

The Christmas Story: Temptation
December 4, 2016
Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT)

As the character Flick in the movie “A Christmas Story” can attest, we live in a “triple dog dare you” kind of world. While it was a frozen flag pole that got Flick, we all face a variety of temptations every day that encourage us to steer off course. Thank the Lord for this promise that He will not give us more than we can bear. But how do we handle the heavy burdens of this world without Him? That is the tragedy facing millions of non-believers in our world today. Thankfully, as believers, we can rest in the fact that if we lean on God’s strength, He will provide the fortitude we require to be able to overcome the many temptations we will surely face while roaming this earth in the presence of the evil one.

Digging Deeper

Temptations from The Christmas Story:

Herod:

- Herod wanted no one in the way of his throne. Certainly not a baby who was prophesized to be king of the whole world! Herod was tempted by the greed of power. What are your biggest temptations?
- Discuss the many ways a Christ-centered holiday season can alleviate tendencies of selfishness and greed.
- It is very tempting to turn the Christmas season into a “me, myself and I” fest. What can you do as a family or small group this Christmas to serve others in His name and bring glory to the newborn king?

Religious Leaders:

- When this time of year starts to roll around, there is a general excitement in the air for all of the impending Christmas festivities. Hark, the herald angels (and us humans too!) sing songs of our new born king in all His glory thereby causing our Jesus flames to get all fired up. But come December 26th, as we wade through carelessly strewn scraps of wrapping paper, empty boxes and a multitude of displaced tinsel strands, what on earth happens to all that passion? Are we like the religious leaders of Jesus’ time who became very “stirred up” at the news of His birth, but then suffer from a failure to launch? Talk about practical ways you can intentionally transition into 2017 with a wholehearted desire to serve the Lord by serving others.

Innkeeper:

- When we buy into the modern message that tells us parties and things = Christmas, we find ourselves immersed in a hustle and bustle that has very little to do with Jesus. Do you think the Innkeeper who turned Mary and Joseph away knew he was rejecting The Messiah? We can only

assume he was so inundated with people from the ongoing census that he most likely didn't take time to notice anyone at all. Does this sound like you during the holidays? Are you frantically buying and wrapping presents, running from one event to the next without really taking notice of the people around you? Do you find it difficult to slow down and smell the poinsettias with so much going on around you? Has your "Christmas spirit" been stifled in the past due to busyness? If so, what did you learn from that experience and what changes will you make this year to avoid this type of spiritual drain?

Conclusion

The Bible makes it very clear that we don't need to feel guilty when we are tempted by the things that distract us from the real reason for the season. But we do need to find a "way out" so those temptations don't cause us to sin. "Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions." (James 1:14-15a NLT)

Of course, Jesus is our "Way" who shows us to resist temptation and sin so we can live victorious lives. That's the message behind The Christmas Story, as God came in human form to show us how to live. "We are people of flesh and blood. That is why Jesus became one of us...He had to be one of us, so that he could serve God as our merciful and faithful high priest and sacrifice himself for the forgiveness of our sins. And now that Jesus has suffered and was tempted, he can help anyone else who is tempted." (Hebrews 2:14, 17-18 CEV)

I "triple-dog-dare" you to trust Jesus and let Him help you defeat temptation and overcome sin.