

Crafting Temptation and Repentance Plans to Help Addicts

Keith Palmer

A. Why plan for temptation and repentance?

B. 3 aspects of addiction counseling strategy:

1. Offensive (Ps. 119:9-10)
2. Defense (1 Cor. 10:13)
3. Special Teams/Repentance (Pss. 32, 51)

C. Temptation:

1. Genesis 39
2. Romans 13:14
3. 1 Corinthians 10:13
4. James 1:13-16
5. Hebrews 4:14-16

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D. Crafting a robust temptation plan:

1. Simple
2. Designed to break the building momentum of temptation
3. Examples:

i. Example 1 (kids)

- Stop
- Get away (Gen. 39:12, 1 Cor. 6:18, 10:14, 1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:22)
- Pray (Heb. 4:14-16)
- Obey

ii. Example 2

- Flee to safe place
- Pray for help
- Call accountability partner
- Review counseling notes (verses, strategies, etc.) – Analyze and make changes

4. Fine tune for specific counselee

E. Repentance:

1. Psalm 32

2. Psalm 51

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F. Crafting a robust repentance plan

1. _____ the sin to God and seek His forgiveness

Psalm 32:5 - *I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

2. Confess the sin and seek forgiveness from those you sinned against

Luke 17:3-4 - *"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," forgive him."*

3. Confess the sin to another brother in Christ who is helping you with accountability and can pray for you. Be completely open and honest.

James 5:16 - *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

4. Take steps of radical _____ to avoid temptation in the future. This would include steps such as installing blocking software on your computer and/or phone, etc.

Matt 5:29-30 - *"If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.*

5. What actions of righteousness do you need to implement to _____ the sin?

Eph 4:22-24 - *that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

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To help with this step, ask yourself these questions:

- a. In this specific instance of sin, what should I have been doing?
- b. What are ten specific ways I can show sacrificial love to my wife? (If you are not married, what are ten things you can do to love and serve various people in your church, neighborhood, or workplace?)
- c. Are there areas of responsibility that I have been neglecting?
- d. Are there personal projects, ministries, household duties, or other God-honoring activities that I need to start doing but I have been putting off?

6. Ask God to _____ your heart

Ps 139:23-24 - Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

- a. What self-serving desires and motives do you see? Confess them to God. What God-honoring and others-serving desires and motives should you replace them with?
- b. When do you think this particular temptation began?
- c. What is the main “pleasure” that pornography offers that is attractive to you? (use the following table to help you). Once you identify the main pleasure (from the “promise of porn” column), next note suggested attributes of God and gospel virtues to meditate on. These will give you biblical truths by which you can renew your mind and help you to form gospel-centered resolutions that are specific to your heart’s temptation.

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Promise of porn	Typical context	Faith in God	Gospel virtue
Respect	Inadequacy and fear of rejection	God is glorious – He is the One we should fear	Call yourself to pursue God’s glory
Relationship	Fear of intimacy and risk / desire for relationship	God is great – He is sovereign over our relationships	Call yourself to contentment in Him
Refuge	Hardship or fear of failure	God is great – He is sovereign over our lives	Call yourself to take refuge in Him
Reward	Boredom and sacrifice	God is good – He is our ultimate and lasting joy	Call yourself to delight and joy in Him
Revenge	Frustration and anger	God is gracious – He gives us more than we deserve	Call yourself to patience and returning good for evil
Redemption	Guilt and self-loathing	God is gracious – He is the one who atones for sin	Call yourself to humility

Chart is adapted from Tim Chester, *Closing the Window* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 64.

- d. In what other areas of your life do you see selfishness and living for self instead of for God and others?

2 Cor 5:14-15 - *For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.*

Matt 22:36-39 - *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'" This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."*

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- i. At work?
 - ii. With your family?
 - iii. In eating?
 - iv. In leisure and hobbies?
 - v. At church?
7. By God's grace, what commitments to action do you need to make?
- 1 Tim. 4:7b - ...*discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness*
8. Meditate on and rest in the benefits of being "in Christ" (Romans 6-8, 2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 2:20)

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Appendix: Offensive plan

PRELIMINARY STEPS:

- Begin with Painfully Honest Evaluation (Ps. 139:23-24)
 - How often do you struggle?
 - When do you typically struggle?
 - In what context(s) do you struggle?
 - What patterns do you see in your struggle?
 - Beware of the eternal danger of not fighting (Matt. 5:28-30, cf. 1 John 3:9-10).

- Turn to Christ in Genuine Repentance (Pss. 32, 51, Rom. 7:24-25)
 - Avoid false saviors:
 - Trying harder
 - Making rules
 - Praying more
 - Forming resolutions
 - Giving in to discouragement
 - Relying on biblical principles with relying on Christ
 - It is only because we are “in Christ” that we have any hope for growth and change (Rom. 6).

