

Biblical Eating
By Doug Hamilton

Lesson Five: Understanding Temptation Through the Eyes of the Devil

In the last lesson we had an opportunity to view temptation through eyes of God. As discovered, He allows a test to enter into our lives in order to cause us to make a decision to serve Him in sincerity and truth rather than serving ourselves. He does not give us something that we cannot handle, but only that which is *common to man*. He believes that we are able to make the right decision concerning the trial, therefore He permits the test to come our way. Will we eat the food even though our bodies are not calling for it or will we choose to follow our own desires? God desires for us to be obedient to His natural design, eating when the body calls for it and stopping when satisfied. That is His biblical perspective concerning our nutrition.

The focus of this lesson is to show the devil's perspective concerning temptation. If we can better understand both God's and the devil's position, then we can more readily identify our own position, which is somewhere in between the two. For this standpoint we begin in the following passage.

James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

James appears to have changed his tune from the beginning of the letter, for he stated in 1:2 "*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials*". First we are to be happy when a trial comes our way, but in verses 13-15 it does not seem to be that way. As mentioned in the former lesson, the word for temptation is *pirasmos*, which means to test or try. It has a dual meaning depending on the outcome of the test. This is because there are two possible outcomes to a test, passing or failing.

When God allows the test, it is to bring Him glory. When the food is calling for us to participate in the *sin* of gluttony rather than patiently waiting for true hunger, we are following the natural design of God. God made us; He knows how the whole concept works; He knows that we can pass the test; Therefore He endorses the test!

At the same time concerning the same test, as demonstrated in Job chapters one and two, the devil possesses the opposite viewpoint. God says we can pass the test, but the devil proclaims us losers, encouraging us to fail in light of what God knows. His mission is to lie, steal, kill, destroy, accuse and condemn.

- John 8:44 "You are of {your} father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own {nature;} for he is a liar, and the father of lies.
- 2 Cor 2:11 in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.
- 2 Cor 11:14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

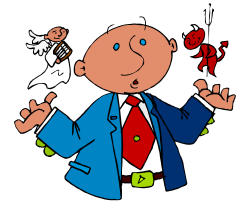
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- 1 Pet 5:8 Be of sober {spirit,} be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- Rev 12:10 "...for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night."

When the lasagna and Italian bread is appealing to our heads rather than our stomachs, the devil deeply desires for us to cave in, wanting us to fail the test. He knows if he could get us to desire the food more than we desire the One that blessed us with the food, then he would succeed. His ultimate desire is to have us deny God the glory that He deserves. Heb 6:6 *"again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame."*

This is why when we fail a test of gluttony or any sin, the very test that God said we could pass, don't blame God. According to James, it was our decision that led to disobedience to God. Yes the devil deeply desires for us to fail, but we must make a personal decision in order for that to occur. *Rom 8:37-39 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

How does the devil sway our decision? We are told in I Jn 2:16 *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.* This is the strategy of the devil in luring us to make the wrong decisions concerning temptation. The desires of our flesh, of our eyes and a call to be independent from God have always been three powerful weapons the devil uses to influence us to make bad decisions. It is in food that some of our greatest examples of temptation and failure occur.



Follow the Trail

It was a beautiful day in a garden called Eden. A woman with head hunger was vulnerable to a tempting serpent, resulting in the inauguration of eating against the will of the Creator. *Gen 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make {one} wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.* It was the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life nestled in a piece of innocent looking fruit that labeled it a temptation. God made it clear in *Gen 3:3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'*" There was only one rule to follow and mankind caved into head hunger in disobeying it.

A hungry hunter returns from the chase and his stomach is growling something fierce. He is faced with a decision of food over principle. The ensuing text explains what happens next.

Gen 25:29-34 And when Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; 30 and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have

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a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom. 31 But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." 32 And Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what {use} then is the birthright to me?" 33 And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

His passion for the food was greater than his passion for the principle of God. *Heb 12:16* "...that {there be} no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a {single} meal."



It was May 1st thirty-five hundred years ago in the wilderness near Sinai that the children of Israel experienced some major food temptation. We must remember that the Israelites just witnessed the ten plagues of Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh and the army; so surely they knew the power and compassion of the Father. Yet what does the scripture say concerning the test?

Exod 16:2-3 And the whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 And the sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

With all that they witnessed, the devil was still able to bring them to failure by keeping them focused on food rather than God. The Lord did provide manna and quail for He said that He would take care of them, however it was lust of the flesh camouflaged in food that the devil used to lure them away into sin. Yes they were hungry, but their hunger led them to grumbling and distrust in Jehovah, the very One that led them out of bondage.

This was a reoccurring theme for the people of Israel. Time and time again, they failed to trust God concerning His proclaimed provision. They were always belly-aching (no pun intended) about not having enough to eat or drink, putting food before their relationship with God. Their greed for rations was a major stumbling block for their correlation to the Father. Another example of this is the following.

Num 11:31-34 Now there went forth a wind from the LORD, and it brought quail from the sea, and let {them} fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits {deep} on the surface of the ground. 32 And the people spent all day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers) and they spread {them} out for themselves all around the camp. 33 While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the LORD

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was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague. 34 So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had been greedy.

