

FAQ: 1 John-Lesson 39

October 22, 2025

1.0 Introduction: The Foundation of Worldly Temptation

Understanding the framework of worldly temptation is a cornerstone of Christian spiritual defense. The Bible provides a clear model for identifying how the world system appeals to our fallen nature, offering a strategic advantage to the believer who learns to recognize its patterns. Just as God's law can serve as a mirror, revealing our own sinful state, His word also uncovers the specific, categorized temptations the world uses to draw us away from Him. This analysis begins with a foundational verse from the Apostle John, which deconstructs the world's allure into three primary components.

1.1 What is the primary biblical framework for understanding the world's appeal to sin?

The primary biblical framework for this understanding is found in the book of 1 John. The lesson identifies a single verse that provides three distinct categories for how the "world system," under Satan's influence, entices humanity. This verse is 1 John 2:16, which states:

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

1 John 2:16 (NKJV)

This scripture serves as a strategic key, breaking down the complex appeal of sin into a web of sinful impulses. These three components—"the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes," and "the pride of life"—provide a beachhead for temptation to land in our lives.

2.0 The Three Categories of Temptation

By deconstructing worldly temptation into its core components, a believer can move from being reactive to being proactive in their spiritual life. Analyzing these three categories allows one to identify, anticipate, and guard against the specific avenues through which sin operates. Understanding this biblical model is the first step toward building a more resilient faith. We will now explore the first of these categories in detail.

2.1 What is "the lust of the flesh"?

"The lust of the flesh" refers to the cravings of a sinful heart. The Greek word used here is *epithumia*, which describes a strong desire. While this word can be used in a positive context elsewhere in the New Testament, in 1 John 2:16 it specifically refers to the negative, sinful cravings that create an impulse to sin.

The mechanism of this temptation is an interaction between our internal fallenness and the external world. There is evil outside of us that solicits the evil that is inside of us. The world system that Satan rules is simply an external projection of the evil heart of man, designed to appeal to our fleshly desires.

It is crucial to understand that the scope of this temptation extends far beyond sexual sins. "The lust of the flesh" encompasses *any* desire, attitude, thought, word, or action that is outside of God's law. It represents the corruption of good and normal desires into evil ones through what the source lesson calls a "slavish kind of relentless gratification of all desires outside of God's limits or exceeding God's limits." For example:

- The desire to eat is natural and good, but when it becomes an uncontrolled passion, it turns into the sin of gluttony.
- The desire for comfort is not inherently wrong, but it becomes sinful when a person becomes a slave to luxury.

This category includes any selfish desire that violates God's commands.

Examples from Scripture:

The Apostle Paul provides a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, list of the "works of the flesh" in his letter to the Galatians. This list demonstrates the wide-ranging nature of this temptation:

- Adultery
- Fornication
- Uncleanliness
- Lewdness
- Idolatry
- Sorcery
- Hatred
- Contentions
- Jealousies
- Outbursts of wrath
- Selfish ambitions

- Dissensions
- Heresies
- Envy
- Murders
- Drunkenness
- Revelries

2.2 What is "the lust of the eyes"?

In contrast to the internal impulses of the flesh, "the lust of the eyes" describes the lure of something *outward*. It is essentially covetousness driven by sight—the simple but powerful temptation of "I see it, and I want it," whether that object of desire is a person, a possession, or an experience, like a bright red shiny Corvette convertible.

The lesson describes the dual nature of our eyes. On one hand, they are a gift from God. As Proverbs states, *"The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both"* (Proverbs 20:12, NKJV). Our eyes allow us to perceive the beauty of God's creation, the faces of those we love, and the wonders of life. On the other hand, the evil within the human heart can twist and pervert this gift, turning the eyes into instruments for a "terrible sinful pursuit."

Biblical Figures Who Misused Their Eyes:

- **Lot's wife:** She misused her eyes to look back on the city of Sodom, an act of disobedience for which she was killed by God.
- **Achan:** He saw forbidden treasures, coveted them, and took them, which led to a devastating disaster for himself, his family, and the nation of Israel.
- **Samson:** He saw a Philistine woman he wanted, an initial step in a journey of compromise that ultimately led to his enemies taking his eyes from him.
- **David:** From his palace rooftop, he saw Bathsheba and allowed his gaze to ignite a chain of lust, adultery, and murder for which he paid profoundly for the rest of his life; it almost destroyed his family.

Recognizing this vulnerability, the saints of the Old Testament prayed for protection and made commitments to guard their sight. The psalmist prayed, *"Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things"* (Psalm 119:37, NKJV), and Job declared, *"I have made a covenant with my eyes"* (Job 31:1, NKJV).

2.3 What is "the boastful pride of life"?

"The boastful pride of life" is the third category of worldly temptation. The Greek word here is *alazonia*, which signifies a bragging, loudmouth, boasting pride. This pride is a core component of our fallen nature and a foundational form of worldliness.

