



WORSHIPPING. Quote from the teaching notes: “the ultimate way we get self-control is not through will-power but through heart-power...not by looking inside to suppress our desires but through looking outside to enhance our desire for God.” That’s what James is getting at in vs 16-18. He is, if you like, trying to warm our hearts to God - for when we are walking with God in our lives, we find that positive passions, constructive desires and a hunger for God is stirred within us. Why not spend some time in worship together, reading passages that serve to warm your hearts toward the Lord, maybe even listening to a song on CD which asks the Lord to take centre place in your life once again, to be your heart’s desire above all other desires. Maybe you want to wait quietly before God and confess that there has been spiritual drifting in your life, and you want to return to Him again.



CARING. Pray for each other in the group that you will develop such hearts for God that stand strong in the face of temptation. Sometimes if you really struggle with a particular issue, it’s good to identify a same-sex partner in whom you can confide and ask for accountability and prayer. Maybe that is something you might want to consider.



SERVING. Pray for all those involved in Christian leadership – leaders in all the children’s and youth organisations, elders, minister etc. It’s interesting that Peter, immediately following his discussion on Christian leadership in 1 Peter 5 warns his readers about “being self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Pray for protection for all our leaders, and that God would be their heart’s over-mastering desire.



ENGAGING. In two weeks time we will be holding our table quiz in aid of Action Cancer. Invitations have been available for you to distribute to friends. Remember, we’re using this as an opportunity to bring along friends who don’t attend church. Tonight each group is receiving a request for help with catering: food to provide, as well as one person to help with preparation and serving, and one person to help with clearing up. Please take time to pray for this event, for those whom you’ll bring. There will be no ‘epilogue’ as such – we’re just trying to build bridges with people.

midweek ministry @ Ballyloughan

worshipping, growing, caring, serving, engaging

James: A down-to-earth faith
2 - How to battle temptation (1:13-18)
Notes for 10th October Teaching Night

“Consider it pure joy my dear brothers whenever you face ‘peirasmos’ of many kinds...” v2. ‘Peirasmos’ is used interchangeably to mean two things: external trials or problems; and also internal temptations. In vs 1-12, James has been talking about external trials, problems. From v 13 his emphasis switches to talking about internal temptations. He realises that there is a link, because when you are going through difficult times there are almost always internal temptations that assault your soul.

HOW TO BATTLE TEMPTATION

Oscar Wilde: “I can withstand anything except temptation. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.” That seems to be the spirit of the age - that resisting temptation is pointless. v16 “do not be deceived my dear brothers...”, or misled, taken in, misinformed about the whole area of temptation. There’s a few things James wants us to **be clear on...**

I. BE CLEAR ON THE _____ OF TEMPTATION.

“When tempted” v13

Temptations are inevitable. We never get too old for temptation, maybe the forms of temptation change slightly as we get older, but temptation never leaves us. We never overcome temptation by getting really spiritual. We’re all tempted, it’s a fact of life. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Mt. 26:41). “Be on your guard, be alert” 1 Pet. 5:8. We are most vulnerable to temptation after a tremendous success (Bobby Leach illustration!). “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall.” 1 Cor. 10:12. Be ready!

II. BE CLEAR ON THE _____ OF TEMPTATION.

We live in a world where we pass the blame for things onto everyone else. We find it hard to accept responsibility. We blame other people for our problems. We do the same thing even when it comes to giving in to temptation: “it was the circumstances, the devil, my genes!” vs 13,14: “When tempted, no-one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt

anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed...” Temptation is an inside job, due to our own twisted hearts.

III. BE CLEAR ON THE _____ OF TEMPTATION.

v14: “each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed...”

“dragged away” - a hunter’s term which literally means, “snared in a trap.”

“enticed” - a fisherman’s term which means “lured by a bait.”

Temptation is such a powerful, attractive force. Sin often looks so attractive. It rarely looks unappealing. It looks exciting, pretty, tasty, easy. Sexual sin, retail therapy which we can’t afford, berating someone with our tongue, exaggerating the truth to make us look better, eating another piece of cake, lying in bed for 15 minutes more on a cold winter’s morning instead of getting up to pray – are all attractive prospects!!! But as exciting, and pretty, and tasty as they may seem, James continues...

IV. BE CLEAR ON THE _____ OF TEMPTATION.

vs 14,15: “each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” James intends to shock us, to show us that we are deluded if we think we can flirt with temptation and yet not sin. He is saying that temptation is dangerous, serious, something to deal with it at the beginning, nip it in the bud. Consider David – 2 Samuel 11v2: “He saw (kept fixing his eyes on) a woman bathing...” David crossed a line, making the choice not to walk away but to keep his eyes fixed on Bathsheba – and it led to disaster. Consider on the other hand Joseph in Genesis 39v10 - he wouldn’t even spend any time around Potiphar’s wife because he knew that temptation is dangerous. In what situations do you have to act quickly so that you won’t be lured into temptation’s trap – sexually, with your words, your temper, seeking revenge, eating, drinking, spending...?

V. HAVE ONE _____ - _____.

The ultimate way to get self-control over temptation is not through will-power, it’s through heart power. See Jacob in Gen. 29:20 - He had one overmastering desire, one overmastering love and passion (for Rachel) that put all the other desires in his heart in their proper place. That’s what gave him self-control. That’s what enabled Joseph to resist Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:9). That’s why David didn’t resist – he had drifted from the One who should have been his heart’s overmastering desire. Overcoming temptation isn’t just about looking inside to suppress our desires through will-power - it’s about looking outside to enhance our desire for God. That’s why James writes (my paraphrase) vs 17,18: “Remember God’s goodness, make Him your heart’s desire...!”

Follow-on Material for 17th October



GROWING

- What is the mindset of many people in society towards temptation today? – see the Oscar Wilde quotation!

Read James 1: 13-18

- Some pitfalls for us as Christians are (1) denying our vulnerability to temptation and (2) failing to take responsibility for our own actions. How does James address such pitfalls?
- Do you think that James is saying that the devil doesn’t tempt us? Look and read James 4:7,8 for further information on what James believes about the devil and our temptations.
- Why do you think James uses phrases such as ‘dragged away’ (literally ‘snared in a trap’) and ‘enticed’ (literally ‘lured by a bait’) when talking about temptation (v14)?
- James uses very strong, horrific language in v15 to talk about the consequences of allowing our desires to run out of control, allowing temptation to get the upper hand. Why do you think he uses such graphic language such as ‘giving birth to sin...giving birth to death’?
- What is James’ ultimate motivation in helping us to overcome temptation in our lives (vs 17,18)? You may want to reflect on the story of Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29: 20) that we thought about last week, and also on Joseph’s response to Potiphar’s wife (39:9) and what we thought about overmastering desires.