

Sermon Title: Temptation, Feedback Loop, Week Two

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Sermon Questions:

Discuss what it looks like to partner with God. Can you give some examples in your own life?

Sanctification is the process of progressively finding more satisfaction and joy in God than in the world. Discuss what this looks like in your own life. How do you partner with God to have this happen?

Phones are a temptation into every form of sin. Discuss how it tempts you in each of the 7 categories we reviewed in the sermon (Sins against God, Sins of the heart, Sins of behavior, Sins of speech, Sexual sins, Relational sins, and Sins of omission).

What changes are you considering regarding your phone to help you partner with God to fight against the temptations it causes?

Transcript

It is a great joy to be here face to face, and that is fantastic. At Gladden and a shout out towards Katera watching on the screens for the first time. It is very fun. We're starting with a truth in scripture that is really there from beginning to end about partnership. All the way through Scripture, we are called to partner with God in his work and the way this, this works.

So you, you could, you can boast that God is your provider, and yet anyone in here who works, which is every single person here, you go to a job and there are days on the job that are grueling and you're not even wanting to be there in the moment. And God is your provider, but you have to work in the provision. In fact, if you said to me, God's my provider, so I'm just going to spend frivolously and go into debt, I'd say, well, that's not understanding scripture much. If you said, God is my wisdom, I'm going to say, hallelujah, yes, God is your wisdom. But if you say God is my wisdom, and as a student, you say that means I'm going to blow off studying for this test because God is my wisdom, I'm going to say that that's, that's not really a wise use of scripture.

You're misunderstanding things. If you say, God is my protector, I'm going to say, yes, God is your protector. He is my protector. It's still good to wear a seatbelt, pop a helmet on your head. Depending on the circumstances, we partner with God.

God is our healer. And yet it's good to get a good night's rest, and it's good to eat in a healthy

way. And it's good if we're feeling sick to see a doctor to take medicine. In those circumstances, we can say, God is my shepherd. He will open the doors in front of me.

He will guide me step by step. In fact, he will guide me into a new job. That's great. It's helpful to fill out applications and to walk through the interview process in a healthy and good way. God.

God demands our partnership with him. Consider these verses. This is First Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 10. This is Paul talking about him being an apostle. And he says, but by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain.

On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them. He's talking about being an apostle. All the other apostles, they were disciples with Jesus as he lived on this earth. Paul missed that. He did not become an apostle till after Jesus died and rose again.

So he's saying, I worked harder than all of them to be an apostle. I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. He worked, but it was the grace of God working inside of him. That truth is spelled out all through scripture in a thousand ways. Consider another passage from a completely different context in a different way.

So Old Testament, in the book of Psalms, Psalm 127, we read these words in verse one. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stay awake in vain. So the Lord is the builder of the house, but you still have people out there with hammers and nails. The Lord is the watchman.

And yet you still have a rotation of people who give up sleep to stand on the gate and watch over the city. There is a watchman. But of all the areas that we trust God and partner with him in his activity, there is none more important than in the realm of temptation and sanctification. Sanctification, the process by which God makes us holy temptation in that of fighting against temptation.

Consider these words. 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 13. You might memorize this in the morning. We're going to go back to this verse repeatedly. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it. Do you hear the partnership there? God will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. He will not let us be tempted beyond our ability.

That does not mean that he pulls the temptation away, does not mean that the desire of our heart in that temptation just disappears. He says, I am faithful and I will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, beyond your ability. I will provide a path of escape. And we have to walk that path. In fact, we have to endure it, endure the temptation by walking that way of escape.

I bring that up because we're walking through a series called Feedback Loop. We're considering the impact of screens on our life, not just phones. Look at all those notifications. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Those are my grandkids, by the way, right there.

I like phones. I'm not lost on the irony that the Cortero campus is watching on a screen right now. Screens are okay. I like my phone. But screens in particular are a gateway of temptation into our Life, we carry them in our pockets.

We have them on our bodies sometimes little screens on our watch. We carry screens with us on all the time. And they're a gateway to temptation. So we're going to consider that temptation, consider our part, our partnership with God in fighting against temptation. Now, I made a list of all the sins in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, every sin listed in the Bible that is a form of temptation.

