

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION (PART 2)

book forty-one in the series:
THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

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

- Day One: Stay Close to God
- Day Two: Make Personal Boundaries
- Day Three: Replace Bad Habits with Good Habits
- Day Four: When Tempted — Stop / Think / Pray
- Day Five: Review and Test

Overcoming Temptation (Part 2): Book forty-one 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?

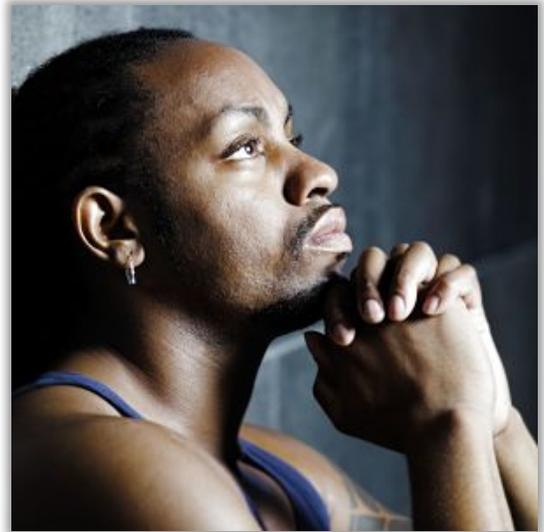
Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

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.

Day One: Stay Close to God

This book is Part Two of a two-book series on overcoming temptation. (Both are part of *The Owner's Manual to the New You*, a forty-eight book series.) In the previous book, *Overcoming Temptation, Part 1*, you learned how to look at sin through God's eyes. In these pages, you will learn practical, Bible-based truths to help you overcome temptation.

It is often said that the best defense is a good offense. That's certainly true in the realm of the Spirit. People often make the mistake of fighting a defensive battle, focusing on resisting temptation. Although we must resist temptation, our primary emphasis should be one of drawing close to God. As Paul wrote to the Colossians, we need to set our heart on things above (heaven), not on earthly things.



Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

What is “living by the Spirit”?

The key to overcoming sin is to “live by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16). As we do this, we become more like Christ and our desire for sin diminishes. We discover that we have greater power to live a holy life and resist temptation.

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Galatians 5:16)

“Living by the Spirit” means much more than following a set of rules. It means falling in love with God and living to please him. It means getting to know him better and enjoying a close relationship with him. It means living according to his word, the Bible.

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

Discussion question

1. Why is living by the Spirit so important in our battle to overcome temptation?

Do you know Jesus as your Savior?

In today's lesson you will read steps you can take to grow closer to God. Before we look at these steps, let me ask if you have been “born again”—if you have entered into a relationship with Jesus.

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)

The rest of this lesson will make a lot more sense if you have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. If you have not yet entered into a personal relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to 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 your life. You have an exciting time ahead of you!

Do you know Jesus as your Lord (as well as your Savior)?

When you are born again, you take the first step in a growing relationship with God. Unfortunately, many people fail to grow in their faith after taking this step. They remain spiritual infants, not allowing Jesus to be Lord in their everyday lives.

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5:15)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

Discussion questions

2. What is the difference between knowing Jesus as your Savior and as your Lord?
3. Are there areas of your life in which Jesus is not Lord? What areas do you need to allow him to be your Lord?

Read the Bible daily

We are exposed to many voices in the world, voices that in many cases give a big thumbs up to immorality of every kind. The Bible can nourish our minds and cleanse our hearts of worldly attitudes. If we don't read it regularly, we can become misinformed about what is sinful, cynical about life, and eventually unbelieving.

The Bible identifies sin.

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

The Bible renews your mind.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Guidelines for Bible study:

- Establish a daily routine of Bible study.
- Take notes as you read.

- Honestly apply Scriptures to yourself.
- Memorize verses and meditate on them.

Discussion questions

4. Which of these guidelines will help you in your Bible study?
5. How will you remind yourself to put them into practice?

Pray throughout the day

What do you devote yourself to? Your family? Your friends? Sports? The Bible gives us a different answer: “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2).

