



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
January-February 2026

Be Real. . . Temptation Is

By Bob Van Domelen

[This is a modified revisit first shared January 2014 and reprinted in "Can I Tell You Something: Words of Encouragement and Hope for the Modern Day Leper"]

"¹³ When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." James 1:13-15

I can recall few experiences more exciting than being caught up in a wave of God-centered praise and worship. Over the years I have had the privilege of attending some wonderful conferences where hundreds of participants would begin each session this way.

While I sometimes initially hesitated in my enthusiasm, there always came a time when I knew I was part of a whole. When that happened, I did not feel restricted in the presence of other expressions of worship, and I let my voice soar when it wanted to soar or seek its own stillness despite ongoing hymns elevated in joy. In those moments, I was alone, but I was also part of a faith community, a great place to be.

Not long ago, I was with a group of people and among this group was a man I will call Sam. He had recently been released from prison, shared that he was registered with the state, and had just met his parole agent. Sam also spoke of his new church family and what some of them had been doing to help him in his re-entry.

His enthusiasm was infectious and I thought, "Wouldn't it be great if all those with sex-related offenses would find such support on the outside?" Sadly, few do.

Sensing the attention of others, Sam went on to explain that he had been saved while in prison, that Jesus was his Lord and Savior, and that because of his relationship with Christ, he had been completely set free. As I looked around the room, I saw heads nodding in approval and even heard a few say "Praise God!"

In that moment, however, I began to feel a little anxious and certainly a little uncomfortable. Red flags started waving in my mind as I listened. I confess here and now that I remember talking to Sam later and all I offered was "Stay in the Lord." How was what I had just said any different from what he had been sharing with us?

I did not caution him about his risk potential (as I should have done) or about seeking balance in his testimony, a balance that would include the need for accountability.

Instead, I asked a friend, "How long before Sam is back in prison?" The fact that we shared the same concern should have been a clear sign that we had a responsibility to Sam. I am sorry to say that we both failed.

A few months later, Sam was revoked though I never learned exactly why. All I knew was that he had stretched the boundaries set for him to a point that he was revoked. That there was no new offense would not have made a difference, however. It was sufficient to understand that something of the old man in him had resurfaced.

Sam is, unfortunately, not alone. Prison has a way of creating the illusion that certain temptations have disappeared and when that mindset is formed, it is easy to feel "I am no longer tempted." If there is no temptation, there is no need to be cautious, certainly not about something that doesn't even exist.

In this part of the country, ice fishing is a big deal and by midwinter, fishermen are driving their cars and trucks onto the ice where they park in front of ice shanties. As winter gives way to hints of spring and thinning ice, there are stories in the paper almost weekly about a car or truck breaking through ice barely thick enough to support body weight much less the weight of a vehicle. Because a whole fishing season had been enjoyed without incident, some mistakenly believed it would go on longer than it does. Those who had fallen through the ice had stopped watching for *signs* that the season was about to end or had, in fact, ended.

You will be tempted

*"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But **when** you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." 1 Cor. 10:13. The verse does not say "**if** you are tempted;" it says, "**when** you are tempted."*

Part of being real with ourselves and with others is not being embarrassed by this simple truth. Yet when someone who cares about us asks "How are you doing?" and we know we are wading in the mud, we must find a way to avoid saying "Fine." God's love for us is never lessened by the fact that we face temptation. Responding as we trained ourselves to respond, though, we don't see the person who is asking us the question as God's representative. And as often happens, fear of being rejected helps make "Fine" the preferred response when it shouldn't be.

Your own evil desires

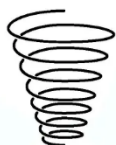
¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed." I often heard

men in prison say, "I will never abuse another child." I say the same thing. When we make that statement, however, we are truly speaking with deep conviction. "No More Victims" might be a catchphrase, but it is more than that. It is a promise we make.

But if treatment teaches anything, it is that abuse just doesn't happen all on its own. Ignoring boundaries and making other unhealthy choices helps to set the stage for the *possibility* of abuse, a possibility that will, if left unchecked, eventually become a reality.

Were the choices Sam made enough to create a new victim? Though I don't know the answer, it would be fair to say that at least some of his choices had to have been unhealthy; some boundaries had been crossed. And in that respect, he jeopardized himself and created potential options he should have been avoiding.

After desire has conceived



I think that many of us flirted with death by our choice to wallow in behaviors that became addictions, yet I have never heard any person say, "I have always wanted to be an addict." One of the best illustrations I

have seen is that of a spiral that descends a little at a time, one choice worse than the previous, until there seems no way out of the pit.

