



Links Players

Know The Difference

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (James 1:13-14 ESV)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2 ESV)

My tee shot settled at the end of the fairway, leaving a clear view of the right portion of the green. My eyes moved from the ball to the green and back again—do I go for it in two?

On the best-ball day of the pro-member event, I never try to reach this green in two. The carry over the water, paired with a small landing area, makes the risk far greater than the reward.

But temptation overruled my better judgment, and I reached for my hybrid. A one poor choice seeped in ego ended my chances to place in the pro competition for the day.

That experience led me back to Scripture to consider the difference between temptation and testing. James 1 helps us see the distinction clearly.

First, we need to understand the difference between the two. Temptation urges us to choose something contrary to God, while testing invites us to trust and obey him.

James makes it clear that God does not tempt us because he is not subject to evil. Temptation comes from Satan and from our own fleshly desires, drawing us away from God.

Once we recognize the difference and the source of each, we can begin to cultivate discernment in the circumstances we face each day.

This can be difficult, because the same circumstance may contain both a test and a temptation. A hard situation may be a test through which God strengthens our faith, while the response we are drawn toward within that situation may be a temptation.

A few questions can help us discern the difference.

What is God asking me to learn in this circumstance? As James writes, "The testing of your faith produces steadfastness." Is God growing patience, trust, obedience, humility, or perseverance in us through this situation?

Am I being tempted to do something contrary to God's desire for me? God does not lead us toward dishonesty, bitterness, pride, unforgiveness, greed, or revenge.

What direction will my choice take me? When a situation feels hard or confusing, we can pause and choose to trust God.

Temptation, however, tells us we do not need Him and urges us to act on impulse—to go ahead and go for it.

In summary, there is a difference between a test and a temptation. God may test us, but He does not tempt us. In every circumstance we are called to move toward steadfastness, trust, and obedience to God—and away from anything that draws us into temptation.

Prayer: Lord, help me in trust you in my circumstances today.

Tracy Hanson

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