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Dr. Allan K. Adams  
Former Director, *MV Logos, MV Doulos*  
Pastoral Care Consultant, Medical Doctor, and Counsellor

“This book, *Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?* is absolutely the best book tailored exclusively for the seamen’s life condition. You can surely rely on what the book says. It was carefully written, researched, and includes the personal testimonies of seamen, making it more personal and practical.”

Bro. Vic Atanacio  
Chaplain Administrator  
Seamen’s Christian Friend Society



Rev MARTIN OTTO and his wife Monika have been serving seafarers in the port of Hamburg for the last 30 years. They work with the international seamen’s mission, Seamen’s Christian Friend Society based in the UK. Martin has visited more than 20,000 ships (cargo ships, cruise ships, navy ships and yachts) and shares in this book, out of his wealth of experience, how seafarers can confront temptation.

Martin is the author of three other books – *Seafarers! A Strategic Missionary Vision*, *Church on the Oceans*, and *Faith at Sea*. He is also the director of training for the Seamen’s Christian Friend Society and the Church on the Ocean project in the Philippines.



Seamen’s Christian Friend Society  
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HELP! How Can I Overcome Temptation?



OTTO

RVB



# HELP!

## How Can I OVERCOME TEMPTATION?



# MARTIN OTTO

Seamen’s Christian Friend Society Edition 3

“Temptation is one of the most powerful tools and strategies, which the devil uses to destroy our life, and our relationship with our loved ones. Many high-profile people like government officials, bishops, evangelists in showbiz and ordinary seamen fall into it. This book, *Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?* is absolutely the best book tailored exclusively for the seamen’s life condition. You can surely rely on what the book says. It was carefully written, researched, and includes the personal testimonies of seamen, making it more personal and practical. May this book help and serve as encouragement to them in their many struggles regarding temptation. I strongly endorse this book to all seamen, their wives and also their children.”

Bro.Vic Atanacio  
Chaplain Administrator  
Seamen’s Christian Friend Society  
Philippines

“I am so blessed to be able to read what Rev. Martin Otto has written in his book *Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?* Man, especially a seaman, is believed to be polygamous in nature. However, we can see the devastating results of polygamy everywhere . . . to the wife . . . to the kids . . . to one’s health. It is a topic that many people are afraid to dwell on, much more talk about. I am happy that Rev. Martin is equipping our seamen against the power of temptation with his new book. It is my prayer that this book will reach and touch the lives of many seamen and help them overcome temptation so that they can live in the abundance of God’s blessings.”

Tom N. Orola  
President  
Orophil Shipping

“Temptations are all around us, and more so to seamen who are away from their families. This book *Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?* is full of answers and godly solutions. This is a very good guide so we could walk a blameless, clean and peaceful life.”

Mrs. Cherry V. Gatapia  
Operations Manager  
Pacific Asia Overseas Shipping Corp.

“You did it again Bro. Martin! . . . Your love for the seamen is shown by your deep concern for our physical and spiritual lives. This book is worthy of reading especially on board the vessels where our fellow seamen and their families will greatly be benefited. You are a blessing to us seamen! One of the best Christian books written for seamen.”

Capt. Nestor M. Vargas  
Fleet Manager  
Michaelmar Philippines Inc.

“The testimonies in this book will make every seaman stronger against temptation, knowing that he is not alone in these battles. Furthermore, one can be assured of victory over temptation because Jesus Christ was also tempted in all aspects of life, and He came out victorious. I strongly recommend that every seaman should read this book because the solutions suggested here are very practical and biblical. May God bless this book and the author whom God inspired to write it.”

Capt. Roberto A. Neri  
President  
Lacerta Shipping

“Christians are admonished in the book of Romans to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. This is dependent on our success in overcoming temptations in our daily lives. Bro. Martin, by God’s grace, has come up with the book, *Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?* which presents a comprehensive biblical insight about temptations and gives deeper understanding on how the Devil works. Most of all, it gives the corresponding guidelines and encouragement in overcoming temptations from the Word of God. It is a great blessing to read this wonderful book and I highly recommend it for all Christians—young and mature alike, taking into consideration the reminder in 1 Corinthians 10:12, ‘*So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!*’ This book will surely be a blessing to all who will read it, especially to my co-seamen and their families.”

Capt. Andres F. Alvaro, MM, PCGA  
General Manager, Veritas Maritime Corporation  
Director, Philippine Association of Manning Agencies  
& Shipmanagers, Inc.

“Temptation is indeed everywhere and is the ‘stimulus’ to sin, and it comes in various ways or forms. A Christian is weakest towards temptation when he or she is alone and not guided in any way—more so when not in fellowship with fellow believers to edify him/her. This book written by Bro. Martin Otto is a great eye-opener, reminder, enlightenment and a guide to combating temptations in the life of a seaman and his wife, and even his whole family. This is another manifestation indeed of God’s working in and through His children (as in the life of Bro. Martin through book writing), to strengthen His children, in order to finish strong in the faith until eternity. To God be the glory!”

Chief Engineer Cipriano Paragas  
PMMA Graduate 1983

“I am honored to be asked to endorse the publication, *Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?* In our materialistic world and society, there are temptations to desire things and seek all sorts of pleasures. As a fellow seafarer with over 47 years experience in the industry, I am fully aware of the pitfalls that every seafarer is exposed to during the times that they are away from home. Martin Otto’s book is timely, authoritative, yet down-to-earth. An invaluable resource that every seafarer should have in his library.”

Capt. David Warden-Owen  
Master, *Saga Rose*

“The book *Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?* opened my mind to how weak I am and how much I needed God. I recommend this book not only to overseas workers but also for all generations.”

Rosemary M. Aaron  
President  
Senator Crewing, Manila

“Martin Otto cares for the ‘whole man’ as he writes about the struggles seamen face. He understands not only the personal life and professional responsibilities of seamen, but he also considers the seaman’s ‘whole of life’ context, including his family back home. Writing this book has required research and careful listening to the family’s viewpoints. Martin addresses sensitive subjects with balance and discretion. His insights and practical advice will be beneficial to all his readers. I heartily endorse this book and believe it will strengthen and encourage many men and women whose personal lives and families are impacted by long periods of separation.”

Dr. Allan K. Adams  
Former Director, *MV Logos*, *MV Doulos*  
Pastoral Care Consultant,  
Medical Doctor and Counsellor

# HELP!

## How Can I Overcome Temptation?

Martin Otto



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Manila, Philippines



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*Help! How Can I Overcome Temptation?*  
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# Acknowledgments

When I began this book on the topic of temptation, I was aware I would not be able to write it without God's help, and of course, without the help of many seamen I know. They have become really close friends over the last ten years or so. I have spoken with many seamen about this book, and many of them have shared their personal insights on the difficult topic of temptation on a ship.

I would like to say a special thank you to: Captain Noel Dagaman, Captain Michael Lasa, Captain Chris Alair, Captain Michael Manuel, Chief Engineer Henedino Magayon and his wife Victoria, 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Ramon Sanchez and his wife Nina, Bong Narvasa (Chief Cook), Noe Panganiban (AB). There were many others too, including my good friends Eduardo Campos (Chief cook) and Mario Albay without whose encouragement and practical help, I could not have even begun to write this book. One close friend is Luisa Gamez. Luisa has been very helpful, and has been a great blessing over many years. Thank you, Lui, for your inspiration and big help!

A special thank you also to some of the wives of seamen who have openly shared their thoughts and experiences: Mrs. Rowena Pam-Ut, Shelly Ocampo and others. You have made this book your book! I hope it will be of help and encouragement to many seamen.

And finally, I am grateful to Marcy Schoenke, an American living in Hamburg, who put this book into good, readable English. Marcy, how can I thank you? This is already the second book you've helped me with. Without your help, this book would not be published. Thank you so much!

*Acknowledgments*

Last but not least, I owe my special thanks to Mike Wilson, who in countless times has helped to sharpen the vision, helped to give practical as well as biblical advice. Thank you Mike, that once more your support and help was so evident.

## Foreword

I write these words as Director of a missionary society. Wouldn't you think, being involved in mission leadership, that I would have worked out how to defeat temptation? Well, I am sorry to disappoint you. I am as human as the next guy and just as open to temptation as anyone else. One might even argue that being a Christian leader brings even more problems with temptation.

I am a man and no different to most men! I experience the same struggles of mind, thought and action just like anyone else—or even worse! This is why I am always so grateful for Paul's words on this subject in Romans 7:15, "*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do . . . for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*" (For more about this, see chapter 15.)

It has been my privilege to have been one of Martin Otto's work colleagues for over 20 years. Martin is already known internationally through his ministry as a Port Missionary in Hamburg—and also through his previous books, *Seafarers—a Strategic Missionary Vision* and *Church on the Oceans*. Martin knows what makes seafarers tick. He understands a seafarer's feelings of isolation and how miserable it can be being separated from family and friends for so many months at a time. He fully appreciates how temptation can be such a big issue during these times of separation—and how it feels when you know you have given in to temptation and let everybody down. You feel you have let God down, too. If anyone could address the subject of temptation from a seafarer's perspective, Martin can.

*Foreword*

Anyone who has approached Martin about a personal problem will know how he offers a listening ear and will offer appropriate guidance without even a hint of judgment. In offering some practical suggestions on the subject of temptation, Martin approaches the whole subject from a helpful and biblical perspective. He is able to incorporate much down-to-earth, practical advice. This avoids being just another exercise in making the reader feel guilty. My prayer is that every reader will feel closer to God as a result of reading this book, and be better equipped to see life's temptations in a new and, dare I say, positive light.

The process by which followers of Christ become more and more like Him takes a lifetime. Even the most devout follower is not perfect, and certainly not beyond temptation. Face this fact but learn how, with God's help, to defend yourself from the inevitable attacks that life will bring.

MICHAEL J. WILSON  
Director  
Seamen's Christian Friend Society  
England

# Introduction

. . . We are only three Christians here, and every time we try to have our prayer time together, temptations come along our way in the form of alcohol . . . .

(Seaman from Myanmar)

. . . As a matter of fact, I feel ashamed to confess this problem with you. The cunning Satan tried to destroy me. Satan wants me to do a sin like King David's . . . .

(Seaman from the Philippines)

. . . I had a problem with sexual sin because I have made a decision not to have sexual enjoyment until I am formally married, which is God-approved. But the Devil hit me on that side in such a way that lust was my daily bread . . . .<sup>1</sup>

(Seaman from Ghana)

. . . Sometimes temptations are coming into my life and are hard to remove, and I sin. Usually, I have done a mistake or sin, and I realize lately in my mind, that it is wrong I have sinned . . . .”

(Seaman from the Philippines)<sup>2</sup>

Almost every day I meet with seamen from different countries in the world. We often have time to talk privately in the crew's mess room or in their cabins, and most of the time the topic of our conversations is temptation. Since there's so little published on the subject, I've made the effort to write something that hopefully will be of help and encouragement

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<sup>1</sup> Original text of the seaman from Ghana. Name not mentioned to protect the seaman's identity.

<sup>2</sup> Original text of the seaman from the Philippines. Name not mentioned to protect the seaman's identity.

to the countless seamen who face struggles on board many international cruises, or cargo or naval ships. It's not only the Christian seamen who struggle against temptations; seamen from other religions also try to find ways to resist the nasty temptations they are confronted with. I have, therefore, done research among seafarers, both men and women, and included some of their views and testimonies in this book in order to make it more personal and practical.

When we look at the life of Jesus Christ, we may be surprised that in His most well-known prayer, Jesus mentioned temptations. Turn to Matthew 6:13 where Jesus prayed, *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”* If Jesus, who is the only person who never sinned, knows about the problem of temptation, how much more should we know about it? Have you ever wondered when we would ever become free from temptation in this world? I am sure there are many who have pondered this question. Whether we work on shore or on a ship, we find it difficult to withstand temptations. Temptations of all kinds come our way, and sure enough, we must admit that we are not always victorious in our battle against sin. We need to face the fact that we live in a fallen world, and as a result, are surrounded by sin. So we can truly rejoice when, by God's grace, we are able to resist temptation. In fact, we can count ourselves privileged to be able to go to Jesus with all of our problems and sins. The Saviour Himself said in Matthew 11:28, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* Sometimes we feel we have won a battle when we are victorious against temptation.

However, there's much more that goes on in our fight against flesh and blood, as stated in Ephesians 6:12, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of the dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

But let us stop for a moment and think about seamen who don't have the privilege of going to church, don't have regular fellowship with other Christians, don't have friends who pray for them—and cannot even enjoy fellowship with their families. What can they do when they are overcome by temptation? Where do they go with their problems and trials? And who will help them to live victoriously in the midst of their many temptations so they can make a difference in this world? Seamen spend most of their lives far away from home. They usually have a contract for 6–12 months. They leave their homes in order to work because they want to give their children a better education and a better future. They sacrifice their lives at sea in order to improve their standard of living at home in Asia, Africa, Latin America, etc. They usually work seven days a week without a day off. “Seafarers have to work under conditions that make their work both challenging and difficult. Storms and problems are constant companions. A seaman is constantly confronted with uncertainties and dangers. In fact, most of them have already been involved in some type of accident. Forty-two percent are sailing on ships where they cannot even communicate in their own language. The wages on board are often very low. Many seafarers still earn less than US\$ 1,100—in a month.”<sup>3</sup>

I have served as a port chaplain to seamen for the past 24 years. During that time, I have visited more than 20,000 ships (container ships, car ships, tankers, reefer ships, bulk carriers, cruise ships, navy ships and luxury yachts, etc.) and have been witness to all kinds of imaginable situations. This ministry of reaching out to seamen is a great challenge because it requires sensitivity as well as knowing exactly when to help the seamen. I come from a western culture and

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Otto, *Seafarers—A Strategic Missionary Vision* (Piquant Editions, 2002), pp. 8–9.

when I go on board, I am often confronted with an Asian culture. Will I then be able to understand the problems and situations of the seamen? I have contact with seamen from more than 100 different countries. This means dealing with different mentalities, backgrounds and cultures. Sometimes, even after so many years of service, I still have to admit I have not always understood the seaman in his particular situation, and have not always been able to give the support he was looking for. But, of course, there are other times when, by God's grace, I was indeed able to help out in a particular situation. Maybe a seaman had prayed for help, and God sent me or somebody else to help him.

But I am not sure how many seamen have really received help in their struggle against temptation. When, for instance, a ship sets sail for Brazil, the seamen grin at me because they know that numerous enticements (that is, temptations) are there, just waiting for them. Fortunately, hectic schedules, increased security measures and reduced personnel on board limit the time and the possibilities for a seaman to follow girls or go to bars in Brazil, or elsewhere for that matter. Perhaps one good thing about these hurdles is that security personnel no longer allow prostitutes to come on board many ships.

Another problem, however, is how to know whether the seaman is struggling with a certain temptation or not. Usually, a seaman will only open up if he feels he can trust the person. He wants to speak to someone who can really help him in his battle against sin. But even if the seaman and the port chaplain have been friends for a long time, it still might be difficult for the seaman to open up, because he now feels ashamed. Therefore, we as port chaplains, need to be aware of this and approach the men with an attitude of humility and honesty when we talk man-to-man. We are not on board to criticize them but to show compassion and willingness to help. We want to create an atmosphere in

which the seaman would feel comfortable opening up and talking about his problems.

We also need to be on guard against pretending to know all the answers. It is sometimes better to admit that we do not have the answer. In fact, this book does not claim to be a complete scholarly and systematic discussion on temptation. Rather, it is a sharing of personal knowledge, experience and wisdom culled from more than two decades of counselling seamen from various races and cultures. If we want answers, we should go to God in prayer and ask Him for wisdom and guidance. It is imperative that we depend on God's grace alone.

I have used more than 200 Bible verses (in italics and dark print) in this book because I want to emphasize that the Bible is the best counsellor there is—a wonderful guide and help. I also hope this will encourage the seamen to look up Bible verses themselves, and that they will find the ones they need for their particular situation. Through this book, I trust that the seaman will see he's not alone, and realize that others are going through the same problems and temptations. It's my hope this book will serve as an encouragement to every seaman or sea woman. I am confident they will find practical help for their personal situation in the various chapters. I also hope this book will help the wives at home to understand their husbands at sea, and in turn, that the seamen will better understand their wives at home. May God bless their efforts as they begin the battle against temptation by the grace of God. I have one request: Please do not read only the section about overcoming temptation—I am sure you will be better equipped in your battle against temptation if you read the whole book.



## SECTION ONE



# Fundamentals





# Almost Everybody's Talking about Temptation

In newspapers, on TV and in the Internet, the problem of temptation that seamen and their wives face has become a topic of interest to the general public. You will find a few articles on the subject below. The following opinions were taken from the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines, from TV and from seamen's wives. This is what they have to say:

Due to the nature of their job, Filipino seafarers are prone to becoming unfaithful to their wives, an official of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) said. The good news is that the problem is still manageable and steps are being undertaken to help them steer clear of worldly temptations, said Father Savino Bernardi, Manila director of the CBCP's Apostleship of the Sea (AOS).

In an interview with GMANews.TV, Bernardi said that because of the big number of ocean-going Filipino seafarers, which is about one-third of the world's total, the number of those who commit infidelity is also high.

"There has been no study made yet on this but indications show that seafarers are more prone to be unfaithful to their wives," Bernardi said citing several cases handled by the AOS.

## *Section One: Fundamentals*

About 266,533 Filipino seafarers have been deployed all over the globe in 2007, according to data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency.

To give the seafarers an option, Bernardi said, the Church has initiated steps to veer them away from the temptations of the flesh by engaging them in worthwhile activities in ports of their countries of destination. The AOS has established 80 clubs and hostels around the world called, "Stella Maris," where seafarers from all nationalities could engage in sports like pool or table tennis, as well as other activities and counselling that would take away their feeling of boredom and isolation.

Bernardi said that the Stella Maris centres are found in all major ports in the world, including New York, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Rio de Janeiro. Despite the presence of temptation among seafarers, it is not a cause for the family to disintegrate, he said.

"We cannot deny it. Broken families and broken marriages are there but with the family culture in the Philippines, the problem isn't as big as it is thought to be," he said. "Infidelity is not yet a dominant issue, but it is a pressing concern," he said.<sup>1</sup>

— *GMAnews.TV*

**Marites Sison (for Inter Press Service), OFW Journalism Consortium, wrote:**

"My husband says if 99 percent (of seafarers) are fooling around, he wants to be that one percent," says Mariepaz Ello, 31. "Temptation and sexual curiosity is always around. What's important is that you fear God and you have self-discipline," stresses her 30-year-old husband Herman, a seafarer for the last six years. "There should be trust," says Shirley Sitenta. She says

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/120719/church-group-moves-to-steer-filipino-seafarers-away-from-worldly-temptations>. Used by permission. Also, see link at <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/120418/Intl-group-issues-warning-vs-pirates-Gulf-of-Aden>.

husbands are not the only ones facing temptation. Bored and lonely wives can also fall prey to indiscretions.

Malou Marin, executive director of the non-government organization Action for Health Initiatives (ACHIEVE), says both overseas workers and their spouses have compelling needs for warmth, sexuality and friendship. "The separation and loneliness that overseas workers experience contribute to their vulnerability in entering into relationships outside marriage," she explains.

Shirley Sitenta demands sexual fidelity from her husband (Alfredo—editor's note). "I tell him, if a woman can endure, so should a man." She says she and her husband are aware of the growing number of seafarers who come home with HIV, and end up infecting their wives.

Of about 1,600 recorded cases of HIV/AIDS so far, 25 to 27 percent have been traced to overseas workers, says the country's health department. The high incidence could be traced to the fact that these workers are subjected to mandatory AIDS testing.

Herman and Alfredo acknowledge that loneliness at sea and problems at home contribute to some seafarer's "girl-in-every-port syndrome."

Alfredo cites prayers as his shield, saying that he recites the rosary at about the same time that his wife does. It's a pact they made to each other.

Herman says he plays his guitar to ease homesickness. Aside from providing his family a promising future, Herman says his goal is to leave the maritime profession with a good record. "I don't care if I don't become a captain. What's important to me is that I retire with my dignity intact," says the deck cadet.

— *OFW Journalism Consortium*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.philippinestoday.net/prelease/prelease4\\_1002.htm](http://www.philippinestoday.net/prelease/prelease4_1002.htm). Used by permission.

In another Internet article, the same author writes:

MANILA, May 17, 2001 (IPS) — “God’s will be done” is the prayer Esper (not her real name) utters each time she has sex with her husband, a seafarer from the Philippines, who has been in the trade for the last 22 years.

When he comes home for a two-to-three-month holiday after being away at sea for months, Esper is not sure whether it is safe to be intimate with him. At the back of her mind, she says, is the possibility that her husband may have contracted a sexually-transmitted disease (STD) or worse, HIV, from sexual relations in some overseas port.

“I always remind him to please come home to me safe, but I have no way of knowing if he’s been faithful to me,” confesses the 43-year-old Esper, who works as a liaison officer for a marine recruitment agency here.

She once tried telling her husband to have a medical check-up, but he accused her of not trusting him. “So I just closed my eyes and prayed,” she added. Studies have shown that seafarers—there are 500,000 registered Filipino seafarers and one in every five seafarers in the world are [sic] Filipino—are among the migrant workers whose “girl-in-every-port” practice makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, and passing it on to their partners.

“Faced with the daily risks of negotiating turbulent seas, sailing for days or weeks on end, and being in a typically male-dominated occupation, seafarers are known to indulge in social activities the moment they dock, including drinking binges and casual or paid sex,” activist Riza Faith Ybañez says in a case study on the HIV vulnerability of wives of seafarers.

“If seafarers are vulnerable to STDs and HIV they can pass on such vulnerability to their partners,” adds the study undertaken for Kalayaan (Freedom) and CARAM-Asia, non-government groups that work with migrant labour. Activists say there are no statistics on the number of seafarers and their wives with HIV.

Most of those with HIV keep it to themselves, and rarely report to a government agency.

Like Esper, Julie (not her real name) is aware that STDs and AIDS can come knocking on her and her husband's door anytime.

"I trust him," says Julie of her husband. "But I tell him that if you really cannot resist the temptation, please use a condom. If you can't stay away, just have oral sex." Julie does not realise that STDs can be transmitted even through oral sex.

