



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
January—February 2014

Be Real –Temptation Is

By Bob Van Domelen

¹³ *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;* ¹⁴ *but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.* ¹⁵ *Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."* James 1:13-15

I can recall few experiences more exciting than being caught up in a wave of God-centered praise and worship. Over the years I have had the privilege of attending some wonderful conferences where hundreds of participants began each session with songs and words of praise.

While there is usually a little hesitancy in the first moments or days at these events, there always came a time when I knew I was part of a whole. When that happened I did not feel restricted in the presence of other expressions of worship and I let my voice soar when it wanted to soar or seek its own stillness despite ongoing hymns elevated in joy. In those moments, I was alone but I was also part of a faith community, a great place to be.

Not long ago, I was with a group of people. Within this group was a man I will call Sam who had recently been released from prison. He shared that he was registered with the state and had just met his parole agent. Sam also spoke of his new church family and what some had been doing to help him in re-entry.

His enthusiasm was infectious and I thought "Wouldn't it be great if all those with sex-related offenses would find such support on the outside?" Sadly, few do.

Sensing the attention of others, Sam went on to explain that he had been saved while in prison, that Jesus was his Lord and Savior, and that because of his relationship with Christ, he had been completely set free. As I looked around the room, I saw heads nodding in approval and even heard a few say "Praise God!"

In that moment, however, I began to feel a little anxious and certainly a little uncomfortable. Red flags started waving in my mind as I listened. I confess here and now that I remember talking to Sam later and all I offered was "Stay in the Lord." How was that any different from what he had been sharing with us?

I did not caution him about his risk potential (as I should have done) or about seeking balance in his testimony, a balance that included the need for accountability. Instead, I asked a friend "How long before Sam is back in prison?" The fact that we shared the same concern should have been a clear sign that we had a responsibility to Sam. I am sorry to say that we both failed.

A few months later, Sam was revoked though I never learned exactly why. All I knew was that he had stretched the boundaries set for him in such a way as to result in revocation. That there was no new offense would not have made a difference, however. It was sufficient to understand that something of the old man in him had resurfaced.

Sam is, unfortunately, not alone. Prison has a way of creating the illusion that certain temptations have disappeared and when that mindset is formed, it is easy to feel "I am no longer tempted." If there is no temptation, there is no need to be cautious, certainly not about something that doesn't even exist.

In this part of the country, ice fishing is a big deal and by midwinter, fishermen are driving their cars and trucks onto the ice where they park in front of ice shanties. As winter gives way to hints of spring and thinning ice, there are stories in the paper almost weekly about a car or truck breaking through ice barely thick enough to support body weight much less that of a vehicle. Because a whole fishing season had been enjoyed without incident, some mistakenly believe it will go on longer than it actually does. Those who had fallen through the ice had stopped watching for *signs* that the season was about to end or had actually ended.

You will be tempted

*"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But **when** you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."* 1 Cor. 10:13. The verse does not say **if** you are tempted; it says **when** you are tempted.

Part of being real with ourselves and with others is not being embarrassed by this simple truth. Yet when someone who cares about us asks "How are you doing?" and we know we are wading in the mud, we have to find a way to avoid saying "Fine." God's love for us is never lessened by the fact that we face temptation. Responding as we trained ourselves to respond, though, we don't see the person asking us the question as God's representative. And as often happens, fear of being rejected helps make "Fine" the preferred response when it shouldn't be.

Your own evil desires

¹⁴ *but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.* I often hear men in prison say "I will never abuse another child." I say the same thing. When we make that statement, however, we are speaking with deep conviction. "No More Victims" might be a catch-phrase but it is more than that. It is a promise we make.

But if treatment teaches anything, it is that abuse just doesn't happen all on its own. Ignoring boundaries and making other unhealthy choices helped set the stage for the possibility of abuse, a possibility that eventually became a reality.

Were the choices Sam made enough to create a new victim? Though I don't know the answer, it would be fair to say that at least some of his choices were unhealthy; some of his boundaries had been crossed. And in that respect, he jeopardized himself and created potential options he should have been avoiding.

