GOSPEL COMMUNITY CHURCH
**PULPIT SERIES**

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# JESUS DRIVEN CHURCH
# AGENTS AGAINST WHOLENESS - TEMPTATION

We have already discussed the first agent against wholeness mentioned in Genesis, loneliness. Remember Jesus came to give us something, and in that something was Wholeness.

So we will now move on to a second agent found at the beginning of Genesis chapter 3, verses 1 to 6, TEMPTATION.

In order to address temptation we must have a good understanding of what it is. Herein lies a problem because of our understanding of the word. Whether in the Hebrew or in the Greek, the same word is used to express both TESTING and TEMPTING.

The main words in the Greek are:
Pierazo, pierasmos

"to test, putting to proof –
- by experiment to good,
- by experience to evil

TESTING

When God does it we call it a TEST/TRIAL.

Why?
Because as Deut. 8:2 suggests:

Deut 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

God's TESTING is always for the GOOD END of exposing:
Loyalty and Disloyalty
Faith and Unbelief

Never is it an enticement for evil. God puts us to a test in order to prepare us to receive the good things He has promised us.

2 Chr 32:24-31 In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. <u>Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.</u>

God was trying him, to test him.

We are told that God left him.

Some famous Bible teachers see this as the conscious presence of God being lifted from Hezekiah.
Let me ask you a question. Do you think God knew what was in Hezekiah's heart? Yes! Why? Because God is Omniscient. I believe what is really being said here it that God placed a test in Hezekiah's path to determine if Hezekiah knew what was in his heart. In other words God left him to himself. Now we could say that the conscious presence of the Lord has left him such that he had to make a decision within him self. But I would rather say that God left him to himself to see if he would choose loyalty to God or disloyalty to God and loyalty to himself.

Keep in mind that God is always there when we are faced with a decision in a TRIAL/TEST. Will we turn to Him or away from Him? He designed the test to have us turn to Him or to determine where we are in the inside, and then turn to Him.
Either way a TEST/TRIAL is designed to have us turn to Him.

There are four things we must do when TESTS/TRIALS come our way:

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| 1. HAVE A JOYFUL ATTITUDE |

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Because we are in the world we will experience testing and trials. Peter reminds us:

1 Pet 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Remember outlook determines outcome, and attitude determines action.

When Paul got saved he evaluated his life.
Count = evaluate

He came to the conclusion that what he once thought was important was dung, rubbish, in light of his new life in Christ.

Our values determine our evaluation.

If we value comfort over character then trials/testing will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual we won't be able to count it all joy. If we live only for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better.

So when trials come we should immediately thank God and adopt a joyful attitude. If you want to end with joy, you must begin with joy.

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| 2. HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING MIND |

James 1:3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

A) <u>Your faith will always be tested.</u>

God tests our faith to increase it.
God always wants to bring out the best.
The testing of our faith proves we are truly born again.

B) <u>God's testing works for us, not against us</u>

Trying = approval

1 Pet 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

A gold prospector brings his ore sample to be tested. The actual sample may be worth very little. But the approval of the ore tells the prospector that he has struck it rich.

God's approval of our faith is precious, because it assures us that our faith is genuine.

C) <u>Testing rightly used, matures us</u>

What does God want to produce in our lives?

Patience, endurance
He wants to mature us.
The only way God can produce these is through trials/testing.

Patience and endurance can not be attained by reading a book, listening to a sermon, or even praying.

It must be experiencially produced.

We come to KNOW that trials are good for us and we come to KNOW that the end result will bring glory to God.

## 3. HAVE A SURRENDERED WILL

James 1:4, 9-11 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.
Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

God can not build our character without our cooperation. If we resist he chastens us. If we submit then he can accomplish His work in us. God wants to do a perfect work. His goal is maturity. God works for us – salvation. God works in us – sanctification. God works through us – service-good works.

We must give God consent to work – its known as a surrendered will.