Julie says her "open and honest relationship" with her husband allows them to express their feelings without fear of rejection.

Not so the majority of seafarers' wives interviewed by Ybañez. Thirty-three women in her study said they feared contracting STDs and HIV from their seafarer-husbands, but most "still have not taken proactive positive measures to protect themselves from their own vulnerabilities."

Like Esper and Julie, those who manage to talk to their husbands only give gentle reminders to engage in safe sex. Only a few insist on a medical examination before sexual contact, citing the need to preserve family harmony.

In an interview, Ybañez says many seamen's wives actually agree that they need to be more assertive with their husbands, but add that doing so is not easy.

"They are economically dependent on their husbands so there's a lot of gratitude for taking care of them. The husbands are only home for weeks so there's an attitude that if you nitpick, you'll just drive them away," Ybañez observes. "Also, Filipino wives in general are not assertive."

Ybañez quotes the wives who have attended Kalayaan's education sessions as saying they cannot suddenly become assertive in sexual relations. "So they are sold to the idea, it's a question of how to do it."

Sexist norms in society have likewise created an imbalance in relationships. "We have a situation where, on the one hand, the seafarers are exposed to sexual adventures abroad and come

## *Section One: Fundamentals*

home with a new world view on sexual practices while, on the other hand, their wives remain sexually reserved back home," says Ybañez's study.

To cope with the possibility of their husbands' extramarital relations, the study says, "the wives do confront their husbands or drop hints of their doubts, but always jokingly."

Other women "fish for signs in their conversations," says Ybañez. Esper tells of a seafarer's wife who went through her husband's belongings in search of clues of possible affairs.

Likewise, "there are wives who refuse to think about their husband's sexual activities abroad," says Ybañez. Each time her husband leaves, Esper says, "I just think that he's single."

Sometimes, it takes a first-hand example to make the wives accept the truth about casual sex prevalent in lives at sea. Ybañez relates the time a sex worker, speaking at a session for seafarers' wives, told them point blank that most of her customers are seamen. "So, the illusion is shattered," she explains.

Still, others cling to the belief that their husbands are different. "It's really up to the person," Julie says of seafarers' sexual activities, though she says her husband told her that sex workers can be very aggressive and persistent.

She says some captains have been known to take commissions from pimps who supply the officers and crew with women. She adds that her husband has been ridiculed and called a homosexual for refusing to engage in or pay for casual sex. At the root of most seafarers' foray into the culture of casual sex is the tolerance of male promiscuity.

Some wives rationalise that "their husbands have sexual needs that must be satisfied and since they cannot be present to satisfy these needs, it is natural for men to look elsewhere for satisfaction," Ybañez explains.

"They (the wives) say that they miss their husbands so much that they are eager to sexually connect with them notwithstanding the risks. They say they think of the risks later,

so STDs or HIV may be the price to pay for their happiness," Ybañez'es study says.

Using condoms was also not popular among women surveyed by the study—some said it was unnatural, others said volunteering their use was a sign of "guilt or mistrust."

Esper says the "first and only one time" he wanted to use a condom was when her husband suggested using it. He had confessed to an indiscretion, was not sure if he was still safe, and later asked her to accompany him to a medical check-up. Fortunately for Esper and her husband, he only had a urinary tract infection. But she told him, "We can't just ignore this. The next time it could be worse."

If her husband had indeed gotten HIV, Esper says she would be heartbroken but would still stand by him. "Who else will understand him?" she asks.

Asked if her husband has learned his lesson, Esper smiles faintly: "I don't really know. I just hope so for our family's sake."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aegis.com/news/ips/2001/IP010510.html>

## 2

# What Is Temptation?

The words *temptation* and *trial* both come from the same Greek word *peirasmos* which means “a putting to the proof, trial.” Its root word *peira* means “a trial, attempt, endeavour.” The word *peirazo* means “to tempt (Matthew 4:1); to try, subject to trial (1 Corinthians 10:13).”<sup>1</sup> The word “to tempt” had this broad meaning before the *King James Version* was published in 1611 whereas “now [it] usually means only to entice.”<sup>2</sup> According to Bibleseo.com,<sup>3</sup> it is important to make a distinction between the two meanings of this word. It points out that “on the one hand, it signifies an attempt to entice someone into evil (often translated as temptation). On the other hand, it indicates a testing which aims at spiritual good (often translated as trial).”

In a web dictionary, temptation is defined as:

1 something that seduces or has the quality to seduce; 2 the desire to have or do something that you know you should avoid; “he felt the temptation and his will power weakened”; 3 the

<sup>1</sup> *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, (Harper and Brothers, 1979, pp. 314-315.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Richardson, ed., *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, (Macmillian Co., 1950), p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> <http://bibleseo.com/matthew/overcome-temptation>. Used by permission.

act of influencing by exciting hope or desire; “his enticements [sic] were shameless.”<sup>4</sup>

Temptation is when something makes you want to do something that you believe or know is wrong. For instance, you know that smoking is bad for you, but your body still craves nicotine: that is a temptation. It would be easy to fall back into an old habit, but part of you knows that you shouldn't do it because it isn't healthy. Temptation is also a choice between right and wrong, between good and bad. You'll be faced with such choices your whole life. There are no short cuts. We can say with certainty that every Christian experiences temptation in this life.

## Temptation vs. Trial

Could something be a trial from God and a temptation from Satan at the same time, like in the case of Job? An Internet article affirms this:

Sometimes we can confuse temptation with God's testing of our hearts, but temptation and God's testing are very different. Most of the time, though, what we're experiencing is both! God's testing presents the opportunity to do that which would please him. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, Abraham was being tested—both his heart to obey God and his ability to trust Him (Genesis 22). God's Word clearly states that he tries the heart and tests for faith. Proverbs 17:3 says: *“The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.”* At the time we are experiencing it, we may not be able to distinguish the difference between testing and temptation. Afterward, if we are seeking God's purposes in our dilemma, we will likely understand God's intent.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.elook.org/dictionary/temptation.html>

Temptation can occur on many levels. We may be tempted to eat something we shouldn't for health reasons; we may be trapped in a harmful pattern of thinking, or dangerously involved in a lifestyle that is harmful. In all cases, temptation is rarely a one-time event. Tests may occur more than once in similar ways, but temptation is almost always cyclical. James 1:12-16 discusses the process of being tempted, "*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.*"<sup>5</sup>

Job's trials and temptation will be discussed at length in chapter 4.

## Temptation vs. Deception

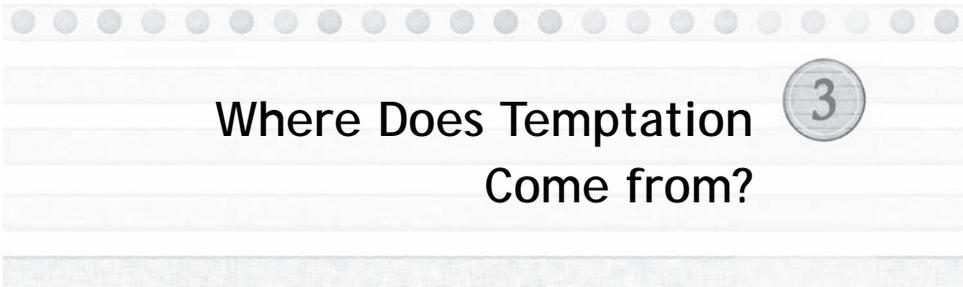
Temptation shouldn't be confused with deception. Dr. Neil Anderson gives us a good explanation of deception. He says,

"If I tempted you, you would know it. If I accused you, you would know it. But if I deceived you, you wouldn't know it. If you knew you were being deceived, then you would no longer be deceived. Eve was deceived and she believed a lie. Deception has been the primary strategy of Satan from the beginning. That is why truth sets us free, and why Jesus prayed, '*Sanctify them in the truth, Thy word is truth*' (John 17:17)."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Taken from <http://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/fighting-temptation.htm> -- published by AllAboutGod.com Ministries, M. Houdmann, P. Matthews-Rose, R. Niles, editors, 2002-2010. Used by permission.

<sup>6</sup> Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, (Monarch Books, 2000), pp. 168-169.



## Where Does Temptation Come from?

3

It is amazing how temptations manifest themselves, not only when you are lonely and frustrated, or when you have worked long hours, or when you are overly tired! But they also sometimes arise after you have enjoyed a certain success and have experienced joy in serving Jesus Christ. Maybe God has used you to share the Gospel with your fellow seamen. Maybe you have helped a person to accept Jesus as his Savior. Maybe you have been able to help others on board in some practical way.

I am sure you have sometimes wondered why you are always surrounded by temptations in this world. Perhaps you also wonder where temptation comes from, and why you sometimes feel helpless in your battle against temptation.

### The Origin of Temptation

Temptation is actually as old as mankind. Shortly after God created Adam and Eve, temptation came through the Devil. We read in Genesis 3:1, *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in*

*the garden?”* This verse clearly shows that the Devil is a liar and a tempter. First of all, he distorted the words of God. We read in Genesis 2:16–17, *“And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’”* The Devil twisted the words of God. He continued to ask subtle questions. His questions seemed so sweet, so logical, so tempting, sometimes even convincing.

The Devil is the enemy of Jesus Christ. And when you are a follower Jesus Christ, Satan wants you to fall into sin so you cannot bring glory to God. That is his business. One trick the Devil often uses is to make sin look sweet. The temptation looks nice. The Devil showed Adam and Eve the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and when they looked at it they wanted to taste its fruit. So what can we learn from Adam and Eve? Not only to refuse to look at what Satan tries to show us, but also to refuse to listen to him. I think the best thing to do is to refuse to even enter into a conversation with the Devil because once you do that, it will be almost impossible to avoid sin.

The Devil wants you to fall into sin so that you become useless for God. You can go to church, you can be very active in church, but this is not what the Devil fears. His fear is that you serve Jesus and make His command your command, His ways your ways. That’s why the Devil wants to get you to change your path, and he tries to get you out of fellowship with God by getting you to give in to temptation.

There is not one person in this world who has not been tempted. Even Jesus Christ, during His life on earth, was tempted like we are. Yet He remained sinless. So Jesus Christ is the only one who can really help us in our battle against temptation.

## Two Sources of Temptation

### *Temptation from within*

There are two sources of temptation to sin that we need to be aware of. The first source is from our great enemy—our own sinful self. Let us carefully examine this fact. You have experienced the new birth. You have been made a new creation in Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it says, *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”* Your sins are forgiven and you now have eternal life. In 1 John 5:11–12 you can read, *“And this is the testimony, God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his son. He who has the son has life, he who does not have the Son of God, does not have life.”* However, you still find yourself being drawn into sin. You discover that when you say you have no sin you are deceiving yourself: 1 John 1:8 says, *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”* The reality that sin is still in you is demonstrated by your tendency to sin.

Temptation comes from our own lusts. James 1:14–15 states, *“But each one is tempted when by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”* 1 John 2:16 says, *“For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.”*

It is important for you to know that one of the reasons you received the Holy Spirit is because of temptation. Galatians 5:16 says that if we *“live by the spirit,”* we will not carry out the desires of the sinful nature. So the greatest safeguard against temptations from within is to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. At this point it might be helpful to learn from the Scriptures about what the Holy Spirit intends to do in

your life. I encourage you to read the books of Galatians and Ephesians in the Bible to find out how the Holy Spirit wants to guide you, protect you and use you for His glory.

I also encourage you to think about your own situation, whether it is on board a ship or at home. Maybe you have recently gone through a time of being tempted. You wonder how the temptation could be so strong. You serve Jesus and you even attend church regularly, so why were you tempted? Sometimes, while on ship, you feel weak because not only is your spirit weak but your body is also weak. You work long hours, you have little sleep and you feel so easily tempted. Perhaps it would help you to take better care of your body. Try to get more sleep. Try to watch how you live on the ship. We all know what it's like when our spirit is weak—when we do not read God's Word or spend time in prayer, we aren't strong enough to overcome temptations. But we also need to know that when we do not take care of our physical bodies, we are also more prone to fall into the Devil's traps. Perhaps it is better not to go out to nice places with the crew, but instead get some rest, eat well and do everything in our power to stay fit for the next day with all its challenges.

### *Temptation from outside ourselves*

This type of temptation is from our strongest enemy, Satan, and his hosts of demons. Satan is called "the tempter." He is also called the "father of lies." It's through lying that he tempts the children of God. He even tempted Jesus, as we can see in Matthew 4:1, 3, "*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. . . . The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'*" Mark 1:13 says, "*. . . and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals and angels attended him.*" Another passage in 1 Corinthians 7:5

advises us, *“Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again, so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”*

We read in 1 Chronicles 21:1, *“Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.”* Once you are born into the family of God you become an enemy of Satan. Satan has lost control over you and therefore he strongly desires to make you surrender to sin. For this reason, whenever you hear the tempter speak, you can be sure that it is a lie, because Satan is called the father of lies as we can read in John 8:44, *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

At this point you might say, “I am tempted not so much by Satan, but rather by other people.” Well, the truth of the matter is, Satan works through human beings in the same way that God works through human beings who have trusted Him as their Savior. When someone tries to get you to do something wrong, you need to be aware that these people are under Satan’s influence if they have not surrendered their life to Jesus. It is important to keep in mind that Jesus once said, *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money”* (Matthew 6:24).

We either serve Jesus or Satan. There is no neutral ground. We are either under the influence of Satan, or under the influence of the Holy Spirit. So, on a ship, if you live and work among people who do not want to serve Jesus, you will meet many who do not take temptation or sin seriously. They have no idea what God thinks about sin, and therefore they take it lightly. These are the kind of people who might lead you into temptation. However, you can never blame other people

because they have led you into sin. You are responsible for your own actions, your own life and your own behaviour. If you have committed a crime, you cannot point at another person and tell the judge: "I am sorry, but I was tempted by that person, and that is why I did what was wrong." Blame-shifting will never be accepted by others, and it will not be accepted by God either. So if you don't want to be led astray by your comrades on a ship, you should pray that God will protect you from them. You can also choose who you want to spend your time with. Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 26:41, "*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The Spirit is willing, but the body is weak.*"

## Why Are You Tempted?

One frequently asked question is: Why are we tempted? Couldn't God create a world in which His people were free from temptations? The answer is, as long as you live on this earth you will face temptations. Heaven is the only place where there are no temptations—only the glory of God. And why are you tempted? Maybe you feel like you are the only one being tempted. Others always seem to lead lives of pleasure, peace and success. Others seem to be so carefree, without any problems. Is that really true? Maybe you even wonder about certain Bible verses which seem to contradict your own experiences, verses like 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”* You might not feel the “new,” and you might not feel that “the old” has gone. You just feel tempted! Sorely tempted! The only thing you can do is to cry out: How can I become free from temptation? How can I escape and overcome temptation?

Let me encourage you with this thought: Although none of us enjoy undergoing a temptation, there is also a positive

side to it—when we learn to overcome it through God’s Word and through prayer. Turn to James 1:2–4 where you will find an interesting thought: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials [peirasmos] of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”* Can you see from these verses that there is a definite purpose in the temptation? We, as human beings, prefer to have everything made easy for us. We don’t like loneliness, problems, sickness, worries or temptations. However, we shouldn’t forget that God’s plans for us are good, and He does not allow things to happen that will not be for our good.

The primary purpose of temptation, if we overcome it, is to “perfect” us, or to make us complete. God intends to produce maturity in us, and He uses temptation for that very purpose. Look at what God says in Job 23:10: *“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.”* Imagine how many trials and difficulties Job went through. Before they occurred, he was very wealthy, and he led a very godly life. It was said of him that he lived a very blameless and upright life and that he feared God (Job 1:1). He had everything that one could ever dream of. Yet, in the prime of his life, God allowed Satan to “test” him. Keep in mind, it was not God who tempted Job, it was Satan. God did not allow Satan to kill Job, but only to severely test him. Let us take a closer look at the temptations and trials that Job went through.

I think the most difficult trial was the loss of his children. Who can imagine how painful that was? Yet, it is amazing how Job trusted God. He did not even curse God for the terrible loss of his children. Instead, he said, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave*

*and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.’ In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing” (Job 1:21–22). A little later in chapter 2:9 we read how Job’s wife said, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”*

Imagine that! That is perhaps the worst kind of temptation and trial one can go through—your own wife turns against you and tells you to stop following God. Job’s wife even said that he should die. We all know how much we need the support of our wives—she is our closest family member. What did Job do? What did he say? In verse 10 of the same chapter he replies: *“‘You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?’ In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.”* Isn’t that astonishing?

When his friends heard about his situation, they tried to encourage him, but they also lectured him and gave him all sorts of advice. Job grew weary of it all and became fed up with the trials. In addition to losing his children and his property, he was also struck with illness. At this point Job cursed the day of his birth and said, *“May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, ‘A boy is born!’”*

The story ends in a very remarkable way. After God rebuked Job’s friends and then spoke to Job, Job came to a very important realization, as seen in his reply to God in chapter 42:2–5: *“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.”* This true story about Job is one of the most encouraging examples of how to deal with temptations. Why?

*Because it shows you how temptations work, how temptations can be overcome and how God works in our lives through temptations.*

In the New Testament, we often read about how Paul suffered difficulties, persecutions and all kinds of trials. Yet he was always confident that God's grace would be sufficient enough to carry him through. Paul says something quite extraordinary in Romans 5:3-5: *"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."*

Here we can find an answer to the question posed earlier on: Why does God allow temptations in your life? It is because He wants you to have a Christ-like character. He wants to bring you into a closer, more loving relationship with Jesus Christ. For this reason, the verse says that God poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We can choose how to deal with each temptation: either overcome it by God's grace with the help of the Holy Spirit; or, surrender to it in sin. God has given us the freedom to choose between right and wrong.

Finally, we read that our trials are not in vain. If we choose to serve God and to overcome temptations by His grace, then God Himself will give us the crown of life, as promised in James 1:12: *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial [peirasmos], because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."* Look at what wonderful promises there are for those who overcome. Revelation 3:11-12 says, *"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God."*

Very encouraging, isn't it? At the other extreme, there is

also a consequence if we do not overcome. It is mentioned in James 1:15: *“Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”* Sin always produces death. But if we overcome temptation and sin, the result will be life, which continues for all eternity.



## Temptations in the Lives of Joseph, King David, Jesus and Judas

In this chapter we are going to examine how people in Bible times were tempted, and how some of them overcame temptations in the right way (Joseph, Jesus). We will also see an example of how a person fell into sin, afterwards confessed his sins, and was restored and was still used by God (King David). Finally, we shall see what happens to people who succumb to temptation and do not return to God, or do not have the opportunity because judgment already awaits them. (Judas, Achan).

### Joseph

Let us start with Joseph, the son of Jacob (Genesis 30:22–24). The Old Testament tells us about Joseph and how he was tempted. There is no doubt that this kind of temptation can easily happen on any cruise ship. We read about Joseph in Genesis 39:6–12, *“Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master’s wife took notice of Joseph and said,*

*‘Come to bed with me!’ But he refused. ‘With me in charge,’ he told her, ‘my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?’ And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even to be with her. One day he went into the house to attend his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’ But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.”*

This is a very real situation, which could arise on cruise ships where men and women are working together. It could also occur on land in your home country. It is an excellent example from the Old Testament to teach you how to resist temptation and avoid sin. First of all, we see that Joseph simply refused to go to bed with the woman. He had made up his mind. We are not told how much he prayed or even if he prayed at all. But what you read here is that he simply refused to sin. You can only refuse to sin if you have made up your mind early enough before temptation sets in. If you are caught up in the clutches of the temptation, it is often too late to make up your mind. You have to know what to do beforehand (be proactive). This lesson about Joseph teaches you to be prepared when you are faced with sexual temptation.

Secondly, you can see that one of Joseph’s virtues was faithfulness. He simply wanted to prove himself faithful to his master. In the New Testament much has been written about being faithful to both God and man. Joseph had learned that lesson. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, he said to the woman, *“How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”* Joseph lived a holy life, and he wanted to obey

his master; but even more that that, he was determined to obey God and not sin. Joseph put God first. His goal was to please God at all times.

The woman made one final attempt to seduce him, but there wasn't time to discuss the matter with her now. Rather, it was better to escape. There are times when you should not simply react in a spiritual way; instead you should do something practical. Joseph did not pray there or even offer a spiritual explanation as to why it would be wrong to go to bed with her—he just ran out of the house! He ran away from the temptation. Often, this is the only option. On different ships, I have sometimes seen that adult movies (X-rated films) were being shown in the mess room. In such a case, it is not advisable to stand and pray—just run away and leave the place! By doing so, you are also setting an example for others to follow.

## King David

In 2 Samuel 11:2–5, we read, *“One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, ‘Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’ Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. . . . Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, ‘I am pregnant.’”* Now, what kind of situation do we find here? David is strolling around on the roof of his palace. Maybe he is relaxing. In verse 1, it says that this was the season for war, but King David merely sent Joab, his commander in chief, and the king's men to go to war. He himself remained in the Jerusalem and was walking around on his roof. There's nothing wrong about

walking around on the roof. But the moment David's eyes rested on the woman, he had to make a decision. Should I watch the woman bathe? Or do I turn my eyes away and get out like Joseph did when he was tempted?

As we all know, David decided to stay on the roof and continued to observe the woman. By doing so, he made the decision to give in to lust, which later, as we will see, led him into terrible sin with frightening consequences. If you think you can trust your own judgment and your own strength, you are mistaken. You need to be aware that your own will power will never be strong enough to overcome this kind of temptation. You always need the discernment, which is found in the Word of God and in prayer. Even as a king, David proved that he could not trust his own judgment. And we all know what happened after David made a wrong choice.

First of all, it is not right to watch a woman bathe. Then, after making one wrong decision, more sinful actions naturally follow. David now decided to take the woman into his house. Here we see a common problem. Once you have decided to give in to sin, your rational and spiritual mind do not work in a way that will prevent you from falling into sin. As a result, sin disturbs and even destroys spiritual thinking. David then slept with Bathsheba, and she became pregnant. What was King David's reaction? Did he repent and turn back to God? No, he continued to sin even more. Sin blinded him and destroyed his ability to discern between right and wrong.

The whole story became even more tragic when David sent off Bathsheba's husband, one of the king's men, to a place in battle where he would be intentionally left to be killed by the enemy. In modern times that would be considered murder!

