

Home Group Study Notes - 18/4/21

Temptation

Note for study leader: *You might find there's too much to look at fully here. If so, choose what would be best to concentrate on for your group. The talk on Sunday was based on James 1 so it would be good to look at that. And it would be great to give people an opportunity to talk about their struggles with temptation and pray for one another. God bless you as you lead today.*

Introduction

What do people find really tempting? Try not to go into any deep feelings or issues at this point - that comes later if people are willing. Talk about the word 'temptation' and find out what it means for people.

Discovery & Discussion

David and Bathsheba. Read 2 Samuel 11:1-17 & 26-27. If you've looked at this story in your group recently, you could just ask someone to summarise it to save time.

Then, before you discuss it, read Ephesians 2:1-3.

How were David's actions like those in this bit of Ephesians? Yet David was 'the Lord's anointed'! So how could this be!? Discuss.

With the last verse of 2 Samuel 11 in mind, read Psalm 50:17-21 (which is to rebellious Israel).

Discuss: do you ever feel unsure if what you do is OK or not in God's sight? How can you be sure? (NB - Spirit, Word etc. The Alpha course suggests 5 C's - commanding scripture, compelling Spirit, common sense, counsel of the saints, circumstantial signs).

What happened next to David? Read 2 Samuel 12:1-14, or, again, summarise it, focussing on the fact that David was outraged at the story (of what he'd done!), and on his punishments. Discuss.

Read James 1:13-15 & 21-25.

Suggest that v14 & 15 could be expressed in maths equations like this:

Desire + Temptation = Sin

Sin x Time = Death

(Or don't if you don't like maths!)

Discuss what 'death' means here, linking it to Eph 2:1 (which I think begins as a sort of moral death - a gradual diminishing in the life we were meant to live as Christians, to quote Tom Wright). What does it mean for a Christian?

Then look at James 1:21-25 (because this is all feeling a bit doom and gloom!) and the idea that 'looking intently' at the word involves reading it, working out its meaning, meditating on it, and acting on it. How does that help us fight temptation?

Read Eph 2:4-10 and praise God for what he's done. Link the 'good work he has prepared for us' there to v23 in James 1.

If you have time, consider this quote from CS Lewis in 'The Screwtape Letters'.

'It's funny how mortals always picture us ('junior devils') as putting things into their minds; in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.'

How true is that? And what does it mean for us?

Recommend people read and meditate on Psalm 1 and the contrast between those who 'walk, stand and sit' in wickedness and those who meditate on God's word day and night - and the destiny of them both. You probably won't have time to read it through and talk about it, but if you do - great!

Response

Encourage deeper delving into the Word.

Ask how people who attempted the bible memory challenge I gave out a couple of months ago got on. Get anyone who wants to, to recite something they've learned from scripture. It's not too late to have a go. Maybe set a date in the future to look again at it. There are tips on how to do it below.

Finally, and very importantly, invite people to share regarding temptation. Be specific about those cravings we find it hard to resist, and how we might have learned to fight and overcome them. Pray for each other.

God bless you as you meet today.

Mike

Tips for memorising a chunk of the bible (chapter or psalm):

- Write or type it out on paper - unless you only ever use one, paper bible (this keeps it in the same format while you learn it, which helps it burn into your memory);
- Put all of it on one page, ideally with multiple columns;
- Break it up into chunks - maybe 3 or 4 per column;
- Use colour, different fonts etc;
- Make 2 or 3 copies (e.g. for one downstairs, one upstairs and one .pdf version on phone / tablet);
- Learn a verse a day, and recite the whole lot multiple times a day, ideally at a time you're not having to concentrate on what you're doing much, e.g. as you have a walk;
- Try, particularly, to memorise the start of sections so that you can get going on each one each time;
- Try to figure out the meaning of complex sections. I reckon its best to use a close translation rather than a paraphrase like the Message, because you have the proper meaning of it, which you can come to understand as you learn it;
- Ruminant on it as you walk, sit, lie in bed at night - it will become a place you enjoy being;
- Of course, ask the Holy Spirit to help you with it all. May God bless you as you give it a go and, maybe, make it a way of life.