## 4. HAVE A BELEIVING HEART

James 1:5-8 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

James is writing to people who had problems with praying. When going through God-ordained testing what do we pray for?

ASK FOR WISDOM!

## WISDOM

Why wisdom and not strength or grace?

Because we must understand what God is teaching us to mature us.

## TEMPTING

When the enemy (Satan) TEMPTS it is always and enticement for evil.

Satan's temptations are always encouraged by our fallen nature.

What starts out as a testing on the outside can become a temptation on the inside.

When circumstances become difficult, we may find ourselves:

- Complaining against God
- Questioning His love
- Resisting His will

In other words, when left to ourselves to assess the difficulty, we might chose to leave God out and submit to our flesh. When this happens, Satan will provide us with an opportunity to escape the difficulty. This opportunity is a temptation.

Examples:

As Abraham is in the promised land, a famine occurred. It was a trial to prove God. Abraham turned it into temptation when he went down to Egypt. (Problem with protecting his wife)

When Israel was wandering in the wilderness they ran out of water almost immediately after being delivered from Egypt. When they found water it was bitter. They murmured and complained. They turned their test into a temptation.

Let's return now to the Garden. The tempter is subtle, crafty. Note that the temptation started with a conversation. Old slue-foot wasn't shouting, he wasn't parading his wares around, there was no circus of events drawing Eve and Adam away to some secluded spot. He simply spoke in a normal conversation, but started with a question. It would seem at first it was just an innocent question.

But to the temper it was a bated question meant to awaken our curiosity. Let me say that there is nothing wrong with natural curiosity as long as it is under the control of the Holy Spirit. Adam and Eve were able to satisfy their curiosity by eating the fruit of every tree in the garden except one. God placed a limitation on curiosity. As a matter of fact the same one He placed on Adam and Eve He places on us. We are not to gain knowledge of evil by experience. Rather we are to discern with the Spirit when something is evil, and to reject it.

Rom 16:19 …but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

Our flesh doesn't like limitations. It loves darkness rather than light. So as the tempter awaken their curiosity he was also arousing their suspicions towards God. After all that's what the first question was set up to do. Satan's question exaggerated and ridiculed God's limitation upon them. The question literally says:
"Is it really a fact that God has prohibited you from eating of all the trees of the garden?" His calculated attack against the character of God and against the wisdom of His word (law) accomplished it purpose. Eve entered into the conversation.

SIDEBAR

As a sidebar let me just remind us that our conscience is a God-given alarm system.

It becomes activated whenever we approach evil, or evil approaches us. Your conscience will tell you when something is wrong, even if others tell you it is right. The first sign to you that your conscience has been awakened is when this question pops into your mind: "Is this right for me to do?" If you fail to listen to this signal, you will then begin to think of A reason why the activity in question is all right.
The continuing in wrong reasoning will lead to a seared conscience.

As Eve entered into the conversation, she added words to Gods command. By adding words to Gods word she became vulnerable to the continued onslaught of the enemy. When Satan can't get us to deny God's word, he will tempt us to distort its' meaning or add restrictions which were not intended by God. When we do this we begin to feel a sense of being hemmed in – without freedom. Since Eve voluntary added a restriction to God's word, the enemy was quick to act. He ridicules God, and plants doubt in Eve's mind as to what God actually said.

He then bates her with the promise of an immediate good, which in reality contains evil concealed. She then takes a good look at the tree and its fruit.

If you allow yourself to continue looking at what God has forbidden or to visualize the potential delight or pleasure of it in your mind, you will certainly be defeated.

James 1:14-15 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

She fell to the three areas of Satan's continual temptation:

- Lust of the flesh
- Lust of the eyes
- Pride of life

When ever we have fallen, God wants us to return to Him. Much could have been prevented had this story have come to a conclusion with repentance.

But again God knew it wouldn't. That's why Jesus would come as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

What is it that you do when temptation knocks at your door? It will you know. Be prepared. It will seek to rob you of your wholeness in Christ, don't let it.