

SPIRITUAL FORMATION SERIES

Course: Dealing with Temptation

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Session One

Introduction

As the learner may have already learned in the *Christian Foundations* or *Nature of God* courses, practicing sinful behavior (activities that are contrary to God's nature and ways) will earn a spiritual death sentence for the actor. Practicing sin may be the result of poor choices or a lack of self-control or ignorance. Regardless, there's no excuse, and it is not God's fault. Also, the outcome will stand regardless of whether the believer considers their self a Christian, because belief without corresponding action and the pursuit of holiness and purity is useless to God and the Church.

But, our Creator doesn't want us to suffer this ultimate punishment and separation, and the Church exists in great part to train Jesus' followers and provide accountability to help us attain salvation and eternal life. The remainder of the activity is up to the individual follower and must consist of resistance to sinful behavior and growth out of a heart (mind/desire/intent) for God, not easy considering our human tendency to chase pleasure!

The purpose of this course is to help the follower in spiritual formation training and assist them to control the body and mind for purity, charitable deeds in Christ, and true worship of God so they can please *Him*. This training will define and relate temptation, sin, repentance, purity, and repentance and then help the learner apply the knowledge to devotion and self-control by the Spirit, a renewing of the mind, and avoiding the practice of sinful behavior.

We desire that the training contained here will equip a believer to become a follower – someone who truly and actionably loves God and humankind. The follower will be the person *God* knows and who will be able to train others to deal with temptation in holiness.

What to Know First: Defining Temptation, Sin, Repentance, & Purity. While they may seem to be strange bedfellows, temptation, sin, repentance, and purity are related. Unmanaged temptation to do (or even intend to do) actions contrary to God's ways will lead to sin, the practice of which lead to spiritual death. In a Christ-follower's pursuit of purity, the practice is *not* to sin. But when it happens, they address and change the behavior because of a heart devoted to God (repentance). Perhaps this is an appropriate time to define these important terms before discussing how to deal with temptation effectively.

- **Temptation.** Contrary to widely-held belief, being tempted isn't a problem or sin. We are often tempted to do good things as well as bad. For instance, someone will be tempted (or have a desire or provocation to) donate money, food, or clothing. Perhaps they are provoked to offer encouraging words or gentle guidance.

On the other hand, we are often compelled to behave in ways that are contrary to God's or cause harm to our bodies or hurt other humans in some way. We often refer to these kinds of temptations as 'weaknesses' or 'struggles.' Perhaps they are, but please understand that weakness is just a *potential* for uncommitted sin. And struggling is a *good* thing. It suggests a resistance to committing sin or unhealthy acts and is a perfect response to adversity, which exists in our minds and world. The lack of struggling could indicate lethargy, giving up, or a complete rejection of God's ways in favor of an easier path and self-pleasure. So, keep up the good fight! You may have guessed by now that temptation in the context of our Christian training is a solicitation or provocation to consider action. It is a desire that begins in the mind.

Where adverse temptation to sin (even in harming our body) is concerned, all is well as long the thought is controlled and remains a fleeting thought. The Bible is clear that we must practice mastery over our body and control of our mind for purity and good works (Romans 6:11-14 & 12-20). But, what if adverse temptation hangs around and festers because of a lack of self-control?

- **Sin.** By definition (and in biblical context), sin is *offense* caused by 'missing the mark.' What mark? That 'mark' is God's standard as taught by what we can read in the Bible in the Law of Moses (in the Old Testament) and the Law of Christ (Jesus' teachings that go beyond the letter of the Law in the New Testament).

Jesus said, "If you love me, you'll obey my commandments" (John 14:15 & 23). His words imply that *not* keeping His commandments will reflect a lack of love, or rebellious response – sin. What are these commandments? They demand that we love God appropriately and man charitably (Matthew 22:35-40). Jesus tells us that the Law [of Moses] and teachings of the prophets are summed up in those two statements, which makes sense since nearly everything we can think of doing is related to our treatment of God and man. Here's an interesting and related tidbit: The first five of the Ten Commandments relate to our treatment of, and obedience to, God; the last five dictate a

few basic guidelines for how we should treat our fellow human. Everything we do – or want to do – should be measured against those two categories. Want to know whether an action (whether intended or carried out) will be or is a sin? Just consider how it will affect God or His creation.