Prayer is your opportunity to be in intimate communication with the God of the universe, the Creator of all there is. Prayer is an incredible privilege. Don't take it for granted. Here are some practical ideas to help you get the most out of it:

- Have specific prayer times.
- Pray throughout the day.
- Concentrate when you pray.
- Pray for your spiritual and personal needs.
- Pray for other people.

Discussion questions

6. Describe your current prayer life. How often do you pray?
7. What changes, if any, would you like to make in your prayer life?

Enjoy God's love. Praise him throughout the day.

God loves you and wants you to enjoy his presence. Develop the habit of worshipping him, praising him, and giving thanks throughout the day. When you do this, you will get to know God better, refresh yourself in his presence, and enjoy his fellowship.

My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long. (Psalm 71:8)

God's love is precious and life-giving. It is much more than following lists of rules.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 36:7)

Spend time with other Christians

It's important for us to have friendships with nonbelievers as well as believers. However, we need to be sure we spend time with other Christians, both in church and away from church, enjoying and

encouraging one another. In the book of Acts, we learn that this was so important to the early church that they met together every day.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:46)

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

Discussion questions

8. How can spending time with other Christians help in your struggle against sin?
9. What plans will you make to spend time with other Christians—both in church and away from church?

Memory verse

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Galatians 5:16)

Want to learn more?

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Studies on life with Jesus

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/jesus

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Who Do You Think You Are?

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/who-are-you

Homework – Day One

1. What does “living by the Spirit” mean?
2. Why is living by the Spirit so important in our battle to overcome temptation?
3. What is the difference between Jesus being your Savior and Jesus being your Lord?
4. What are some areas in your life in which you would like to make Jesus your Lord?

Day Two: Make Personal Boundaries

When people talk about setting boundaries, they often mean putting limits on what they will allow others to do to them. In this lesson, you will read about a different type of boundary—one you establish for yourself.

It is easier to avoid temptation than to overcome it after it gets a grip on you. Whenever possible, stay away from settings, activities, and people that are dangerous for you until you are ready to deal with them without giving in to sin.

The highway of the upright avoids evil; he who guards his way guards his life. (Proverbs 16:17)



Guard your thought life

Many people who set boundaries on themselves focus on outward behaviors—how to act with dangerous people and how to act in dangerous circumstances. But there’s another area of life that needs just as much (if not more) attention—your thought life.

Don’t fantasize about sin, thinking that your thoughts are harmless. When you cherish sin in your heart, you put a wedge between yourself and God.

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. (1 Peter 4:7)

Sin begins in your thought life.

When you commit a sin, it never “just happens.” Sinful acts begin as attitudes or temptations in your mind and emotions.

For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (Mark 7:21-22)

Thoughts become sin when you entertain them.

Having an impure thought come into your mind is not a sin by itself; entertaining the thought (continuing to think about it with pleasure) is a sin. A good guideline is to not allow yourself to consider or dwell on anything God would not want you to do. Don’t allow yourself to think about sinning.

For example, if you look at someone and think “He (or she) is so sexy,” that would not be sinful. God understands that we all have improper thoughts. However, if you start to daydream about having sex with that person, resist (or pray about) your thoughts.

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Romans 13:14)

Identify your rationalizations.

It's easy to justify your sins. Ask God to help you overcome thoughts such as:

Stores cheat us all the time. It's okay to lie when we return something so we can get a refund.

We just have oral sex. It's not real sex.

It's impossible to be honest and make money in business.

The government is corrupt. It's not wrong to lie on my tax form about how much money I made.

Reject sinful thoughts.

You can become spiritually crippled if you continuously think about committing a sin, even if you never commit the sin. If you allow yourself to daydream about doing something wrong, this thought pattern can become a habit that is hard to break. It can become compulsive and continue for years, robbing you of the joy that comes from a clean conscience.

When a temptation comes to your mind, actively fight the thought. You could think about the benefits of resisting it and the negative consequences of giving in to it. Or you could say something to yourself such as "I will not give in to this temptation" or "I rebuke this temptation in Jesus' name."

Choose wholesome thoughts.

Do you think you can't control your thoughts? If so, you are not alone. Many people think thoughts are like rain—there's not much we can do about them. But that's not true. You can discipline your mind and decide what to think about. Make it a habit to think about things that are pure and true.