And I broke them up into seven categories. And we're going to walk through those seven categories. So the, the first category are sins against God. This is shaped by perhaps the most prominent, the first two of the ten Commandments. You'll have no other gods before me, and you shall not worship idols.

So putting anything before God, a sin against God. Idolatry. Changing who God is worshiping with words, but not your life. Hypocrisy. Enjoying the world more than God.

In fact, that goes back. It's a fancy word, sanctification, for God making us holy. But if you said, what, what is a definition of sanctification? I would define it this way. Progressively finding more satisfaction, more enjoyment, more pleasure in God than in the world.

Progressively, on an increasing measure, finding more satisfaction in God than the world. Anytime we're finding satisfaction in the world as opposed to God, we are walking in a sin against him. Exalting self over God, ignoring God, lack of faith, unbelief, testing God, forgetting or rejecting God. Now, what would all of that have to do with screens? And when I say screen, I'm pulling out my phone a lot.

It's not just phones. In fact, you might say, well, I don't even have a phone. But your TV is on 16 hours a day. There's lots of screens. Well, my six year old doesn't have a phone, but they have that iPad, that screen, that tablet, whatever.

There are lots of screens. What does a screen have to do with sins against God? 85% of Americans, 85% start every single day looking at this first thing, the very first thing. Take Christians and even strong Christians who have made a declaration that they have a daily devotion with God on a daily basis. That's not even just saying they're Christians.

These are Christians who say, on an everyday basis, I have a devotional time with God. 73% of them look at their phone before their devotion with God. I don't know, is that a big deal?

My bride's in there with the children at the moment. But I can tell you, if I get together on a date with my bride and I pull this out to look at how the draft is going does not go well for me, does not win B points. And I can promise you this, God is significantly more jealous than my bride.

God demands that he be first in our life and nothing else comes close. You shall have no other gods before me. The first of the commandments sins against God. It's a big deal. It grabs ahold of our minds in subtle ways.

This thing is designed to subtly reshape the pathways of our brain. It's designed that our attention spans would be no more than 8 to 12 seconds. You watch modern movies today. The camera angle's changing all the time. The phone changing all the time.

The news stories, the order of the things, the scroll as you go by changing all the time. What does that have to do with God? If we want a relationship with God and we're serious about it, not just coming to church once a week or anything, if we want a relationship with God. Here, I'm going to tell you. It takes a depth and intimacy of slowing down and having margin to communicate with God.

Prayer is easy if what we mean by that is us talking to him. If you want to hear God's voice, you have to slow down. And it takes time. I'm often asked, how long does it take to write a sermon? I don't know how to answer that question.

There's lots of ways to try and answer that question. For me really what it takes to write a sermon is perhaps two five minute moments where I am immersed and anointed in the presence of God, where I feel him all through me and I hear his voice and it flows through me and a sermon is born. So all it really takes is 10 minutes. Now the reality is in general it takes like 15 to 20 hours for those two 5 minute periods of time, listening, interacting with God, it takes, it takes non distracted times of intimacy. And our phones are designed to rewire our brains so that we don't even have the ability to be able to decompress and have times of silence and solitude with God.

It is a big deal. We pick up our phones. The average American, this is just back to phones, picks up a phone to check it 352 times a day. That's once every 2.7 minutes continually for 16 hours in the day. The gentle buzz, the little addiction to look at it.

There are people who go to wherever their phone is thinking it's buzzing just because their body now feels buzzes all the time. It's addicting. I'll confess. I watch movies and if there's a slow part in the movie. I'm picking up my phone.

I'll wait till it gets exciting again. I mean, heaven forbid there's a commercial. I guarantee. I mean, I don't know if this commercial is going to be 60 seconds long, but that's 60 seconds. 60 seconds.

I can go. We're increasingly addicted to our phones, and it robs us of the ability to have intimate, meaningful times with God. In fact, it suppresses a spiritual appetite because we don't have the patience for what it is to connect in our spirit with God. Sins against God. Now, let's go back to 1 Corinthians 10.