Death comes when helping hands are rejected, when a person feels that not even God can help or make a difference. But if you are reading this newsletter, you have come face to face with your descending spiral of sin choices. And you have learned that God doesn't simply erase your past—He gives you a way to deal with it. He gives you a way to be real because temptation certainly is.

Interestingly, most of the time there is no evident downward spiral, and life can look like a flat line. There is no change, because we aren't looking for a change. We don't see a gaping hole just waiting to trap us. Though a hole might be there, it *can* be avoided.

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matt 26:41

All things are possible with God!

Broken Yoke Ministries is a not for profit 501 (c)(3) corporation and operates *solely* on the contributions of people such as you. All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized. If you cannot support us financially, pray for us. *Unused stamps* are also very welcomed and a good way for those in confinement to be in partnership with this ministry.

Our Prayer Corner



Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

Let us pray

- First and foremost, for our victims and for all victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those with addictions, that each victory may be an ever-growing source of choice options when tempted.
- For those who define themselves by their sins, that each look in a mirror is an opportunity to say, "I am a child of God" and "God loves me."
- For those wallowing in their personal darkness, that they read Psalm 40:1-4 and find hope.
- For the church, that it finds ways to support those whose presence makes them uncomfortable. Jesus did.
- For families, that they find strength in the healing process God offers everyone.
- For chaplains, that they find healthy ways to rest and restore themselves in a job where peace is at a premium.
- For Bob, that as he gets older and experiences issues all seniors face, he will rely on God's love in all things, that he will continue to seek ways to serve.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter as well as being a resource for those in need of that information.
- (As Always) For those who are still abusing, that they will come to understand the devastation they bring on their victims and that they seek help for themselves.

To change from what we were to what we hope to be requires us to recognize the 'what' in us that needs to be changed.

PS If we have no struggle with our temptations, might it be because we have made them a regular choice?

Bits & Pieces

The following are taken from letters I have received. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement to you while others call out for us to be in prayer.

Do you think that the head of DOC or the administration here cares if I get out broke and homeless? As long as I don't reoffend, right?

Now, with my tablet, I figure that I will read through all they have available on SAA topics and possibly read something useful that I didn't already know. There are 20 books or pamphlets available.

Watching my heartbeat in a recent echocardiogram and seeing all the diagrams of the heart and how it works reinforced the fact that only God could have designed and created man. Pure chance would never have given us the systems in our bodies that keep us alive.

Some days the main challenge in my life is controlling me. God has the rest and has already proven it. He's clearly spoken His word and made provisions for all of it. So, I'll simply keep working on me. The Serenity Prayer is really that – serenity. There's so much peace in knowing Him who is in control.

I am rediscovering that temptations seem to get more intense if I am feeling bored. I try to stay busy doing multiple things but still seem to get stuck sometimes. I do know that when I get out the hymnal and start singing hymns, the temptations lessen and eventually disappear. I just need to reach for the hymnal rather than wallow in boredom. [It's hard to worship God and surrender to Satan at the same time.]

Fear of the future is very real and self-hatred is all-consuming. Guilt, shame, and remorse hover over me like a dark storm cloud. Toxic thoughts bombard me and most days there is an intense anger bubbling beneath the surface. I manage and some would say I am thriving, but deep down the pain is intense and never goes away.

Every now and then I get a letter from someone who comments on this column and argues that I need to share more notes with a positive focus. I do try to do that, but I also know that sometimes seeing positive comments only makes a person without them feel even more separated, more like a lost cause.

The previous note came from an intelligent man who clearly knows where he is meant to be but is caught in the struggles of self-image because of his crimes. I believe God will bring wholeness to his life, but I also know that he needs our prayers just as he is meant to pray for us. So, let's start praying!



Write Bob at:

Bob Van Domelen
Broken Yoke Ministries
PO Box 5824
De Pere, WI 54115-5824

Bits & Pieces is based on letters I get. If you want to share, please consider contributing.

There is Life after Prison

"The Road Not Taken?"

by Don

Not a real long time ago for some of us, Sheryl Crowe had a hit song titled "Everyday is a Winding Road." I'm sure if you look back at your life, you will agree and understand firsthand what she meant. Beatles Paul McCartney later added, "The long and winding road that leads me to your door will never disappear."

So, "What has that got to do with me?" you ask. Well, whose road are they talking about and whose door? For now, look back on the road that led to your door - the current sallyport that you went through to get to where you are now. Is this the end of the road? For some, it seems to be. How about you? Do you have more roads to travel?