- Implement Radical Prevention Steps (Matt. 5:29-30)
 - Remove sources of temptation (computer/internet, movies, certain contexts, jobs, people, etc.).
 - Install blocking & accountability software to all computers, phones, and other internet-capable devices.
 - Restrict access to cable, satellite, or on-demand video services like Netflix, Vudu, iTunes, or Amazon.
 - Re-design your schedule and daily routine so that it promotes godliness, not sin.
 - Surround yourself with godly men.

OFFENSIVE PLAN:

1. Spend daily time with God in His Word and prayer
 - a. My daily time and place is _____
 - b. My Bible reading plan is _____
 - c. Things I am praying for _____

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2. Read over each of the following Scriptures every day:

2 Timothy 2:22, Job 31:1, Proverbs 5:21, Ps. 119:9-16, Prov. 6:27, Phil. 4:8, 1 Thess. 4:3-8, Lev. 19:2, 1 Tim. 6:11, Eph. 5:3, Col. 3:5, Matt. 28:28-30

- a. Memorize one of the above verses per week.
- b. For the verse you are memorizing, write one specific, practical application that you can do *today*. Do one application per day.

3. Attend a worship service every Sunday. Commit yourself to a local body of believers in a Bible-teaching church.

Hebrews 10:23-25 - *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

4. Get involved in a small group or discipleship group in your church. A small group or discipleship group is a context where you can practice the “one anothers” of Scripture, receive the ministry of others, and build relationships where “speaking the truth in love” can occur.

Eph 4:14-16 - *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

5. Find a ministry in your church that you can get involved with. If possible, try to get involved with a ministry that involves serving other people.

1 Peter 4:10 - *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

6. Seek out an older, godly man who can disciple you and specifically hold you accountable with your struggle.

Titus 2:6-8 - *Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.*

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7. Practice the principle of radical amputation.

Matt 5:29-30 - "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

- a. What things are causing you to be tempted? As Jesus commands, remove these things so that you will no longer be tempted (this may mean adding blocking software to the internet or getting rid of home internet service, removing cable TV service, avoiding certain people or places, etc.)

Rom 13:14 - But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

- b. What things are you doing which are “making provision for the flesh” and leading you to temptation?

8. What sexual-related thoughts and fantasies have you been entertaining? These need to be put-off and replaced with godly, Christ-exalting thoughts and desires.

Eph 4:22-24 - that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

- a. It is helpful with these things to already have a “put-on” list in mind so that you have something to think about when sinful thoughts arise.

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PUT-OFF	PUT-ON
I'm tired and stressed out, I need some relief...	Lord, I'm tired and stressed. I need your grace to sustain me. Help me to find peace in You alone.
I just want to feel the rush of looking at...	Father, only you can bring godly pleasure to my soul. Help me to see the deception of the temptation I feel right now. Might I find joy in the pleasures which are in Your right hand.
She looks....	Father, that woman is Yours: made in Your image by You and for You. Any sexual beauty she has is reserved for her husband alone. Help me to honor her as a fellow image-bearer and to think of her as a sister whom I am called to serve and treat with purity.
I'll just look for a minute...	"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision [no plan to indulge] for the flesh in regard to its lusts." I must kill this thought now. Instead, I'm going to go ask my mom if I can help with any chores.
It will feel so good to...	"For the lips of an adulteress drip honey And smoother than oil is her speech; 4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword." – Prov. 5:3-4
God will forgive me	"Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be!" – Rom. 6:1
No one will know	"For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths" – Prov. 5:21
I can't resist this temptation. It is too strong!	"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." – 1 Cor. 10:13

- b. Since sexual temptation often comes to the mind as an image, having "righteous images" to replace them with is essential.
- c. Romans 13:14 offers a helpful "put-on/put-off" admonition:
 - "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" – His desires, thoughts, provision, etc.
 - Put off – "make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." - The word "provision" means "thoughtful planning to meet a need." This verse commands us to not even begin to "make a plan" to indulge in sexual lust, but to kill the desire as soon as it comes.

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d. Now come up with some replacement thoughts of your own:

- _____
- _____
- _____

9. Read Romans 6. How does your status as a believer in Jesus Christ equip you to battle sin? Write down at least five commands from Romans 6 to make a regular part of your daily life:

10. Do a biblical study of sexual intimacy. In what ways is your view of sex unbiblical? For help on the study, see Stuart Scott's chapter, "Physical Intimacy" in *The Exemplary Husband* (Focus Press, 2000). This is a good study for married men. Single guys may benefit more from Tim Challies, *Sexual Detox: A Guide for Guys Who are Sick of Porn* (Cuneiform press, 2010).

Resources

Brian Hedges, *Licensed to Kill: A Field Manual for Mortifying Sin* (Cruciform Press, 2011)

Kris Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within* (P&R, 1998)

C. John Miller, *Repentance* (CLC, 2010)

John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, edited by Kelly Kapic and Justin Taylor (Crossway, 2006)

J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, reprint (Charles Nolan, 2001).

Stuart & Zondra Scott, *Killing Sin Habits* (Focus, 2013)

Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, reprint (Banner of Truth, 2002)