They wanted meat to go with the manna, God blessed them with abundant quail and they went past satisfaction and right into head hunger. They put their stomachs and food ahead of the One that gave them the stomachs and food. The result was a large graveyard named “Gluttony Garden Memorial Park Cemetery”.

It was 2404 BC and an old, righteous man named Noah was told to build an ark for a flood was coming. The reason for this was because of what was spoken in Gen 6:5 *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*. What was the wickedness that was prevalent in the lives of the condemned? Jesus identified it in Matt 24:38 *“For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark...”* They were participating in orgiastic behavior, including excessive eating, not wanting to stop at satisfaction, but *continually* focusing on their own lusts. They had a 1 Cor 15:32 perspective *“...let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”* The devil had successfully taken the eyes of the people off of obedience to God.

Thirty-two centuries ago in the land of Israel lived a priest named Eli. He had priestly sons that refused to pass the test of head hunger.

1 Sam 2:12-17 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD 13 and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." 16 And if the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "No, but you shall give {it to me} now; and if not, I will take it by force." 17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD.

Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were allowing their passion for food to come before obedience to God. The Lord provided food for them through the Levitical priesthood, but apparently they did not think it was enough. The result would not only cost them their lives, but also the priestly rule in their family.

It was a long forty days of fasting and prayer that Jesus spent in the wilderness, focusing on the Father and preparing for the mission set before Him. What does the scripture say

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concerning the devil's strategy? *Matt 4:3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."* The first test of the three that Jesus faced in this passage was centered on food. If the devil could just get Jesus to take His eyes off the Father and put them on the bread, then the devil would succeed in his goal. Satan tried everything he could to have Jesus fail in this area, but had no success. Jesus would not take the position of the devil concerning temptation, but kept His eyes on the Father. *Matt 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*

We must remember that when we are obedient to the Father, we are disobedient to the devil. When we are not obedient to the Father, then we are playing into the hands of the devil. *James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

There are three perspectives of temptation, God's, the devil's and ours. God wants us to be obedient to His plans and knows that we are able to do so. The devil desires for us to fail and will use food and many other items of the world to make it so. We are somewhere in between the two, carrying the awesome responsibility of choice.

Josh 24:15 "And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

This week's pointers

- For the next three months, until we have been adequately been trained to be obedient to the food principles of God, it would be better to avoid the restaurants that advertise "All You Can Eat". It is not evil to one of these places, but simply an added precaution to build. *Eph 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*
- Accept full responsibility for your role in gluttony.
- That leads us to a scenario that many church people will have to face, the Church potluck (Better known as "All You Can Eat" for free). Since it is a church event, use that time to model to others a responsible biblical approach to eating. Share with the others around you the two principles of eating when hungry and stopping when satisfied.
- When you know that there is going to be a social meal coming up shortly, wait for hunger! If you are worried about not eating at the Thanksgiving meal because you are not truly hungry, prepare in advance. You have heard of the saying "Don't spoil your appetite." If you have to be hungry for three or four hours prior to an important meal, then make it so. Those special meals will be much more special if you are bringing true hunger to the table.
- If you are required to take medication with food, then use a couple of crackers or a small piece of bread. Some people will use the "medicine with food" reasoning to launch into a five course meal. It says "TAKE WITH FOOD", not "TAKE WITH A BUNCH OF FOOD".

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Questions for Lesson Five

1) What is God's strategy when testing us?

2) What is the devil's strategy in testing us?

3) Which foods are the devil's favorites to win you over to disobedience?

4) Besides food, what are some of the other disguises that Satan uses to conceal "*Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life*"?

5) Explain why strengthening one's self in the area of food would be of benefit other areas of temptation.

6) In knowing God's and the devil's perspective, how does it help you deal with temptation in the area of food?

7) Knowing what God's will and the devil's will are concerning the test of food, where do you place your will?

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8) Where was it at the beginning of the class?

9) Have people mentioned that they have noticed any changes in you? If so, what were they and how did you feel about it?

10) What areas are you going to try harder in serving the Creator this week?

11) Have you been satisfied with the results of your efforts to be obedient in the area of food? If so, then explain.

12) What has been harder, waiting for hunger or stopping when satisfied?

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Daily Records:

Sunday

Yes ___ No ___ Did you feel true hunger today?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you stop eating when you were satisfied?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you eat what you wanted to eat?

Monday

Yes ___ No ___ Did you feel true hunger today?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you stop eating when you were satisfied?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you eat what you wanted to eat?

Tuesday

Yes ___ No ___ Did you feel true hunger today?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you stop eating when you were satisfied?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you eat what you wanted to eat?

Wednesday

Yes ___ No ___ Did you feel true hunger today?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you stop eating when you were satisfied?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you eat what you wanted to eat?

Thursday

Yes ___ No ___ Did you feel true hunger today?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you stop eating when you were satisfied?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you eat what you wanted to eat?

Friday

Yes ___ No ___ Did you feel true hunger today?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you stop eating when you were satisfied?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you eat what you wanted to eat?

Saturday

Yes ___ No ___ Did you feel true hunger today?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you stop eating when you were satisfied?
Yes ___ No ___ Did you eat what you wanted to eat?