can take to make yourself less vulnerable to sin.)

#### **Step 5**

Write how you will resist when tempted. (The next book in this series, *Overcoming Temptation, Part 2*, will help you make a plan to defeat temptations when they arise. As you read, look for ideas and add them to your worksheet.)

### Step 6

List alternative things you could do instead of sinning. (Sometimes it's easier to resist temptation if you make a plan to do something different instead of just saying "no" to temptation.)

### Discussion questions

10. What do you think about this six-step plan? Does it look like something that could help you? Why or why not?
11. Are you willing to make a six-step plan to overcome a specific temptation? If so, what temptation will you work on? When will you write the plan?

### Persevere (Don't give up)

You may lose some battles and slip back into sin. If you do, let these passages encourage you to confess your sin and then keep fighting. With God's help, you will win the war.

*Therefore ... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)*

### Pray to persevere:

*Lord, I commit myself to persevere no matter what. I am committed to keep fighting. Please grant me strength and a willing heart, in Jesus' name.*

### Memory verse

*The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways. (Proverbs 14:8)*



6. Write a brief plan to overcome a specific temptation. As you study the next book in this series, *Overcoming Temptation, Part 2*, add some of the ideas into your plan.
  - a. Write the temptation:
  - b. Analyze why you sin:
    - Who are you tempted to sin with?
    - When are you tempted?
    - Where are you tempted?
    - Why are you tempted? (What are your excuses for sinning?)
    - What are the first steps you might take on the path to sin?
  - c. Write out and memorize one or more Scriptures dealing with this sin:
  - d. List preventive actions you will take. (The next book in this series has many steps you can take to make yourself less vulnerable to sin. Add some of them into this plan.)
  - e. Write how you will resist when tempted. (The next book in this series has many ideas about how to resist temptation. Add some of them into this plan.)
  - f. List alternative things you could do instead of sinning. (This is explained in the next book in this series.)





## Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

### Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

### True or false

- F 1. Since only Jesus can be completely holy, it's silly for us to try to be holy.
- F 2. Holiness means following a list of rules.
- T 3. God is grieved when we sin.
- F 4. Since we live under grace, we don't have to worry about how we live.
- T 5. Holiness is loving God and living in a way that pleases him throughout the day.
- T 6. If we ask God to help us overcome temptation, he expects us to do our part.
- T 7. It's a good idea to make a plan to resist temptation.
- T 8. Sin can feel good at first.
- T 9. Reading and thinking about key Scriptures is important in our battle against sin.
- F 10. If a sinful thought comes into your head, the thought itself is a sin.

### Memory verses

- 1. Leviticus 19:2

*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.*

- 2. Psalm 119:11

*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*



## About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

He has also trained pastors, counselors, mentors, and lay leaders in biblical counseling, mentoring, and small group leadership.

Doug and his wife Skeeter live in Northern California.



### Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore).

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### Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com) and click on the "Seminars" link.

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