

How to Deal with Temptations

Steve Brown

Fishing lures fascinate me. From a human perspective, they look ridiculous. It makes no sense that something so big, flashy, shiny and laced with sharp hooks would be inviting to a fish.

But if you are a hungry fish looking at the lure from underwater, they look like the gift of easy food. Until he bites down on it. Then everything changes. The hooks begin their work, the line pulls, and the battle ensues. What seemed tantalizing in one moment becomes potentially deadly. And it all started with a clearly ridiculous looking lure.

We have more in common with a fish than we may first think. We can be drawn to temptations that are much like fishing lures. They can look ridiculous from an objective perspective, but in the moment, the temptation can still be strong. If we act on the temptation, we can have trouble breaking free, or worst-case scenario, it can lead to our demise.

Every temptation starts with a lure. Every temptation involves a choice—to pursue the temptation or to pursue holiness.

In a "post-truth" world, holiness can seem like an old-fashioned idea. Examples abound of self-righteousness, legalism and lists of rules. Holiness can seem impossible this side of heaven, so some wonder "why we should even bother?" After all, there are worse things going on in the world than what we might be doing, and the cross covers it all anyway.

Minimizing holiness is one of those carefully designed fishing lures. As the angels sang in Isaiah's powerful vision, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty." God is holy and he hates sin, even a whiff of it. Jesus faced all the "fishing lures" we can face yet was without sin. He bore all our sins that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. The Holy Spirit lives in us and makes the transforming power of God available to us moment by moment.

Holiness matters. **We are called to be holy. Hebrews 12:14 says, "...without holiness no one will see the Lord."** But pursuing holiness is hard. Temptations abound. We have a battle waging within us. We also have an adversary who is adeptly skilled at handcrafting fishing lures.

Being a Christian leader also involves unique temptations and makes you a high-value strategic target. Isolation, shame, masks and a sense of powerlessness are the evil one's goal. Plus, the evil one delights in the prospect of collateral damage beyond the leader.

As we journey toward Holy Week, is holiness your longing? Are you nibbling around a lure? Has a lure trapped you? **Whatever your reality today, leaning into God's grace, truth, power and people are keys to freedom and holiness.**

May this prayer for holiness help you live and Lead Different:

Holy God,

Thank you that you are holy through and through. You are set apart and pure. Forgive me for minimizing holiness or seeking holiness as a badge of honor. Forgive me for pursuing temptations rather than holiness. Search me and know me. Show me if there is any offensive way in me.

Create in me a pure heart. Set me free by your power. Sanctify me by your truth.

Strengthen me through Christian community. Protect me from the evil one.

May I be set apart for your glory, for my best and so others see you.

I pray these things in the name of Jesus who frees me from condemnation and is the way, the truth and the life.