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. (Romans 8:5)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

Discussion questions

1. What are some ways you have rationalized sin? How do you think God looks at your justifications? Explain your answer.
2. What will you do if you start to think unhealthy thoughts or start to feel tempted?
3. What are some practical ways you can choose to focus on wholesome thoughts?

Guard your eyes and ears

Controlling where you look and what you listen to is a key part of establishing personal boundaries and living a self-controlled life.

- If you have trouble with compulsive shopping, do not leaf through catalogs, watch TV infomercials, or spend time looking at online ads.
- If you have trouble with lust, do not stare at tempting people, watch videos with sexual content, or listen to music that makes sexual sins sound fun.

- If you have trouble with overeating, do not watch a cooking show on how to prepare rich desserts.

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? Does he not see my ways and count my every step? (Job 31:1-4)

A discerning man keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth. (Proverbs 17:24)

Discussion questions

4. What are some ways you personally need to guard your eyes?
5. What are some ways you personally need to guard your ears?

Avoid “dangerous” people when possible

Do you know someone who is “dangerous” for you, someone with whom you are likely to sin? This could be a co-worker who wants to have sex, an old friend who wants to do drugs together, or someone who wants to go gambling with you.

Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies. (Psalm 141:4)

Discussion questions

6. Who are dangerous people for you to be around? Why are they dangerous?
7. What steps can you take to avoid being with them?

Be wise if you need to be with a dangerous person.

We can't always avoid dangerous people. For example, what if your co-worker or next-door neighbor is a dangerous person? Moving to a new home or getting a new job may not be feasible choices. If you know you need to spend time with a dangerous person, your plan might include the following:

- Pray. Ask God to help you be strong and wise.
- Ask a friend to pray for you.
- Tell a friend where you are going and what you plan to do. Report back later.
- Tell this dangerous person about your boundaries.
- Pray to be a good witness for Christ.

Avoid “dangerous” situations when possible

Don't flirt with danger, putting yourself in a position where you are likely to be tempted. In other words, don't set yourself up to sin. Instead, identify activities, settings, or situations that are dangerous for you, then avoid them when possible.

For example, if you eat too much ice cream, don't keep ice cream in your freezer. If you watch pornography using cable or satellite TV, discontinue the service. If you have trouble buying junk food, don't go grocery shopping on an empty stomach. If you are angry with someone, pray before getting together or talking.

Discussion question

8. What is one dangerous situation you should avoid? What steps could you take to avoid that situation?

Be wise if you need to go into a dangerous situation.

It's not always easy to avoid dangerous situations. For example, although shopping may be a dangerous situation for you, you probably need to go shopping from time to time.

If you need to enter a dangerous situation, plan ahead. Identify the potential temptation and then decide on exactly how you will avoid giving in to temptation.

Discussion questions

9. What is one dangerous situation you cannot avoid? Why is it dangerous for you?
10. How will you avoid giving in to temptation when you are in this dangerous situation?

Take care of your body

If you are a Christian, the Bible says you are a temple of the Holy Spirit. This means God's Spirit resides within you. When you think about this, it should motivate you to treat your body more respectfully. Get enough rest and exercise. Eat healthy food.

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 ... (1 Corinthians 6:19)

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Taking care of your body makes you less vulnerable to sin. When we are tired, we are more likely to be irritable, overeat, or get drunk. When we eat an unbalanced diet, we are more likely to eat too much junk food.

Memory verse

The highway of the upright avoids evil; he who guards his way guards his life. (Proverbs 16:17)

Day Three: Replace Bad Habits with Good Habits

One mistake people often make when fighting temptation is to only fight defensively, resisting doing something they feel like doing. As they focus on resisting, it sometimes feels as if a mountain of desire is building up inside. The pressure to sin can seem overpowering.

One key to overcoming temptation is to focus on doing something positive to replace the sin. Instead of simply resisting sin, “put on” good habits to replace those you wish to discontinue or “put off.” Paul made a similar point when he wrote the following passage:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)



Here’s another passage identifying what to “put off” and what to “put on”:

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:18-20)

In this passage, Paul is doing much more than saying “don’t get drunk.” He is also telling us what we can do instead of getting drunk—things that will bring us a lot more joy and happiness.