We also see splendid examples of good *and* sinful behavior as exhibited through correspondence between apostles and the Church. For instance, Paul explains that examples of sinful behavior include sexual immorality, theft, drunkenness, unjust actions, uncontrolled anger, witchcraft, and more (1Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21). To the church in Galatia, Paul addresses the issue of *practicing* sin. Because we're interested in life and not God's wrath, let's explore the idea of repentance as a way of maintaining righteousness by not practicing sinful behavior.

- **Repentance.** We commonly think of repentance as “saying I’m sorry.” However, feeling sorry without addressing sinful actions is useless to everyone including God, the one harmed, and the sinner, e.g., 2Corinthians 7:8-10). True repentance is acting out of our sorrow to reform or reverse our behavior (by definition). Because Christ-followers think differently, they reconsider their actions and change behavior.

We'll delve deeper into practical ways to repent and avoid sin, but a wonderful example of true repentance and its behavior exists in Zacchaeus' sorrow and repayment beyond what he had stolen from people when collecting taxes (Luke 19:1-10). Today, this could look like the person who turns off the cable television feed or has their Internet activity monitored to guard against the pursuit of pleasure through pornography or plain lethargy or gluttony through the excessive viewing of multimedia. Our goal as Christ-followers is to remain pure and righteous as we head toward salvation; true repentance is necessary for attaining that rescue and eternal life.

- **Purity.** Being pure, moral, and holy means being sin-free and set apart for God's purposes (2Corinthians 7:1). Something pure has no blemish and is valuable to the beholder, so we are to be dead to immorality and impurity (Colossians 3:5-8; Ephesians 5:3-5). Purity requires focusing on things that are true, honorable, lovely, excellent and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8). With this mindset, we practice excellence, self-control, godliness, and charitable love. The heart and resulting behavior open for us the entrance to the Kingdom of God (2Peter 1:3-11; Romans 12:1-2; 1Timothy 5:5-6). As we'll read next, choices have consequences!

Read:

- Romans 6:11-14 (mastery over our body and control of our mind)
- John 14:15 (those who love Jesus obey His commandments)
- Galatians 5:19-21 (examples of sinful behavior)
- 2Corinthians 7:1 (be set apart for God's purposes)
- Ephesians 5:3-5 (be dead to immorality and impurity)
- Philippians 4:8 (focus on things that are excellent and worthy of praise)

- 2Peter 1:10-11 (keys to the Kingdom of God)

For the Learner: Think about what you've just learned of temptation and how it relates to God's judgment and entrance into His kingdom. Then, discuss other examples of sinful behavior that a Christian shouldn't practice.

What to Know First: Choices & Consequences. God will judge all spiritual beings at the end of this age (2Corinthians 5:10). Devoting ourselves to Him in response to His love for us and practicing purity, holiness, and righteousness will earn reward and eternal life; practicing the opposite will earn self-inflicted punishment and separation from God.

The Bible teaches that there's a distinction between an isolated rebellion against God (a sinful action that we need to repent of) and *practicing* sinful behavior. While God will forgive the occasional infraction along the journey of righteousness and holiness, the latter will bring clear separation from God and invoke judgment! Practicing sinful behavior, which certainly implies a lack of repentance, will result in God's wrath at the end-of-the-age judgment to come (e.g., Romans 1:29-32; 2Corinthians 12:20-21; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-9; Revelation 22:11-15). Likewise, *not* practicing *obedience* to Jesus' commandments to actionably love God and humankind will result in the same consequence (e.g., Matthew 25:41-46).

We've spent a lot of time and space addressing and defining sin and its consequence because of the importance of understanding the effects and potential death sentence not dealing with temptations will bring. Now, let's explore how temptation turns into sin to help us understand and apply methods of keeping that from happening.