Would you read it with me? No. Temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

So the underlying question we have to ask is, Jesus, what is the way of escape? What is the way of escape? You're giving me a second category of temptations of sin. Sins of the heart. A love of self, selfish ambition, coveting envy, jealousy, greed, love of money, hatred, bitterness, lack of submission, lack of trust, conceit, ingratitude.

The whole network of not just screens, but the Internet itself. It draws us into a place of envy. We envy other people's homes, envy other people's jobs, other people's incomes, other people's bodies, other people's lives, other people's vacations. And we create this envy off of things that aren't even real. In other words, all you're looking at is a highlight reel of the ultimate.

No one posts about their kids fighting in the backseat on a vacation. It happens, but they only post the other part. And so our envy gets stirred up in our souls. A sin, A sin of the heart. Ingratitude gets stirred up in our souls, a sin of the heart.

We get filled with anxiety, with jealousy, with envy. Have you ever been texting someone? And as you're texting, you send a message, and then you notice before you're really done, you just push send. You notice on the other end, hey, they're texting you back. And so you're wondering, hey, what are they texting me?

So you kind of wait with a little measure of anticipation, and you wait with a little measure, and then it's not coming. So you close the screen. Well, it'll pop up. And then you go back, the dot, dot, dot's gone. You think, well, what were they thinking?

What were they going to say, why aren't they responding? I know they're there. It stirs anxiety. The very nature of communication in that form stirs anxiety in us. Even though it might not be anything, our mind just spins.

Well, I, I have a loved person in my life. I don't mind saying, this is my mom. I'll just say my mom. 90% of my mom's communication with me are, could be classified by what we call butt dial. Like they don't, they're not intended to come to me.

They come at 2 in the morning, they come at 4 in the morning. It just, it just comes and it'll be nonsensical and I know what it is. And I'll say, hey, what's going on? I don't know. Why, why are you contacting me?

We don't know, but it stirs anxiety in our heart. A third category, sins of behavior. This takes it past just soul issues into actions. Murder, anger, rage, abuse, sexual immorality, theft, swindling, cheating, stinginess, a lack of gratitude, substance abuse, drunkenness, violence, brutality, control, oppression, injustice. Screens offer us anonymity.

We can be anonymous. We don't even have to disclose who we are. We can have separate accounts in someone else's name. We can put up false pictures. We can be false in all kinds of ways.

And it just separates us along the way and into a behavior of sin. Take anything good and obsess with it and it can become sin. In other words, food is a good thing. I hope you all eat food today. But gluttony is a sin.

Sexuality is a beautiful, good blessing of marriage. But fixating on it in any context is a sin. Buying things like money is a good thing. We have to buy things. I'm glad everyone has clothes on.

Like there are good things to buy. But obsessing with it, and that's what these things do. Had a friend recently I was talking to, they've been addicted in the realm of buying things, just spending. And there's something about it. You get on an app and you just go.

You don't even have to really buy it anymore. Just click it and click twice and it's done. It just shows up at your house and it got to the point where they have so many boxes coming that they don't know what's in the boxes. In fact, the joy of the buying has left them. And now it's just a box that shows up.

And so many boxes, I don't even remember what I ordered. You watch that one show and it ends and five seconds later, the next show is starting. And the next show is starting. And the next story is there. And the next story is there.

Now, again, I'm not against screens. Have I shown you my. Oh, yeah, there they are.

It's cool. Every time I click, a new picture comes up of them and I really enjoy it. I'm not saying screens are bad, but they will pull us into addiction in a heartbeat if we are not careful. First Corinthians, chapter 10. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it. Lord, what is the way of escape? What is that path for me? A fourth category, sins of speech.

We oftentimes treat these as if they're small. If you've been a part of any kind of Christian tradition over time, you probably think of, well, murder and adultery. Those are big boy sins. But gossip and slander, that's hardly worth thee saying. I mean, the reality is you can gossip and slander in a prayer request.

I really think we should pray for Judy because.

