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"A Tempting Thought ..."
Matthew 4:1-11

We are often tempted. It is an inevitable part of life...and yet it frequently seems to surprise us...even perhaps annoy us...but it is real and we have to learn how to recognize and deal with it.

Temptation is not in and of itself a sin, but we should not make fun of it, make light of it, or even dismiss it as a mental game. It often begins in our mind and that is the very place to begin ... James 1:14-15 tells us: "... each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it has been conceived, brings forth sin: and the sin, when it is acted upon, brings forth death." Our desires and lusts begin in our thoughts and that is where the struggle with temptation is either won or lost. We have two really good examples of how to deal with temptation, Adam and Eve in the Garden and Jesus in the Desert.

What is Temptation?

It is a test.

It can strengthen our trust and faith.

It reveals our heart and our priorities.

Adam and Eve:

Sinless in a perfect environment.

Given one rule.

Thought about and considered the temptation.

Did not consider talking to God about it.

Gave into it.

Jesus in the Desert

Led by the Holy Spirit into a desolate, hostile environment.

Three separate temptations.

Did not think about or consider those temptations.

Turned immediately to God's Word in response.

Another temptation in a place of refuge and refreshment.

Struggled with the temptation to obey.

Surrendered His will to God the Father.

Temptation is not a sin. Temptation is not an innocent thing however ... because how we deal with can lead to sin. Temptation can hurt you ... it can lead you to do things that will bring pain and sorrow into your life and the lives of those around you ... because sin does nothing but destroy everything it touches. That is why we must take temptation seriously and not play or flirt with it. We must make temptation captive to Jesus ... bring those tempting thoughts to Him and allow His word to guide our actions ... we must take temptation and the sin it brings seriously - Jesus did ... can we afford to do anything less?