The good news is that you do. Remember that the McCartney line above ends "your door will never disappear." In short, the "door" you came in will be the "door" you go out. At the same time, that "The long and winding road" that got you in there will not "disappear" either. So, what are you going to do about it?

If you've been behind that closed "door" for quite a while, surely you know that you can just lie there day after day, like the times you were driving other long distances mindlessly watching the scenery going by automatically and reacting to traffic until you wake up to where you are. "Do I take this exit?" "Do I go right or left or straight ahead?" "Do I just stop and get someone to help by telling me where I should go?"

It's no different now. What are you going to do to be on the right road when you get out? Surely, you've seen those who just end up making a U-turn and come right back to that ever-open door. They got their chance and made the wrong turn once again while you are still sitting inside. And worst of all, they expect you all to welcome them back as they reclaim their territory, their place in prison's inside society. And they soon start plotting what they need to do to get out again. Will that be you? What road do you plan to take?

Believe it or not, you have a choice. Which exit do you plan to take? Or when you come up on that fork in the road, which road will you take?

If you haven't noticed already or maybe you've even been forced to take classes to help you, did you? Did you try to get anything out of them or just check a square for the

Parole Board? You may exist in a place where you say you don't have any choices. Oh really?

Yes, there are those around you that have that same day-to-day existence going down the same road, admiring that same scenery in that fog they lived in before - until they wake up and see where they are. Nowhere. Is that you?

If not, then get with it. Help is there. If not with Staff teaching classes or willing to talk with you, there really are trusted inmates to help you. All of them can give you directions. It really is your choice. Which fork do you want to take? Which life do you want to live that's best for you and not the other guy. That's not just behind those closed doors but, believe me, it's no different out here. When you go out that door and are once again on that long and winding road - those "roads that never disappear" - they are all too real. Look at the road that got you behind "that door." Then look at the road you've taken while behind "that door." I bet it's not straight. But you had choices. Life's road does not stop until you come to this life's dead end. And it's always long, winding curves everywhere. Up. Down. With many forks and exits.

Don't believe it's going to be any different when you get out, no matter how well you map it, no matter how prepared you think you are. How's that map going? You'll need it. And yes, reentry is very survivable and many of us are still out here waiting for you. It's not always easy nor just as we mapped it, but workable if you make that choice. Also, know that no one can do it on his own. Friends, family may not be there, but I've found (as others have) that God is - even when you think He's not. He'll guide you if you let Him. Make that choice.

A Little Humor . . .

Don't blame me – I didn't write them – I just copied them out for you.



- I once bought a Jewish GPS that was, I think, made in Egypt. I am pretty sure it was defective, though. Anywhere I wanted to go, it told me the travel time would be 40 years.
- I once got stuck in an elevator. Now I take steps to avoid them.
- "Look! A flock of cows." "Herd of cows." "Yeah, I have. There's a flock of them over here."
- What's the best thing about Switzerland? I don't know, but their flag is a plus."
- I used to be addicted to Hokey-Pokey, but I turned myself around.
- I'll never forget the last thing my grandfather said to me before he kicked the bucket. "How far do you think I can kick this bucket?"
- I told my wife she was bad with directions. She was

so mad, she packed her bags and right.

- What do you get for a man who has everything? Penicillin.
- Why do flamingos pull up one leg when standing? Because if they pulled both legs up, they'd fall.
- Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside a dog it's too dark to read.

Everything Has Changed: Registrants in Reentry

Age has a way of doing funny things to the brain – like thinking something has been shared when it hasn't. I recently responded to a letter by saying, "You might remember that I am working on a second book" and then sharing thoughts that connected with that.

A short time later, another letter arrived that began, "No. You didn't say anything about a second book." After some digging, it came to me that I only *thought* I had shared. So, I'm setting the record straight.

If all goes well, I will have finished "Everything Has Changed: Registrants in Reentry" by the time you read this newsletter. I can't say, however, how long it will take for Covenant Books to edit and produce the book.

The direction of the book will not be a resource guide with names, addresses, and phone numbers. Any such effort would be out of date by the time the book made it to a distributor's list. What I know from personal experience is that reentry involves feelings, emotion, and a host of needs we often keep to ourselves.

Each topic will be approached by sharing my experiences, those of individuals already in reentry, and a main article from *Into the Light* that will, I hope, offer some related and perhaps unrelated support. Put together, it will be a little like someone sharing things someone nearing reentry might like to know. Your prayers will be appreciated.

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)