Read:

- 2Corinthians 5:10 (God will judge all spiritual beings)
- Romans 1:29-32 (God's wrath for practicing sin)
- Colossians 3:5-9 (God's wrath for practicing sin)
- Matthew 25:41-46 (God's wrath for *not* practicing true love)

Questions for the Learner: Now that you know there will indeed be a judgment of all people, what do you think? Is this knowledge new? Why do you think practicing sin is worse in God's eyes than an occasional, but repented-of, sin?

When Thought Becomes Sin

Again, a momentary desire for something against God's desires or a related but fleeting thought isn't a problem. Also, God doesn't tempt or lead us to sinful behavior; we have free will and the flesh often wants what is pleasurable (James 1:13-14). Even Jesus was tempted (Hebrews 2:18)! So, what's the problem? How does temptation become sin?

A pleasing thought or desire – temptation – that is adverse to God’s ways can be on the way to becoming sin but isn’t at that point. According to Jesus’ brother James, temptation becomes sin when we give in to it (thought turns into intention), and we become enslaved to that desire and activity (James 1:14-15). The reference also reminds us of the deadliness of sin!

It might be prudent here to highlight intent as something that’s related to the mind/heart. For example, if we have a mind to do something, it is our *intent*. And, it is as good as done as far as sin is concerned. Jesus gave us a glimpse of the idea in Matthew 5:27-28 when He pointed out that once someone has intended to commit an act, it is as good as done (adultery, in this case). Case in point: An individual can be tried and convicted of [attempted] murder even if the act was unable to be carried out because the perpetrator *intended* to end someone’s life.

Peter addresses temptation turning into sinful mastery in 2Peter 2:19. Unfortunately, we often attempt to disguise or excuse our behavior by convincing ourselves and others that the temptation – *weakness* – is somehow unique. However, as Paul and Solomon before him pointed out, no temptation is new or unique, and there’s nothing new under the sun (1Corinthians 10:13; Ecclesiastes 1:9-10). What to do?!?

Paul tells us that if we *walk by the Spirit*, we won’t give in to the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-26). In this way, Jesus can rescue the righteous from temptation through the same indwelling of the Spirit He enjoyed while on earth (2Peter 2:9). We’ll address this and other methods of managing temptation and mitigating the risk of sin in the next session.

Read:

- James 1:13-14 (our free will gets us in trouble)
- Hebrews 2:18 (Jesus dealt with temptation too)
- James 1:14-15 (how temptation works)
- 1Corinthians 10:13 (no temptation is unique)
- Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 (no temptation is unique)
- Galatians 5:16-26 (walk by the Spirit)
- 2Peter 2:9 (the Lord can keep us from temptation [by the Spirit])

Preview of Session Two: Putting Everything to Work

Because the Father desires our return to Him, He has given us very effective tools by which we can successfully pursue holiness, righteousness, and, in reward, salvation and eternal life. He has equipped us with a very capable mind/heart. With it, we can learn and internalize through practice (which shows intent and devotion!) truth that *renews our mind* and leads to righteousness and salvation. God also gives us His Holy Spirit when we give ourselves to Him.

Through the Spirit, we can exercise self-control and master our thoughts and be persistent in avoiding things that trigger temptation or cause us to stumble spiritually. And, because we're part of the Kingdom of God and assembly of *followers*, we can enjoy accountability and training from others who are successful in their 'struggles.' We'll discuss these heavenly assets and their practical application in the next session, *Putting Everything to Work*.

Session Two

Review: What to Know First & When Thought Becomes Sin

In session one, we defined temptation, sin, repentance, and purity. Why? To ensure the learner understands the serious nature of practicing sin and begins thinking about ways to reverse sinful intentions and behaviors to pursue purity and salvation. Here's a recap of the definitions:

- **Temptation** is potentially sinful thought or desire that, if managed well, will be benign (fleeting and not sinful).
- **Sin** is a temptation that turns into an intention to act in ways that are contrary to God's. The outcome, if not managed, can result in self-inflicted punishment and separation from Him.
- **Repentance** is an intentional reversal of sinful intention or behavior. The outcome will be occasional, but corrected and forgiven, sinful behavior at worst. True repentance, which comes from a right heart, is the only way to please God.
- **Purity** is being blemish-free and righteous through the process of Godly thought and behavior. The outcome will be salvation from coming wrath at the end of the age, and eternal life in the new creation to follow.