David destroyed people's lives—even his infant son had to die. In 2 Samuel 12:14, the prophet Nathan says, “*But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.*” Just because he made one wrong decision!

What was the wrong decision? It began by his refusal to turn his eyes away from the woman. Instead, he watched her while she was bathing. Many temptations start when you allow your eyes to see something they shouldn't see. Therefore, it's a good idea to train your eyes to look away and your legs to run away! If you know that in certain places you will see things that lead you into sin, it is better to avoid those places and to stay where it is safe for your eyes to look. Many seamen who have come to Hamburg know about the red-light district in “Saint Pauli.” Actually, there are many places like that in many port cities around the world. Everybody knows that sin dwells in these places. So, if you want to keep your eyes from seeing sinful things, just avoid those places.

However, there is good news in this story: King David did not continue in sin, but he repented when the prophet Nathan came to him. David said to the prophet in 2 Samuel 12:13, “*I have sinned against the Lord.*” David's sin brought about terrible consequences. The good news after David's repentance is that God forgave David's sin and still used him as king.

## Jesus

Jesus, the Son of God, He who was sacrificed for your sins, lived for about 33 years on this earth, and was tempted like all of us. God, the Father, did not spare Jesus from temptations—thus, He is able to understand us in our battle against temptations. Wayne Grudem says,

“Christ obeyed God in our place and as our representative, thus succeeding where Adam had failed, where the people of Israel in the wilderness had failed, and where we had failed (see Romans 5:18-19). As difficult as it may be for us to comprehend, Scripture affirms that in these temptations Jesus gained an ability to understand and help us in our temptations. ‘*Because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those, who are tempted*’ (Hebrews 2:18).”<sup>1</sup>

Here is what is written about the temptations of Jesus. Luke 4:1-4 states, “*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell the stone to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone.”*”

The life of Jesus is a beautiful contrast to David’s. Jesus did not succumb to temptation; instead He showed us how to overcome. This is why we need to do everything in our power to come close to Jesus, to learn from Him every moment of our lives. What did the temptations Jesus went through in the desert look like? I can imagine it was very difficult for Him. Just imagine, you are in the desert and you are hungry. Your whole body craves for food and water. Then, all of a sudden, somebody appears and offers you food and drink. What would you do? In this dilemma, Jesus remembered the Word of God and answered Satan, “*Man does not live on bread alone.*” Jesus knew that if He gave in to Satan’s wily temptation, that would be sin because it would be accepting what the Devil had to offer; and on top of that, He would have to give up His public ministry. Jesus looked to God, the Father; He focused His thoughts on the Word of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Inter Varsity Press, 1994), p. 537

Keep in mind, Jesus didn't get involved in long discussions with Satan. He didn't try logical arguments.

During the second temptation, the Devil showed Jesus all the riches in the world—Jesus could have them all. The only condition was that Jesus would have to worship Satan. But Jesus replied with what is written—that we must worship God alone. Jesus became man and lived as a perfect example for us. Hebrews 2:18 shows us, *“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”* In the New Testament, Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:1–2, *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”* By claiming the promises of God, by following the example of Jesus, by setting your mind on things above, you will be conquerors, and you will be victorious in your battle against temptations.

## Judas

We read about Judas, one of the twelve disciples, in Matthew 27:1–5: *“Early in the morning all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’ ‘What is that to us?’ they replied. ‘That’s your responsibility.’ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.”*

This is a very tragic story. Judas had been with Jesus for so long. He saw the works and miracles of Jesus. He saw how Jesus suffered, and how He was determined to follow

the Father in heaven rather than seek the enjoyments of life. This story is also a warning for people who sympathize with Jesus all their lives, but later ignore Him when trials come. Another sad story is found in Acts 5:1–10 where we read about Ananias and Sapphira. They were tempted to be dishonest, and in the end, they lied because they wanted to keep some of the money for themselves while making it appear that they had given all. The punishment for them was very severe. They died right there on the spot.

## **Elisha, Peter, Samson and Achan**

The prophet Elisha is an encouraging example in the fight against temptations. He refused payment when he performed a miraculous healing. In 2 Kings 5:16 it says, *“The prophet answered, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.’ And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.”* Money is always a great temptation. Elisha refused a financial reward and chose to obey God rather than receive the money.

Peter also refused a bribe. In Acts 8:20 it says, *“Peter answered: ‘May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!’”* Bribery is something that I still hear about in shipping. Do not give in to the temptation of bribery.

Samson was lured by the deceptive Delilah, we read in Judges 16, and her deception led to his death. Money and possessions have frequently been sources of temptation in the Bible. We read about Achan’s greed in Joshua 7:21, *“When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”* Later, Achan was stoned for his sin.

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These are frightening examples of how giving in to temptation can have extreme consequences which might even lead to death. We simply cannot take sin lightly—there is always a consequence for sinning. We can read in Romans 6:23, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* This verse in particular shows us that there is a choice between sin and the gift that God offers; between death, which is the consequence of sin, and eternal life, which is the result of choosing Jesus.

## Temptations on a Ship

Once at sea, the seaman encounters many difficulties: loneliness, since he is away from his beloved family for long periods of time, financial problems, health issues, difficulties in communication, marriage problems—and the list goes on. But for the majority of seamen the biggest problems they face while far from home are temptations of all kinds. Temptations have always been a great challenge to seamen. As soon as they are on board, they find themselves in situations where they will either win or lose. When you are far away from your family feeling lonely and forgotten, that is when temptations take you by surprise. While you are out there on the ocean, that's when you begin to ponder such questions as: *How can I manage my life? How can I be a good seaman? How can I be a good husband and father? How can I overcome temptations?*

Some seamen who board a ship for the first time might mistakenly think that they won't encounter temptations once they step aboard that ship. Unfortunately, this is never the case—it is an illusion. Even if you locked yourself into your cabin, you still wouldn't be free from temptation. Temptation is not bound by space or circumstances. Nowhere in the world

will you be free from trials, sorrows, or temptations. Temptation often begins in your mind (see Chapter 9, “Proactive Stance: The Battle in Your Mind”), and it can get its hold on you anywhere and at any time. The ship, and of course the various ports your ship sails into are places of temptation. Of course, there might be a difference depending on where you work—a container ship, tanker, bulk carrier, car ship, reefer ship, passenger ship or cruise liner. On a cruise liner you might be working with hundreds or even thousands of seamen, (there are more than 2000 seafarers on the cruise ship *Oasis of the Seas*), whereas on a typical container ship you probably work with 10 to 25 people, depending on the size of the ship. On a cruise ship you work with men and women, whereas on a conventional cargo ship usually, with a few exceptions, you might be surrounded by men only.

It also depends on the routes your ship takes: fixed routes as compared to ships which have no liner service. There is probably a difference if your ship trades regularly between Europe and Brazil with all its temptations, or if you just trade within European waters. As you can see, many factors come into play. However, in spite of any of these factors, you must realize that wherever you are, wherever you go, you will be working with other people. Many of them do not make it their aim to follow Jesus or do what the Bible teaches. Temptation is not a big issue to them.

I am sure you will agree with me that the primary temptation on most of the ships is sexual temptation in its various forms, such as pornographic movies and literature. In 1 Thesalonians 4:3, 7, the apostle Paul said, *“It is God’s will that you should be holy, that you should avoid sexual immorality. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.”* Certain ships are sometimes visited by prostitutes. This, however, happens less often now due to stricter security measures. Since the attacks in New York in 2001, and the implementation of

the ISPS<sup>1</sup> code, I have personally found that prostitutes no longer come on board—at least not in Germany. Richard Anti, a seaman from Ghana wrote,

“As a sailor, God knows the number of hours and days you spend on board, He knows the limited time you have in participating in religious activities, but this does not guarantee you to play around with sin from port to port chasing women and living indecent lives. If only you can embrace Him (Jesus) with faith and carry yourself well from day to day, then you will receive consolations and favours from Him, which may put you into high standing with your superiors and even crew mates since you will become a light shining in their path.”

However, with Internet being available to many seamen, a new dimension of temptation has come through Internet pornography. It is an even trickier and more subtle temptation, since nobody watches the person engaged in it. Nowadays, many seamen have laptops and access to the Internet. This enables them to watch all kinds of pornographic materials in the privacy of their own cabin. Psychologists say that this is a great problem and a challenge for today’s society, as many people have become addicted to Internet pornography, besides the Internet, in general. Let’s read what an Internet article says about Internet pornography:

#### **Effects of Cyber sex Addiction on Families:**

In a limited study on the effects of cyber sex addiction on families and partners of the cyber sex addict, the partners reported strong feelings of betrayal, hurt, loneliness, rejection, abandonment, devastation, shame, isolation, humiliation, anger, jealousy and loss of self-esteem. Being lied to repeatedly was

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<sup>1</sup> ISPS = International Ship and Port Facility Security

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reported as a major source of distress. As might be expected, Cyber sex addiction was a major contributing factor to separation and divorce in couples.

Additionally, and perhaps most critically damaging, was the loss of interest in relational sex in one or both of the partners. Whereas this might appear to be less important on the surface, it is a major source of misdiagnoses by therapists when couples or one of the partners goes for therapy because of sexual difficulties. The cyber sex compulsive partner will present with [sic] a host of sexual symptoms, such as sexual anorexia, loss of libido, or loss of function (either erectile or orgasmic).<sup>2</sup>

In another article we see the danger that affects people through Internet pornography. Here is an excerpt from an interview with Dr. Mark Laaser, head of the Christian Alliance for Sexual Recovery:<sup>3</sup>

**You have referred to pornography as a building block to sexual addiction. Obviously the Internet has contributed greatly in that area.**

The scary part about the Internet is, firstly, there are forms of perversion available through the Internet that almost defy description. The second and the most powerful problem with the Internet is that it is available in the privacy of your home. In the "old days," it was necessary to go to various red-light districts. You had to make the effort to get there, and as a result, you risked exposing yourself to public humiliation.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://socyberty.com/sexuality/virtual-infidelity-cybersex-addiction/2/>

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Mark Laaser knows both sides of sexual addiction. For 25 years, beginning as a college student and continuing through his career as a pastor and counselor, he lived a secret life that included pornography, affairs, and encounters with prostitutes. Today, 12 years into recovery and a healed marriage, Laaser heads the Christian Alliance for Sexual Recovery, lecturing and conducting workshops around the world. He has worked with hundreds of addicts and their families and has consulted with many church congregations and pastors after their clerics' sexual sins were exposed.

**Would you call Internet sex an “appetizer”, opening the way for the real experience and outward expression of one’s sexual needs?**

I think the average person who gets hooked will find himself on a downward spiral. It’s going to feed the appetite for sexual expression. If you’re left untreated, left unhealed of an addiction to pornography, eventually your mind is going to want to express sexuality in some way.

**Does the Internet attract and make sex addicts out of people who otherwise might not have been addicts?**

There might be some people who were always more vulnerable, having drifted along at a very low level, but instant access to the internet has opened the floodgates and has hooked many people who might not otherwise have degenerated so rapidly.

**We tend to think of this as a male problem. Are women at risk, too?**

We’re seeing a dramatic increase in the number of women who are addicted to pornography and related sexual behaviour. Until the recent past, it seemed that women tended to be addicted to romance novels or chat rooms. That’s still true in some cases. However, it is changing. If you look at women, ages 30 to 35, or a bit younger, they are giving expression to their sexuality very openly. They are becoming more demonstrative and they are giving in to their needs in very direct ways, such as through masturbation.<sup>4</sup>

It is imperative that you be aware of this before you even enter the ship. In this way you will be able to have things clear in your mind and decide what plan of action you are going to take in order to withstand such strong temptations.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.internetevangelismday.com/dayframeforlinks.php?id=http://www.christianitytoday.com/mp/2000/003/12.28.html&referer=/dangers.php&des=CT%20article>

Nevertheless, we will deal with the topic “How to Overcome,” later in this book.

The second temptation that will occur is gossiping. You will hear people talking behind someone’s back or even talking about you. Once again, you must decide whether you want to take part in this kind of activity or if you want to avoid it, and risk becoming an outsider.

The third type of temptation I have encountered is alcohol. Alcohol is available in almost every ship. Some ships have limited the amount seamen are allowed to drink; however, alcohol is almost always a problem.

Another common temptation, at least on small container ships, also known as feeder ships,<sup>5</sup> is the temptation to smuggle and sell alcohol and cigarettes to countries like Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where alcohol and cigarettes are very expensive. Many seamen start selling alcohol and cigarettes in these Scandinavian countries in order to improve their income. This is, by the way, a major crime. If you are caught you will be in deep trouble. Therefore, you should always steer clear of it. The question you need to answer is: Will you join in these activities or will you refuse, and risk being considered strange by your colleagues? You may gain friends if you participate, but they might even try to get you to engage in other sinful activities. What happens if you do not sell alcohol and cigarettes, and people on board start to talk bad about you behind your back? Will you still stay strong? And how will you react if they say bad things about you? Will you start arguing with them? Will you defend yourself? You need to keep in mind that you are living in a sinful world. The Devil rules this world. All he wants to

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<sup>5</sup> Feeder ships collect containers from different ports and transport them to central container terminals where these are loaded onto bigger vessels.

do with you is to make you give in to these temptations in order to ruin your faith.

During all the years I have been working on board cargo and passenger vessels as port chaplain, I have heard about one temptation which might not occur too often, perhaps, but which has enormous consequences. I am referring to the smuggling of drugs. In Hamburg, I have sometimes read reports in the newspapers about how police and customs find drugs on ships. These ships often come from South America. It is so tempting to make a lot of money in such a short time. I remember in the early nineties when Nigerian ships still came to Hamburg, that there was one seaman who was caught smuggling drugs. He was put in prison for several years, and of course, he lost his job. Drugs will definitely destroy people's lives in addition to destroying the lives of their families back home. For this reason I consider drug trafficking to be one of the worst temptations to seamen.

For quite a number of seamen it is also a temptation to spend money, or rather, to overspend. Of course, there is nothing wrong with buying something on shore, especially if you or your family needs it. However, many seamen, after they have received their pay, tend to spend their money on the wrong things: alcohol, cameras, clothes and even various kinds of technical equipment. This is not good if the family back home desperately needs the money that the father is earning. Most seamen are financing a house they have bought in their home country. They need to pay back their loans. Many have financial commitments if their children are in good Christian or private schools. So the seamen need to practice strict discipline if they want to continue saving their money to meet all of their financial obligations. If they waste their earnings on "unnecessary" things, they will risk losing their house or not being able to pay the school fees, which

in turn will cause marriage problems as well. Nevertheless, I frequently hear from seamen that even their wives at home are not careful with the money they receive.

One more temptation that may not even look like a temptation is laziness. This is something seamen often tell me about. People fail to do their work correctly, or they don't do it the way the company wants it done. This can lead to trouble and can cause unnecessary danger when one should instead be thinking about safety.

However, it is also a fact that if you trust the Lord Jesus, He will help you deal with all of these temptations. He will show you a way out. On some ships you might still encounter temptations, which are not listed here, so it is advisable to think about the matter and to make a choice as to what your reaction will be in the face of those temptations. A few questions to ask yourself are: *What does God think about this? What does my family think about it? Does it help my family when I do these things? Do I please God by doing these things?* Don't forget: God has a good plan for your life. He wants to bless you and guide you into all the truth. But He cannot bless you while you are involved in such activities.

Another problem I have encountered results from people of different nationalities working together. You might work alongside a German, Polish or Russian seaman or even someone else. They all come from different cultures. Some Europeans, for instance, don't know that they shouldn't shout at Asian people. And some don't know that an Asian gets very offended when a person mentions his mistakes in front of other people because he will feel like he has lost face. How would you react if something like this happened to you? Some seamen fight back, but of course this only leads to more problems, and the seaman might risk losing his job. Therefore, I think the best thing to do is to find out

about the different cultures in order not to act in a way that would hurt others, thus, causing more trouble. Most of the maritime schools nowadays teach courses about different cultures in order to prepare the seamen for their next assignment on a vessel.

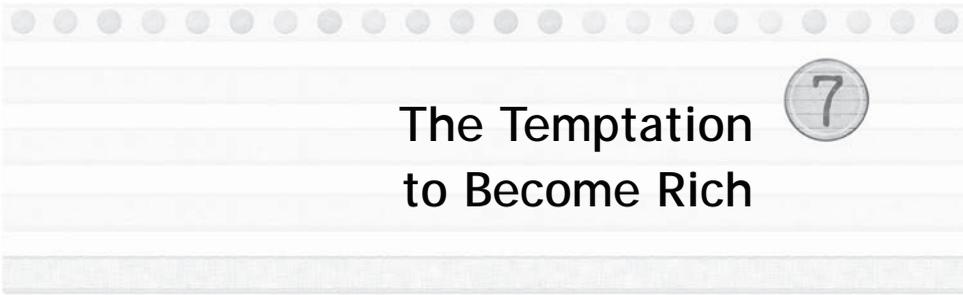
At this point, I would like to give some examples of temptations seamen have had on ships. Several years ago I met Ferdinand<sup>6</sup> from Honduras. Ferdinand worked on a reefer ship.<sup>7</sup> He was glad to meet me and my wife. He introduced himself as a Christian and invited us to his cabin. When we went inside, we noticed pornographic posters on the walls, and were extremely puzzled. We purposely said nothing because we had no idea why the posters were there. Almost immediately, Ferdinand began to speak openly to us and explained what happened to him when he joined the ship. He had been eager to share his faith in Jesus to as many colleagues as possible. However, there were other seamen who didn't like it when Ferdinand talked about Jesus and so they put a huge, dramatic poster on the wall in Ferdinand's cabin. As soon as Ferdinand saw it, he took the poster down and destroyed it. Sure enough, the following day, a new poster was put on his cabin door. Ferdinand got frustrated and after a while did not have the strength to overcome the temptation. In a short time he not only had a poster outside the cabin but also on the inside. He then confessed his sin to us, and we prayed together to Jesus. Ferdinand repented of his sin, and we destroyed all the posters and in their place gave him some beautiful posters showing nature to hang in his cabin.

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<sup>6</sup> The author knows the real name but chose to use another name to protect the person's identity.

<sup>7</sup> A ship that transports refrigerated cargo like bananas, pineapples, pears etc.

Another seaman told us this story. He was from the Kiribati Islands, a country in the Pacific Ocean. This seaman had the inner desire to follow Jesus and to live according to the Word of God. However, when his fellow crewmembers discovered how his life was changing by the power of Jesus, they tempted him with different things. One day, they invited him to go with them to a bar. He told them that he didn't want to go to a bar, and therefore intended to stay on the ship. They insisted that he join them because he was the only one who knew the way to the bar. So this seaman said to himself: *All right, I will go to the bar, but I will not drink alcohol and I will not touch any women.* A few hours later they returned to the ship. The Kiribati seaman had been faithful to his promise, and he had not touched any alcohol or girls. However, the following day, when he was working again, the other seamen smuggled a girl into his cabin. When he had a coffee break at 10 o'clock and opened his cabin door, he saw the woman. This is an example of how difficult it can sometimes be when you desire to live a Christian life, the Kiribati seaman said.



## The Temptation to Become Rich

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The temptation to become rich has been around as long as man has been living on earth. There is certainly nothing wrong with earning a lot of money and having houses, cars or even enjoying nice holidays. It's not that God is against having material wealth. Throughout history there have been people with more money than they needed. Both the Old and New Testaments offer us examples of people who were very rich. People like Solomon and Job. Solomon is described in 1 Kings 10:23: *“King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.”* And in Job 42:10, 12, we find the following report about Job's wealth: *“After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. . . . The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.”*

In his book, *Managing Your Money*, Michael Wilson says,

“It would be easy to assume that money in the bank equals happiness and protection from life's trials. This is not so. Certainly, a healthy bank balance does solve some of life's day-to-day

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problems, but a Christian knows that his or her life is going to contain all sorts of trials. James tells us to expect testing—but we are also told that such times make us ‘mature and complete’. So there would be no point in Christians attempting to use money as a form of protection from life’s troubles; we shall probably face various trials despite our money, and if we don’t, we are losing out on an opportunity to be made pure and complete!”<sup>1</sup>

I assume that you are aware of the fact that money is not the problem. The problem starts with the ambition to acquire lots of money, more than you need—only to use it for self-centered purposes that do not please God. It is important that you are aware of the priority you actually place on money. The apostle Paul, for instance, gives a clear warning in 1 Timothy 6:9: “*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*” Another warning against making money your number one priority is found in Proverbs 11:28, “*Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*”

Perhaps it would be a good idea to examine yourself for a moment. Ask yourself questions like: *What is my goal in life? Why do I have certain goals? What does God think about my goals and ambitions?* There are quite a few examples—from the past as well as the present—of people striving to become rich, people wanting to impress others with their wealth, people thinking that their life can only be meaningful when they have amassed riches. Allow me to ask you one question: Is your identity found in Jesus Christ or is it in money? Money will perish, but Jesus will remain forever. Paul continues in 1 Timothy 6:10, “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*”

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Wilson, *Managing Your Money*, (Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), pp. 8–9.

*Some people, eager for money, have wondered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” Matthew Henry’s Commentary analyzes Paul’s warning as follows:*

“People may have money, and yet not love it; but, if they love it inordinately, it will push them on to all evil. Covetous persons will quit the faith, if that will be the way to get money. Those that depart from God do but treasure up sorrows for themselves.”<sup>2</sup>

The love of money and the love for God are contrary to each other. The Bible makes it very clear that you can either serve God or money. God is a jealous God, and He will never allow you to put money before Him. If Jesus lives in your heart, then He wants to be your first priority. He wants to be everything to you. And if Jesus is everything in your life, then He will take care of your money matters. He knows what you need, and He also knows it if you are suffering from financial burdens and problems.

The apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:6–8, “*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*” Paul wants you to think about things from a different angle. He wants you to think beyond this life. Paul reminds you that you brought nothing into this world and that you can take nothing out of it. He tells you that there is an eternal life. And that is why money should be of secondary importance.

Having said that, I also want you to be aware of the fact that money can be a blessing. But first of all, as a Christian, the right thing to do is to set a good example, such as paying your bills on time. You should not let people wait and possibly suffer if you owe them money. Another way

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<sup>2</sup> *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, (Zondervan Publishing, 1979), p. 1892.

money can be a blessing is that you can use it to help others who are in need.