Discussion questions

1. Why is it a good idea to replace bad habits with good ones instead of simply saying “no” to bad habits?
2. What are some practical ways you can put this into practice in your daily life?

Identify habits you can change

Our lives are full of habits, many of which we aren’t aware of. As you read the rest of this lesson, examine your own life to see if there are some habits you could change. Let’s start out by looking at a few common bad habits that can be replaced by good habits. Check each box that describes a change you could make.

- Replace unhealthy foods with healthy foods. When you crave a candy bar, eat fruit instead.
- Replace watching immoral TV shows with playing sports or wholesome games.
- Replace dirty jokes with clean jokes.

- If you are married, replace thoughts of having an affair with prayers to love your spouse and build a great marriage.
- Replace staying up too late to watch TV or surf the Internet with reading a book or going to bed.
- Replace being angry with someone with praying for him or her.
- Replace yearning for more possessions with thanking God for what you have.
- Replace driving too fast with giving yourself enough time to get to your destination without breaking the speed limit.
- Replace gossiping about people with saying positive things about people.
- Replace thinking about people's faults with praying for them and thinking about good things they have done.

Discussion questions

3. Did you check any of the above boxes? If so, will these new habits help defeat the old ones? Are there other new habits you could start that will help?
4. What are other areas in your life in which you could replace old habits with new habits? What are some new habits you could develop?

Be productive

Let's look at some major habits. If you are like many people, you spend a great deal of time visiting online social media sites, surfing the Internet, using your smartphone, and watching TV. There's nothing wrong with taking some time for entertainment. However, if that is the main way you spend your spare time, you are missing out on God's plan for your life.

When you are productive, you are less likely to take the time to engage in sin. God created you to be a doer, not simply a spectator. Study 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 for God's warning to avoid laziness.

Find productive things to do in your spare time. Tell others about Jesus. Volunteer at church. Spend time with your family. Paint your house. Mow your lawn. Exercise. Attend church services. Help out with community activities.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Discussion question

5. What are some productive things you could do that would replace unproductive or dangerous activities? How would you feel about yourself if you did these things?

Develop your gifts and talents

We all have gifts and talents. God expects us to use them. Jesus illustrated this in Matthew 25:14-30, verses in which he talked about how servants will be rewarded or punished depending on how they invested their master's money.

Your talents could be singing, helping in a soup kitchen, ushering at church, teaching a class, or any of thousands of other possibilities.

You were not created to just put in your time and then die. You have a purpose—to touch this world for Christ. Look for ways you can use your talents and abilities to glorify God and encourage other people.

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

Discussion question

6. What are some of your talents or gifts? How could you use them to glorify God or encourage other people?

Practice contentment

Another major habit change is to practice contentment. When we sin, it's often because we are discontent. We may feel sorry for ourselves or dissatisfied with our circumstances. If we aren't careful, we can feel envious when we look at others who have happy marriages, obedient children, good health, a nice house, a prestigious ministry, or lots of money.

Contentment is the antidote to many types of temptation, including envy, greed, the love of money, and self-pity.

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. (Proverbs 14:30)

Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Are you practicing contentment? If not, you may feel sorry for yourself and "give yourself permission" to sin. For example, you might spend too much money, get drunk, or have an affair.

Discussion question

7. What are some areas in which you think God would want you to be more content? How can you go about becoming content in these areas?

Watch out for the love of money.

The love of money is one of the major sins that destroys contentment. This problem is addressed throughout the Bible.

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

Notice that the love of money, not money itself, is "a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Although money is not evil, it is a rare person who has not sometimes fallen in love with it and slipped into sinful attitudes.

Also notice that this passage does not just apply to rich people. It applies to everyone, for even the poorest person can fall into the trap of loving money.

You can enjoy possessions without sinning.

Although we must guard against the love of money, it's not necessarily a sin to own nice things. Stay balanced. Enjoy what God has given you, but be generous and put your trust in the Lord, not your finances.

It may be okay to try to improve your situation.

It's not necessarily wrong to try to improve your situation. Just be sure to stay balanced. Don't neglect going to church, spending time with your family, or telling others about Jesus because you are busy earning money. Whether or not you improve your situation, be like Paul, content where you are.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:12-13)

Discussion questions

8. Why does God say the love of money is wrong?
9. How can you seek to improve your situation without giving in to the love of money?

