

LESSON 6 A – Listening to Friends and Members of the LGBTQ+ Community



(based on pp. 203-258)

Introduction

Why? Why are some attracted to others of the same sex? Is it heredity or environment, or a combination? Maybe the best answer is “could be.” Rick is a good argument for same-sex attraction being hereditary. He struggled and prayed about his same-sex attraction for much of his life. He didn’t want it, but it was there none the less. Eileen is a good argument for same-sex attraction being something a person grows into. All her married life, she felt like something was missing, and only when she was with another woman did she find *the life of love, laughter, and acceptance* that she had always craved. Doesn’t everyone want that—a life of love, laughter, and acceptance? Yet the desire for it can be so much greater and the resources to achieve it so much less for those who have been abused by the very people who should have protected them. Is this perhaps why abuse victims sometimes experiment with the gay or transgender lifestyle? There’s no scientific way of knowing, and everyone’s story is so different. So how do we get to the heart of how and why friends and members of the LGBTQ community feel as they do? God gives us ears to listen, hearts to empathize, and his Word of wisdom to guide. But in order for us to follow God’s way, we need to understand our own search for a life and love and acceptance, and how God would have us address the temptations and struggles we ourselves face each day.

Why does God let us be tempted?

1. What truths do we learn about our temptations from these verses?

James 1:13-14 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

Ephesians 2:1-2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

2. James lays the burden of guilt on us, on our desires. Why is this always true?

3. Let's say you wake up in the morning in a good mood with good intentions. You read your morning devotion and pray the suggested prayer along with the Lord's Prayer. You go out to the kitchen and are hit in the face *again* with an irritating, seems-like-forever frustration. Your reaction? Without thinking you mumble an expletive under your breath, taking God's name in vain. Think about it. Not even two minutes after your morning prayers and you took God's name in vain.

We may consider this sin just a slip of the tongue or a minor infraction. But that takes us down the path of defending sin. What conclusions do we reach about this sin from Exodus 20:7?

Exodus 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

4. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God" is the Second Commandment. Yet it's been said that every sin ultimately breaks the First Commandment as well: "You shall have no other gods." Understanding that truth gives us insights into the seriousness of sin and the place it comes from. Explain how the episode mentioned above stems from breaking the First Commandment.

The only way God could prevent us from being tempted again to take his name in vain—or any other sin—would be to take us out of this life. One day he will deliver us from this world, but until he does, we are still accountable to him and under the influence of the sinful nature.

Just as there are different appetites, our sinful natures express themselves in different ways. One person is especially tempted by one sin. Another person might have little inclination toward that sin but is especially tempted by another sin. What everyone has in common is that it takes just one little spark to set fire to the sin within.

5. What sins was Paul especially prone to?

Philippians 3:4b-6 If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

- 2 **Corinthians 12:7a** To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations...

6. Agree or disagree: Fighting work-righteousness and pride is harder than dealing with anger or impatience. Explain your answer.
7. How did the Lord choose to counteract this sinful tendency in Paul for his spiritual and eternal good? Why is this response so agonizing to our flesh?

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient

for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

8. Outbursts of anger and impatience open us to all kinds of sins that bring guilt before God and hurt the people we love. What sins do a prideful work-righteous bent open us up to?

The purpose of the previous is not to point an accusing finger at those who have anger issues or are judgmental and self-righteous. The purpose is to recognize the unrelenting struggle that churns within each of us—whatever our particular temptations may be. We are our own worst enemy in ever achieving life and love and acceptance. We all fight this struggle on different fronts. But the people with perhaps the most formidable struggle are those fighting their sinful nature to resist sexual sins.

9. How are sexual sins different than other sins?

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

We noted that one person may be especially tempted by one sin while another person’s struggle may be with an entirely different sin. We might like to ask God why we have to be born with a sinful predisposition to anything. Why can’t we all just be born with a clean slate? And if we do have to be born with a sinful disposition, why can’t it be to a sin other people won’t look down on? God hasn’t told us these things. He tells us only what we need to know in order to be saved!

10. Whenever our sinful nature gets the better of us and we repeat a sin, whatever it is, how can we be reassured that we are still God’s children?

1 John 1:8-2:2 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

11. What blessings does God work in us through our struggles against our sinful nature and against temptations (including when we fall)?

Romans 7:24-25a What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Romans 1:18-32 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:18-32 shows how holding on to sin leads to more sin and ultimately to grief and helps us understand why a holy and loving God may at times hand people over to degrading their own bodies among themselves (sexual sins).

God's wrath is being revealed for idolatry. But keep in mind, idolatry can be more than worshiping a false god. Idolatry may include idolizing a life of love, pleasure, and acceptance instead of fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things. Verse 24 tells us that God may punish people for their idolatry by handing them over to committing sexual sins because it's what they want to do, and because in this life the worst punishment for sin is more sinning!

When God lets people go their own way, he is showing himself to be holy. He is also showing his love. When we see the depravity sin brings to us and others, we are warned to stay clear of all sin and flee to Christ for cleansing whenever we do sin. We are also spurred on to not be ashamed of sharing the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation, even for idolaters and adulterers—unless they refuse.

12. Based on Romans 1:26-32 Describe the downward trajectory from idolatry through sexual sins to more sins and the consequences of those sins.

13. In your own words summarize why God allows us be tempted.

14. Complete this sentence: "Reading this section from Romans chapter 1 encourages me to . . ."

NEXT TIME: How does God help us overcome temptations?

Prayer