Take a careful look at the words of wisdom from the Old Testament:

Proverbs 28:6, NASB:

*"Better is the poor who walks in his integrity  
than he who is crooked though he be rich."*

Proverbs 28:11, NASB:

*"The rich man is wise in his own eyes,  
but the poor who has understanding sees through  
him."*

Proverbs 22:1, NASB:

*"A good name is to be more desired than great wealth,  
favor is better than silver and gold."*

## God's promises are for righteous and upright people

It is exciting to see how God views wealth, and what He considers important. Therefore, I challenge you to embrace God's attitude and His ideals. Take time to read the entire book of Proverbs where you will find encouragement and wisdom to help you in your personal life. Here are a few verses:

Proverbs 2:21–22, NASB:

*"For the upright will live in the land  
and the blameless will remain in it;  
But the wicked will be cut off from the land  
and the treacherous will be uprooted from it."*

Proverbs 10:16, NASB:

*"The wages of the righteous is life,  
the income of the wicked, punishment."*

Proverbs 10:25, NASB:

*"When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more,  
but the righteous has an everlasting foundation."*

Proverbs 10:27, NASB:

*"The fear of the Lord prolongs life,  
but the years of the wicked will be shortened."*

Proverbs 11:5, NASB:

*"The righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way,  
but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness."*

Proverbs 11:8, NASB:

*"The righteous is delivered from trouble,  
but the wicked takes his place."*

Finally, I would like to end this chapter by reminding you of a verse which has already been mentioned in this book. You will find it in Matthew 6:33: *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*



## 8

# The Unseen Temptation

When you think about temptations, you easily think of the worst temptations like drugs, pornography, alcohol, stealing something or making money in unlawful ways. However, the Devil is very clever, and the temptation that all of you will find the most difficult to handle has to do with time. What do I mean by that? How can time become a source of temptation to you?

God has given each of you a day consisting of 24 hours. The question is, how do you spend those 24 hours? Almost everyone works at least eight hours a day. You may sleep for about eight hours, but what about the remaining eight hours? How do you spend that time? Let's start at the beginning of the day. You might get up at around 6 o'clock in the morning. You take a shower, and have breakfast, and for many people, work starts at 8 o'clock. After you finish work, you may feel like resting a little. Maybe you read the newspaper, watch TV or talk with friends. The question I would like to raise at this point is: *What percentage of your time do you give to God every day? Do you read your Bible in the morning?* Maybe you are too tired in the morning—do you read it in the evening? I have heard many seamen say, “I

have no time to read the Bible—I am so busy with my daily work on board ship.” Is that really true? Maybe you could ask yourself a question: “How many hours a week do I watch TV or DVDs?” Strangely enough, I have never heard anyone say that he had no time to watch TV, or no time to listen to music. Neither do people say: I have no time to eat, since they know that when they stop eating, they will starve. I encourage you to think not only about your body, but also your soul. Your soul also needs food!

How much time do you spend listening to your favourite music? And what about writing SMS messages (texting) to loved ones and friends? In recent times, more and more seamen have bought a laptop. They spend hours and hours using the laptop. I can imagine you need to spend time using it if you want to be able to operate it correctly. A third officer from the Philippines told me, “I used to read the Bible regularly, but since I have bought a laptop, I spend so much time with it that I often forget to read the Bible.” Many people also spend a lot of time with their new digital cameras.

Again let me be very clear—there is nothing wrong with these things. But the question remains: How much time do you dedicate to Jesus? Many would say that Jesus is their first priority. Is He really Number One? Or do you say that without really thinking? Stop for a moment and think about what the highest priority in your life is. Who or what is Number One for you? The answer to that question will determine how intensive your fellowship with God is. Martin Luther used to say, “The more work I have, the more I need to pray.” Does that make sense? Oh yes, I believe it makes sense, because when we have a lot of work to do, we also need a lot of wisdom and a lot of God’s grace for the many jobs we have to do. So spending a lot of time in the Word of God and in prayer will certainly help you to be successful in life.

In the Old Testament we read about Joshua who was responsible for leading the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua realized he could only do that if he spent enough time with God. Let's look at what is written in Joshua 1:8, *"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."* Isn't that exciting? Joshua speaks about being prosperous and successful when we take time to read God's Word. Do you want to be prosperous and successful?

Be aware though, that the Devil will tell you that you are too busy. You have to finish first the job assigned to you. But when you have finished that job, he will show you something else to do, so that at the end of the day or even at the end of the week, you will notice that there was hardly any time left for God.

Is Jesus really our first priority when we have no time for Him, when we spend perhaps 30 seconds in prayer in the morning and 30 seconds in prayer at night? Many people realize they need to spend more time with God. In spite of that, they don't manage to take the time. They spend more time with others—chatting on the telephone, using the Internet, or even just sitting around with other people and talking about anything. Of course, it is important to have social contacts, and you should cultivate them. In fact, we need friends we can share our sorrows, joys and problems with—and the Gospel, as well! But the same question remains: What part does Jesus play in your life? Is He Number One or Number Two or even Number Ten? Jesus will not force His way into your life; He will wait patiently for you. (This is, by the way, the difference between a sect and personal faith. In many sectarian groups you are forced into certain relationships.) Jesus, however, gently, patiently, calls you to

meet with Him in prayer or in the Word of God. Consider the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:20, *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”* Did you know that these words written to Christians—these were written to a church in Laodicea. Jesus kindly invites you and me to listen to Him and to invite Him in for fellowship. Jesus wants to be the highest priority in your life! He deserves to have first place in our lives.



## SECTION TWO



# Proactive Strategies



## Proactive Stance: The Battle in Your Mind

Do you ever wonder what really goes on in your mind? Thousands of thoughts and ideas go through your mind every day. Where do these thoughts come from? How do you know which of these thoughts will help you lead a godly life and which ones will be a hindrance to you? I am sure you would agree that the real battle of temptation starts in your mind. Fortunately, no one can see what goes on in your mind; otherwise you might be ashamed. However, the good news is that Jesus knows your mind, and you can simply come to Him in faith and ask Him to control your mind and to help you win the battle over your thoughts.

Nevertheless, you might sometimes have doubts about certain verses in the Bible. For instance, in Colossians 1:13–14 where it says, *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”* Or in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where Paul says, *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come.”* And lastly, in Colossians 3:3, *“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”* Do you feel as if you have been rescued from

the dominion of darkness? Do you feel like a new creation? Do you feel as if your life is hidden in Christ? Perhaps you are even surprised at how negative your thoughts can be. Sometimes, you wonder whether you are really a Christian, and why you still have such negative and destructive thoughts. But this is the very same problem we all have.

Too often we depend on our own feelings and do not live by faith. The promises in the Bible were not given to us to make us feel something. God gave us promises that must be claimed by faith. When you have fallen into sin, your feelings tell you that you are no good and that you are of no use to God. But is that true? Of course not! It is one of the Devil's lies. The Devil tries to distort your thinking as well as your feelings. He tries to make you believe your feelings rather than the promises of God.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to begin living by faith and to feed your mind on Scriptures, on the promises from the Lord. Many people wonder where all the evil thoughts which race through their minds come from. I encourage you to put a stop to those evil thoughts when you feel them arising. The moment you begin thinking negative thoughts, simply pray to Jesus to remove those thoughts immediately. Turn to the Bible and fill your mind with God's unchanging Word. Do not let your negative thinking continue. Do not try to argue in your mind. Just stop the thoughts immediately and pray. Tell Jesus your thoughts; tell Him that you want to be free from these negative thoughts.

After praying, try to bring to mind verses from the Bible. Begin by thanking Jesus for making you a new creation. Turn to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, where Paul says, *"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments*

*and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

According to Dr. Neil Anderson,

“Strongholds are fleshly thought patterns that were programmed into your mind when you learned to live your life independently of God. Your world view was shaped by the environment you were raised in. But when you became a Christian, nobody pressed the ‘CLEAR’ button. Your old fleshly habit patterns of thought were not erased. What was learned has to be unlearned.

“If you have been trained wrong, can you be retrained? That is what repentance is: a change of mind. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds. We can be transformed because we have the mind of Christ within us if we have repented from our sins and accepted HIM to be our Saviour and Lord. Now the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. But the world system we were raised in and our independent flesh patterns are not the only enemies of our sanctification. Even though we are new creations in Christ, we still battle the world, the flesh and the devil.”<sup>1</sup>

So you know that the battle to overcome temptations has to be won in your mind. Now the question is: What do you feed your mind? Which influences, which messages, pictures and ideas, etc. do you allow in your thoughts? Let me give you some examples. When you feed your body too much food, you will neither work well afterwards nor feel well (You may even get sick or throw up). The same will happen if you feed your body too little. In the same way, we need to consider very carefully what we allow to enter in our minds. Our mind is fed by what we see on TV, by what we read in the newspaper, and by our daily conversations with others.

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<sup>1</sup> Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, (Monarch Books, 2000), pp. 51-52.

I remember a few years ago while still working as a radio speaker, I invited a famous football coach to a radio interview. It went well and afterwards, over a cup of coffee, I tried to have a nice conversation with him. However, no matter how hard I tried, I could not get a conversation going. All we were able to talk about was football. Why? This coach had fed his mind on football for years and years. He read about football, taught others how to play football, he watched football on TV, and talked day and night about football. His mind was crammed with all kinds of information about football. In the same way, you have to determine what you will feed your mind.

The problem is that too often people are not aware that the mind is the center of everything. They say thoughts are free, but they forget that the course of one's whole life is determined and directed by one's mind. Your mind determines what kind of life you lead. I am convinced that the best "food" for your mind is the Word of God. We read in 1 Peter 2:2, "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*" And in Matthew 4:4, it says, "*Jesus answered, 'It is written, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'*" (KJV). In Hebrews 4:12, we also read about the Word of God: "*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*" The Word of God judges your thoughts and attitudes, which are most important to God. It's not what you do, but *why* you do it. The Word of God is able to clearly tell you which of your thoughts are useful in service to God and which are not.

## **The enemy wants to infiltrate our thoughts**

Dr. Neil Anderson says the following:

“Don’t think that the devil is no longer interested in manipulating your mind in order to accomplish his purposes. Satan’s perpetual aim is to infiltrate your thoughts with his thoughts and to promote his lie in the face of God’s truth. He knows that if he can control your thoughts, he can control your life.”<sup>2</sup>

The apostle Paul says to the Christians in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*” As far back as in the Old Testament, Satan put his thoughts in King David’s mind. Satan convinced David that it would be a good idea to take a census of his people. 1 Chronicles 21:1 tells us, “*Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.*” Now what was wrong with that? Wasn’t it right for David to know how many troops he had available for combat? But it was Satan’s strategy to put David’s confidence in his troops rather than in the protecting power of God. And how did Satan incite David? Did he talk to him in an audible voice? No, it was through David’s thoughts. David believed they were his own thoughts. Here lies Satan’s deception.

Judas also listened to the Devil as we read in John 13:2, “*The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.*” Again Dr. Anderson says:

“We may be tempted to dismiss this as just a bad decision prompted by the flesh, but Scripture clearly says that the origin

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

of those thoughts was Satan. When Judas realized what he had done, he took his own life.”<sup>3</sup>

In John 10:10 we read, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*” This is what the work of the Devil is all about. Therefore, we need to be both informed and prepared. I am sure none of us have fully understood the effect our minds have on our behavior or our thoughts. If we did, we would certainly behave or react differently at times.

However, as Christians we have all the reasons in the world to be encouraged, because the Word of God gives us guidelines, advice and help so we can learn how to “feed” our minds and use our minds to win the battle against temptations. Here is what Paul says in Romans 12:2, “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*”

God challenges you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. How does that work? When you received Jesus Christ into your heart, the Holy Spirit was given to you. He is the One who will do the transforming part in you. You cannot transform yourself; this is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in you. However, the transforming process will take place as mentioned in Romans 12:2 while your mind is being renewed. For example, if you choose not to act selfishly, but seek to please God; if you choose not to seek your own profit, but seek to glorify God in your life. Here are some tools that will help you begin the transforming process.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

## Prayer

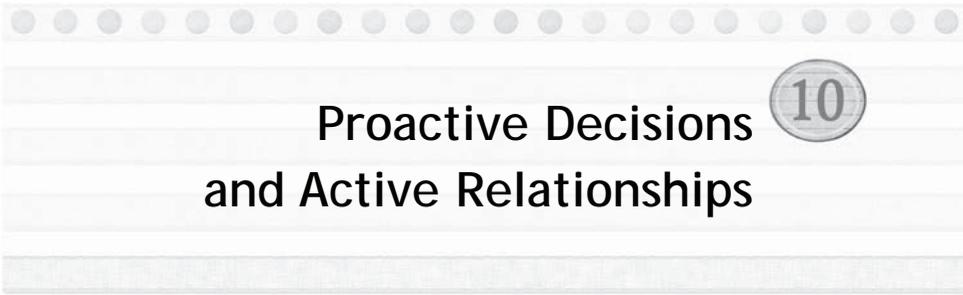
Philippians 4:6-7 says, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all our understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* By prayer and petition—this point seems to be very important to Paul, and it should also be to us. Prayers and petitions will transform our lives while we occupy ourselves with God rather than our own egos. When our focus is on God, our mind will be renewed through prayer, and this is what Paul means. I encourage you seek out a fellow Christian on board your ship. Meet regularly with him for prayer. If you have a church on board, suggest praying together as a church. This will truly help all of you to win the battle in your mind, the battle against temptations.

## The Word of God

Deuteronomy 8:3 says, *“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”* And in Job 23:12 it says, *“I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.”* The author of these verses knew about the tremendous transforming power of the Word of God. Did you know that communist regimes feared nothing more than people who were reading their Bibles? They knew that the minds of people were being changed by the power of the Word of God. They knew that if the people followed what their Bibles said, they would not follow a corrupt regime; but their aim would be to live holy lives—lives pleasing to

*Section Two: Proactive Strategies*

God. Millions of people have experienced true change in their hearts and minds. Therefore, I don't want to add too much to these verses, but just like Joshua, I encourage you to meditate on them day and night, "*Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful*" (Joshua 1:8).



## Proactive Decisions and Active Relationships

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Most of the seamen I have met would be glad to know how to resist temptations. Many would be happy to have a set pattern by which they could even avoid temptations. Unfortunately, however, it is not so easy. Countless seamen have told me—no matter how hard they have tried, they have not been successful. I think there are many ways to help build up your resistance against temptations but there are simply no set rules to automatically help you overcome the problems. Nevertheless, I will try to list a few points, hoping that these will be helpful.

### **Be Proactive: Decide Early on How to Respond**

#### *Prepare yourself before joining the ship*

When you leave home to join a ship, you should prepare yourself by thinking about possible temptations that will arise. Pray for your next ship and for the people you will be working with. Ask seamen you know how they dealt with temptations. Pray that God will protect you from temptations and if temptation does come, that God will give you the

strength to overcome. Remind yourself of God's promises, such as Matthew 11:28, "*Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" Part of the preparation is to know exactly where the ship is going (for example, Brazil?) and how long you will be on board. Also, what is your reason for going to sea? Is it only to earn money, to sacrifice nine months for the family, or is it, first of all, to live for the glory of God? If you choose to live for God and make Him your highest priority, you will find it easier to resist temptations because you know who you are living for. In Matthew 6:33 it says that we are to seek God first. "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*"

### ***Don't Stay! RUN!***

Run when you see it coming. For instance, if you are in a room where a dirty movie is playing, do not simply pray for protection; instead you should get out! If you are in a house where fire has broken out, you would not sit down and pray for protection, but you would run away from the fire. In the same way, be practical—run away from the temptation.

When we read about Lot and his family in the Old Testament, we are given a perfect example of what it means to flee, to run away in order to be safe and to be protected. They had to make the choice of whether or not they wanted to stay in the city of sin, a city that was full of temptations. Two angels told Lot that the sinful city of Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed. Genesis 19:12 says, "*The two men said to Lot, 'Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here.'*" So the only chance Lot and his family had of surviving was to get away. In the following verses (vv. 15–17) we read, "*When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot,*

saying, ‘Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.’ But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city. When they had brought them outside, one said, ‘Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away’” (NASB). We clearly see that the only solution was to escape. We also see how God helped Lot and his family to escape. It says that the Lord was merciful to them.

This story contains a wonderful lesson on how to fight against temptations. First of all, it says we are to get out. Secondly, we see how God helps people to escape. And thirdly, we see the place we should run to. In the case of Lot and his family, they were told to run to the mountains. This beautifully illustrates how much God desires our safety. The mountains were far away from the city that God wanted to destroy. They were safe on the mountains! So we are to run to places where we would be safe, where we would not be easily tempted.

However, we also see in this story what it means if we are not willing to get out. There are consequences when we look back. Lot’s wife was not willing to get out of the city of sin; she looked back, as it says in Genesis 19:26, “*But Lot’s wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt.*” She paid for her disobedience—she had to die.

### ***Don’t even look!***

A pastor once told his congregation, “I learned a great lesson from a dog. His master used to put a bit of meat on the ground, and he’d say to the dog, ‘Don’t eat that,’ and the dog would run over and eat it, so he’d hit the dog. And he

put another piece of meat on the ground. He'd say, 'Don't eat that.' The dog would go over and eat it, and he hit him again. Well, after a while, the dog got the message: eat meat, get hit. So the dog decided he wouldn't eat the meat." But the man telling the story related how that the dog never even looked at the meat. The dog evidently felt that if he looked at the meat, the temptation to disobey would be too great, and so he looked steadfastly into his master's face and never took his eyes off him, and thus the temptation never caused a problem.

I think this story illustrates a very practical lesson. If you turn your eyes away from the temptation you will certainly find it easier to overcome.

## **Be Proactive: Establish Strong Emotional and Social Support**

### *Keep in close contact with your wife/family*

A very good way of keeping away from temptation and sin is a strong and healthy relationship with your family. And if you are married, your wife back home remains your first friend and your best friend, the one who can encourage, help and counsel you in the midst of temptations. Your wife knows you best, and she is usually the one who can give you good advice. However, your wife is only able to help you on board if you have a very open and honest relationship with her, and if you let her know what is going on board your ship. If your wife does not know about the various temptations, how can she be of help? You do not need to pretend that you are strong and that you will overcome any problem—your wife often gets to know about your situation from other seamen or seamen's wives. I have seen many seamen who cultivated a good relationship with their wives by phone calls, letters,

text messages, etc. But I have also seen seamen who did not cultivate a good relationship because they wanted some adventure on board ships. They kept what they were doing a secret. Actually, sooner or later this will fail. A relationship that is not strengthened through mutual trust will easily break down and then the problems will worsen. I am reminded of what Paul says in Ephesians 5:25, 28: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . . In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”*

### ***Find a good friend***

Someone you can share your problems with, with whom you can pray. Someone who can carry your burdens. David and Jonathan had that kind of friendship in the Old Testament. We can find it in 1 Samuel 20:16, 42: *“So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David. . . . Jonathan said to David, ‘Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever. . . .’”* I am sure you have friends either at home or on the ship. Try to have an open and good relationship with them. If possible, be honest and talk about your problems, and ask them how they have overcome problems. Try to learn from them. Pray together so God can mightily work in you.

### ***Find a prayer partner***

Maybe you have never thought about a prayer partner. The Bible emphasizes the importance of having people pray for us. Paul reminds us about this when he asks people to pray for him. In 2 Thessalonians 3:2 he requests prayer: *“And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone*

*has faith.*" This is a very practical prayer, since it is on ships that fellow seamen lead others into sin. So we need to ask for prayer that we would be delivered from such people. Sometimes a prayer partner can be a close friend in your church. It can sometimes be somebody on the ship that you know well. But it can also be your wife or another church member. Your prayer partner could also be a foreign friend or a port chaplain. It is simply important that you give someone your prayer requests so they know what to pray for. If you inform them about your situation on board, and tell them that there are temptations of different kinds, then they can pray to Jesus to protect you from sin. This is not only helpful for you, but at the same time it is encouraging to know that there is always somebody bringing your requests before God.

### *Keep writing to your church*

Long before email and such things existed, most seamen corresponded regularly with friends and family by letter. Some kept in close contact with their home church through letters. Some pastors spiritually fed their members who were on ships by sending them personal letters. Other pastors sent their sermons or Bible study notes. Unfortunately, in this high-speed electronic age, people do not write as much. However, you can easily send SMS messages to your pastor, or to the elders in the church and share some of your prayer requests. If you have email on board, you can email your church. They, in turn, can send you an SMS or email and tell you about church life and what is going on in the church, and then they can tell you how they have prayed for you or will continue to pray for your requests. This way you will be able to feel the help and encouragement from your home church. You will feel like you belong to them, that you are not forgotten, that people care for you even though you are

far away from them. Then, when you go home, you will look forward to seeing the developments in the church, and you will be excited to see the church members once again.

### *Experience church on board*

Some seamen start churches on board. This has had many positive effects on their lives. I encourage you to look for Christians with whom you can have fellowship while you are working on board. If you are the only person on the ship who loves Jesus and reads the Bible, perhaps you can start sharing Christ openly and inviting people to join you in reading the Bible and prayer. This will also help you to focus on what is important and will keep you from temptations.

### *Keep in close contact with port chaplains worldwide*

Most of you have met port chaplains in various ports worldwide. They often came on board and talked to you, gave you newspapers, telephone cards and good Christian literature such as the Bible, study guides and other books or even CDs. I have never met a seaman who did not welcome us port chaplains. The seamen usually enjoy it when we come on board, and we enjoy meeting them. Seamen are very friendly and hospitable.

However, when they have problems, they usually have difficulty opening up to port chaplains and telling them about their problems, especially if they don't know the chaplain very well. It might have something to do with the culture they were brought up in. I have met many seamen on ships who were open with me, and who honestly shared what was burdening them. Some even did it with tears. This usually brings about a deeper friendship with the port chaplain, but it is also a great relief to the seaman when he is finally able

to tell someone what has been troubling him. I usually pray with seamen and they really appreciate that. Many tears have been shed and many seamen have left the port relieved because they knew that Jesus had forgiven their sins. They also appreciated being able to talk through some of the problems that they had been dealing with alone.

