

How God Can Provide You Escape From Today's Cultural Temptations

I have been a committed Christ-follower since 1978, and I have experienced many tests, trials and temptations. The following are the six seasons for tests and temptations that I have observed during my Christian walk.

1. Tests come before a great assignment. I have found that right before God wants to do something great, either in an event or in my life and ministry, there is an extraordinary amount of resistance against me. At the beginning of my Christian journey, this was confusing, but as I matured, I realized if I did not get opposition from the enemy, it was a sign that I was probably missing God. Hence, when there is great spiritual warfare, I have confidence that God is ready to do something big! This gives me the endurance and patience I need to continue, despite any intense difficulty.

2. Tests come right after a completed assignment. Through the years, I have discovered that Satan attacks right after great achievements or victories because he desperately desires to prevent our forward motion. Often, after experiencing a significant success, we are not on guard. This is usually the time we are most vulnerable to attacks from the enemy. This is similar to what happened after the prophet Elijah reached his highest peak in ministry. When Elijah called down fire from heaven, proving to Israel that Jehovah was the true God over Baal, the wicked Queen Jezebel threatened his life.

This caused him extreme discouragement to the point of wanting to end his life (1 Kings 18-19). We also read in the Gospels that after Jesus had a great glimpse of the glory of His father, on the Mount of Transfiguration, a strong case of

demonic oppression was manifested. It was so strong that even His disciples couldn't deal with it or cast it out (Matt. 17:1-20).

I have learned the hard way that after every personal breakthrough or victory, I have to be on high alert so that I'm not blindsided by an attack.

3. Tests come in between a prophetic word and its fulfillment.

One of the most significant tests I have experienced is waiting for a prophetic word to be fulfilled. Often, it's difficult to discern the timing of a prophetic word. As a result, many assume a prophetic word will be fulfilled soon after they receive it. My experience has shown me otherwise! Sometimes I have had to wait years before words spoken to my heart by God were ever fulfilled. Some words spoken decades ago have still not come to pass. This is a great test of faith.

Abraham experienced a similar test when God told him he would have a son, and he had to wait several decades before Isaac was born (Gen. 12-21). Not only that, but after Isaac was born, God tested Abraham's obedience by telling him to sacrifice his son on the altar (Gen. 22). In light of this, after we receive a word from the Lord, we need to ponder it in our heart as Mary did concerning Jesus (Luke 2:19). We have to discern both the timing and interpretation of it and rest in the Lord until it comes to pass. We need to continue in well-doing and not faint because, in due season, we will reap our reward (Gal. 6:9). This is perhaps the hardest of all the tests.

4. Temptation comes when you are at your weakest point.

In studying the Gospels, we learn that the devil came to tempt Jesus after He fasted for 40 days (Luke 4). After Jesus overcame all of the temptations, the Bible says that the devil left Jesus alone until a more opportune time came (Luke 4:13). I have learned that the devil doesn't have mercy upon

believers when they are weak, tired, discouraged, angry, bitter, offended, sick or burned out. Instead, that's when he assaults us the most. We must never think that the devil feels sorry for us or will have mercy upon us when we are struggling. This is why we have to have covenant relationships with mature Christians who will come around us when we are weak. We need brothers and sisters in Christ who can help pray us through in our weakest moments. Along these lines, I have also learned never to make major decisions or communicate sensitive information to others when I am weary, tired, discouraged or angry. When one is in a weak emotional position, it's difficult to discern God's will.

5. Temptation comes when you are bored. Second Samuel 11 illustrates how King David fell into adultery and murder when he was idle. He stayed home while the other kings went to battle. Often, because people do not have a strong sense of purpose, they get bored. As a result, they may get involved in adulterous relationships because they yearn for excitement and stimulation. I have found that the only thing that saves me during mundane times is my deep intimacy with the Lord. As long as my primary motivation for living comes from seeking and knowing God (and not from ministry), then, when I experience mundane times, I use that time to seek and study the ways of God (which further prepares me for the next big thing I will face).

6. Temptation comes when you lose your primary focus. Along with the last point, temptation comes when we allow distractions to keep us away from the main things we are called to focus on in life.

Besides our walk with the Lord and our commitment to family and church, we all have a primary assignment we should focus on. One of the greatest temptations I have faced in life is not necessarily a sinful temptation, but being presented with many good opportunities that are not from God. Accepting these can wear us out and keep us from maximizing our time and focus

on our primary assignments. The enemy of God's best is often disguised in the form of good opportunities. We have to continually focus so we can keep "the main thing the main thing."

Finally, I thank God that He always provides a way of escape from temptations. He is always with us during our fiery trials and tests (1 Cor. 10:13, Isa. 43:2-3). {eoa}

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