

Temptations can take down any one of us, at any time. We're human. I'm guessing not a day goes by that someones life or ministry implode because of falling to temptation. The truth is, beating temptation requires a plan. You've heard the saying, "Failing to plan is planning to fail." That's critically accurate for battling temptation. Each of us has unique patterns to how we live. You have a unique fingerprint, thumbprint, eye print, footprint, and voice print. Nobody's heart has ever beat just like yours. That's true of you emotionally and spiritually too. Certain things tempt you more than other things. We may have similar temptations, but they come at us in different ways depending on our personality, background, and other factors. For instance, I've never been tempted to smoke. It just hasn't interested me. I can't stand the smell. We need to know our own pattern of temptation because the devil knows it. He knows what uniquely tempts you. Proverbs 5:6 says, "The immoral person does not care about the path of life. She staggers down a crooked trail and doesn't even realize where it leads." If you don't know your path of temptation, you're headed for destruction.

To figure out what some of your temptation pattern might be, ask yourself these five questions.

1. When am I most tempted?

If you look carefully, you'll notice that you are tempted on certain days more than others. For instance, on Monday morning when you go back to the office, you may be tempted to be frustrated, short-tempered, and irritated with people. On Friday you may be tempted to unwind from a tough week in a way you shouldn't. And on Saturday morning you may be tempted to be lazy, waste time, or be irresponsible. What are you tempted to do – or not do – on different days of the week?

You're also tempted more at certain times of the day – and you need to know what those times of day are. Maybe you're tempted in the later afternoon when your blood sugar is low and you're irritable. Or you may be tempted whenever it's late at night and everyone else is in bed. It may be a different time for you, but you need to know it.

2. Where am I most tempted?

Maybe you're most tempted in a certain restaurant. Or you're most tempted when you go to the local gas station and see a certain kind of magazine on the shelves. Or maybe you're tempted when you're in your neighbor's house. If you know where you're tempted, stay away. It's that simple. If you don't want to get stung, stay away from the bees. There's no place you can go that's more important than avoiding temptation.

3. Who am I with when I'm tempted?

Some people are more tempted when they're alone. They're tempted when they think nobody is watching. Others are tempted when they're with other people, usually certain people. They're tempted when they're out with "the guys" or "the girls." Some people are the most tempted when they're around strangers. They think, nobody knows who I am. I can do whatever I want. Others are tempted with family. You'll act in certain ways with your family that you wouldn't dare do in public.

A good plan to stop temptation will take into account the people you're with when you're tempted. You may or may not be able to completely avoid those people, but you can make sure you're ready for those situations. You can have friends pray for you when you're in situations like that. And you can be on your guard.

4. That temporary benefits do I get when I give in? Sin always has a temporary payoff. You wouldn't do it if it didn't. If sin had the pain of a root canal, it wouldn't be a problem. There's pleasure in sin. The Bible says it's fun. But the pleasure is short-term. When you sin, you're trading short-term pleasure for long-term damage and destruction. It's not a good deal.

You've got to figure out what you're getting when you give in to temptation. Why are you doing it? Sometimes you give in for comfort. Other times you give in to relieve stress. Some people are just looking for excitement. Ask yourself, "When I give in to temptation, do I feel more loved, accepted, or popular?" Then you need to look for healthy ways to get those kind of feelings.

5. How do I feel right before I'm tempted?

You need to know your emotional triggers. Maybe you get so frustrated that you don't know what to do and you give in to temptation. Maybe you get mad and that leads to your temptation. Know the emotions that make you vulnerable to temptations. There are good and bad ways to deal with any emotion. Learn some of the good ways to deal with your problem emotions.