When you read this book and feel the need to talk to a chaplain, I encourage you to take the opportunity to look for one in the next port you sail to and ask him to pray with you or for you. We chaplains are not perfect; we are also human beings, tempted just as you are, but we would love to help you overcome temptations and serve Jesus wherever you are. Write, if you have our addresses; also feel free to send an email, text, or call if necessary. We would be happy to hear from you. We would like to help you and pray for you. We urge you to do it!

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If you are a Filipino seaman, also feel free to visit  
our Seamen's Center in Intramuros, Recoletos Street, Corp.  
Plaza Bldg., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Room 204, Manila.  
Email: vicscfs@yahoo.com

## Proactive Spiritual Habits

One seaman wrote to me in an email:

“Starting a Christian life is one thing, continuing is another thing, and finishing is also another thing. Most sailors started well as Christians, but can’t continue, neither can they finish. Continuing is feeding daily on the Word of God regardless of where you are in the world, and praying regularly for guidance and His grace. But finishing is looking unto Jesus, the author of our faith, and our coaches who are the past prophets, apostles and teachers who had passed through temptations and tribulations more than our own but looked unto God and survived.”<sup>1</sup>

The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:22, “*You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*”

Christ told His disciples to pray that they might not fall into temptation. Matthew 6:13 says, “*And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.*” And in Luke 22:40 we read, “*On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation.’*”

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<sup>1</sup> A seaman in the navy of Ghana.

And again Paul says to the church in 1 Corinthians 10:13, *“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”* (NASB).

Below are several points that may be of help in dealing with temptations:

## Come near to God

James 4:7–8 says, *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded.”* So you see, you need a plan of action. If you know temptation is waiting somewhere, do not go there. Instead, go to where you will be safe from the temptation, where you can find peace for your soul.

## Walk by faith

As it says in 1 John 5:4, *“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”* We read about Moses in Hebrews 11:24–25: *“By faith, Moses when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated, along with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.”* Moses made a choice—he chose a life of faith, rather than a life of pleasure. What do you chose for your life? Temptation sometimes looks so sweet, but it can be overcome by faith!

Now you might ask, “How can I have a strong enough faith to overcome?” As the Bible tells us, faith is always nurtured by the Word of God. In Romans 10:17 it says, *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is*

*heard through the word of Christ.”* So, reading and meditating on the Word of God is absolutely crucial to having strong faith. Perhaps you are not sure about your faith yet—if you feel your faith is not strong enough for the next trial, then follow the example of the apostles in Luke 17:5: *“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’”* You can go to Jesus in prayer and beg Him to increase your faith. God knows your situation. He knows your life, your feelings. He knows your past, and He knows whether your faith is weak or strong. In Jesus you have a friend, someone who is for you, who wants to make your faith grow day by day.

## **Study the Bible regularly**

The most crucial aid in building your resistance versus temptation is having a close relationship with Jesus Christ, your personal Saviour. He will show you how to flee from problems and temptations. Therefore, I encourage you to take time to get to know Jesus better. The better you know Him, the more you will learn from Him and the easier it will be to overcome temptations on a ship. I challenge you to read your Bible daily. Let the Bible become your daily spiritual food. I would like to stress that many people cannot overcome temptations simply because they do not spend time reading (or listening to audio tapes of the Word of God) and meditate on it. If we don't, we will be weak and have no power to overcome. But if we do, when difficulties come up, we are reminded of what the Bible has to say, and how we can live victoriously.

King David said that God's Word directed his way. We can read in Psalm 119:105, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”* Early in the morning, David took the time to meditate on God's Word. In Psalm 119:147 he says, *“I rise*

*before dawn, and cry for help, I have put my hope in your word.”* He knew that God’s Word would be able to show him the best path, the safest path away from temptations. He has given you the Bible, His Word, to equip you for the battle against temptations. In the Bible you can read how about how people have won the battle. People like King David, Joseph, Jonah, Jacob, Peter, Paul, Jesus, etc. We can learn from them, and thus, be better prepared for temptations will surely come our way. Reading God’s Word will always direct your mind to what is pleasing to God. By reading your Bible you get spiritual food, which you need as much as you need food for your body. Sometimes you might find situations where there seems to be no way to escape sin, but then you read the Bible and you find a way. Jesus even says of Himself that He is the Way. We read in John 14:6, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* The Word of God will draw your attention to the right things, to the important things in life. It will draw you close to Jesus and Jesus will help you to overcome. In 2 Timothy 3:16–17 the apostle Paul says, *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”*

## **Fix your eyes on Jesus**

As in the illustration about the dog, cultivate a close relationship with Jesus—look to Him and not to the temptation. Colossians 3:1–3 says, *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”* Jesus Himself was tempted during His life

on earth. It was said about Him in Hebrews 2:18, “*Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those being tempted.*” Imagine what a privilege it is to have God on your side—Jesus Christ, who Himself was tempted. He will surely understand you when you come to Him in prayer and tell Him what burdens you. He knows everything going on in your life. He is so eager to help you.

## **Pray, pray, pray**

We all have experienced the power of prayer. Let’s examine Matthew 11:28 once again, where it says, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” We can come to Jesus anytime. He never rests or goes on holiday. You can pray to Him anywhere, anytime. He loves to hear from you, and He especially loves to help when you are in trouble. It is truly exciting to see that when Jesus Christ taught us how to pray, He included the request to keep us safe from temptation. Matthew 6:13 says, “*And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.*”

It is of utmost importance that we start praying, even before the temptation comes, in order that we may be safe and victorious. After you get up in the morning, pray for protection. You might even find it helpful to tell friends, family and church people at home to pray for you to be kept safe from temptations. There are so many promises regarding prayer. We, as Christians, should take these promises seriously and live expecting them to be true.

## **Read good books**

During the past 24 years of visiting ships, I have met numerous seamen who asked for good spiritual books. In fact, seamen

on ships coming to Hamburg ask for good books every week. Books can be a tremendous help in your battle against temptations. You can also write to port chaplains and ask them to send you inspirational books. When you are home, try asking your pastor too, if he can lend you a few books for your time on board ship. For instance, thousands of seamen have read *The Purpose Driven Life*. This book has been a great blessing to so many people worldwide. It has been translated into about 50 different languages. Also Dr. Neil Anderson's book *The Bondage Breaker* has been a blessing to so many seamen. In any case, when you are in a port, you can also ask the port chaplain if there is a Christian bookshop nearby.

## Live by God's grace

This might be considered as one of the most difficult aspects of Christian life. We are all human beings who are used to working hard. We work to obtain food and shelter for ourselves, and our families. We often try to transfer this pattern of work to our spiritual lives. We try to work hard to be better Christians. We try to work hard to have faith and to overcome temptations. But I must disappoint you here—no matter how hard you try, you will not be successful in your battle against sin. You need God's grace.

Read through the books written by Paul in the New Testament and notice how often he mentions the importance of grace in our lives. We are saved by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8–9) and our whole lives should be dependent on God's grace. If you ever have a chance, read *From Fear to Freedom* by Rosemarie Miller. You might be able to get it through the Internet. In her book, Rosemarie describes in a very personal and practical way, what grace did in her life. She said the following about working in one's own power:

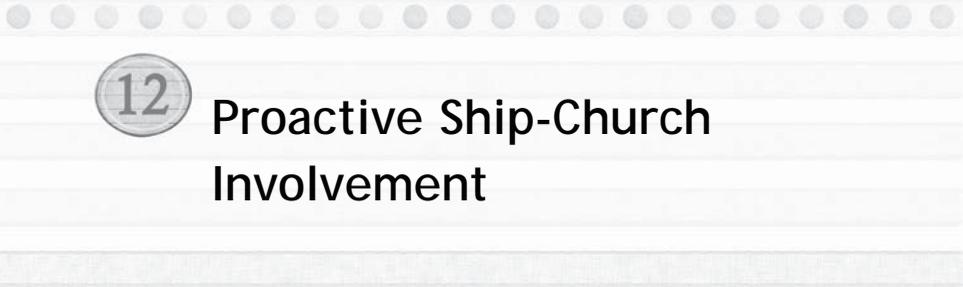
“A refusal to live by the grace of God isolates a person from him [God], and from everyone else as well. Spiritually and emotionally, you truly do feel like an orphan.”<sup>2</sup>

The writer to the Hebrews encourages you in chapter 4:16, “*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*”

We mustn't forget: We are only human beings. Our human strength will never be enough in our battle against temptations. If that were so, it would not have been necessary for Jesus to go to the cross and die for our sins. We are in great need of the GRACE OF GOD!

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<sup>2</sup> Rosemarie Miller, *From Fear to Freedom*, (Harold Shaw Publishers, 1994), p. 18



## 12

# Proactive Ship-Church Involvement

Seamen are easily tempted because of the many problems they face. They lack people who love and care for them. They are far away from home, without fellowship with their family, friends or their church. Often the atmosphere on board a ship is not good, communication problems between seamen and/or their superiors occur, and if the seaman has no friends on board, he will naturally succumb to various temptations. I have often been asked: Please pray for me, as there are so many temptations. The question still remains: How can a seaman live a life that is pleasing to God, a life which resists temptations that usually occur unexpectedly?

From what I have seen and observed on different cargo and passenger ships, the best way to guard the seaman's spiritual life is a church on board. "A church? Why a church?"—you may ask. If there is a church, the seaman will have a social life, and he will feel like he belongs to a family. The fellowship, the love and care in a church on board, and of course, the biblical teaching, will help him to remain strong in his fight against sin.

The Catholic Church also considers the church to be important for seamen. We read in the foreword of Karen M. Lai's book, *An Unconditional Love Story*,

"Because modern seafarers spend 80% of their time at sea, and only 20% ashore, the Roman Catholic Church has called on its seafaring members to be the Church on board ship, not merely to wait to be served, when arriving in port. Seafarers are called to build community, even a Christian community among the crew."<sup>1</sup>

I have therefore asked several seamen, whom I all know personally, and who have experienced church on board, what impact a church has had on their lives and in their struggle against temptations. One captain, who didn't make a direct statement on temptation, clearly said that the church brought about positive changes in the crew, which then helped them in their fight against temptations. This is what he said:

- We have more harmonious relationships
- Seamen are more co-operative when problems arise
- Seamen are more willing to admit mistakes
- The crew is more willing to support their superiors

Another captain, from Ghana, has this to say:

**Personal experience of Capt. Michael Manuel**

"I started my sea career on a state-owned ship that had almost forty crew members. That was relatively large by today's standards. On this ship almost everyone was a Christian—either nominal or in truth. There was a thriving Sunday church and a Christian fellowship that met during the working week. Given that only about 40% of the crew was made up of watchkeepers,

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<sup>1</sup> Karen M. Lai, *An Unconditional Love Story, Meeting The People Of The Sea*, (Mall Publishing, 1999), p. iii in the foreword

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attendance was very high and the meetings were vibrant and 'alive.'

"Subsequently, I worked on other ships where the Christian presence was much less. On one occasion, I was on a ship where there were no other committed Christians. My last ship was a highlight. The context was not a common one since she was a ship owned by a Christian organization. Everybody on the ship was a Christian and all activity was Christian in nature and focused on glorifying Jesus Christ in missions. This was an exceptional experience. Among other things it also gave me an opportunity to visit other ships and interact with Christian fellowships on these ships.

" 'Land-based' churches are also only a local expression of the global community of believers which exists for the same reasons that seafarers need 'ship-board' churches. The Church is made up of all who have surrendered to the Lord as Savior and Lord, irrespective of where they are or where they are from. The local expressions of that body are a practical necessity but do not define the totality of the Body of Christ. Neither do the artificial denominations that man has made.

"In my life as a seafarer, it is with immense joy that I have shared true fellowship and real love with many other believers in all sorts of out of the way places. Christian seafarers belong, not only to their own land-based congregations, but more significantly, to the Universal Body of Christ. What joy it is to be able to find fellowship with others in the Universal Body, when we are far removed from our own local contexts! I am very glad that this experience was what marked my last days at sea as a practicing Ship's Officer.

### *Nature of shipboard life and blessings of an on-board community of believers*

"The isolated social context of contemporary shipboard life means that loneliness can easily quench the flames of Christian love and life in a seafarer. The operational focus of ship-life, how each day revolves round work, the inability to distance

oneself spatially from the work environment and the pressures of modern day shipping, all make it easy to push the external practices of a Christian lifestyle to the fringes of one's priorities. Temptations may also be more accentuated in the shipboard context especially when in foreign ports where the seafarer may feel a reduced sense of accountability to his personal relations. Ironically, given these dynamics, it is obvious that this is the kind of environment where fellowship is particularly helpful and needed. The many advantages to having such fellowship include:

- Praying for one another
- Encouraging one another to avoid the many temptations that seafarers may be exposed to
- Maturing as believers in the study, knowledge and understanding of the Word of God
- Challenging each other to excellence and a godly lifestyle
- Exhibiting the love of Christ that defines the Church
- Pointing to Christ and thereby attracting others, as a body of believers, to Him

### *Challenges*

"There are many challenges, however, to organized church activity on board ship. Some of the most impacting are the kinds of time schedules that are kept. This may be completely out of the control of the Christian believers on the ship. It is not always easy (nor possible) to arrange meeting times such that all would be present.

"Another challenge is that of continuity. It is often the case that key people in a fellowship leave the ship at the same time, which means a re-building process (repeated continuously) even in the case where others remain. This can be discouraging.

"In some cases, support from senior management, or indeed the shipping company, may be lacking, or in worst cases, completely adversarial. Unlike ashore, one cannot just decide to go and have meetings in a different location. Another issue that has become more of a challenge recently is restricted

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access to shore facilities/personnel to augment the fellowship experience. Meetings with external (shore-based) personnel often serve to ignite the beginnings of a church on board, to encourage existing members and/or to attract new members. However, current global geopolitical dynamics have restricted seamen's access to such support in many areas of the world. That, together with the short turn-around times of ships in port, places an even greater burden on the shipboard church.

### *Fundamentals*

"Despite all these challenges, one would highly recommend and advise that Christians seek out other Christians and work to prioritize meetings when they are on ships. The call to meet together as believers was not a suggestion but a requirement for Christian living. Furthermore, according to our Lord Jesus Christ, it is through the exhibition of our love to one another that the world will know that we are His. This love, support, encouragement and empathy are often best expressed in the local church.

"Modern-day seafarers may spend a lot of time at sea. As Christians we cannot (and should not) continue to leave such huge gaps in fellowship time by only enjoying such fellowship when we are on leave at home. Nevertheless, many situations in life place us in contexts where we can't immediately or temporarily fellowship with true believers. Given the dynamics of shipping today, it may often be the case that a Christian believer finds him or herself on a ship where there are initially no other Christians. This should not discourage the committed Christian. The church adds to the fullness of a walk in the Lord but does not define it. Walking with the Lord is fundamentally a personal matter, and while a church should facilitate this, it is ultimately the believer's relationship with Jesus Christ and his/her recognition of the value of this relationship, the residence of the Holy Spirit in each believer, and the believer's submission to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, that is vital. God's Spirit goes with us.

"It continues to be my prayer that Christians who go to sea will so love their Lord that no separation from friends at home will separate them from the love of God in their hearts or His love for them. When all are like this, fellowship on board will be a priority and will be even sweeter and more of a blessing.

*"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:23-25, NKJV)."<sup>2</sup>

## **What others have said after experiencing church on board**

### **Luisa Gamez, Senior IT-Officer on cruise ships**

"Temptation on board a ship might be a sensitive topic for some . . . but in reality, this is very rampant, and I believe that the Church will have a big role in providing a solution to this, even in our own small ways. Being away from your loved ones and living in a confined space where you spend your day in and out, restricts a seaman's healthy interpersonal relationships. One of the most common temptations of working onboard ships is INFIDELITY. It has been a common saying that if you work on ships, then you're likely to be involved in forbidden relationships. Most people who are 'lonely' tend to channel their emotional resources such as romantic love, time, and attention to someone else—someone who is around, and can give them the attention and care that they crave for, being away from their families. Infidelity is defined as an act of unfaithfulness to one's husband, wife, or lover, whether sexual or non-sexual in nature. Onboard, it is defined as 'companionship', a.k.a. an 'open relationship.'

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<sup>2</sup> Capt. Michael Manuel, PhD, Head of Research and Consultancy, Regional Maritime University in Ghana.

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It is acceptable even if both persons involved are married with children. When they get home, they are back to their own families anyway, no strings attached. What constitutes an act of infidelity varies between and within cultures and also depends on the type of relationship that exists between people. There are two areas in a close relationship where infidelity mostly occurs: physical intimacy and emotional intimacy. Infidelity is not just about sex outside the relationship, but about trust, betrayal, lying and disloyalty. What makes infidelity so painful is the fact that it involves someone deliberately using deception to violate established expectations within a relationship—which is supposed to be bound by love and integrity.

“Sadly, this can happen to anyone, Christian or non-Christian. This is where the Church on board comes into play. During counselling sessions with those who have (in some way or the other) experienced this kind of destructive temptation, it has been identified that the common denominator is weakness and lack of faith. They have become emotionally weak and failed to stand firm to what is right in the eyes of God. Encouraging a person who is still engaged in this dilemma requires a long process of restoration. We first aim to bring the person’s perspectives back to the basics—for example, what are the things that matter most in his life, his purpose and goals. Then we lead them to understand the definition of genuine love, through Jesus. We do not condemn what they did; instead we explain that it is Satan who has deceived them to believe the wrong perspective about love. We explain to them that the only way to defeat deception is to know the truth—which is found in the Bible. Only the truth shall set them free! Once the person’s perspectives are restored and the bondage is broken, then they can go forward in establishing healthier relationships with their loved ones through constant communication.

“They can always rely on the brethren for good advice too. Apart from our weekly Praise and Worship and Sunday Service, we also have informal gatherings in the crew mess or ashore,

just to build the camaraderie. We have practice sessions for the next week's line up of songs. We can't seem to wait for the next time that we will have fellowship! We basically establish real friendship. Anyone can seek help whether it is personal or work-related. If someone goes home for vacation, we send keepsakes like cards, letters or books to remind them there's a family waiting for his/her return on board. If time and location permits, we try to meet each other in our home countries—attend a common church and meet our families. Most members have commented that being in a group of Christians kept them focused and helped them to resist temptation. But we tell them that it is Jesus in their hearts that led them to channel their love, resources and attention to what matters most in life—to know Jesus, live a life according to the Lord's plan, and lead more souls to Jesus."

**Captain, Noel Dagaman — *M/V Paranagua Express (container ship)***

"I might not be able to write a complete or long article concerning temptations and seamen working on board. But I can share what God's Spirit has been doing in the life of a seaman who put his trust into the person of Jesus Christ, who can break the chain of bondage that has plagued the peaceful life of a seaman working away from his loved ones.

"A church could provide a solution to the problems of temptations. When a seaman starts to work on board ship, his feelings, emotions and behavior are somewhat affected by the temporary separation from his family. The loneliness and boredom will find their way to fight against the will to survive for the sake of advancement in life. With the determination to go on until the completion of his contract, comes self-indulgence, either to spiritual or worldly activities. Or it may be to both aspects. For a fast-moving ship, especially a container vessel, a seaman has rarely the chance to go to the church ashore, and pour out his spiritual or physical burdens. The tendency of one

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who goes ashore is to find his way to the mall, and then he will be back to the ship, or go to the nightclubs before going back onboard. A church can provide a better way to keep a seaman away from temptations.

“There are some practical helps a church on board can give to minimize the temptations. Once a church starts on board, a series of studies of the practical questions in life are being put on the table. Questions like, *What is the purpose, why do we work onboard ship? What are we living for? What is the purpose of our life? How is your relationship with God?*, among others are being raised. By studying the Word of God in the Bible, answers to those questions are slowly revealed and settled in the mind of the listeners. With the aid of the resources provided by the missions, port missionaries or missionaries to seamen, the study of the Word of God is enhanced. Thus, when the seaman commits himself to the study, the conviction of the Holy Spirit will give him the reality and benefits of doing what is good and not bad.

“In my personal experience, after a church is established on board, the changes in the behavior of the crew are evident. Good relationship among them is enhanced, some experience inner peace and joy in their testimony, realizing the need for a right relationship with the Creator. . . .

“The church on board becomes a source of this joy, that comes out from studying the Word and those who faithfully believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, become heirs of salvation. As the Holy Spirit guards the hearts and minds of God’s children through conviction, the way of life, the outlook of a person becomes obvious to have been quite different than what he was, had he not found his way back to God.”

**Capt. Joseph G. Gracilla – *M/V Bulk Brazil***

“Of course, a church, or fellowship on board will greatly help seamen to overcome temptation: regular prayer meetings, encouraging one another, helping each other to be more deeply

rooted in the Word of God and reading the Bible, especially verses on how to overcome temptations in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“The unique role of the church is to show the love of Christ by caring and helping every crew member. The seamen are safe when they join the church because, as I mentioned earlier, they pray for one another, and for the protection of our Lord Jesus Christ. They care for one another and understand each other.”

**Chief Engineer Henedino Magayon—*M/V Efraim A***

“A church on the ocean offers great help to seamen when it comes to handling temptation. The saved seaman, first of all, understands that he is now a new creature, a workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus for good works. He is saved by grace through faith and not by his good works. It is a free gift from God, and as a sign of gratitude to him who saved him, he loves to do good works.

“I know one seaman who dropped his smoking and drinking habit after he received Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He gives a testimony that it is the God of the Bible who helps him subdue his cravings to nicotine and alcohol. He had tried many times to quit these vices but often failed. Through the Lord, he said, he can do all things.

“Second, a church on the ocean offers new companions at times of shore leave. A seaman said he can avoid going to a bar in port because he now has a new fellowship. He means that, before, all his friends loved to visit bars and places where they can meet girls for the night. But now, God gave him Christian shipmates he can go with.

“One seaman cried in tears after he listened to the preaching about adultery and said that he never realized the gravity and destructive results of sexual sin before. He believed that because everybody was doing it, he can do it as well. He thanked God for sending Christian seamen on board. He said as

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long as there is a Christian seaman on board, who is not afraid to speak and teach the truth from the Bible, he is safe from temptation. I told him that it is not just the Christian seaman, but it is the Holy Spirit, who renewed and changed his mind, who helped him to be able to avoid temptations.

“Spending hard-earned money ashore is also a serious temptation for every seaman. They seldom make long-term plans in their lives. Instead, they love to spend every penny they earn and this lifestyle is also adopted by his family. By reading and studying their Bibles, they become good stewards of their money. A church on the ocean helps them understand that it is God who gives them power to look after their money properly.