After desire has conceived

I think that many of us flirted with death by our choice to wallow in behaviors that became addictions, yet I have never heard any person say "I have always wanted to be an addict." One of the best illustrations I have seen is that of a spiral that descends a little at a time, one choice worse than the previous, until there seems no way out of the pit.

Death comes when helping hands are rejected, when a person feels that not even God can help or make a difference. But if you are reading this newsletter, you have come face to face with your descending spiral of sin choices. And you have learned that God doesn't simply erase your past—He gives you a way to deal with it. He gives you a way to be real because temptation certainly is.

Interestingly, most of the time there is no evident downward spiral and life can look as flat as the line shown below. We don't see a gaping hole just waiting to trap us. Though a hole might be there, it can be avoided.

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matt 26:41

Bits & Pieces

The following are taken from letters I have received since the last issue of this newsletter. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement while others call out for us to be in prayer.

As the saying goes in here, "Get your heart right." It is learning to value spiritual principles above worldly and social values. Imagine believing that there is no shame to living life in prison. Imagine believing that I am truly not at home in this life or in this world.

I do feel we have a major challenge in correcting the lives of those with sexual charges. The thing is, the world will continue to fuel this shame by their constant condemnation and lack of forgiveness. What they (society) don't realize is they actually put the SO into a higher risk to re-offend by compounding the natural shame caused by the offender's unresolved guilt. Helping offenders to overcome shame while also helping them to be empathetic toward those who would be damaged by their choices will go a long way to reducing recidivism.

While I am trying so hard to change and become a better person, so many here are simply throwing their lives away. On what? Warped thinking? Temporary satisfaction? Instant gratification? Isn't that what got us here? Isn't that what damaged our lives and our futures? It's sad and yet all I can think is how far I want to be away from it all. I don't want to see it or hear it anymore, but it's all around me. Like Lot in Sodom, I cry out for God to do something, anything to

rescue me. But then I think that maybe it's making me stronger. Maybe being submerged in such degradation without being an active part, without the desire to join the corruption. Maybe that shows growth and change. Maybe it shows healing.

It would be so nice if God would wave His magic wand and <poof> I no longer struggle with my sexual addiction. But I am learning that it is through the struggle that I get stronger and learn to lean on Him (Prov 3:5-6) and He will give me the strength to overcome all my temptations (1 Cor 10:13).

Repentance that is worth something will bring change. Worldly sorrow will not have that kind of substance and will not hold up.

I think what we have is a case of having to admit that what we have been doing the past decade or so to reduce recidivism among sex offenders is not working. It is what we call "Unable to pass the red face test." As far as we know, not a single inmate who has completed the faith-based program has reoffended. However, those who refuse to give their life to Christ have been returning to some degree—mostly technical violations.

When this Goliath in my life is slain, I will testify whenever and wherever as to how God can move in a situation where there is literally no way out in the natural.

Begin the day with God. Kneel down to Him in prayer. Lift up your heart to His abode and seek His love to share. God pours His love into our hearts so that it might flow out to others.

Dependence on and surrender to God go hand in hand. We can't fully surrender our wills until we are convinced we are in a hopeless situation. As long as we see a way out, we will generally opt for it.

I don't think I am just playing with words to say I avoid sin because it pleases the Lord. Rather, I avoid sin because I want to prove to God I can do it.

I can walk, talk, hear, and I know how to read. I have clothes, a TV, a fan, and other prison comforts. I have some family and friends who have stood by me and who visit me. I could go on and on but most of all, I know Jesus as my Savior, so I am not lost. That is the one thing that empowers me to keep everything else in perspective.

I want to hang on to the relationship I have with Christ and never want to lose it. I have learned through the experiences of temptation that although I am tempted, by God's grace I can say "No!" and overcome. God has brought me a long way.

We can never blame our past situations for our present situations. The past events of our childhood were catalysts and may have molded or helped shape the way we think, but it is our choices that have formed our present.

I'm praying that the "Into the Light" mailing list problem gets resolved. Your newsletter is always an encouragement to

me. The Lord continues to provide –sometimes in the way I like but always in the way I need.