Memory verse

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Want to learn more?

Book by Doug Britton

Putting Money in its Place (marriage book)

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/money

Homework – Day Three

1. Why is it a good idea to replace bad habits with good ones instead of simply saying “no” to bad habits?
2. What are some bad habits you can change? Beside each bad habit, write a new habit that could replace it:
3. Write a prayer asking God to help you make the changes in your answer to question 2:
4. What is one thing you could do to be more productive? How could this help you in your struggle against temptation?

Day Four: When Tempted — Stop / Think / Pray

In this lesson you will read about a simple formula to help when you are tempted. Remind yourself of it whenever you are tempted to do something wrong. The formula is STP—Stop/Think/Pray.



Step 1: Stop

The first step in STP is Stop. The moment you feel tempted to sin, say to yourself, “STP.” Then stop. Don’t take the next step, whatever it is.

In other words, exercise self-control.

So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8)

Enjoy being self-controlled.

When you think of self-control, do you think of it as saying “no” to fun? If so, there is an entirely different way you can look at self-control. See it as something desirable, something that is good or fun in itself. You can learn to enjoy being self-controlled!

When you live a self-controlled life, you can fulfill God’s purpose for your life. You can enjoy freedom from the power of sin. You can celebrate God’s love and live a full, joyful life.

I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (Psalm 119:32)

Discussion questions

1. What is the most common way to think of self-control? What is a better way?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Do you think STP is related to that verse? Why or why not?

Seek God’s help as you practice self-control.

If we try to be self-controlled on our own, we may seem to succeed for a while, but eventually we will fail. We need God’s help as well as our own determination.

Choose not to sin.

With God’s help, you can decide not to sin when faced with temptation. When you are tempted, say things such as:

- I choose, with God’s help, not to sin.
- I don’t have to do this, and I will not do it.
- I choose to obey God, not the devil.

- I won't sin. I choose righteousness.

Flee temptation.

There are times when you need to get out of a situation fast. We read about such a situation in Genesis 39:1-12. When a woman approached Joseph to commit adultery, he fled.

When confronted with temptation, be like Joseph. Don't stick around. One compromise often leads to another. Get out of that situation. Flee from sin.

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Discussion questions

3. Describe a situation that might come up in the future when you should flee.
4. If you start to sin with someone and then feel convicted, should you stop or should you continue since you have committed yourself? Explain your answer.

Resist the devil.

Satan is real and he wants to turn our hearts away from God. Jesus himself was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). Since Satan tried to get the Lord to sin, we should not be surprised if the devil also tempts us. When he does, we don't need to be fearful. Instead, we can resist him, knowing he must flee.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:7-8)

One warning: Don't think the devil is behind all your temptations. Most of our sins are the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:17-21, King James Version) and come from our own "evil desire" (James 1:14). Take responsibility for your actions. Don't blame the devil for everything.

Step 2: Think

Now that you stopped, move on to the second step: Think things through. Following are several ideas that can help you think. Look for ones that will work for you.

- When tempted, thank God for the opportunity to grow. Read James 1:2-4.
- Remind yourself that sin is your enemy, not your friend.
- Remember that God is with you.
- Analyze why you are tempted. Ask yourself questions such as:
 - Am I feeling sorry for myself? If so, what would God want me to do?
 - Have I been drawing close to God?
 - Have I been putting myself in a dangerous situation?
 - Have I been staying in touch with a prayer/accountability partner?
 - Have I been getting enough rest?

Discussion questions

5. How can you remember to think things through when you are tempted?
6. Which of the previous points will you try to remember? Explain your answer.

Think about the consequences of choosing to sin.

Have you ever decided to sin and thought, "I don't care about the consequences," but later discovered you cared very much? Most of us have had this experience. Don't let your emotions overrule your desire to please God. Discipline yourself to consider the possible consequences of your actions.

- Sin grieves God. Read Ephesians 4:30-31.
- Sin harms your walk with God. Read 1 Timothy 1:5-6.
- Sin gives Satan an opening. Read Ephesians 4:26-27.
- God punishes sin. Read Hebrews 12:5-11 and 1 Thessalonians 4:6.
- Sin harms others. Read Romans 5:12.
- Sin often results in natural consequences. Read Galatians 6:7-8.
- Sin results in guilt and misery. Read Psalm 7:14-15.

