

■ SCRIPTURE

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. **14** But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. **15** Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. **18** Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

ESV

■ DISCUSS

1. Earlier in the chapter, we learned that God uses trials to help us grow. But here James is talking about temptation. What's the difference?
2. Why is it important that we NOT blame our temptation on God?
3. According to Francis Chan, how is temptation like fishing?
4. Verses 14-15 describe something we might call the "life cycle of desire." What are the stages?
5. Does "evil desire" always bring forth "death"? How does this happen? What examples could you give?
6. In light of this, what's the best way to deal with our "evil desires"?
7. Why do you think James suddenly starts talking about "every good and perfect gift" in verse 17, after talking about evil desires? Is he just changing the subject (which he does sometimes), or is there a connection?

8. Why does he call God “the Father of lights”? What does that have to do with giving gifts? How has God “brought us forth by the word of truth”?

9. What does he mean by “firstfruits of his creatures”?

■ LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let’s consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Memorization: Learn 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15–16; Matthew 26:41; Psalm 51:10; and/or another verse that applies to a particular temptation you struggle with.

Journaling: Write about your temptations and how you respond, but also about the joys you experience when you resist temptation. How does your relationship with God grow and soar when you trust Him?

Prayer: Think about others you know who are being tempted. Pray that God will strengthen them. But don’t let these be proud prayers—“watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Include The Lord’s Prayer in this devotional time, with special focus on “Lead us not into temptation.”

Accountability: Look for others you can share your struggles with. Can you arrange to meet with them every week or two, and let them know how you’re doing? Fighting temptation can be a lonely business, but it doesn’t have to be. When you know there’s someone else holding you accountable, it might give you additional strength.

Joining or Volunteering: Our culture is full of temptations, and there are many whose lives have been ravaged by greed, lust, pride, or addictions of various sorts. There are also ministries that help those strugglers. Is there one you could connect with—as a volunteer, donor, or fellow struggler?