

TEMPTATION

Years ago, when I was working, I bought donuts for the staff and volunteers on a Saturday at a subcenter in Oak Park. I took my donuts to work and at the end of the day (which was only until noon) I had five donuts left. Looking at the donuts and knowing there were only four of us at home, I ate one. Now I had four. I started out for home about 45 minutes away and looked at the donuts and thought I might as well eat mine. Now I had three. I realized the kids would fight over the one with chocolate icing, so I ate that one. Now I had two and three people at home. My Husband was going to wonder why he did not get a donut and the kids did so I ate the other two. In the space of an hour, I ate five donuts, and they were not small donuts but regular size donuts. I did not eat lunch that day and the sugar rush did make me move faster and get the weekly cleaning and laundry done in record time. Impulse eating is when you grab something and shove it in your mouth with no thought of consequences. We've probably all been guilty of this at one time or another. I thought about these donuts when someone on Facebook was writing about the fact that they had eaten most of the Easter Candy and now did not have enough for the baskets. Her intentions were good, but she had succumbed to the call of the chocolate eggs. Temptation is rampant at this time of year. There is a comic strip that shows a mother obsessed with eating the ears off the chocolate bunny rabbit in her daughters Easter Basket. The child tries every year to keep the chocolate rabbit away from her mother but fails and always finds an earless rabbit. The temptation is just too big.

Jesus gave us lessons about temptation. In Matthew 4 Jesus is tempted to turn away from God.

Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread. Jesus answered, "It is written, man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, "It is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test." Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you" he said, "If you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me Satan for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

As I read these words from Matthew, I thought of the number of gambling commercials we see on television. These commercials appeal to those seeking to get rich quick. They are temptation for the poor and the struggling. The people who actually win from gambling are few and far between, but these commercials are a draw to those who can least afford to spend their money on gambling. I talked to a woman who told me of her struggle to stop gambling, she had lost everything, declared bankruptcy, and was trying to work her way back to solvency. The more she played, the more she lost, and the more she lost the more she thought she was sure to win soon and so the more she played. She had become trapped in a whirlpool of addiction before she finally realized she had a problem and by then she had lost everything. I know people who frequent the casinos, and they take a set amount of money with them, leave their debit cards at home and when the money is gone, they are done. They only spend what they feel they can afford for an evenings entertainment in a fun setting. Gambling can be fun when you have the money to spare but for the people struggling to buy groceries, gas, and pay rent or mortgages it can be a trap.

Lord, hear our prayers. We pray for those who suffer addictions, for those who struggle, for those just trying to get by. Give them strength, give them peace, give them hope and perseverance. Be with those who are sick and those who grieve. Be with those in our midst who are lonely and need a voice of concern and caring, may we be that voice. Be with our church may we be the hands and feet of Christ. Bless our Pastor, grant him safe days and restful nights, bless his ministry and be with his family. Be with our staff and leaders, give them inspiration and vision. In Jesus name, Amen

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