Think about the benefits of choosing to say "no" to sin.

Remind yourself of the benefits of making godly choices—choosing righteousness instead of sin. For example, when you say "no" to sin:

- You please God. Read Galatians 1:10.
- You grow in the Spirit. Read Galatians 2:20 and 5:22-25.
- You build resistance to future sin. Read Philippians 4:13 and James 1:12.
- You are a good example to others. Read Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 5:1, and Ephesians 5:8-9.
- You avoid the negative consequences of sin. Read Romans 12:21.
- You experience joy. Read John 15:10-11.

Choose the path of love.

One of the best ways to avoid sinning with other people is to truly love them. If you love someone, you will not do anything that harms that person's relationship with Jesus.

Discussion questions

7. What consequences of sinning will help you resist temptation? Why?
8. What benefits of not sinning will help you resist temptation? Why?
9. If someone (other than your spouse) says, "If you love me, you will have sex with me," how will you respond if you want to choose the path of true love? Explain your answer.

Step 3: Pray

Be honest with God. Admit you are tempted and ask for his help. Here are some ways you could start your prayers:

- Lord, help me be faithful to you and to your word.
- Lord, help me be clear-headed about what is going on.
- Thank you God that I don't need to sin.
- God, help me look at women (or men) as my sisters (or brothers)—or as people who need Christ—not as sex objects.
- Help me Lord to remember the blessings of obedience.
- Thank you Lord for this opportunity to grow more disciplined and closer to you.
- Lord, please help me not to give in to self-pity.
- Help!

Discussion question

10. Which of these prayers will help you when you are tempted? Why?

If you sin — repent, learn, and press on

God is on your side. He doesn't want you to give up if you sin. Instead, he wants you to confess your sin and then press on, knowing that he loves you and forgives you. *Overcoming Guilt and Shame*, another book in this series, discusses God's forgiveness in depth. For now, let me share this beautiful promise found in 1 John:

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)

Memory verse

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Want to learn more?

Book by Doug Britton

Defeating Temptation

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/temptation

Homework – Day Four

1. What does STP stand for?

S stands for:

T stands for:

P stands for:

2. Do you think STP can help you say “no” to temptation? Why or why not?

3. What is self-control?

a. What does self-control say “no” to?

b. What does self-control say “yes” to?

4. Many people think self-control means saying “no” to fun. What is the better way to describe self-control?

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. Saying Jesus is your Savior is the same as saying Jesus is your Lord.
- T 2. "Living by the Spirit" is a key part of overcoming temptation.
- T 3. Making personal boundaries means placing limits on yourself.
- F 4. It's wrong (or unchristian) to avoid certain people even if they are "dangerous."
- F 5. Replacing bad habits with good ones is not a good way to overcome temptation.
- T 6. One way to overcome temptation is to think about the consequences of sinning.
- T 7. One way to overcome temptation is to think about the benefits of saying "no" to sin.
- T 8. Self-control is more than saying "no" to things you want to do.
- F 9. STP stands for Stop/Talk/Pray.
- F 10. Choosing the path of love is a dangerous way to resist temptation. If you follow that advice, you may end up having sex with someone other than your spouse.

Memory verses

- 1. Galatians 5:16

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

- 2. 2 Timothy 2:22

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.



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.

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Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

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Read and download Doug's free online studies on marriage, parenting, anger, self-concept, anxiety, depression, temptation, fear of death, biblical counseling, mentoring, small group leadership, and other topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources.

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 and click on the "Seminars" link.

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In addition to “The Owner’s Manual to the New You,” Doug Britton has written many more cross-cultural, Bible-based books on leadership, discipleship, and key areas of daily living.

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Getting Started, Getting Connected
First Things First
Living by Grace

Living Free

Breaking Free (from Drugs and Alcohol)
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Defeating Temptation
Healing Life’s Hurts
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Making Christ the Cornerstone
Encouraging Your Spouse
Extending Grace to Your Mate
Talking with Respect and Love
Improving Your Teamwork
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