“It is the Word of God that helps seamen to realize the gravity of temptations that surround them on board and in port. A church on the ocean gives them a lighthouse to see, and an anchor of faith to hold onto when the storms of temptation beset them.”

### ***Collated testimonies on the effect of a church on the ocean on the lives of seamen as told by their wives***

***Changes in habit*** – “Seamen are prone to be addicted to something they find interesting while away at sea. They are habitually prone to bad temper and outburst when pressured by the circumstances around them. It is the pride of every seaman that makes him carry the image of a macho man everywhere he goes. As a result, they are easily hooked by vices that they think can add and lift up this image. Vices like drunkenness, smoking and womanizing are favorites—but gambling can add even more damage. Even seamen without vices can act as one without knowing it. They even continue this habit when they arrive home to their family.

“Coming in contact with the Word of God on board brings hope to every seaman. They believe no one is able to help them stop their vices but, by the Word, they are able to know the truth and realize they are more than conquerors through

Him who loves them. Those who listen and obey experience dramatic changes in their lives. Those who humble themselves to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ get freed from these damaging habits. They no longer allow their members to be instruments of unrighteousness but yield themselves to God as instruments to righteousness.”

*Changes in character* – “Seamen love to carry the reputation of a tough guy. They make sure people around them see that they are afraid of nothing, and they are the masters of their lives. This is the character of the seaman that helps him survive the rigorous life at sea. Most seamen think they can manage their life at home but the opposite always happened. Seamen always find themselves awkward in dealing with life problems in the family especially when it comes to emotional ones. They are helpless and incapable in situations like this without the help of the wife. Being the tough guy in the family, they find it hard to listen to the voice of the wife, which always causes misunderstandings and a bad relationship while the seaman is at home on vacation.

“By hearing the Word of God, seamen are able to have a biblical faith (Rom. 10:17)—a faith that changes their perspective and character. They learn by the Word of God that to be effective both on land and at sea, they must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Converted seamen know that in trusting the God who proves and examines the heart, they are no longer the masters of their life. Instead, the master is their Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. Instead of playing the tough guy, they have learned to kneel and pray for strength and courage to face the real issues of life. They can now enjoy the fruit of the Spirit in their lives and know that meekness and temperance make the real man.”

*Changes in work attitude* – “As contractual migrant workers, seamen care only about the completion of their contract. Like most migrant workers, they perform based on the money they

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receive from their employer. With this mentality, many seamen perform well only under the watchful eyes of their superior. Senior officers lord it over all the ratings, and compete and destroy one another in their respective fields. They will employ all means, even to the destruction of fellow seamen, to justify their lust or to gain the favor of the ship's owner or shipping agents' managers. They work in order to please men.

"Any dramatic change in the work attitude of seamen comes to the attention of ship owners. Converted seamen become joyful and hard-working persons. They learn to enjoy and love their work and complain less. When asked why, they reply that they are no longer working for the ship's owners but for the Lord, who uses the ship's owner to give them their jobs. They perform their jobs as to the Lord and not unto men. This makes the Christian seaman more pleasing to the owner."

***Changes in family relationship*** – "One seaman's wife testified to the changes in her husband when he arrived home. She said, "I wondered why he didn't call his friends and start a welcome drinking party in our house. Maybe my husband was still tired from his travel home but for sure tomorrow the drinking will start." But tomorrow came and still no party as she anticipated. She became anxious and worried so she asked her husband if something was wrong with him.

"Then the seaman's answer surprised her. . . . She said her husband told her that he no longer drinks and smokes because of what Jesus did for him. And he started to read her verses from the Bible.

"Her husband no longer smells of ash and alcohol but smells fresh all the time. He also started spending time with their children, which he seldom did before. She said although she is afraid to change her religion, she likes the changes that happened to her husband—so she now participates in a wives' fellowship and Bible study when her husband's ship visits the Philippines."

***Changes in financial lifestyle*** – “Seamen would spend their money in port as if there is no tomorrow. They buy what they want and fill themselves with material things, which can never satisfy their needs. When they have learned the Word of God, they understand the difference between needs and wants. They become good stewards of what God has given to them.”

These are some of the positive changes the seamen’s wives have seen in their husbands who have heard the Word of God in a church on board.

## How You Can *Not* Overcome Temptation

Since the Devil doesn't like it when you serve Jesus Christ, he will do everything in his power to get you to sin. Therefore, he puts temptations in your path. Temptation is the Devil's strongest weapon, so you can imagine it is not easy to overcome temptation quickly. One thing, however, is sure: In the same way that we are unable to save ourselves from our sin, but are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), we as human beings are also too weak to overcome temptation in our own strength. We need Jesus Christ to help us, and we need to let Him do His work in us.

The apostle Paul, who was greatly used by God, had to learn that a man can do nothing in his own strength. That is why he wrote in Romans 7:15, 17-25: *"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do, no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it."* Paul also says in chapter 3:10-12, *"There is*

*no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless, there is no one who does good, not even one."*

These verses clearly show us that no matter how hard we try in our own strength to overcome any kind of temptation, we will fail. The strength to overcome is only made possible through the victory that Jesus won on the cross of Calvary over Satan. If Jesus Christ lives in us, we can call on Him to help us overcome. We can confess our weakness, and He will help us in our battle. Paul says in Philippians 4:13, "*I can do everything through him (Jesus) who gives me strength.*" Nevertheless, we often try in our own strength because we, as human beings, are sometimes selfish, proud, arrogant, and we forget that *Jesus* won the victory on the cross—not us. Over and over again, we try to overcome using our own wisdom, and then we get frustrated because it doesn't work, even when we make great efforts. Trying hard is just not enough. We need God's power through the Holy Spirit.

The Bible makes it very clear that pride is an obstacle to overcoming temptation. Look at Proverbs 16:18 where it says, "*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*" In other words, if we trust in ourselves, we will become proud of what we have achieved. God does not want us to use our own strength; He wants us to live by His strength. If we could overcome temptations by our own strength, then why did Jesus Christ have to die on the cross? It would not have been necessary for Him to make such a sacrifice for us. Why was the Holy Spirit given to people if they could do everything by their own strength?

Throughout history, men have always wanted to show off. They have wanted to prove to others how strong they were. People strive to have a good reputation. Maybe you say, I believe in Jesus, and I know He is God. The question still is: Does Jesus Christ have the control over your life? Or

do you have the control? Do you want to carry out your plans or the plans of Jesus?

Perhaps, you do have a method by which you try to overcome problems, trials and sin. Sooner or later, you will realize that no method in itself will work. Neither human maturity nor life experience will lead you to a solution. The only way to overcome problems and temptations is to run to Jesus and ask Him to help you to overcome by His power. Why? Because we have to realize that the struggle is not against flesh and blood: Ephesians 6:12 says, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

Imagine for a moment: who brings temptations your way? Is it God or Satan? It is Satan, of course. My question now is: How will you, as a human being, be able to overcome Satan? It is not possible! The only person who has overcome Satan is Jesus Christ. He won an eternal victory when He died on the cross and rose from the grave three days later. His resurrection is the proof that the victory over Satan is complete and eternal. In our battle against temptation we need the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. He alone is the guarantee for our victory.

## Testimonies of Seamen Who Overcame Temptations

I have written to a lot of seamen and even talked to many more in order to find out first-hand what they go through regarding temptation while they sail on ships. What are their very real temptations, and how do they deal with certain problems? Below you will find testimonies of seamen who honestly write and share their experiences and how they overcame temptations. They also write about the problems they see on board. Here are a few emails I have recently received. The seafarers have given me permission to use their testimonies in this book.<sup>1</sup>

Dear Rev. Martin,

How are you? Years back you gave me one of your small books—though I can't recall the title now—I still have it on my library back home. You may not remember me, but that's ok. It's about 10 years now since I worked for a few months in Papenburg, at the Meyer-Werft shipyard and I still recall the warm welcome I had from the brethren there. Anyway, in

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<sup>1</sup> The author, however, wants to make it clear that his own theological view and that of a certain seaman might not agree.

## *Section Two: Proactive Strategies*

response to your query about temptation, I think, in general, it's much the same as you guys have on land except during times when we are at high seas and away from other people. For seamen—the prevalent temptation is to cheat. Ninety percent of us are married or engaged—and as with most normal men—lust of the flesh is always something to contend to. Since satellite and Internet bring us closer to land—lust of the eyes is a very much strong temptation as well. You ask me how I overcome? To a non-Christian—that is more or less sporadic, there's no real pattern or lasting conviction to avoid temptation. But to a believer all tools are provided by the Lord, and being away in the high seas is no excuse.

Personally—I overcame by prayer, Bible study and most importantly, by the help of the Holy Spirit. By my own—it is impossible to parry all the fiery darts of temptation, but as I learn to submit to the Lord, it gets easier to go through the next level. In general—being physically out is already a hindrance to temptation, but as soon as seamen get to port—some will go wild and some are a bit controlled. One strong factor of controlling lusts among men is the support and prayers of their families back home. Also the fear of retribution or losing jobs can be a factor of deterrence. Amongst the better educated seamen, that also is a contributing factor. In every normal non-Christian man—is a hidden beast within, and often only controlled by civility due to education. This viewpoint is mainly Asian. Caucasians and Africans are a bit different in general as they usually are more indulged in satisfying what they feel they deserve to have. But in general—women and money are the top of the list when it comes to temptation.

In His hands,  
Michael Sison (Philippines)

Hi Bro Martin,

I would like to share my experiences on temptations that I've encountered for the past 17 years of my being a seaman. First, in 1995 when I was 22 years old and a single then, our ship

anchored in Madagascar in East Africa. There were two boats full of women young and old. They came along side to our ship and came up through. The young girls were trading themselves and most of my crewmembers took some into their cabin, and the rest of the others were really frustrated to sell their flesh. While I was about to enter my cabin, one attractive girl came in immediately into my cabin, and she tried to kiss me. She already undressed me but when I thought of hell, suddenly I pushed her out of my cabin and I immediately cried out to God for forgiveness, and kept telling myself, *I don't want to go to hell*. From that time until now, I learned I should not play with that kind of temptation or else I will fall and be a victim of Satan.

A second temptation for me is anger. Sometimes, or most of the time, Satan is trying to tempt me to get very angry at my crew members, who are really having an attitude that is difficult to understand. I admit sometimes I fall into that temptation, when I think of doing something that is not good and pleasing to the Lord. Thanks be to God, He controls me most of the time. But I admit that in this case, I fell.

Thirdly, I think it is common to many to be lazy. Sometimes we neglect our job, we forget the Word of God that "even if there is no one who has seen you, do your job not just for earthly masters but for God who sees whatever you do." These three temptations onboard are the common ones to seamen, which I have experienced as well.

In Christ Jesus,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Ramon Sanchez (Philippines)

Dear Bro. Martin,

Most of the temptations I encountered on board are drinking, gambling, fornication and lust. The drinking habit of the crew every Saturday is mostly a temptation to me. I had been there before, and I know what will happen to me. I do not like getting up in the morning with a big headache or hangover as they call it, and could hardly work. This I gave up and instead of joining

## *Section Two: Proactive Strategies*

the crew, I stay in my cabin, sing some praise songs to our Father, or see a Christian movie—like *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof* or the *Jesus Film*—which I bring along with me. I never get tired of viewing these movies. As I view them again and again, God is revealing new insights to me. If I'm not playing these movies, I use my audio Bible and study our Bible lesson to be shared during Sunday night in our Bible study group.

Captain Chris Alair (Philippines)

Greetings in Jesus Name!

There are many types of temptations on board, but I would like to cite the very common ones. To indulge in consumption of alcohol is a very common way most of the seamen do in order to relax and chill out as they say. I overcame this by firmly telling them that alcohol impairs judgment as the Word of God tells. By seeking guidance from the Word of God, it is made clear that continuous consumption of alcohol leads to dependency and can even ruin one's health.

The next one is pornography. Almost on every ship I sailed, there are lots of pornographic materials onboard. I overcame it by, again, meditating and asking myself, "What good will this bring me?" At first Satan will tell, "It is o.k. to just watch." But the problem is, it creates a vivid picture in our mind. The more you see it, the more cravings of the flesh are there to do it. It means if a person indulges more in pornography, it is more likely that he will commit fornication and adultery. That's how strong pornography can be.

Next is adultery and fornication. Especially when a ship arrives in a port. I must determine where I will go, if I go ashore. Again, it is important to explore from God's wisdom and from His word to make choices on this matter. As a Christian on board we must not isolate ourselves from our shipmates. We should make friends, but at the same time, we should make our stand in God's Word. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "*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, that you may be able to endure it" (NASB). What a promise we have from our Father! God bless you,*

Bro. Noe Panganiban (Philippines)

Bro.Martin, greetings!

About your question regarding temptation on board—it is women. I have experienced this, when we were in Barcelona (not this ship) when three women came on board. They brought with them some perfumes to sell. Around 9 o'clock in the morning they came on board and they stood inside the crew mess [room]. I was there with one mess man, while the other crew were not yet there because it was not their break time yet. These women were beautiful, then one of them suddenly asked me if I would like to take her to my cabin for US \$50. Well, I was enjoying a conversation with her, though. I told her it's wrong, but there is enjoyment in talking with them. Then suddenly the word of Jesus came into my mind, saying, "If you look at a woman lustfully you will commit adultery" . . . so what I did was to get out from the mess room and go to the kitchen. Then at coffee break the crew arrived and they took the girls to their cabins. You know, some girls who come on board will directly go and knock on the cabin's door. Temptation is also present when we go for shore leave in a certain place. Some crew will go to bars, the others will have a massage. What I did to resist temptation is to separate myself.

Bong Narvasa, Chief Cook (Philippines)

Dear Bro.Martin,

About temptations—well, there are really lots of them. Starting from boozing, gambling, womanizing and others. And the majority of the seamen's reasons is that they are away from home. It is their main outlet for homesickness. I do not understand why they said so.

## *Section Two: Proactive Strategies*

First, drinking liquor, beer, wine, and the like will really bring you nowhere. Why? Because if you drink too much, your work, especially your duty, will be affected. It will really give you a bad hangover. And it will just add on to your homesickness. What is the use of drinking to the extent that you will be at the losing end later on?

Second is womanizing when they get to the bar. After some drinks one seaman decides to pick up a partner. Someone, who according to him, has a similarity to his wife. What for? He was saying previously that he wants to get rid of picking up a partner. So that's it. He just wanted to commit sin, without his knowledge. Maybe he simply does not want to accept the truth that, in so doing, he is giving in to temptation.

That is why I was so thankful that when I was still at sea, I could always cling to the Lord. In so doing, like committing everything to HIM, He will really never forsake you. I am speaking from experience. Before, I was very near to falling into temptations. Especially when we called at ports in Brazil. But our God never allowed it to happen to me. He always found ways to direct me to the right way.

Again, I should say clearly based on my own testimony and our experiences as seamen, that if we accept God in our own hearts, He will not leave us or forsake us.

Captain Michael Lasa (Davao, Philippines)

Dear Pastor Martin,

I am writing about the temptations I had on board and how I overcame them. On my cargo vessel, one of my crewmates who was often drunk, came to my cabin to invite me to drink. I refused and I told him I did not drink. Again and again, when he was drunk, he knocked at my door with his fist and forced me to go out with him. My door was locked, and I told him that I was resting. Outside my door he shouted at me and used bad words. Anyway, I did not open my door. I was sitting on my bed and prayed to God to touch the heart of my crewmate. I also

prayed to God for strength and power to overcome this temptation. After my prayer, I asked my colleague why he was so angry with me. He told me it was because I didn't join him in drinking.

One day, when he was not drunk, I explained to him I am a Christian and that I do not want to have any trouble with him. I told him I had surrendered all my vices to God. Another time, when he was drunk again, I saw a knife in his pants. So I tried to stay far away from him. Suddenly our captain passed by and saw the knife in his pants. When our captain asked him about the knife, he answered him with unpleasant words. While in my cabin, I asked God, again, to rescue me from that temptation, and told God in prayer about my plan to hand in my letter of resignation to the captain. In our next port, before I could give the letter of early resignation to my captain, I was surprised to learn that the captain sent my crewmate home before his contract was finished. I thank God that he rescued me!

I encountered another temptation while I was working on a tanker vessel in the port of Lisbon/Portugal, where the ship was in dry dock. Because of the many jobs I had to do, there was no time to go ashore. I was tired and finished my job at around 10 p.m. Most of my crewmates had gone ashore that night. A few days later, one of my crewmates asked me why I wasn't going ashore since we had been there for some time already. He said, "Have some drinks and girls and make yourself happy." I told my colleague it was too late to go out and that I was looking for a supermarket to buy something. He told me that he saw a supermarket open even at midnight. The next day at around 9 p.m. , I took a shower, changed my clothes and went out together with that crewmate. Upon reaching the place, we had to go through two doors and to my surprise, there were a lot of girls with men who were smoking and drinking. I told my friend "This is not the right place, I want to go shopping." My friend said, "Yes, after this, we will go." Immediately, I was convicted by the Holy Spirit. I walked out of that place, went down a street and bought everything I needed in a small shop.

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Then I went back to the ship alone. I really thank God because He never leaves me or forsakes me (James 1:14-15). I understand that there is a way to escape temptation (James 4:7). To avoid temptations, we should keep away from certain areas (Titus 3:9-11) and keep the right focus in life (Colossians 3:1-3).

Mario Albay, Bosun (Philippines)

## SECTION THREE



# Realities



## Help, I Have Fallen into Temptation!

You have arrived at Manila airport. You're finally home! How you have longed for this moment! It feels so good! Friends and family are there to pick you up. At last, you are home after such a long absence. This is the happiest time of the year! Now you can enjoy a nice holiday with your family. You can spend time with your children. You now have time to play with them and go out and enjoy being together with them. You have been waiting for this very moment for months—just being with your family. However, after only two or three months the company calls you back to another ship. Home sweet home, only for a short time!

You go through the same routine once more—saying goodbye at the airport is always one of the saddest moments in your life. Your family at home misses you, and you miss your family. The first few weeks on a ship are especially difficult. You have to adjust to new people, a new ship, a new climate and other things as well. During your time on the new ship you also miss your church and the fellowship you had back home. Your thoughts take you back to those special moments in church where you were praising God in songs and in prayer. You enjoyed the pastor's sermons. And

now you have to wait nine or ten long months before you can see any of the other church members again. It is painful. It is frustrating.

## A trap

The ship you are now on is heading for Brazil. You have heard about Brazil and may have been there before as well. You know that there are many temptations just waiting for you there. How will it be this time? Will girls come on board? Will you encounter temptations outside, in the town? What will your colleagues do? They'll be watching you and waiting to see how you react when temptations come your way. When you were at home, you promised yourself that you wouldn't surrender to temptations, especially not with girls. Now you have reached the port. The first day is busy with a lot of work. On the second day you're allowed to go out. What a good feeling it is to be out again and enjoy a little freedom! Your ship friends go to a bar and invite you to join them. You decide to go with them but resolve to stay away from girls and alcohol. However, after a few hours there, you start getting tired and fall into temptation's trap, and get involved with a girl.

## Guilt and shame

After you get back on the ship, you are shocked! What did you do? You have sinned! You did something you did not want to do. Before you went to the bar, you promised yourself that you would stay away from any kind of sin. Your wife doesn't know what has happened, and you are even afraid to give her a call because she might ask questions. What do you do now? You are overcome by feelings of guilt. *How could it have happened?*—you ask yourself again and again. But

you can't find an answer. Your life seems ruined—at least ruined when it comes to serving the Lord. The worst thing about all this is others have seen you. So your testimony is ruined now. How can you tell them about Jesus? Frustration sets in. You can't find a way out of this dilemma. You start condemning yourself. You feel so far from God. Questions race through your mind, questions like: *Can God forgive me? Can God still use me? Am I a backslider?* What's even worse is that the Devil will try to make everything look even more terrible. For isn't he called the Accuser (Revelation 12:7-12)?

## The prodigal son

When you have fallen into sin, I urge you to go to Jesus right away! The good news is that Jesus is waiting for you! Let me tell you the story of the prodigal son from the Gospel of Luke. The prodigal son fell into the money trap. He did not resist the temptation. In chapter 15, we read about a father with his two sons. The youngest son asks for his inheritance and the father gives what he desires. After a while, the son gets into real trouble. He has wasted all of his money as well as his life, and he finally realizes that he has sinned against God in heaven and against his own father. He has even brought shame upon his family. This is what the son now says in Luke 15:17-19: *"How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men."*

## The father's reaction

Now, what was the father's reaction? Was the father angry at his son? Did he reject his son? Did he punish his son? Let's

look at the following verses in Luke 15:20–22: *“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him . . . the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.’”*

The father in this story is a picture of our Father in heaven. In this story we see God’s boundless love and compassion. This story should give you the courage you need to return to God in prayer. If you confess your sins to Jesus Christ, just like the son confessed his sins, Jesus will forgive you. In 1 John 1:9, we read about what God’s requires of us: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

Isn’t it amazing? Jesus doesn’t expect you to do good deeds, He doesn’t expect a special vow; instead, all He expects is a humble confession of sin, and then He will forgive all of your sins.

## Ignore the Devil

But the problem at this point is that the Devil will not like it if you confess your sins. He will try to convince you that you have sinned too much. He will try to convince you that you have sinned before and received forgiveness. Now, this is just too much! You have made God angry and, therefore, He cannot forgive you anymore.

Do not listen to what the Devil says. Do not even argue with him in your mind. Just believe what God says in the Scriptures. Start giving God the glory by acting on His promises.

## **Jesus, our High Priest**

We find a very encouraging and remarkable truth about Jesus' perfect character and His attitude toward us in Hebrews 4:14–16: *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* You have a high priest, Jesus, who is able to sympathize with your weakness! Imagine that! That clearly explains why Jesus is always for you. He understands you. It just wouldn't make sense if He sympathized with you and then didn't forgive you.

At this very moment, Jesus is waiting for you to approach Him—with confidence. He did not say you can only come three times with confidence. Jesus does not limit you. He is happy when God's children return to Him. Furthermore, there is another great verse of Scripture to encourage you. Read Luke 15:10 where it says, *“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”* This verse shows how much God rejoices when one person comes back to Him. God longs to be united with you. He longs for fellowship with you!

