

Temptation

Question: What tempts you, and how do you resist temptation?

Teens and parents in conversation Homeword

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Teen Talk *by Nicolo Kehrwald*

When I think of temptation, I also think of sin. As a Catholic, I have grown up with the idea of avoiding the temptation to sin. However, the *concept of sin* implies a very fixed way of looking at the world: black or white, good or evil. I propose another way of looking at sin and temptation that is less focused on sin and more centered on encouraging life in all its aspects, including the ugly aspects.

My way of looking at sin and temptation has been strongly influenced by Native American philosophy. My temptation is to *not* live life fully. I am tempted to give up. I believe many people deal with this temptation. Whether this means being tempted to give up on math homework or on life, the temptation is a dangerous one. Look at the mess our world is in right now! Why are we content to live our life as if we can't do anything about it? So many people, even if they do not admit it to themselves, have given up on peace, community, and even God. This obstructs the natural flow of spirit

and causes negative energy to build in the body, which may manifest as illness, or even as extreme acts of sudden expression, such as violence or suicide.

When I give in to the temptation to give up, I lose my sense of purpose and find myself asking, "What is the point?" We no longer live in communities with strong cultural traditions that provide members with a role and purpose. There are no important initiation and coming-of-age ceremonies. We don't know what we are doing in life.

One way that I avoid the temptation to give up and provide myself with a sense of purpose is by serving and helping others, by engaging in activities that already inspire me. These activities include delivering food to Saint Vincent de Paul, removing ivy from Forest Park, and teaching Capoeira (a Brazilian martial art) to young kids. A sense of purpose can best be discovered within a community, or in the creation of a community. In community everyone has ▼



Parent Talk *by Susan Archer*



The Gospel of Luke tells the story of the devil tempting Jesus in the desert. The devil says to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to turn into bread." Next, the devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and promises them to Jesus if he will turn from God and worship the devil. Finally, the devil takes Jesus to a parapet in the temple and says, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here" (4:1-7).



What is the core temptation in this Scripture passage? Notice how the devil directly impugns Jesus' relationship with God. Twice, the devil says to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God . . ." Through temptations of food and power in the height of Jesus' vulnerability from having fasted for forty days, the devil tries to make Jesus compromise his relationship with God.

As one who has parented two teens and step-parented two teens, I face similar temptations. Amid my own stresses and vulnerabilities, I

become reluctant to intervene with our teens when their behavior or attitude indicates a need for redirection, because I know the confrontation will be stressful. I don't want to rock the boat. I am tempted to simply let them do their own thing.

In times of stress, my temptation to avoid needed confrontation rears its ugly head, and I tend to forget who I am in the eyes of God. I lose my perspective.

What I do, and what happens to *me* becomes magnified, while what God has done tends to look very small, if not out of the picture altogether. From a faith perspective, my world has turned upside down. I think and act as if I am in charge instead of remembering that God is in charge.

Jesus resisted temptation with the power of the Scriptures. Each time the devil taunted him, Jesus replied with an answer from the Scriptures. This tells me that resisting temptation is not so much a matter of rules and forced discipline. Rather, it is a matter of remembering what God has to say and who I really am. ▼

I am tempted to simply let them do their own thing.

Teen Talk *continued*

a place. Each person helps support every other person and is essential to the whole.

Another way to avoid giving up is to get closer to survival. I recently went backpacking for a week with some of my friends. The simple acts of setting up camp, fetching and purifying water, protecting ourselves from rain, and trying to start fires for heat made each moment meaningful. At the same time, our sense of community and friendship deepened because we had to work together, and we depended on one another for survival.

When we live fully, we feed the Spirit with our beauty and our life experiences, which helps the whole world flow with life. If this is not purpose, then what is?

I believe that by simplifying my life, getting closer to survival, creating community, helping others, and celebrating faith in an active way, I help to keep this world alive. I have a sense of purpose and can fight my temptation to give up on the beautiful experiences of life.

I do not think that God is concerned with my petty sins and temptations, or even if I am happy or sad. I believe that God is concerned with how I embrace life! I believe that God wants me to grasp the fullness of life, including my mistakes, and then raise my voice to the Spirit in praise, grief, anger, and joy, thus recognizing and honoring God and giving life to the whole world!



Dear God,

Here I stand, in front of you, asking you to forgive me for all the things I have done that are not truthful or right, for all the times I have disobeyed my parents. Forgive me for eating candy before dinner, ice cream for breakfast, and drinking pop instead of milk. Forgive me for being negative.

Forgive me for every time I yelled at my sister, got mad at my parents. Forgive me for eating popcorn and caramel with my braces on.

Bottom line, God, forgive me for everything I have ever done that I should not have, especially when I knew not to do it. Help to start anew every day. Amen.

Catherine DeSarno, Saint Agnes School, Springfield, MO
(*Life Can Be a Wild Ride* [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000], p. 61)

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Parent Talk *continued*

When I remember that I am a child of God, I put God back into control. I can breathe a sigh of relief as I consider that God is standing by me and is helping make things right. I also remember that I am a parent, a step-parent, and an adult who has more experience (and perhaps more wisdom) than our kids.

Then I am empowered. I can talk with my teens about drugs, alcohol, and sex. When I see them doing little things that will take them in the wrong direction, I have the courage

to approach them, talk about possible consequences, and work together toward a change in that behavior. When they are having a rough time at school, I can just hang with them, watch television with them, or talk with them while we wash the dishes. I can give them a hug before they go to bed, whether we are mad at each other or not.

The stresses may still linger, but when God is in charge, I can fight my temptations and help my teenagers fight their temptations too.



Let's Talk

Give some reflection to the statements below, and then discuss your thoughts with at least one family member.

I think most teens are tempted by . . .

I think most parents are tempted by . . .

My worst temptation is . . .

I am most vulnerable to this temptation when . . .

You could help me deal with my temptation by . . .