Now, let's explore how to put what we've learned to work in our pursuit of purity.

Putting Everything to Work

So, we understand the need to control our minds and bodies in true spiritual worship as we please God and pursue purity. But how do we apply that knowledge? What follows is basic guidance for devoting our minds and actions to God through self-control, recognizing and avoiding triggers of sinful behavior, and engaging in accountability and prayer.

Control: The Heart of the Matter

Central to our covenant with God is a choice to follow and completely devote all we are and have to Him. The covenant and devotion require intent and action fueled by the firm and consistent control over body and mind. Nothing else can have mastery over what we control; there's no other way to ensure we serve one master: The Lord God. But how can we achieve that state? Through walking by the Spirit, immersing ourselves in the study of God's ways, and then internalizing what we learn to make it part of who we are.

Devotion, Self-control & Worship

With Moses came the Law on stone tablets. In the New Covenant, God gave us the Law recorded in our heart (mind - Romans 2:14-15) by the Spirit who convicts us of sin and righteousness (John 16:7-8). When we ‘walk by the Spirit,’ we adhere to God’s ways and practice righteousness and not the pursuit of pleasure (Galatians 5:16-17). In doing so, we are engaged in true spiritual worship (Romans 12:1). Although we tend to call Sunday morning praise music *worship* time, it is inbound and not worshipful for the most part. *True* worship is outbound action (by definition) that shows ‘worth’ to our God we love (hence the compound word “worth-ship”) through self-control of our bodies for the pursuit of purity and obedient charity.

The Mind of Christ & Renewal

One of the New Testament’s more interesting concepts may be that of ‘abiding’ in a corporate sense (for instance, see the course on *The Nature of God*). When we are like-minded with the Son and Father, they *abide* in us and us in them. The intimate fellowship and like-mindedness are only possible when we think as they think; we reflect their natures. How can this happen?

Only a true disciple of Jesus who immerses themselves in His and, therefore, the Father’s ways can emulate their natures. The Bible (Old and New Testament texts) compels us to read and internalize (meditate on) its contents continually. Constant meditation and application of what we learn cause the Scriptures to become who we are. As a result, we are *clothed* with Christ (Romans 13:13-14) and have His mind – understanding (1Corinthians 2:16).

Our reading and meditation on God’s ways not only clothe us with an understanding of His nature but also results in a *renewing* of our mind (Romans 12:2). As we saw in verse one, we are to *present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship*. In our learning and the application of the knowledge, it becomes our practice and consistent behavior. We become transformed into the likeness of Christ (again, Romans 12:2).

Likewise, Paul reminds the church in Ephesus that they have learned Christ and, as a result, are to lay aside their old self and be *renewed in the spirit of their mind and put on the new self, which is the likeness of God* (Ephesians 4:20-24). Paul’s admonishment is a sobering reminder that we are to learn the truth and, once we have, **do something** with it!

To summarize, we must devote ourselves to God and continually be involved with pure thought and the pursuit of knowledge about His ways to become *clothed* in Him. Then, we'll understand what He expects of us as we practice righteousness and holiness. Armed with a knowledge of God's desires and nature, we'll be better able to keep our thoughts from becoming sin.

Mastering Your Thoughts

First and foremost, we must control our thoughts, taking them *captive* according to Paul (2Corinthians 10:5). Additionally, we are to set our minds on heavenly, not earthly things (Colossians 3:2), as indirectly addressed in the previous section on *renewing our minds*. Why is mastery over our thoughts so important? Left unchecked, they can lead to sinful intention and, therefore, sinful action.

Controlling our thoughts and ensuring they're pure in the first place will help keep sin from having dominion in our minds and lives (Romans 6:14-23). The self-control of the mind will also go a long way toward keeping us from being mastered by anything worldly (1Corinthians 6:12). Can you tell that the mind is where we win or lose the battle over sin? That is where we either struggle and live or give in to our desires and perish. Let's discuss that struggle for a moment to uncover some practical ways to put your pure intentions and thought-control to work in the real world.