One final word: I urge you to think about how you can find ways to resist surrendering to temptation (See section 2, chapters 9 to 11 of this book).

*Section Three: Realities*

**Song by Keith Green<sup>1</sup>**

The very things I hate, I end up doing,  
The things I want to do, I just don't do.  
Lord, it seems so sad, why am I so bad?  
When in my heart I only want to be like you.

The very ones I love I end up hurting,  
The ones I want to help I pass right by.  
Now I want to be, finally set free  
The grace you've shown, the love I've known,  
Please let it shine through me.

I want to love them, the way you do,  
I want to serve them, by serving you

Lord, how I know your tender heart must be broken,  
By all those unkept promises I've made,  
The question still prevails, please take away the doubt,  
About how you forgive, and still you live inside when I fail

I want to love them all, the way you do,  
I want to serve them, by serving you.  
I want to be like you—Jesus I do  
I want to love them all, the way you do,  
I want to serve them, by serving you.

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Green produced many CDs. He died in a plane crash with his two daughters in July 1982.

## The Shame Problem

When the *Queen Mary 2* sailed on her maiden voyage, she also came to Hamburg for a short stop and I was able, along with my wife and a colleague, to visit the crew and officers. There were 600 Filipinos on board and, of course, many other nationalities as well. Before I had even been on board for one hour, a Filipino Christian approached me. He told me about the difficult life on the ship, and then mentioned he had become a backslider. His confession didn't surprise me—I had heard such things many times before from Christians coming from Asia and Africa. We talked for quite a while, and I tried to encourage the man to confess his sins to Jesus Christ, because we have a wonderful promise from God in 1 John 1:9: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

I also encouraged him to meet with other Christians and to have fellowship with them. But the reaction of this brother confused me. Due to fear and shame, he was unwilling to meet with the others. He felt ashamed that they would find out he was a backslider and that he had sinned. In his mind, he had lost face.

This is a tragic situation which occurs in so-called shame cultures, mostly in Asia, but it can occur in other countries as well. How could I convince the seaman that the best thing would be for him to join a Christian fellowship? How could I convince him that Jesus still loves him and has forgiven him? It was difficult, and I somehow felt helpless. Logical arguments didn't seem to convince him. It required the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Sadly enough, on that ship, I also met other seamen who were also backsliders. These men were from Indonesia, China and India.

On a reefer ship, I had another encounter of a similar nature. I met a Christian who was really happy to meet me because he wanted to have fellowship with other Christians. Perhaps he hadn't met with other Christians for a long time. He invited me to his cabin where we sat and talked about the Bible, and then prayed for each other. This seaman seemed to long for prayer time with someone, and was so happy that he invited me to come back the following day. When I arrived the next day, I looked all over for him. I finally went down to his cabin and knocked on his door. Nobody answered. I tried a second time, but again nobody answered. I was about ready to leave when the door opened, and a prostitute came out of the cabin. Soon after, the young Christian also came out, but without looking at me, he ran away—it seems he was trying to avoid me. He was ashamed I had found out who had been with him in his cabin. I gently tried to approach him but couldn't get through. He acted as if he didn't know me. This seaman had lost face.

In the Genesis 3:9, we read about how Adam had sinned. He also felt ashamed, and so he and his wife tried to hide from God. Dr. Neil Anderson explains the fall of Adam in this way:

Instead of seeing God, man sees now himself in separation from God and fellow men. He feels exposed (Genesis 3:10). Consequently, shame originates the opposite to what is written in Genesis 2:25. Shame is man's grief for his estrangement, and the powerless longing to return to unity with the origin. Man feels ashamed because he has lost something that belongs to his original being, to his totality, he feels ashamed of his exposure. As a consequence of shame man hides (Genesis 3:10) and God makes him garments of skin (Genesis 3:21). Shame seeks coverage as remedy to the separation. Consequently man puts on a mask. This mask is a necessary sign of the separation. But under the mask the desire for the restoration of the lost unity continues to live.<sup>1</sup>

But how did God react to Adam and Eve? Did God give them a talking to because of their sin? No, not at all! God's first reaction was to ask them a question: "Where are you?" This clearly indicates that God's greatest desire was to have fellowship with Adam and Eve. God was interested in a relationship with them, even after they had sinned. God will never lose interest in you, because it is His very nature to love people, even if they have sinned. His first desire was not to punish Adam and Eve, but to restore them and bring them back into fellowship with Himself. In the New Testament, we see proof of God's love in providing a mediator for you. In 1 Timothy 2:5 we read, "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" Jesus wants to bring you back to a fellowship with God.

I experienced a very sad situation on one of the Norwegian cruise ships several years ago. On board, there was a very lively fellowship, which met every week. I was

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, (Monarch Books, 2000), pp. 275-276.

invited on board several times, and even had the opportunity to preach once during their worship service. It was a wonderful experience and the fellowship truly encouraged many seamen and sea women. However, after the ship left Hamburg, I heard from one Filipino Christian that the church had stopped its worship services. I later learned that one of their leaders, a married man, fell in love with a woman on board. When the ship returned to Hamburg, I immediately tried to speak to that leader. I went to his cabin, but to my dismay there was no way to convince him to repent of his sin and return to the fellowship. Sadly, that was the end of the church on board.

What then is the solution to the dilemma you find yourself in, when you have sinned and are too ashamed to participate in the church on board, or when you are too ashamed to meet with other Christians?

As I already mentioned, we can not solve the shame problem with logical arguments or reasoning. Not even good advice from other Christians will bring the kind of relief that you are looking for. However, I would like to point you to the One who fully understands you and your situation. The One who knows what it means to be alone, to feel ashamed and to be separated from others: JESUS CHRIST. He is the One who suffered more than we can ever imagine. He was tempted like we are, and He knows our feelings.

Let's examine Isaiah 53:3-6: *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he took our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on*

him the iniquity of us all.” And in verse 12 it says, “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Jesus was called the Man of Sorrows. He was despised and rejected by men. How did Jesus sometimes feel? Maybe you feel alone in your situation—you feel worthless, you feel cut off from others. You feel like you have lost face, and no solution to your problem is in sight. Is what you are feeling a factual truth, a spiritual reality? Well, I am happy to tell you that it is not the truth. I am happy to tell you that Jesus understands you! Jesus loves you; Jesus sympathizes with you at this very moment! Jesus has felt the same way you feel. He loves you no matter what you have done!

He is waiting for you just like He says in Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Remember what Jesus said here. He is not calling the ones who are healthy, who are strong, and who have a good reputation. He is calling people like you, who have sinned again and who have lost face. You are just the person Jesus is looking for and the one He cares about. He wants you to serve Him. In the New Testament Jesus said that He came for the sick and not for the people who feel healthy and strong. In Mark 2:17 it says, “. . . Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

Remember the story about the prodigal son in Luke 15? In your cabin, take some time to read and think about it. You will learn quite a lot from both the prodigal son and the father. In the story you will see how the son ruined his life and wasted everything his father had given him. The son brought shame upon the father. How terrible it must have been for the father to know that his son was leading such

a terrible and sinful life. What would other people think of him? I can imagine the father had a good reputation in the village, and now the son had ruined it. Instead of feeling ashamed at what his son had done to him and keeping away from people, the father continually went outside his house and watched for his son. He loved his son so much! His only desire was to be united in love with his son again. This is an accurate picture of God who will act in the same way when you have fallen into sin. When you feel you have brought shame on God, remember that God sent His son just for people like you, in order to reconcile you with Him again.

By the way, did you notice what the father said to the prodigal son when he returned? He didn't condemn him; he didn't even ask questions such as, "Son, why did you do this?" No, the father was just so glad to be united with his son again. He was so happy that he even kissed his son. Amazingly, the father took the first step towards reconciliation. It should have been the son, but the father, full of love, kept watching for his son, and when he finally saw him, he ran to him and kissed him. This is an illustration of our heavenly Father. He feels so much compassion for you that He sent His son Jesus to die for you on the cross, even before you could ask Him for forgiveness. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says, "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*"

## The difference between shame and guilt<sup>2</sup>

	Shame	Guilt
Focus	Focus on Self	Focus on Act
Nature of fault	Failure to meet self-expectations	Offence against legal expectations
Internal Reaction	Embarrassment/ disgrace (self-depre- ciation)  Fear of abandonment  Resentment  Self-Isolation  Alienation	Condemnation/ remorse (self accusa- tion)  Fear of punishment  Anger  Self-justification  Hostility
Social Reaction	Ridicule and exclusion	Demand for revenge or penalty
Remedy	Identification and communication  Love banishes shame	Propitiation through restitution, or penalty  Justification banishes guilt
Interpretation of the cross	An Instrument of shame  God's ultimate identi- fication with us in our sinful shame  Expresses God's love  Resurrection—new hope	An instrument of penalty  God's ultimate substi- tute for our sinful guilt  Expresses God's justice  Resurrection—new chance

<sup>2</sup> Hans Wiher, *Shame and Guilt* (Hänsler-Verlag, 2003), p. 152.

## The Effect of Temptation on Your Family

As you read this, you are probably wondering what temptation has to do with being a good seaman or being a good father. I think it has a lot to do with it. As a good seaman, you also want to be a faithful and caring husband, and a father your children would be proud of. However, if you give in to temptation when a girl comes on board, how can you be a faithful husband? How will your children regard you now? What will the children think when they remember their father? As we can see, temptation always has a major effect on every aspect of your life. It also affects your Christian witness to other seamen on board. They are watching your life very carefully. And they will be quick to point out your mistakes and shortcomings. When others on board begin to talk about your sins, you will feel even more isolated and lonely. This isolation and loneliness may then lead you to more sinful acts, and soon you will forget your Christian values.

Temptation will affect you in many ways—not only your life, but also the lives of your whole family. The temptation to spend money is very real. If you're not careful, you could waste your money on things you don't really need. The

result will be that you cannot pay back your loans, and you eventually lose your house. If you are tempted to be lazy on a ship, or if you start drinking too much alcohol, you risk losing your job. I could list many more effects that temptation could have on your life, but let's concentrate on the effects it might have on your marriage, since 90% of seamen are most likely married, usually for a lifetime. Therefore, the marriage relationship will be affected more than any other area of a seaman's life.

One of the reasons I would like to emphasize marriage is that I have met far too many seamen with marriage problems brought on by their unfaithfulness to their wives. Also, seamen sometimes find out that their wives at home are not faithful and are involved in a relationship with another man. It is my wish that you will be strengthened in your marriage relationship and that you will fight against temptations, so you may enjoy a more stable and successful marriage.

A strong and stable marriage is not only important for you, but also for your children. The effects of a stable marriage are evident even in the children. Of course, it is very difficult to be separated from your wife and children for such a long time. It is a great sacrifice for you and for your wife and the children, as well. Remember that God Himself has a vital interest in your marriage and your family as a whole.

First of all, you are married before God. Don't forget what you promised in church when you married your wife. You got married with the desire to live together under the blessings of God. This is what the Bible says about marriage and about your sexual relationship with your partner: 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 says, *"But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife's body does not belong to her*

*alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."* These verses make it very clear that sex is meant only for the wife or husband you are married to. The Bible does not tell you to have sex with a partner outside of marriage.

In conversations with seamen on cruise ships, I have sometimes heard sad and shocking things. The seamen confessed openly that they had sexual relationships with other women on board, or even with prostitutes in different ports. On one particular cruise ship, I was talking to several seamen during lunchtime, and as usual I asked about their families. Strangely enough, they all said that they have wives and children back home, but now each had another wife, sometimes secretly, sometimes openly because the marriage at home had been annulled. One seaman even invited me into his cabin and said it more dramatically. He said something like this: "I do not know one seaman who has not had a sexual relationship with another woman." At this point I cannot say whether this statement is a hundred percent true or not. It just illustrates the difficulties and problems seamen face with sexual temptations on board, as well as on land.

However, seamen are not the only ones tempted to go to other women; the wives at home are also tempted to take other men. The following email from a seaman is sad but true:

"I am here now on *Aida Vita*.<sup>1</sup> Most of the time we are in Hamburg I want to see you. Please pick me up and let's talk together. During my last vacation I discovered my wife has another man. It is very hard for me because this other man is our pastor. Until now

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<sup>1</sup> The name of a cruise ship.

I am suffering and getting crazy. Please pray for me.”<sup>2</sup> My wife and I picked him up, and we went out for a walk at a beautiful lake. We found it difficult to comfort him. He was so shocked he could hardly stop crying. All we could do at that moment was to pray for him and show him Christian understanding and love.

The Bible teaches us that marriage is holy in God’s sight. In fact, it is a holy covenant. We read in Malachi 2:14–16, *“You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ‘I hate divorce,’ says the LORD God of Israel, ‘and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,’ says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.”* In these verses we are told two times to guard ourselves in our spirits. Your mind is where all of this takes place—good or bad thoughts and intentions, as you have already seen in chapter nine.

Below you will find two very encouraging reports from the wives of seamen about how they treat their marriages as holy, and what they have done to make their marriages successful. Here is what they have said:

**Victoria Magayon, wife of a Chief Engineer from the Philippines**

“First of all, marriage for me means that two people . . . commit to each other (to become) one, in the foundation of love. In this promise, husband and wife are no longer on their own, but they always consider the other half in whatever plans, discussions and endeavors they have. I am lucky to have a husband, who became

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<sup>2</sup> The seaman’s name is known only to the author.

### *Section Three: Realities*

my best friend. We are very much open to each other—he can open my email, read my text messages, and I can also open his email and read his text messages. Open communication makes us support one another.

“Secondly, the most affected (aspect) in our marriage is the communication. Before, when the communication was not yet as fast and sophisticated as today, it was really hard for us, as we waited for a long time—like months—to receive a letter. It was really a torture to think what is my husband doing, and where is he? But when the communication became sophisticated like cell phones and satellite phone and ship-to-shore radio, our relationship became stronger, because we can decide together about plans and problems.

“This was different during the times that there was no proper communication. I had to decide on my own, no matter what problem arose in my family. Now this problem is reduced due to sophisticated technology.”

#### **Nina, wife of Ramon Sanchez, from the Philippines**

“Marriage is a holy thing. The vow I took is not just to my husband or for the witnesses on our wedding. I made the vow to God. Along with the man I married is his whole being, including his being a mariner. Ramon was a seaman even before we got married. So I had the chance to really ask myself if I was ready to be a seaman’s wife. I knew he won’t be around for some time—I mean for a long time, even longer than the time we would spend together. But I prayed for this man, and I was certain that he is the one God gave me to “live with” for the rest of my life. Ironic? Because for most of the time, he is not physically living with me. But being in a great distance doesn’t mean being apart. It’s hard to explain, considering English is not our language. Ramon is always on my mind. We try to have a good communication. We learned to be open with each other. He is

my husband, and my best friend. Our faith in God is the most important thing. We have great trust in each other, knowing we both fear the Lord. Praying for each other is very important, as important as our love for each other.

“Regarding difficulties, like other families of seamen, we also have our story. One thing is when I gave birth to our first, and still our only child, Kim. In 1999, I gave birth 10 days after Ramon left for his job, so I felt so alone during the most important time I hoped to share with Ramon.

“It was a nine-month contract. The communication was good, telephone calls, letters and voice tapes reached me. I would play Ramon’s voice tape to our son and show Kim his Daddy’s picture. Later on Kim recognized that on the picture was his daddy. He recognized the voice of his dad on the phone and on cassettes.

“Then finally, the long wait was over. Ramon came home to see for the first time the small replica of himself, our son who looked exactly like him. He brought home some gifts for Kim. I warned Ramon not to force Kim and to let him come to him instead. In the car, I thought Kim wouldn’t go to Ramon so I just put Kim on Ramon’s lap without explaining so much to my 9-month old child. Kim did not cry, but did not move very much as well. He was stiff and just observing the stranger carrying him. Then I told him: This is Daddy. When we reached home and when it was time to sleep, Kim pointed to Ramon as if asking why he is staying here. Kim knew his dad on the picture, his dad’s voice on the phone but not this dad in our house. I knew it was hard for Ramon, too. But after a day or two, Kim got used to Ramon and knew that this stranger is his dad.

“More challenges came and are still happening to us, being a family of a seaman. But I believe God put Ramon and me together and through God’s help we would overcome whatever challenges there are and would be. God bless you and your family!”

## Temptations and Problems of Seamen's Wives and Children

The following letters and articles are from seamen's wives who have experienced temptations from a different perspective. It is somehow strange that most of the time, people only think of the seamen and their sacrifices. But the women at home make sacrifices too and go through temptations as well. This is what some of them have written:

Rowena Pam-Ut, wife of a Filipino seaman on board a cruise ship

Every person in this world has different struggles in his or her life. Everyone is unique. We are in different situations, we live different ways of life, and we struggle in different ways.

Two persons are united in Christ to become one in flesh, and nothing can separate them, for God has united them. But circumstances can come in between these couples. They feel they need to separate. One should leave the other for a brighter future. This situation looks like a unique one, and this may turn into possibilities—it either builds up relationships or breaks them.

My husband is a seaman, and I was once a seaman's wife, who was left at home for three years. Those times that I was

alone were really difficult times of my life, I did struggle and many temptations came.

***The opposite sex*** – I met different people, and it came to the point that some of those people I have met showed interest in me, and there were times I almost forgot I am already committed to my husband. There were times I really wanted to give in to the temptation. Maybe I was longing for the care but mostly the presence of my husband. God made a way. He didn't allow the temptation to win over me.

***Money*** – The Word of God says that those who can be trusted with small things can also be trusted with big things. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10). Seamen's wives have a tendency to overspend the money they get from their husbands for different reasons—it maybe to satisfy their material needs, or to have fun with friends, which they shouldn't do.

***Influence*** – Making friends makes a great influence in one's life, and wives without their husband tend to have friends who can lead them away from what is right. Some friends will drag the wives of seamen to commit adultery by telling them that it's ok because their husbands are also doing the same thing on board.

There's always a way out. You may sometimes feel that a temptation is too overpowering for you to bear, but that's a lie from Satan. God has promised never to allow more on you than He puts within you to handle it. He will never permit any temptation you could not overcome.

***How to defeat temptations*** – Run from anything that gives you evil thoughts. But stay close to anything that makes you want to do right. In 2 Timothy 2:22 it says, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Here is another email from the wife of a Filipino seaman:

Hi Martin,

This is Shelly, Richard's fiancée. How are you? Can I answer your questions? I am not his wife for now,<sup>1</sup> but we are planning to get married soon this December—hopefully. It is too difficult for me being alone, while he is working abroad. I have heard so many cases when it comes to “long distance” commitment. Some of them are enjoying other's company while their husband/wife is away. Personally, I have thought of ungodly things but Christ reminds me of the righteous way. Since my partner is away, this is my continual thought on how life would be as a seaman's partner.

Richard is my boyfriend, for now. I am in the situation of being alone, and it is very hard! You know Martin, every time I listen to the radio program called “Heart Line,” many of those wives of seamen would complain that being alone is more difficult. . . . receiving money for their needs, but it is not enough to raise their kids and to live a life while one of the parents is not present. The kids are most likely longing for a father, his voice is usually heard over the phone only, but the father didn't know everything in his family. What is important is the presence of both parents to guide them in every way. Some of their kids really don't know how to enjoy their parent's company because of the years of being absent from the family while working abroad. Some of them spend time with their friends, or hangout even late at night. It is the usual thing that I have heard in “Heart Line.” The wife would look for another partner in the meantime, for their sexual life. I have heard many cases about these things—the marriage ends in separation or divorce. I have a lot of stories to share with you some other time. Thanks!

Shelly (Philippines)

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of the book's publication, they have already gotten married.

The following is a letter from a Filipino chief cook. He writes:

Seamen's children also encounter temptations. They are different compared to other children on land. Land-based overseas workers can communicate easily with their families abroad, especially since we have cell phones and Internet. But the children of seamen have limitations in their communication with their fathers every time the ship is sailing. Of course, they can still communicate by satellite but it is usually too costly.

The lack of communication with their fathers at sea causes unnoticed problems for the children and for the family. They may look for a father image in a different way—especially the daughters of seamen. They may become involved in an early relationship with the opposite sex. One of my crewmates told me something that happened to his family. His daughter got pregnant at the early age of 17. This led her to stop going to school, because she felt ashamed of what happened to her. The father at sea was very upset when he heard from his wife what happened to his daughter. He said this might not have happened if he was not sailing but at home with his daughter.

Eduardo Campos, Chief Cook (Philippines)

One of the most popular newspapers in the Philippines addresses the problem of seamen's children in the following article (excerpt):

Especially for growing children, this absence can cause psychological problems. Employers of these seafarers must be proactive in helping to minimize the social and psychological costs of the absent father. The families must be provided with modern communications technology (e.g. Skype) so that there can be frequent (even daily) conversations between the parents and their children. The number of months of home leave must be lengthened as much as possible. The children (especially

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teenage boys) must be helped by psychologists or guidance counsellors to minimize the trauma of long separations. The period of having to work abroad [sic] a ship could be shortened by preparing the maritime professionals for alternative income-generating occupations back in the Philippines through entrepreneurial training or the acquisition of other professional skills such as management or information technology. I am glad to observe that a good number of Philippine manning companies are already implementing some if not all of these interventions to address the social problems faced by families of maritime professionals."<sup>2</sup>

It is encouraging to note that individuals, the press and even shipping companies see the need to help the children, for instance, by giving shorter contracts and offering technical help so the fathers can communicate with their children more easily. However, it is also important for you as a seaman and father to consider taking measures to prevent temptations from affecting your children. What will you do in order to help your children not to fall into temptations?

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<sup>2</sup> Villegas, B. M., "Seafarers Forever" *The Manila Bulletin*, April 04, 2010. <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/250951/seafarers-forever>. Used by permission.

# What Do Seamen and Wives Think about Their Separation?

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The following are the most common answers from Filipino seamen in Manila and their wives to the following questions:

- 1 How does the long absence affect the marriage?
  - Loss of communication.
  - A certain indifference arises or doubts spring up, brought about by Satan, who also causes personal differences to come between the couple.
  - Each marriage partner may be tempted to become attracted to someone of the opposite sex.
  - The sacrament of marriage is endangered.
  - The long absence might negatively affect the marriage relationship and the testimony of the man and/or wife.
  
