

Five Lies Temptation Tells About Sin

Years ago I was driving down the interstate headed home. As I navigated my vehicle on the road, I saw something up ahead. From my vantage point, it appeared that there were thousands of papers scattered all over the road. When the cars that were preceding me reached that spot, my guess was confirmed as the papers scattered and swirled with the wind produced by the passing traffic. I realized there was no danger so I continued driving at the speed limit until I reached the seemingly endless pieces of paper. Just as I was plowing through the mess, one "sheet" flipped up and stuck to my windshield. It was then that I realized my guess about it being paper was woefully wrong. Clinging to my windshield and staring me in the face was a picture of a nude woman from a pornographic magazine. I frantically used my wipers to dislodge this most unwelcome guest, but that did not work. I slowed down and then sped up again hoping that the change in velocity would remove my new passenger. Also unsuccessful. Finally, through no skill on my part, the page slid off my windshield and floated along the road behind me. There in my wake were thousands of pages from pornographic magazines twirling, spinning, and attacking drivers all over this unsuspecting Nashville interstate.

I tell this story for a few, somewhat contradictory reasons. First, temptation rarely works like that. It is not often that we are smacked in the face in such an obvious manner as my windshield porn. I have given in to temptation's lies more times than I care to admit, but I am happy to report that this was not such a time. The example above is absurdly over-the-top, but that is not to say that we do not face some versions of in-your-face temptation. I will deal with one such example in a bit. Most often though, temptation is subtle. It is tricky. It is deceptive. Here are five of the most common lies

that our temptation tells us about sin.

It is not a big deal.

In Acts chapter 5, we find the story of Ananias and Sapphira. It is a complicated and difficult story to deal with in modern-day America. First, God's judgment on this couple seems too severe. Second, the idea of selling all of our possessions and handing the proceeds over to someone else goes against most of our natural instincts. Fortunately for me, I am not dealing with either of those particularly troublesome issues today! Instead, I want to focus on the sin involved in the story.

At that point in the life of the early church, the first members were renouncing their own possessions, giving all they had to the church, and allowing everyone to live without any financial needs. It was socialism at its very best because it was driven by pure motives and clean hearts and guided by the Holy Spirit. That's where Ananias and his wife Sapphira enter the story. They too sold some property they owned. They too presented the profits at the feet of the Apostles. But together, they conspired to withhold a portion of those profits for themselves. Keeping some back did not seem like a big deal to them. They convinced themselves that they were still handing over enough. Why would anyone object since it was obvious they were giving to the work of the Lord? They were tempted to lie and they fell to that temptation. It cost them their lives.

Sin is a big deal. Always. Let's stop acting like it's not.

The outside is what matters.

Going hand-in-hand with not seeing their deception as a big

deal, Ananias and Sapphira were also primarily concerned with the outward appearance. They wanted to be seen giving to the church. When Ananias went alone to place the money at the feet of the Apostles, he wanted to look committed to the cause and righteous, all the while he was lying to himself and to the church. I am not convinced that withholding the money was even that big of a deal. It was their money, after all. They could have just as easily brought a portion of the proceeds and presented it to the church. They did not do that. Instead, they chose to claim something false. They chose to lie because it mattered to them how they were perceived by others. In the end, their internal sin was exposed to the light and their judgment was swift and severe.

The outside is important as it can reflect what is happening on the inside, but do not deceive yourself into believing temptation's lie. If you harbor internal sin, it will destroy you in the end.

We have it under control.

One of the most well-known examples of succumbing to temptation found in Scripture is the story of David and Bathsheba. At this point, I doubt there is anyone reading this story that is not aware of the particulars, but in case there is just one person out there that is not, allow me to give a brief summary. As king, David was the most powerful man in Israel. Scripture calls him "a man after God's own heart." He was married – to more than one woman by this time. At this moment in Israel's history, things were good. We find the story of this great fall in 2 Samuel chapter 11. Early in the chapter, there is a key phrase that is used to set the context of the scene, *"In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites."* For whatever reason, David decided that he did not need to go out to war. He chose to stay home. Perhaps I am

reading too much into this, and that wouldn't come as a shock to some, but this feels like a man that believed he had his life under control. He was confident, self-assured, and in control. That is a very dangerous place to be for any Christian. That's not to say we should walk around scared and paranoid. Yet, based on David's actions in the next few verses, it is clear he was not where he needed to be spiritually speaking. He was vulnerable to attack. He was open to temptation.

So David stayed home when he should have been off to war. It is late in the afternoon and he decides to go up to his roof to look across his city. It is then that he sees Bathsheba taking a bath. That was his porn on the windshield moment. That was temptation slapping him in the face with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. David should have walked away. He should have averted his eyes and fled from that temptation. But he didn't. He chose to look. He chose to admire her beauty. And then he chose to find out who she was, invite her to his house, and convince her to sleep with him. The story only gets worse from there but that's probably enough for my point. David let down his guard because things were good. That sense of self-satisfaction and being in control doomed him.

There will be times when things in our lives are humming along nicely. Everything seems to be working out for us. Cling to God during those times. Seek His face with more fervor than ever because it is exactly in times like that when temptation will approach you and trip you up.

We can hide our sin from God.

Ananias and Sapphira. David. All great examples of people thinking they could hide their sin from God. Scripture is full of these examples because humanity is very, very dumb. We constantly convince ourselves that what we do in secret cannot

be seen by anyone. We forget or choose to not remember, that God sees everything. The story of Achan is perhaps the best reminder of this.

The Israelites were conquering the promised land. They were given specific instructions on what to do with the plunder. Achan violated those instructions. He took a robe, 200 coins, and a bar of gold and buried them in his tent. He thought he could steal those things and no one would ever know. And if God had not been involved, he probably would have been correct. He and his family paid for his sin with their lives. All for things he had no use for because to use them would have revealed his sin.

That secret sin you think is hidden is not hidden at all. God sees it. God knows. You might be able to keep it hidden from everyone else, including your spouse or your children but you will never keep it concealed from God. To make it worse, that sin you hide is slowly killing you. You are cutting yourself off from God and His blessings and that sin is doing you as much good as Achan's buried treasure. Expose it to the light and let it die.

We can handle it on our own.

I have given enough examples of what not do to. For this, I will use a positive example of overcoming this lie. When Daniel and the other Hebrew young men were taken to Babylon in the first chapter of the book of Daniel, they could have easily fallen prey to the new culture and customs. Most importantly, they could have chosen to rely on their own power to survive in a hostile nation. Instead, they chose to commit together to not drink the wine or eat the meat. They found fellowship and accountability. They were not an island to themselves. They were united in their rejection of temptation.

If you are struggling with sin, seek help. Confide in someone you trust. Find an accountability partner who will be a voice of wisdom, encouragement, and if needed, rebuke. I know there is nothing novel about this, but our culture values independence and that is stifling to the Christian walk. We are made for community. We are made to walk this road with others. We are not islands. Find your support group and rely on their strength in times of temptation.

Hopefully, this will be a help to someone out there. I know I have listened to all of these lies at some point in my life. They are very alluring. Temptation works that way. It tells us that what we are doing is not a big deal. It lies that as long as we put on a good front, that is all that matters. It tricks us into believing we have it all under control. It tells us that no one, even God, can see. And it convinces us to handle things on our own.

Sin is serious and we need to take it more seriously than we do. We need to stop listening to temptation's lies.

We welcome your comments below.