Read:

- John 16:7-8 (the Spirit convicts concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment)
- Romans 2:14-15 (the Law on the heart)
- Romans 12:1-2 (self-control = spiritual worship; transformed by renewing of our mind)
- Romans 13:13-14 (clothe ourselves with Christ)
- 1Corinthians 2:16 (we have the mind of Christ)
- 1Corinthians 6:12 (not mastered by anything [earthly])
- 2Corinthians 10:5 (taking thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ)
- Galatians 5:16-17 (walk by the Spirit to avoid carrying out desires of the flesh)
- Ephesians 4:20-24 (lay aside our old self, be renewed in mind, put on the righteous, self)
- Colossians 3:2 (set our minds on heavenly things)

Questions for the Learner: What do you think about the concept of *renewing your mind*? Discuss your routine for the study of biblical texts (beyond typical daily devotionals) and ways of meditating on them. What does *walking by the Spirit* mean to you? How can you apply this concept?

Preview of Session Three: Avoiding Risk and Accountability & Prayer

Knowledge without any application is useless. In the next session, we'll put what we've learned to work by applying a knowledge of God's desires to dealing with today's temptations. What you'll learn is that we must *act* in true repentance and that repentant actions taken to mitigate the risk of sin will keep us from practicing what God detests. Also important is the act of continual accountability and prayer, both of which show an intent to keep from practicing sinful behavior.

Session Three

Review: Putting Everything to Work

In the last section, we discovered that self-control of our thoughts and body is the only way to please God in true worship. That control is critical to repentance and, therefore, the practice of righteousness and not sin. We are to control our thoughts to dwell on good, pure, and holy things. Dwelling instead on thoughts or temptations to act in ways that are contrary to God's introduces the risk of practicing sin and, as a result, spiritual death and separation from Him. Putting on the *Mind of Christ* in a renewing of *our* mind through constant study and meditation of His words and ways will help guard against giving into sin and help us master our thoughts.

In this section, we'll learn more about controlling our body for avoiding the risk of sinful behavior by exploring different approaches to dealing with temptation.

Avoiding Risk

Avoiding sin is all about mitigating risk to address human weakness while also walking by the Spirit as we discussed above for strength and purpose. So, the goal of this section is to provide examples of how to mitigate the risk of sinning by avoiding temptations or triggers that are too powerful to overcome in the *flesh* as a human being.

We must remove ourselves from circumstances that may tempt us to commit or practice sin. Because we're Christ followers, let's look at a few biblical examples or wisdom. First, Psalm 101:3 tells us we should *set no worthless thing before [our] eyes*. And, we've already learned that we should think/meditate on whatever is pure, lovely, and holy.

That takes care of our eyes and mind. What about the ears? Peter among others tells us that we must avoid the pursuit of sensuality (1Peter 4:1-5); what we choose to listen to falls into this category because it is one of the senses. Also, Paul addresses course joking and 'silly talk' (Ephesians 5:4). He also told his disciple Timothy that some people will choose to listen to what 'tickles' their ears as they follow their desires, not God's (2Timothy 4:3). Paul also addresses gossip and deception by false teachers. Both would be non-existent without an audience! Speaking of removing the audience, let's look at another example of avoiding sin: Joseph fleeing from Potiphar's wife.

Read Genesis 39:6-12 and you'll discover a handsome and young Joseph who resisted temptation by fleeing from the wife of his master (Potiphar) when she tried to entice him with a sexual encounter while they were alone one day. Again, he was a young man and likely tempted

to agree to the physical relationship. But, he ran away to remove himself from the possible temptation. We must do the same!

In Matthew Chapter Five (verses 20-48), Jesus preaches that the heart/mind/intent can be at the root of sinful behavior and that addressing it is more important than just meeting the ‘letter of the law.’ That is what He meant by explaining that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. In verses 29-30, He advises us to avoid those things that can cause us to stumble spiritually – sin – and create the risk of Hell’s punishment. How can we apply the concept today?

- The weakness of **sexual impurity and sensuality**: Like Joseph, we must avoid those ‘triggers’ that can trip us up. If there is a weakness for sexual misconduct such as indulging in pornography (even light sensuality and nudity!), then avoiding the triggers could resemble discontinuing cable television or movie services. Having the front desk turn off video feeds or remove the television where necessary can help those who stay in hotel rooms.

