

## STUDY 4. NOTES FOR LEADERS.

**1. You are pulled over for speeding. As the policeman walks towards your car slowly opening his folder, would you be tempted to...**

- a. Swap places with your wife so that she could get the demerit points.
- b. Tell the policeman that you are running late for a funeral.
- c. Tell him that your speedo is not working properly.
- d. Tell him he should be out catching real criminals.
- e. Tell him that you are doing benevolent work.
- f. Something else.

**2. Has anyone in the group faced a strong temptation this week? How did you handle it? Did you feel guilty about the temptation? Did you “win” or “lose”?**

*Be alert for anybody in the group who associates guilt and temptation. With skilful questioning point out that Jesus himself was tempted, with reference to Hebrews 4:15.*

**3. What do all these situations have in common?**

- a. A young mother is depressed and is getting less sleep with a restless baby. When the baby wriggles as she is about to change a nappy she raises her hand to hit the baby.
- b. A young man at work is having a tough time with his marriage and starts talking to a female companion regularly about his domestic problems. She is very caring and seems to understand what he is going through.
- c. A single mum is having a huge problem making ends meet. She is in Target and notices a dress that would look great on her 4 year old daughter. She hasn't the money to pay for it.
- d. A 52 year-old accountant has just lost his job and feels a lot of shame and anxiety. He has not told his wife and wonders about heading off every morning as if he was going to work but going to the pub instead.
- e. A 16 year-old struggles to overcome her feelings of lack of acceptance. She goes to a party with a friend who is upset with her because she will not take the little pills that every one else is taking. “If you want to be a prude then you are on your own” she was told.

4. a. What advice would you give the people in the above scenarios?  
b. Is temptation always as obvious as it is in the above stories?  
c. Would it have been as obvious to those who were involved?

*Each of the stories shows how temptation is more strongly felt in times of vulnerability. Some people could be advised to avoid placing themselves where temptation is strongly felt. Some of the above could also be advised to seek help with the underlying problem that may eventually lead to sin.*

**5. Read Luke 4.1-13**

- a. What do you notice about the timing of the Devil here?
- b. How does this tie in with the above stories?
- c. What does this teach us about coping with temptation?

*Some in the group should see that Jesus was tempted at a time of high vulnerability. It was not only that he was fasting. He was about to launch into a ministry that would meet opposition and misunderstanding and would have played with the idea of taking a short cut towards success and popularity.*

**6. In what ways are you tempted when you are:**

- a. Depressed?
- b. Stressed?
- c. In conflict?
- d. Being criticized?
- e. Having problems with your children?
- f. Unable to sleep because of a snoring spouse?

**7. How do you deal with temptations at such times? Do you:**

- a. Pray?
- b. Talk to yourself?
- c. Avoid the situation?
- d. Succumb?

*A lot of valuable information could be shared at this point about how group members have resisted temptation. As a group leader use your skills to develop the positive points that group members share and build on those.*

**8. How did Jesus handle temptation at a vulnerable time?**

*Notice the way that Jesus handled temptation. Despite the devil's ability to quote Scripture (out of context) Jesus was able to reply with Scripture.*

**9. See Matthew 6.13**

What do you think Jesus meant when he taught us to pray: "Lead us not into temptation" (or "Do not bring us to the time of trial" as in NRSV)?

*It was common rabbinic teaching that temptation could be a 'spiritual muscle builder'. i.e. God may place trials in our way so that we emerge as stronger followers because of the test. Jesus is teaching something quite different. It is an acknowledgement that we are vulnerable and we are in effect praying, "Do not test me. I am unable to hold up." Garland. D.E. Reading Matthew SPCK. 1993 p 81.*

10. Should we avoid places of temptation or front up to them with confidence that God will give us the victory?

*The group will probably not be "either-or" on this question. Refer the group back to the discussion on vulnerability. If we have a particular weakness or if we are going through a vulnerable time, then some situations should be avoided. On the other hand, we can be focused on who we are and what God expects of us so that we can cope with situations that might tempt others.*

**11. In the light of this study how should we pray regarding temptation?**

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