

Here we are nearing the end of the 2nd month of the New Year and starting the 2nd week of the Lenten Season. A lot of people make New Year’s resolutions to lose weight without much success. Maybe you’ve decided to give up something like candy for Lent with the hope that it may also help you lose weight. Or maybe you’re looking a few weeks ahead to Spring break with your kids and want to lose some weight before going to the beach. If you’re trying to lose weight or just trying not to gain any more weight, then you know that temptations come along all the time. You think that just one piece of chocolate, a regular coke, a few French fries really can’t hurt that much. And so you compromise.

Even though giving into these types of temptation may be frustrating, I’m not sure I’d call them sinful. But I do know that real temptations are a fact of life. Everyone has to face times of temptation, even Jesus. Today we see that even though Jesus was tempted, he never gave in. Jesus did not compromise, especially when it came to dealing with temptations.

You’ve heard the old saying, “Pride comes before the fall.” That may have been on Satan’s mind when he began to tempt Jesus. It came after one of the high points in Jesus’ life. He had just been baptized by John the Baptist. The Holy Spirit enveloped him with a sense of love and acceptance. God the Father voiced his approval. Jesus heard that he was loved and that he was doing the right thing. Then Jesus went into the wilderness to fast, pray and prepare for His ministry. Jesus was at the very start of his mission.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus fasted for 40 days and that he was hungry. Jesus had to be hungry! After all, if you didn’t eat for that long, you would be beyond hungry. By the way, I don’t recommend this as a weight loss program. Satan felt that Jesus was ready for a big fall, so he challenged him by saying, **"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."** (Matthew 4:3) Since Jesus is both true God and true man, he had to be starving. His human side could have been ready to eat just about anything. But Jesus didn’t compromise. He didn’t become self centered and self serving. Jesus told the tempter, **"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"** (Matthew 4:4) Maybe you’ve been hit with the same kind of temptation, to look out for yourself while ignore the need of someone else. Did you ever find some money in a public building at a time when you could really use it, money that belonged to someone else? Did you keep it or did you turn it in at the office so the person could claim it?

We have to remember that temptation is not the same thing as sin. Jesus was tempted but never sin. But if we don’t recognize temptations for what they are and let them take control, temptations can become sins. The goal of temptation is to pull us away from God. Satan wanted Jesus to take a short cut to fame, power and fortune. He tried to get Jesus to be impatient and to avoid the pain of doing things the right way. The devil uses temptations to keep us from

following the Lord, obeying His commands, and telling others about His love for them. His ultimate goal is to get us to give in often enough that we leave the Jesus team and join his team.

That is why we can't make any kind of compromise with temptation. The world tells us all the time that we have to compromise. In some areas of life that can be ok. But when it comes to your faith, your values, or your integrity there is no room for compromise. Were you ever tempted to turn in an essay or research paper that someone else wrote because you had access to one, even if you didn't work on it yourself? That's a type of compromise we should not make.

Jesus took the temptations seriously. First of all he recognized them. And knew they were an attempt to keep him from fulfilling his mission. Secondly, he didn't try to face the temptations alone. Jesus drew on God's word to defeat each of the temptations that Satan threw at him. Knowing God's Word and relying on it helps us to both recognize and defeat temptation. Jesus defeated temptation with the truth. He refused to compromise.

We can find ready excuses for giving into temptations. But they are only excuses. Because everyone else is doing something doesn't make it right. Just because no one else will find out doesn't mean it is ok to do it. Doing something only once doesn't mean it is the right thing to do that one time. The end doesn't justify the means.

When we are tempted to compromise our faith, or promised a quicker path to success, or offered something that we haven't earned, we need to follow the example of Jesus. Treat temptation like temptation. Draw on the strength of God's Word. Spending a little time in the Bible every day is a good thing, because that is where God tells us what is right and wrong and shows us how to live. Defeat Satan's lies with the truth. Don't compromise yourself or your faith.

But also remember this. Jesus is the only one who was always able to defeat every temptation he faced. Jesus is the only one who lived a perfect life. So when you fail, turn to Him in repentance and faith. Rely on the victory that He won because he was able to complete His mission. He died to pay the price for our sins. He has broken the strangle hold that sin can hold on us. We are free to walk with Him, to serve Him, to honor him with our lives. There is no one left to condemn us.

The early Christians in Laodicea were guilty of making compromises with the world. Because of that, they were lukewarm Christians. The book of Revelation warned them that they were in danger of being spit out by God. God gave them a warning not to compromise themselves. He warns us too not to be lukewarm. Don't compromise your faith. Follow the example of Jesus and rely on His help and forgiveness. The real Jesus wants to give you some real help to live as one of his faithful followers. Amen.