On the computer, one could use an electronic content filter or accountability program such as *Covenant Eyes* to mitigate some of the risks. Keeping the door open so that others can see your computer or multimedia activity and ensuring there are no provocative or sensual magazines wherever you are will also help. Speaking of magazines, make sure you avoid isles or locations within stores where sensual materials are hosted or sold.

Lastly, you may need to sever relationships with other people who engage in sensuality to remove stumbling blocks or triggers. This elimination of the risk is exactly the type of action to which Jesus referred in Matthew 5:29-30! Breaking relationships can be difficult, but the alternative of severing the relationship with God would be much worse! In place of old relationships, make new ones with people of God’s community.

- Weakness for **substance abuse** (such as alcohol) and **gambling**: As with sensual materials, consider avoiding all encounters with the substances or opportunities to gamble by avoiding their sources including appropriate stores, restaurants, places of entertainment, and relationships.
- Weakness for **chasing wealth**: According to the Bible, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1Timothy 3:3; 6:10). We do tend to be greedy and self-centered! The writer of the letter to Jewish Christians teaches that we should counter the potential for greed by avoiding the fondness for money and being content with what we have (Hebrews 13:5). What else can we do? Be benevolent and give away what we don’t need. Then, we’ll

reduce the risk of greed and stay obedient to Christ's command to actionably love others through charity.

These have been but a few examples to help you begin thinking of effective ways to reduce the risk of sin. The very act of addressing weaknesses and taking steps to reduce the likelihood of practicing sin is the essence of repentance (changing behavior to turn away from sin) and shows a pure heart. Is there anything else we can do to stay on the path of righteousness and salvation? Yes: Pray, confess, and seek accountability! After all, our Savior also reminds us in Matthew 26:41 that the *spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*.

Accountability & Prayer

We must also continually pray for escape from tempting situations. Again, this shows intent and aids in true repentance. Prayer also solicits the help of the Spirit in winning this battle of flesh against spirit. Praying for assistance with weaknesses or the removal of temptation also provides accountability in that the one praying is outwardly admitting the weakness to God through the Spirit. There is another form of accountability that is at least equally important: Confession within the assembly of Christ followers.

An upcoming lesson will address the need for mature followers to 'judge' sinful behavior in the Church and provide gentle accountability and correction (you can begin early by checking out 1Corinthians 5:12-13 and Matthew 18:15-20 if you're curious!). However, understand that we must hold ourselves accountable by confessing our sinful behavior to others (James 5:16), ideally to followers of Jesus who **don't struggle with the same weaknesses**. Doing so is obedience and in line with true repentance. Here are some basic guidelines about this one-to-one accountability:

- Accountability partners should be of the same sex – especially where sexual sin is involved.
- Privacy is of the utmost importance!
- Hold yourself accountable to someone who doesn't struggle with the same weaknesses! Doing the opposite creates an environment that invites enablement and mutual sympathy but provides little in the way of correction and healing.
- During accountability sessions, provide very specific details on successes and failures along with countermeasures. In other words, don't say something like, "I'm still struggling with alcohol abuse." Instead, say something like, "While passing through the grocery store and by the liquor aisle, I gave in and bought (and then drank) a bottle of

wine last night. In my repentance, I vow to either have someone accompany me when I shop there or shop somewhere else that doesn't sell alcohol."

- Meet regularly and often! Also, have a means of quick, clear communications to help avoid giving into temptation as it occurs. Ever hear of the old saying *an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*?

Read:

- Psalm 101:3 (guard what we watch)
- 1Peter 4:1-5 (we are not to pursue sensuality)
- Ephesians 5:4 (avoid course joking and 'silly talk')
- 2Timothy 4:3 (following what 'tickles' the ear)
- 1Timothy 3:3 (no addictions; be free from the love of money)
- 1Timothy 6:10 (the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil)
- Hebrews 13:5 (be content with what we have)
- Matthew 26:41 (the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak)
- James 5:16 (confess our sins to one another)

For the Learner: If comfortable, discuss personal weaknesses and ways you mitigate the risk of sinning. Otherwise, feel free to discuss other possible methods of reducing the likelihood of sin in general.