- 2 What does the wife think about her seaman-husband being away from home for such long periods?
  - He is willing to make sacrifices for his family and children.

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- He might be having an affair or is being unfaithful in some way.
  - The wives often worry about the financial support for their children.
  - The wives sometimes deny the fact that they are lonely.
- 3 What does the seaman think about being away from his wife for so long?
- His focus is on the future welfare of his family and children.
  - He misses his family very much, especially when there are significant events, such as graduations, birthdays, celebrations, etc.
  - He fears that his wife may be tempted to get involved with someone of the opposite sex.
  - He sometimes suffers from negative thoughts.
  - He struggles with homesickness.
- 4 What are the difficulties when they are separated from each other?
- Longing, homesickness, fear or worry.
  - The fear of making a wrong decision.
  - Loneliness, jealousy or gossiping.
  - The need for physical fulfilment and satisfaction.
  - The need for someone to listen, or the need for encouragement.
  - The need for someone who will comfort and care.

- 5 Is it possible to have a happy marriage when the husband or wife is on a ship?
- Yes, if both partners focus on working towards a brighter future for their children.
  - Each partner must trust the other, have confidence in him/her, maintain a life of prayer and a holy fear of God, and remain faithful to the other partner.
  - Each partner must fulfil his/her their role in the family, fulfil their responsibilities to each other and foster a healthy relationship to each other.
  - They must pray to the Lord and keep Him as the centre of their marriage.
  - Christ should be the foundation of their marriage.
  - They must maintain their commitment to their existing relationship, their commitment to God's plan and to His will for each other.
  - They must nurture open communication with each other.
  - They must practice agape love for each other.
  - They must always be willing to forgive each other when one asks for forgiveness because forgiveness restores a broken relationship.
  - They must ask God to always protect their family by His grace.
  - The husband must love his wife, and the wife must always submit to her husband.
  - The husband must recognize and meet the needs of his wife.

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- He must make his wife a partner in their marriage.
  - He must show tender, loving care to his partner; show courtesy and concern.
  - They must recognize the importance of their marriage vow.
  - They must remain faithful to each other.
  - Each must accept his/her partner as he/she is.
  - They must encourage one another by having a positive attitude.
- 6 What kinds of problems should be avoided when the seaman-husband is away?
- Two of the most common problems are finances and how to spend the money.
  - Quarrels and pressure about money matters when the partner is on the ship.
  - Spending money without restraint.
  - Open communication and transparency must be fostered.
  - Open-mindedness on issues concerning the family must be maintained.
  - Gambling, gossip and bad company must be avoided.
  - When God is not present in the family, the quality of the relationships will be affected.

## SECTION FOUR



# Restored for Service





## Can God Still Use You 20 When You Have Surrendered to Temptation?

If you are married and you have a good relationship with your partner, you will do everything to keep that relationship healthy. As soon as something comes between you and your wife, you are not happy. You try to solve the problem because you aim to have a peaceful relationship with your partner again. In the same way, if you're a Christian, you have a desire to please God. This is probably your highest goal in life. You want to live for Jesus, for His glory. You want to obey what the Bible says, and you want to be an instrument in God's hands. You also want to share your faith with others. However, you also know that when you have fallen into some kind of sin, your relationship with God is disturbed—there's something between you and God.

Perhaps you have wondered: How does God view me when I have fallen into sin? Can I still serve God? You may struggle with:

Past sin — the guilt from some past sin still weighs heavily upon you. Because of this you think you have become useless to a holy God.

**Present sin** — you are currently struggling with sin, whether it is lust, anger, lying, greed, or an addiction. You somehow feel cut off and separated from God.

You might ask: Does God still accept me? Can I still share with others about Christ? You are thinking about a particular sin you may have committed. It is even a major sin, in your opinion. You wonder what God thinks about you. Will Jesus ever forgive you and use you again for His purposes? You once promised yourself that you would overcome that sin, but then again it happened—you stumbled and did not overcome the temptation. Now you are discouraged—discouraged about yourself and your situation. It all seems so hopeless! You don't know what to say, you feel ashamed, and you wonder what you should do next.

Let us turn to the Bible to see how God dealt with people who committed certain sins. Did God tell them off? Did God choose others to take their place? What did God do with men like King David, or Peter? We all know they sinned, and we know the terrible consequences of some of their sins. Was God still able to use these men? What does God do to His people, whom He created, who choose to sin rather than obey Him? Let us start with King David. We read about him in Acts 13:22: *“After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David, son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’”* Imagine King David, a king who was chosen by God, a man after God's own heart. And yet David committed adultery with Bathsheba; then he had her husband, Uriah, killed and took her for himself. Just think about it for a moment: Have you done anything like that? Have you killed anyone? Have you taken another man's wife? I can't imagine that. So you see, if God still used David after such terrible sins, how much

more will He still use you! Keep in mind that Jesus did not come into the world for perfect Christians, but for sinners.

Let's take another man from the Bible. We know that Peter was a great apostle. We are told that Peter was a fisherman. Jesus called him to be His disciple. Peter was excited and was determined to follow Jesus whatever the cost may be. Shortly before Jesus was crucified, He told Peter that he would deny Him, but Peter couldn't believe it and confidently replied, *"Even if all fall away, I will not." 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice, you yourself will disown me three times.' But Peter insisted emphatically, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the others said the same"* (Mark 14:29–31).

Maybe you are like Peter. Your faith was once very strong. Perhaps you even made a vow to God. You felt strong enough to overcome temptation, but then it happened anyway: you gave in. Now you feel ashamed, and you feel so far from God. You don't even want to meet with other Christians. Well, what can we learn from Peter? He acknowledged his sin. He wept bitterly. Later, God greatly used him; God even made him one of the great apostles. This is what it means to confess your sins to God:

**Confession of Sin:** As believers we are completely "clean" from sin only when viewed from the standpoint of our relationship with Christ. By virtue of our "position" in Christ, God the Father considers us totally washed of our sins—past, present and future. We are "clean on the inside," so to speak. In our everyday experience, however, we frequently get "dirty on the outside." We don't cease to be Christians because we have made a mistake—we still "hold on to Christ" and so are still considered clean by God in that critical respect. When we err, we don't need another "salvation bath"; only our "feet" need washing as a result of the personal sins we commit.

Confession is the solution, which God has provided for this continuing problem. Just as the work of Christ is sufficient to free us all from sin *at the point of time* when we believe in Him . . . , so that same work of Christ is also sufficient to wash us clean whenever we sin *after that point* of salvation.

David's great psalm of confession, Psalm 32, is a model for the mechanics of confession in that it demonstrates so clearly the two most important principles to keep in mind as we face the vexing problem of personal sin. On the one hand, we **must own up to our mistakes, realizing that sin is a serious business which carries with it serious consequences**, and we must approach God for forgiveness with a genuinely contrite attitude. On the other hand, **we must also approach Him in the sure and certain confidence that He will forgive us immediately and unconditionally** (Please also see 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 4:14-16), for His forgiveness is not based upon our personal merit, but upon the work of His Son, Jesus Christ. As is often the case in the application of Christian truth, we must avoid extremes on either hand. We cannot afford to ignore the seriousness and the wrongness of what we have done, any more than we can afford to give in to excessive guilt or uncertainty about the perfect, loving forgiveness of God.<sup>1</sup>

I hope that the following promises of God on the next page will be of encouragement to you.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ichthys.com/Pet15.htm>, emphasis mine.

<b>You Say . . .</b>	<b>God Says . . .</b>	BIBLE VERSES
<i>"It's impossible."</i>	<i>"All things are possible!"</i>	(Luke 18:27)
<i>"I'm too tired."</i>	<i>"I will give you rest."</i>	(Matthew 11:28-30)
<i>"Nobody really loves me."</i>	<i>"I love you!"</i>	(John 3:16; John 3:34)
<i>"I can't go on."</i>	<i>"My grace is sufficient."</i>	(2 Corinthians 12:9; Psalm 91:15)
<i>"I can't figure things out."</i>	<i>"I will direct your steps!"</i>	(Proverbs 3:5-6)
<i>"I can't do it."</i>	<i>"You can do all things!"</i>	(Philippians 4:13)
<i>"I'm not able."</i>	<i>"I am able!"</i>	(2 Corinthians 9:8)
<i>"It's not worth it."</i>	<i>"It will be worth it!"</i>	(Roman 8:28)
<i>"I can't forgive myself."</i>	<i>"I forgive you!"</i>	(1 John 1:9; Romans 8:1)
<i>"I can't manage."</i>	<i>"I will supply all your needs!"</i>	Philippians 4:19
<i>"I'm afraid."</i>	<i>"I have not given you a spirit of fear!"</i>	(2 Timothy 1:7)
<i>"I'm always worried and frustrated."</i>	<i>"Cast all your cares on ME!"</i>	(1 Peter 5:7)
<i>"I'm not smart enough."</i>	<i>"I give you wisdom!"</i>	(1 Corinthians 1:30)
<i>"I feel all alone."</i>	<i>"I will never leave you or forsake you!"</i>	(Hebrews 13:5)

## God's Purpose and Calling for Your Life

Eating, sleeping, working—is that really what your life is all about? And is your aim in life to keep up this routine for 40, 50 or 60 years? Have you ever wondered: *Why on earth am I here? What is my purpose in life? What am I living for? Have you asked yourself: Where do I come from, why am I alive, and where will I go when I die?* Rick Warren, the author of the *Purpose Driven Life* challenges us when he writes on the first page:

“It is not about you. It is about God. People just plan their life, they try to live a good life, but too often they forget where they come from. God our Creator, created us for a purpose.”

In Genesis 1:27 it says, “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*”

At the beginning of mankind, God has made His purpose for men very evident. God created you in His image, so you can communicate with Him and live according to His purposes and goals. You were created to live for Him and through Him. You were created to reflect God's image on

this earth so others can see through your life that God is a living God. If you live your life independently of God, then the logical question is: Why did God create you? What is the purpose of a human being if he lives separated from God? What sense does it make if there is no communication between God and men? Imagine a married couple who does not communicate and does not live with each other or for each other. This would certainly lead to divorce; we could say such marriage has failed. The most normal thing in life is to communicate with one's family, friends and with the people around us. In the same way, it should be normal for you to communicate with God on a daily basis.

A relationship with God is the only thing that will quench the longing in our souls. In John 6:35 Jesus Christ said, "*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.*" Until we come to know God, we experience a hunger and thirst in life. We try to "eat" and "drink" all kinds of things to satisfy this hunger and thirst, but in spite of it we have to come to the realization that earthly things cannot permanently satisfy the soul.

Still on the first page of his bestseller, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren says:

"The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfilment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It is far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by His purpose and for His purpose. The search for the purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That's because we typically begin at the wrong starting point—ourselves. We ask self-centred questions like: What do I want to be? What should I do with my life? What are my goals my ambitions, my dreams for my future? But focusing on ourselves will never reveal our

life's purpose. The Bible says, 'It is God, who directs the life of His creatures; every one's life is in His power.'"<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the Bible you can see that your life matters to God. God has done everything for you so you can live a life pleasing to Him. God sent His son Jesus Christ to set you free from sin and bring you into a personal relationship with Himself. In fact, it is amazing how the holy God Himself, the One who created the earth and everything in it, actually called you by name. Isaiah 43:1 says, "*Israel, the LORD who created you says, 'Do not be afraid—I will save you. I have called you by name—you are mine'*" (TEV).

Let me show you some facts about your very personal calling:

- **You are called into fellowship with God**

1 Corinthians 1:9 says, "*God, who has called you into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*"

- **You are called to freedom**

Galatians 5:1 says, "*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*"

Galatians 5:13 says, "*You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.*"

- **You are called to be an ambassador for Christ**

2 Corinthians 5:20 says, "*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*"

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, (Zondervan, 2002), p. 17

- **You are called to live a holy life**

1 Peter 1:15 says, *“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.”*

Here are more truths about your calling:

1 Corinthians 1:26 *“Brothers, think of what you were when you were **called**. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.”*

Ephesians 1:18 *“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has **called** you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”*

Philippians 3:14 *“I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has **called** me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

1 Thessalonians 2:12 *“. . . encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who **calls** you into his kingdom and glory.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 *“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers, loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He **called** you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

2 Timothy 1:9–10 *“Who has saved us and **called** us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. . . .”*

Hebrews 3:1 *“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly **calling**, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.”*

1 Peter 5:10 *“And the God of all grace who **called** you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”*

2 Peter 1:10–11 *“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your **calling** and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

There’s much more to say about what it means to be called. However, I would like to point out that you are very special to God. Your life is so meaningful to God, that Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for your sins. Even if you were the only person in this world, Jesus would still have gone to that cross to die for your sins. God has done everything in His power to free you from sin and to give you a holy calling. This enables you to live for Him and be used by Him so that God’s glory will become increasingly evident and people will come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. What will you do with your wonderful calling? Your life will gain so much more meaning if you live according to your heavenly calling. You should never forget—God is for you! Jesus sacrificed His life for you. He has done everything so you can live according to His heavenly calling!

My prayer for you as a seaman is taken from 1 Thesalonians 5:23–24, 28: *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”*

# Salvation through Jesus Christ

## Man's Problem

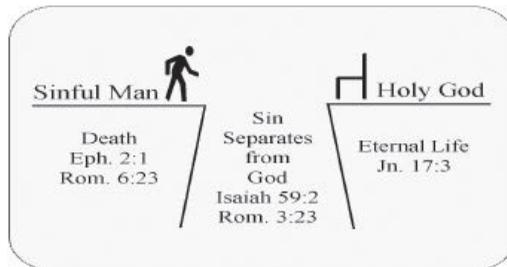
### *Separation from God*

Isaiah 59:2 *“But your sinful acts have alienated you from your God; your sins have caused him to reject you and not listen to your prayers.”*

Romans 5:8 *“But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

According to Romans 5:8, God demonstrated His love for us through the death of His Son. Why did Christ have to die for us? Because Scripture declares all men to be sinful. To “sin” means to miss the mark. The Bible declares “all have sinned and fall short of the glory (the perfect holiness) of God” (Romans 3:23). In other words, our sin separates us from God who is perfect holiness (righteousness and justice) and God must therefore judge sinful man.

Habakkuk 1:13a *“You are too just to tolerate evil; you are unable to condone wrongdoing.”*



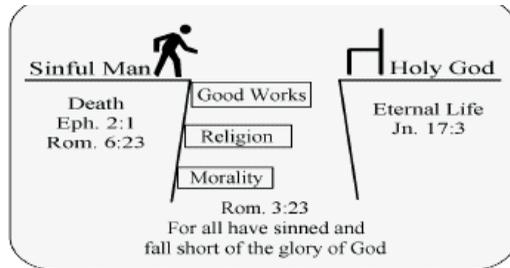
## Our Works are Futile

Scripture also teaches that no amount of human goodness, human works, human morality, or religious activity can gain acceptance with God or get anyone into heaven. The moral man, the religious man, and the immoral and non-religious are all in the same boat. They all fall short of God's perfect righteousness. After discussing the immoral man, the moral man, and the religious man in Romans 1:18–3:8, the Apostle Paul declares that both Jews and Greeks are under sin, that *"there is no one righteous, not even one"* (Romans 3:9–10). Added to this are the truths of the following verses of Scripture:

Ephesians 2:8–9 *"For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not of works, so that no one can boast."*

Titus 3:5–7 *"He saved us, not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And so, since we have been justified by his grace, we become heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life."*

Romans 4:1–5 *"What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has discovered regarding this matter? For if Abraham was declared righteous by the works of the law, he has something to boast about (but not before God). For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited due to grace but due to obligation. But to the one who does not work, but believes in the one who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness."*



No amount of human goodness is as good as God's. God is perfect righteousness. Because of this, Habakkuk 1:13 tells us God cannot have fellowship with anyone who does not have perfect righteousness. In order to be accepted by God, we must be as good as God is. Before God, we all stand naked, helpless, and hopeless in ourselves. No matter how good one tries to be, it will not get us to heaven or give us eternal life. What then is the solution?

## God's Solution

God is not only perfect holiness (whose holy character we can never attain to on our own or by our works of righteousness) but He is also perfect love and full of grace and mercy. Because of His love and grace, He has not left us without hope or a solution.

*Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

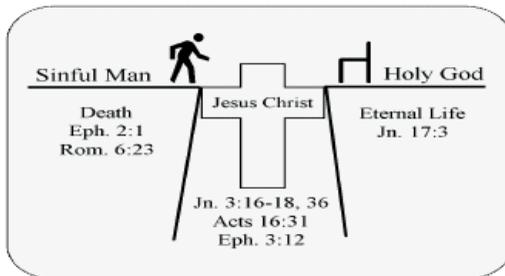
This is the good news of the Bible, the message of the gospel. It's the message of the gift of God's own Son who became man (the God-man), lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and was raised from the grave, proving that He is God's Son and that His death for us as our substitute is counted as valid before God.

Romans 1:4 “. . . who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 4:25 “He was given over because of our transgressions and was raised for the sake of our justification.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made the one who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.”

1 Peter 3:18 “Because Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God, by being put to death in the flesh but by being made alive in the spirit.”



## How Do We Receive God’s Son?

Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the cross, the Bible states: “*He that has the Son has life.*” We can receive the Son, Jesus Christ, as our Saviour by personal faith, by trusting in the person of Christ and his death for our sins.

John 1:12 “*But to all, who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children.*”

John 3:16–18 “*For this is the way God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send*

*his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.”*

This means each of us must approach God in the same way: (1) as a sinner who recognizes his sinfulness, (2) as a person who realizes that no amount of human works will result in salvation, and (3) as a person who relies totally on Christ alone for his salvation, by faith alone.

If you would like to receive Christ as your personal Saviour and trust in him, you may want to express your faith in Christ by a simple prayer acknowledging your sinfulness, accepting his forgiveness and putting your faith in him for your salvation.

If you have just trusted in Christ, you need to learn about your new life and how to walk with the Lord. I would suggest that you begin by studying the *ABCs for Christian Growth*, available online at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org). This series will take you step-by-step through the basic truths of God’s Word and will help you build a solid foundation for your faith in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

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If you would like to keep in touch with me, I can also provide you with some Bible correspondence courses. These courses will help you to grow in faith and help you to know God better. The courses will also help you to share Christ in your family, among your friends, and on the ship. I am also convinced that these courses will help you to be victorious

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<sup>1</sup> The discussion in appendix 1 is taken directly from the Bible.org website (<http://bible.org/article/gods-plan-salvation>). Reprinted with permission from <http://bible.org>. All scripture quotations are taken from the *New English Translation (NET)*.

Appendix 1

over temptations as well. All of these lessons can be ordered free of charge at this address:

scfs.martin.otto@gmx.de

If you would like to order any of the courses, do not forget to give me your postal address. You can also order through the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.emmaus.name/ewc/content/view/13/30/>

Furthermore, you can order the following books about seafarers: *Seafarers—A Strategic Missionary Vision* and *Church on the Oceans* written by the same author. If you prefer a copy of these books in the Filipino language, you can order directly at the following address:

OMF LITERATURE INC.  
776 Boni Ave Cor. Pinatubo St.  
1550 Mandaluyong City, MM, Philippines  
Telephone: (+632) 531-6635  
Email: [Inquire@OMFLit.com](mailto:Inquire@OMFLit.com)

## Scripture Verses about Temptation<sup>1</sup>

Tempt, (not) to be tempted, to -

- 1 To prove, try, test – Hebrew word “*bachan*”  
Malachi 3:15
- 2 To try, prove – Hebrew word “*nasah*”  
Genesis 22:1, Exodus 17:2; 17:7, Numbers 14:22, Deuteronomy 6:6, Psalms 78:18, 41, 56; Psalms 95:9, 106:14, Isaiah 7:12
- 3 Not to be tempted or tried – Greek word “*apeirastos*”  
James 1:13
- 4 To try, prove exceedingly – Greek word “*ekpeirazo*”  
Matth. 4:7, Luke 4:12, Luke 10:25, 1 Cor. 10:9
- 5 To try, prove – Greek word “*peirazo*”  
Matthew 4:1, 16:1, 19:3, 22:18, 35; Mark 1:13, 8:11, Mark 10:2, 11:15, Luke 4:2, 11:16, 20, 23; John 8:6, Acts 5:9, 15:10; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 10:9; 10:13; Galatians 6:1, 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Hebrews 2:18, Hebrews 3:9, 4:15, 11:37; James 1:13-14

Temptation

- 1 A trying, trial – Hebrew word “*massah*”  
Deuteronomy 4:34, 7:19; 29:3; Psalm 95:8;
- 2 Trial, proof – Greek word “*peirasmos*”  
Matthew 6:13, 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 4:13, 8:13; Luke 11:4, 22:28, 40, 46; Acts 20:19; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 4:14; 1 Timothy 6:9; Hebrews 3:8; James 1:2, 12; 1 Peter 1:6; 2 Peter 2:9; Revelations 3:10

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, (Lutterworth Press, 1979), p. 966

# Resources

## BOOKS

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- Lai, Karen. *An Unconditional Love Story, Meeting the People of the Sea*. Illinois: Mall Publishing, 1999.
- Matthew Henry Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979
- Miller, Rosemary. *From Fear to Freedom*. Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1994
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- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002
- Young, Robert. *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Guilford and London: Lutterworth, 1979

## INTERNET WEBSITES

- <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/120719/church-group-moves-to-steer-philipino-seafarers-away-from-worldly-temptations>
- [http://www.philippinestoday.net/prelease/prelease4\\_1002.htm](http://www.philippinestoday.net/prelease/prelease4_1002.htm)
- <http://www.aegis.com/news/ips/2001/IP010510.html>
- <http://bibleseo.com/matthew/overcome-temptation/>
- <http://www.elook.org/dictionary/temptation.html>
- <http://socyberty.com/sexuality/virtual-infidelity-cybersex-addiction/#ixzz0pUqqWivf>
- <http://www.internetevangelismday.com/dayframefor-links.php?id=http://www.christianitytoday.com/mp/2000/003/12.28.html&referer=/dangers.php&des=CT%20article>
- <http://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/fighting-temptation.htm>
- <http://www.ichthys.com/Pet15.htm>
- <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/250951/seafarers-forever>
- <http://bible.org/article/gods-plan-salvation>