Biblically, there are three sins that church discipline deals with at the farthest extreme of excommunication, they're big deals. One is an unrepentant, deliberate, willful, false teaching. Someone who teaches contrary to Scripture knows they're doing it and refuses correction over time. That's the extreme. Likewise with willful and deliberate sin.

In fact, there's a pattern in Scripture. If someone is deliberately willful, this isn't. They're not stumbling in sin, they're not struggling to sin, they're not crying out to God, God, help me overcome this. They are deliberately sinning. You go to that person, you bring correction.

And if they refuse it, you go back with one or two people. And if they refuse it, you go back as a church in some form. And if they refuse it, if they keep pushing it, they don't receive correction. And they are in the very farthest extreme, excommunication.

But the shortest or least patient sin that the church is supposed to be less tolerant of are sins of divisiveness of speech.

Speech that tears down speech that is divisive, that divides and has hatred in. We are to have no part of, no part of. A fifth category of sin, sexual sin. This deserved its own category. It's so common amongst human beings and common in Scripture.

Adultery, fornication, lust, lewdness, self gratification, self gratification. Sexual exploitation, prostitution, homosexuality practiced. We're so anonymous, you can hide it. There was a commercial on during March Madness. So March Madness was a great season for us in Tucson.

It ended a little, you know, but it's awfully fun. And in the midst of all of that, a commercial that I saw over and over and over had the boozier family. So the Boozier family is kind of this famous basketball family, dad, you know, former NBA. The two boys playing for Duke. And that ought to be code.

Like nothing good comes out of Duke. But it all had to do with a screen that was private. In other words, if you had it right here, you could see it, but someone right here couldn't see it. And it just toyed with the idea. They can do it.

Nope. Private. You can't. Nope. It's private.

Private. So someone's walking down the street. No, that's not for you. Private screen. Private screen.

Private screen. Private screen. So the three dad and the two boys are sitting on the couch and. And dad's like, ooh, private screen. What's that?

And they're like, look at that. Does your phone have that? This is private screen. And then. And then in it, they.

They just show. And then the son is like, well, dad, let me show this. Can do. And they show it. And the Love Lagoon comes on.

This movie, the love, it's just a made up thing, but it's a sunset picture with this guy and this gal off to walk down the beach and have sex. Like, it doesn't say that exactly, but Love lagoon and the sunset and that, you know where that's going.

The whole commercial, the whole commercial is saying, take a look at these things. It's so private. No one will know what you're doing. No one knows what you're looking at. And it's a poison.

And it's not just a physical pornography. It's an emotional pornography. Invites us.

I've had a couple of friends who have gotten caught up in emotional affairs with human beings that didn't exist. Scams. But through a couple of AI conversations and pictures, back and forth, they had an emotional affair with someone else, ended up sending funds over to help out that

person.

These are dangerous tools. A gateway into temptation. Let's go back to First Corinthians, chapter 10. Would you say it with me? No.

Temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it so the question is, Lord, what? What is the way of escape that you are giving me from these temptations? What is my role in partnership with you?

To fight against this, even to fight the very subtle rewiring of my brain that I am not fully conscious of.

A sixth category of sin, relational and community sins. Discord, strife. Divisiveness. Dissensions. Factions, unforgiveness.

Disobedience to parents. Lack of natural affection. Breaking trust. Covenant, unfaithfulness, betrayal.

We need a reminder now and then that Jesus did not come to save individual people. He came to save the family of God. He did not come simply that individual people would be born again individually and somehow remain in an individual relationship with God. He came to redeem a family, the family of God, with God as our Father and Jesus as our firstborn brother. And unity is stressed over and over and over, all through scripture, especially in the New Testament.

And you and I live now in cancel culture.

We could reach out our hands and touch someone within five feet of us. I'm convinced, in this room, and find someone who has close members of family or friends that don't even talk to each other anymore. Parents who don't talk with kids, siblings who don't talk with one another. We live in a cancel culture of divisiveness. It's all around us, and it's amped up through screens.

Because after all, on screens, you can say things you'd never say face to face. You can be divisive in ways that you would never be face to face. You can have your speech grow to hatred in ways that you never would face to face.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it. So, Jesus, what is the way of escape?