Reaching Higher

Every Christ follower as a human being will sin on occasion – that's a fact! However, sinning must not be our *practice*, which suggests a lack of worshipful self-control and a 'rinse-n-repeat sin cycle' that will earn a spiritual death sentence and eternal separation from God. We pray this course has provided a solid foundation for understanding temptation and the result of not managing thoughts and weaknesses before they become sin. To help you in your quest to be pure and holy, we have also discussed examples of repentant self-control. What you've learned is meant to inspire a passion for serving God and others in your covenant with Him and provide basic guidance. But, don't stop here!

We must continue to study and grow and apply what we learn while following Christ out of our love for Him and the Father; Mentoring and discipleship will help in this process. Then, you'll train and reproduce godliness in others by mentoring them. Think of it as a never-ending process that will begin with training such as what you've received in this lesson.

Crosswalk church utilizes the First Steps one-on-one discipleship system. We encourage you to ask for a disciple-maker who will partner with you to continue your training and prepare you to then disciple others. The First Steps process will train at a deeper level spiritual disciplines we

introduced to you such as dealing with temptation, prayer, bible study, and fellowship. Then what?

Reaching higher yet, you'll want to spend the rest of your life in daily prayer and Bible study, accountability for and to others in fellowship and growth, disciple-making, and ongoing spiritual formation.

May God richly bless you with your spiritual walk!

Instructor Guidance

First and foremost, this course is meant to be a high-level introduction. So, don't go deep 'into the weeds' theologically-speaking or allow the learner to derail the training. Encourage a separate one-on-one meeting if they'd like to ask more questions or have a deeper discussion than time allows.

Second, and related to the first point, keep to the outline and plan as much as possible! Each point and their order intentionally provides a strategic system to train the learner and provide a clear theological foundation.

Third, avoid the temptation to inject personal bias and private theology into the training plan. If you don't agree with any portion of the plan or theological points, privately note and bring them up to the Pastor or training staff. We understand that not everyone will agree with all theological points represented in this course; however, their formation and order have been part of a well-vetted and carefully thought out process. Disagreeing or correcting them overtly, especially when training, will do nothing but cause confusion, division, and potential disengagement from the church by the learner.

Finally, please come to the training sessions prepared by reading all text and verses in advance. Doing so will help ensure your and the learner's success.

Have fun and may God richly bless you for your spiritual maturity and contribution to His Kingdom!

Session One: 45 minutes

1. Open with **prayer**.
2. Read the **introduction**.
3. **Set expectations.** Attend every session if possible, as they build on one another to create a wonderful and complete "What now?" picture. Encourage the learner to read the material and Bible verses in advance to leave more time for discussion during your sessions together.
4. Read '**What to Know First: Defining Temptation, Sin, Repentance, & Purity,**' each portion and the Bible references at the end.
 - Contrast temptation, sin, repentance, and purity. Ensure the learner understands that temptation without intent or action is **not** sin. However, they must understand that unchecked temptation could lead to sinful behavior.

Next, make sure the learner understands that true repentance isn't just feeling sorry for an action because the feeling without a change in behavior is useless to God and anyone affected by the sinful behavior.

- Engage with the learner through discussion from **For the Learner** by exploring specific examples of sinful behavior. But, watch the time!
5. Read '**What to Know First: Choices & Consequences**' and then the Bible references.
 - The purpose of this section is to remind the learner that choices have consequences!
 - Engage with the learner through questions and answers along with a discussion of **Questions for the Learner**. Briefly, contrast the difference between occasional but corrected sin and that of the unrepentant practice of sinful behavior.
 6. Read '**When Thought Becomes Sin**' and then the Bible references.
 - The purpose of this section is to help the learner understand how a thought or temptation can manifest itself into sinful behavior. Pique their curiosity by reminding them that the intent to sin is as bad as the sinful act itself. Jesus mentions the concept in Matthew 5:27-28 relative to the intent to have an immoral sexual encounter (adultery). And, our judicial system can try and convict someone for intended murder and other crimes unsuccessfully carried out.
 7. Read '**Preview of Session Two: Putting Everything to Work.**'
 8. Close in **prayer**.
 9. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Two throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Two: 45 minutes

1. Open with **prayer**.
2. Read '**Review: What to Know First & When Thought Becomes Sin.**'
3. Read '**Putting Everything to Work,**' '**Control: The Heart of the Matter,**' '**Devotion, Self-control & Worship,**' and '**The Mind of Christ & Renewal**' and then summarize.