I am by no means unfeeling or uncaring. Because of my own pain I am acutely aware of the pain others have and I do my best to help. It never even crossed my mind as to the damage I was causing my victims. My choices seemed normal yet secret in the environment in which I grew up. That's sad, but it's true.

I've had a number of people here tell me that they appreciate the fact that I always seem to be in a good mood and make the best of each day. That gives me an opportunity to encourage them to try and also be positive, to take control of the things they can control—like whether they have a good day or a bad day. People are not perfect. I am also a part of this group I call "people," so I guess that says something. Thankfully, God is not one of us "people," so He is all-loving, all-forgiving, and all-accepting.

The faith we need should never be centered around our own human abilities but solely around Him who can accomplish impossibilities in life.

Conditional love is an exchange that says I love you "as long as or until." Unconditional love means there are no conditions or strings attached and is the way Jesus loved all with whom He came into contact.

I am grateful to God that my victim has overcome what I did to her and did not let my selfish act continue to rob her of the life she deserves.

In life you will realize that there is a purpose for everyone you meet. Some will test you, some will use you, and some will teach you. But most important are the ones who bring out the best in you, respect you, and accept you for who you are. Those are the ones worth keeping around.

Being on the praise team has helped me to find a way to serve God in here. I enjoy this but I also know I have a lot of growing up to do. This place is as good as any in which to do it.

We can't forget our past sins. Though we can will to forgive, we can't will to forget—nor would we want to forget. How else can we avoid the snare of the fowler if we can't recognize how he camouflages his traps? If we are not aware of our weaknesses, how can we pray for God's grace to deal with them?

Our Prayer Corner

Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

Let us pray . . .

- First and always foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.

- For all our prayers for 2014, that we trust God's providence for all that we need.
- For those who truly seek change in their lives, that their efforts be blessed with affirmation and the knowledge that they *are* being changed.
- For local and state legislators, that in their efforts to protect children they do not destroy the lives of those in re-entry.
- For churches, that they reflect the love of the Lord in this difficult area of ministry.
- For treatment leaders, that they remember to personally serve and guide the individual in their charge.
- For those who fear the unknown, that God's design is the peace they seek.
- For family members, that healing can be found and hope for restoration becomes possible.
- For those find each new year a reminder of separation, that they will see God's love at the dawn of each day.
- For those involved in Hope for Healing, a restoration prayer gathering for the abused, that open wounds will be covered with love, respect, and support.
- For all who serve in ministry to those in prison, that they are able to see God's presence in each and every person they serve.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- Finally, for those who are still abusing and are reading this newsletter because God made that possible, that they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

Please consider financially supporting this ministry. *Into the Light*, a newsletter unlike any other, is made possible solely by your donations. Send contributions to Broken Yoke Ministries, PO Box 5824, De Pere, WI, 54115-5824. All donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged. If you are unable to support this effort financially, please support it with your prayers.

Please Note



Our mailing list program died and existing address information got corrupted, so I am starting over with the hope that those who don't receive the newsletter will write. In addition, all newsletters will have to be mailed first class and that is an expense I had not counted on. If you are able to help with a donation, the gift will be a blessing and will be put to good use. My apologies for any inconvenience.



on each and every one of you as you enter 2014 with hope in the Lord and reliance on His loving presence in your lives.

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.
PO Box 5824
De Pere, WI 54115-5824

Nonprofit Org.
Zip+4 barcoded
U.S. Postage Paid
De Pere WI 54115
Permit No.15



All things are possible with God

A Little Humor . . .

One balmy day in the South Pacific, a navy ship saw smoke coming from one of three huts on an uncharted island. Upon arriving at the shore they were met by a man who said he was a shipwreck survivor.

Excitedly, the man said, "I'm so glad you're here! I've been alone on this island for more than ten years!"

With a look of confusion, the captain replied, "If you're all alone on the island, why do I see THREE huts."

The survivor said, "Well, I live in that one and go to church in that other one."

"What about the THIRD hut?" asked the captain.

Without so much as a pause, the survivor responded, "That's where I USED to go to church."

