

## Equipped to respond well to temptation (part two)

Do you agree with the statement, “*I can resist everything except temptation*”? Either way, temptation to sin is a fact of life. No-one is exempt from its vile allurements. The devil tempts us all and, in his battle against us, he is helped by two allies - the world and the flesh. The “world” refers to any system of belief or practice that is anti-God, and the “flesh” refers to our sinful nature. One is external, the other internal. Knowing that we are susceptible to temptation from both external and internal sources is the first step in responding well to it. If we deny the reality of temptation, we’re not going to fare very well when it hits us in the face. So, if we’re going to fight this thing effectively, we’ll need a good battle plan, protective gear and effective weapons.

**A good battle plan.** One of the first strategies in drawing up a good battle plan is to know your enemy. In matters of temptation, our principal enemy is the devil. What do we know about him? He lies,<sup>1</sup> he deceives<sup>2</sup> and he schemes<sup>3</sup>; He can be resisted<sup>4</sup>; He is powerful<sup>5</sup> but limited; He isn’t God, so doesn’t have the qualities of God, like, being all-powerful, all-knowing, and present everywhere; and His destruction is certain<sup>6</sup>

A second strategy in a good battle plan is to be prepared for the certainty of attack. It’s not a case of *if* temptation comes along, but *when* and *how*. We don’t always know *when* temptation will come, so it’s a good idea to pray against temptation before we’re in the position of having to resist it. This is especially useful when we pray against a specific temptation to which we might be prone. We can go some way to responding well to the *how* of temptation by identifying our own particular weak spots - the areas where the devil comes at us again and again. How are you dealing with your weak spots? To what extent do you make a deliberate choice to stay away from situations where you’re likely to meet this temptation? How do you guard against it?

**Protective gear.** No soldier would go into active combat in a T-shirt, shorts and trainers. He or she would get kitted out in highly protective gear. As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we need to do the same. This gear is provided for us in Ephesians 6:10-18, but it’s our choice whether or not we put it on. If we don’t, then we’re an easy target and unlikely to withstand the temptation. Why not take some time to go through the various pieces and consciously dress yourself in them - every day? We’d never leave home without wearing clothes. Can we afford to live even a moment without wearing God’s protective gear?

**Effective weapons.** We live in an age when weapons of warfare are immensely sophisticated. They’re also very effective. If we’re going to have any chance of resisting the devil’s temptations, we’ll need the very best weapons in existence. What are they? Ephesians 5:17 and 18 give us a clue. The word of God, prayer, and the Holy Spirit are available to every follower of Jesus Christ as he or she battles temptation. Jesus Himself used the word of God and relied on the Holy Spirit to resist the devil in Matthew 4. Our Lord was also a man of prayer. If these were the weapons He used, how much more should we follow His example?

We’re only fooling ourselves if we try to get off the hook by saying, “*The devil made me do it!*” or “*I had no alternative*”. I think, in some cases, we don’t respond well to temptation because, deep down, we don’t really want to resist it. We’d rather have the short-term “benefit” of giving in and tell ourselves we can deal with any fall-out later. But it doesn’t have to be like this. As followers of Jesus, we’re on the winning side because we have God’s Holy Spirit living inside us and no temptation is too great for Him to resist. Whatever comes our way, let’s remember that God has equipped us with all we need to respond well to temptation.

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<sup>1</sup> John 8:45

<sup>2</sup> Rev 12:9

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 6:11

<sup>4</sup> James 4:7

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2:2

<sup>6</sup> Romans 16:20