Stress the importance of self-control, which proves righteous intent and actionable love. Think of this as ‘putting spiritual skin in the game.’

4. Read ‘**Mastering Your Thoughts**’ and then the Bible references.
 - Engage with the learner through questions and discussion from **Questions for the Learner**. Discuss how we can apply the concepts of *walking by the Spirit* and *renewing our mind*.
5. Read ‘**Preview of Session Three: Avoiding Risk and Accountability & Prayer.**’
6. Close in **prayer**.
7. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Three throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Three: 45 minutes

1. Open with **prayer**.
2. Read ‘**Review: Putting Everything to Work.**’
3. Read ‘**Avoiding Risk.**’
4. Read ‘**Accountability & Prayer**’ and then the Bible verses.
 - a. Engage with the learner through **For the Learner**. Explore other ways of avoiding the risks associated with temptation and sin.
5. Read ‘**Reaching Higher.**’
6. Close in **prayer**.

Scripture References (taken from the NASB)

Session One

Defining Temptation, Sin, Repentance, & Purity

Even so consider yourselves to be **dead to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body** so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as **instruments of righteousness** to God. For **sin shall not be master** over you, for you are not under law but under grace. —**Romans 6:11-14**.

If you **love Me**, you will **keep My commandments**. —**John 14:15**.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things will not inherit** the kingdom of God. —**Galatians 5:19-21**.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness** in the fear of God. —**2Corinthians 7:1**.

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be **no filthiness and silly talk**, or **coarse jesting**, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. —**Ephesians 5:3-5**.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if **anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things**. —**Philippians 4:8**.

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as **you practice these things, you will never stumble**; for in this way the **entrance into the eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. —**2Peter 1:10-11**.

Choices & Consequences: Sinning Versus Practicing Sinful Behavior

For we must **all appear before the judgment seat** of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, **whether good or bad**. — **2Corinthians 5:10**.

being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that **those who practice such things are worthy of death**, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. — **Romans 1:29-32**.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as **dead to immorality**, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that **the wrath of God will come** upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, **since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices** — **Colossians 3:5-9**.

Then He will also say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.” Then they themselves also will answer, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?” Then He will answer them, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.” **These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life**. — **Matthew 25:41-46**.

When Thought Becomes Sin

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. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and **enticed by his own lust**. — **James 1:13-14**.

For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. — **Hebrews 2:18**.

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when **lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin**; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. — **James 1:14-15**.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. —**1Corinthians 10:13**.

That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is **nothing new under the sun**. Is there anything of which one might say, "See this, it is new"? Already it has existed for ages Which were before us. —**Ecclesiastes 1:9-10**.

But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. —**Galatians 5:16-26**.

then the Lord knows how to **rescue the godly from temptation**, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment —**2Peter 2:9**.

Session Two

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, **will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment** —**John 16:7-8**.

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the **Law written in their hearts**, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them —**Romans 2:14-15**.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy **sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship**. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. —**Romans 12:1-2**.

Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. —**Romans 13:13-14**.

For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM?
But we have the mind of Christ. —1Corinthians 2:16.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. —1Corinthians 6:12.

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ —2Corinthians 10:5.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. —Galatians 5:16-17.

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. —Ephesians 4:20-24.

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. —Colossians 3:2.

Session Three

I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me. —Psalm 101:3.

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. —1Peter 4:1-5.

and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. —Ephesians 5:4.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires —2Timothy 4:3.

not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. —1Timothy 3:3.

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. —**1 Timothy 6:10**.

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” —**Hebrews 13:5**.

Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. —**Matthew 26:41**.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. —**James 5:16**.