

Lesson 3: December 11, 2005: “Do I need intolerance for all temptations?”
--Learning not to take strength for granted

Is it necessary for you to arrive at a point spiritually where you are intolerant of every temptation? Why would you need intolerance for something you don't even struggle with? For example, if you have never had a problem with smoking, would it be necessary for you to develop intolerance for smoking? These are difficult questions that many Christians need answers to. It is a rising problem in the culture in which you live to take your strengths for granted. Even spiritually mature people have problems with this, which leads them into sins they have never even thought about. The most common problem that attacks people unsuspectingly, which will illustrate the point I am trying to make, is premarital sex. You might disagree with me on this, but many people take this strength for granted. When you've never been in a dating relationship and, therefore, never had the opportunity to be challenged physically, it is difficult for you to know that you struggle with sexual temptations. You might even think you don't struggle with it at all. However, it is something that will test you at one point in your life. If you realize that you need intolerance for temptations you may never have experienced, you will be at an advantage when it comes to fighting these battles. But those who take their “strength,” which is really ignorance, for granted, will end up finding themselves in a tempting situation without any knowledge of what to do and might not even be able to find a way out.

So the answer to the question is “Yes.” You definitely need intolerance for every form of temptation whether you think you struggle with it or not. Proverbs 16:18 tells us that “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” It is not hard to see why, either. When you think that you are above a certain temptation or that you don't need to worry about it, you have a prideful attitude. Some people might even think that God has blessed them with the ability to not struggle with certain temptations. This is a complete lie. It doesn't matter how spiritual you are or what church you go to, you are still susceptible to every form of temptation that is out there. If Jesus himself was “tempted in every way” (Hebrews 4:15), you should expect nothing less. The author of Hebrews explain this to us, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, **just as we are**—yet was without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

Since you are obviously going to be tempted in every way, it is necessary that you prepare as if you are going to be tempted in every way. No one goes into a battle assuming that his enemy isn't going to try everything he possibly can to win. Soldiers go into battle expecting everything possible, even trickery and cheating. Your battle with Satan has to be with the same level of intensity. Remembering what has been discussed already (not trying to battle the temptations yourself, but instead striving to become like Christ) will help you prepare for this battle. Satan wants nothing more than to catch you off guard. It even says, “Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8) What better way to catch an unsuspecting Christian off guard than to throw something at them they aren't expecting. That's why Peter says, “Be alert!” Those who think they don't struggle with premarital sex and have never been in a dating relationship all of the sudden find themselves dating someone who is pressuring them for sex. “What should I do?” “I didn't think I struggled with this. Now look what I've done.” It happens all the time. You must be prepared for everything. Never take your strength for granted. All it will do is let Satan know where you're weak points are. If you stay alert, prepare for every form of temptation, becoming more like Christ, and eliminating pride, Satan will have a difficult time bringing you down.