

Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Central idea

With the world, Satan, and the flesh arrayed against us, we must watch against the temptations that constantly beset us. We can effectively do so by knowing our enemy, knowing our weaknesses and strengths, and mounting a good offense, that is, by meditating on God's Word and by prayer.

Developing the Discipline of Grace

1. The indifference of the *Titanic's* captain and crew toward the hazards for North Atlantic shippers resulted in the world's greatest maritime disaster. This irresponsibility resembles the cavalier attitude many believers have toward icebergs of temptation.
 - a. When has someone you love hit upon an "iceberg" (such as marital failure, financial bankruptcy, drug addiction, or a job loss due to ethical violation) that tore a hole in his or her ship?
 - b. What were the signs this person failed to watch for?
2.
 - a. What are some sins you can't imagine ever committing?
 - b. How do you respond to the warning that you should consider yourself capable of even these things? (Are you skeptical? Sobered? Why?)
3. Read Matthew 26:36-56.
 - a. What temptations do you think Jesus faced in this situation?
 - b. How did watching and prayer help Him resist those temptations?
 - c. Instead of watching and praying with Jesus, His disciples fell asleep. What temptations overtook them because they were too weak to resist?

- d. In verse 41, Jesus said they would have been strong enough to resist those temptations if they had simply disciplined themselves to watch and pray. Why do you suppose watching and praying would have made any difference?
4. “The world” pressures us to conform to its values and practices through advertising, pop psychology, magazines, movies, and television programs. Give an example of how you have experienced this pressure.
5. Do you agree that “Christians are no more than five to ten years behind the world in embracing most sinful practices”? Why, or why not?
6. While it is difficult to distinguish between an attack from Satan and a temptation from the world, sometimes it does seem that Satan is attacking us directly. For instance, a Sunday school teacher was sitting alone in church one Sunday because his wife was ill. A woman from his class, who apparently had an unhappy marriage, sat down next to him and subtly began to suggest an affair. This temptation came out of nowhere without warning, in an environment where one would least expect it. This would appear to be a direct frontal assault from the Devil, whereas temptation from the world comes over time through little indiscretions. The sex act is then fantasized in the mind before it is eventually acted out. Can you recall any experiences when a temptation to sin seemed to assault you out of nowhere? If so, describe it.
7. The world and the Devil act in concert with an evil desire within us, which constantly searches for occasions to express itself. It is like a radar system constantly scanning the environment for temptations to which it can respond. For instance, Jerry Bridges radar used to identify ice cream stores without fail. What does your “temptation radar” scan for?
- Donut Shops
 - Garage Sales
 - New cars
 - Old cars
 - Cute members of the opposite sex
 - Scandalous or gossipy news
 - Magazines in checkout lines
 - Skin flicks on cable TV in hotel rooms
 - Other (name it)

8. Since each of us is vulnerable in different areas, it's important to identify them and then be honest with ourselves about our own weak spots. For example, knowing his own lustful heart, Bridges has made a personal commitment not to turn on the television at random when he is alone in a hotel room. Think of one of your own weaknesses. What would be a wise precaution you should take to guard yourself in this vulnerable area?

9. Give an example of a temptation you face because of your environment or occupation.

10. Bridges prays "Lord, keep me on a short leash". That is, "Don't let me get away with the little sins. Give me a tender conscience that will recognize the little sins and sound the alarm bell in my heart". Would you be willing to commit to praying this daily for yourself? Why, or why not?

What's the point of all this?

In previous sessions we addressed the area of persistent sin patterns in our lives, those temptations to which we are especially vulnerable. We have seen that, having identified our own areas of vulnerability, we should make definite commitments regarding them, pray about them, and memorize specific verses of Scripture that will strengthen us against those temptations. Now we should add another help: Be especially watchful against them.