The desire behind this pride is the relentless drive to be better than everyone else, to succeed at any cost, and to elevate one's own life as more important than any other. This impulse is so perverse that it can even lead people to desire to be the "best sinners"—the most crooked or the biggest thieves.

This temptation represents the corruption of the "noblest part of man's being": the image of God. While we are created in God's image to exalt Him, this pride seeks self-exaltation. In pride, a person defies God and rears up to replace the sovereignty of God himself. As the source lesson notes, this is a very apt portrait of Satan. This pride is satanic in nature, making the temptation a direct imitation of the devil's own fall.

A final summary of the three temptations reveals a progression from the base to the defiant:

- **Sensuality (Lust of the Flesh):** This is a corruption of the lower part of human nature, where a person functions lower than animals in the pursuit of gratifying forbidden bodily desires.
 - **Covetousness (Lust of the Eyes):** This is a corruption of a nobler part of human nature, where a person seeks to possess everything their fellow man has.
 - **Pride (Pride of Life):** This is the corruption of the noblest part of man, the spirit made in God's image. In pride, a person defies God and seeks to replace Him, becoming like Satan.
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3.0 The Matrix of Temptation in Action: Biblical Case Studies

Understanding these three categories in theory is the first step, but seeing how this "matrix of temptation" has been deployed in key biblical narratives is essential for practical application. The Bible uses the word matrix to refer to a womb—it is the origin point of all things. In this context, this three-part model is the origin point of sin. From the fall of humanity in Genesis to the victory of Christ in the wilderness, this framework is a consistent pattern. Examining these case studies reveals how Satan operates and, more importantly, how he can be overcome. We will begin with the first and most foundational example: the temptation of Eve.

3.1 How does the temptation of Eve in Genesis 3 illustrate this three-part model?

The temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden is the first and clearest illustration of this three-part model in action. Satan's initial approach was to masterfully turn God's positive provision (you can eat from *any* tree) into a negative restriction (you *can't* eat from one). By asking, "*Has God indeed said...?*" he launched a strategic assault designed to make Eve doubt God's character and distrust His goodness. He reframed God as "narrow" and "restrictive," a liar who wanted to "hamper your freedom and enjoyment." This first question recorded in the Bible was designed to get Eve to subject God's word to her own human judgment.

Once he had planted the seeds of doubt, Satan leveraged the three-part matrix, which is detailed in the biblical account of the fall:

1. Lust of the Flesh: The text states, "...the woman saw that the tree was **good for food**." This appealed directly to her physical desire. The source lesson clarifies that her appetite wasn't one of hunger; her appetite was one of lust for something forbidden—a satisfaction being withheld from her that she now desired.

2. Lust of the Eyes: She then saw that it was "**pleasant to the eyes**." This moved the temptation from a purely physical impulse to an emotional one. Its external beauty made it seem desirable, seducing her through her vision and her appreciation for what looked good.

3. Pride of Life: Finally, she saw the tree was "**desirable to make one wise**." This appealed to her intellectual impulse and pride. This was the ultimate temptation to become "like God," the origin point of sin, where she subjected God's word to her own judgment in the pursuit of self-exaltation.

This combination of a physical impulse, an emotional impulse, and an intellectual impulse forms the timeless matrix by which sin entices people. It worked the first time, and it has worked ever since.

3.2 How did Jesus successfully resist this same three-part temptation?

In stark contrast to Eve's failure, Jesus Christ demonstrated a victorious resistance against the very same three-part strategy. The account in Luke 4 sets the scene: Jesus, led by the Spirit, was in the wilderness for 40 days. He was physically hungry and vulnerable, yet He remained completely submitted to the will of His Father. It was in this state that Satan deployed his timeless attack.

1. Lust of the Flesh: Satan targeted Jesus's profound physical hunger, telling Him to turn stones into bread. This was a direct appeal to gratify a legitimate bodily desire outside of

the Father's will and timing. Jesus immediately responded with Scripture from Deuteronomy, declaring, *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone...'"*

2. Lust of the Eyes: Satan then showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, offering Him all their authority and glory—everything His eyes could see. This was an appeal to covet worldly power and possessions in exchange for worship. Again, Jesus met the temptation with Scripture, quoting from Deuteronomy: *"It is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"*

3. Pride of Life: Finally, Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, tempting Him to prove His divine identity and significance by throwing Himself down, twisting a scriptural promise for his own purposes. This was an appeal to pride and the desire for public acclaim. Jesus's final response was once again the Word of God, again quoting from Deuteronomy: *"You shall not tempt the LORD your God."*

Jesus met every temptation with Scripture. Though He was tempted in all points as we are, He was without sin. His victory provides the definitive model for how a believer, submitted to God and armed with His Word, can successfully resist the world. This is how the world comes at you and me, beloved. It comes at our bodily desires, it comes through the things we see, and it comes at the highest of all, our intellectual level—the desire for knowledge, wisdom, and significance. This is the matrix of temptation, and this is what we must guard against.