A final category of sins. Sins of omission. Failing to pursue God or to love others. A lack of patience or kindness. Neglecting those in need.

A lack of mercy, compassion, justice. Every single one of us is in debt. God designs it that we would be in debt to one another. We have debts to love one another, debts to forgive one another, debts to be merciful to one another. God has given us so much forgiveness, overwhelmed us with so much forgiveness that it is to flow out of us.

We have a debt to forgive others. He has given us so much mercy, so much compassion, so much patience that. That we are in debt to be merciful and compassionate and patient with others.

Jesus told a great parable of the Good Samaritan, one of his most famous stories ever, that there was a Jewish guy who got beat up and was left for dead in the middle of a road. And along came. Along came a priest, and the priest saw him in the middle of the road and crossed to the other side so they didn't have to help, and went on his way. And along came a Levite who likewise saw him in the middle of the road, cross to the other side, and passed by without helping. And then a Samaritan came, kind of a cultural bad guy, someone who didn't have relations with Jewish people.

And the Samaritan came, saw the man in need, and he met that need. He took care of him, he loved him, had compassion on him. And we are called to love our neighbor in that same way. I really think if Jesus was telling that story today, if he was here in 2026 telling us, he wouldn't have to say that the Levite or the priest crossed to the other side of the street. He'd just say, well, along came a priest and they had their phone and they were just so lost in their own little world, they didn't even notice the guy.

And along came a Levite who was so lost on his phone, he didn't even notice it. The other day I was at a stoplight. I was the first car, but in every direction in my rear view mirror, out of both sides and across the intersection, everybody in eyesight driving was on their phone. Everybody down, doing a little text, got a second at a stoplight. Better use our seconds.

We are so addicted and so consumed that we can very well miss seeing the needs of those around us. And God calls us to see the needs. We're supposed to love God and love people like, that's the summary of how to live life. And this can rob us of the opportunity by numbing our brains into all forms of entertainment and blinding our eyes to see. Would you read it with me one last time?

1 Corinthians 10. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it. The way of escape.

What is the way of escape? As we consider screens as a gateway to temptation of all kinds, let me provide for you a possible answer. I think it's really quite simple to have deep, intimate, meaningful time with God. Distraction free, phone free, buzzing free, just to sit in solitude and silence with God, talking with him and listening to him and to have deep, intimate, meaningful conversation with other human beings. Phone free, distraction free, buzzer free.

Those two things. If we could just carve out. If we could just carve out a half hour a day. I'm not talking conversation about pickup trucks or draft picks. I'm not talking about conversation about my Aunt Nellie's next door neighbor's best friend toy poodle.

That is sick. Nothing wrong with praying for Aunt Nellie's best friend's neighbor's toy poodle.

I'm talking issues of the soul. Genuine intimate.

How are you doing?

Do you have any fears in your life? Any anxiety in your life? What are you feeling? What are you walking through? Caring for other human beings and having that same time in a relationship with God for him to care for with us.

We are so tied up. I get. We don't like silence. They call it elevator music because we're so uncomfortable with like 10 seconds in a little box. We've got to fill it with noise.

And we are so filled with noise now that we're losing connection with God and with people. And I would suggest to you that if we want to fight against. I'm with you. That example, I think I said it was me watching a movie and just gets a slow, just a slow part. I'm like on here looking up something.

I find myself addicted to it in different ways. If I have an evening at home, just five o' clock, through bedtime, no phone, I have little withdrawals. I little, little seizures inside. Like, yeah, oh, I need to. What's that?

What's the answer to that question? I need it right now.

Time with God, time with people. Would you pray with me? Lord, we're humble. We walk through a list like this of temptations and every single one of us is convicted because every single one of us has temptations in each of these areas.

And I pray that you would set us free, give us gifts of freedom over temptation in our life, specifically with screens. And so I make a commitment with you to increase intimate,

undistracted time with you and intimate, undistracted time with people.

Would you guide me and us with the strength to carry that out even today and this week, in Jesus name we pray. And everyone said amen. Amen. Let's go ahead and stand as we close in song.