



## Living by Feelings or Living by Faith

Followers of Christ have a glorious position before God, since He has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). Yet, Christians may yield to temptation and purposefully sin in spite of their exalted position in Christ. How can that be? To begin with, Christians today face the same temptations as did Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Compare the following:

**Genesis 3:6**, So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

**1 John 2:16**, For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Notice the similarity between these verses. In Genesis 3:6, Eve looked at the forbidden tree of life and saw that the tree was good for food. In other words, it appealed to her physical desires or what 1 John 2:16 describes as “the desires of the flesh.” Second, the tree was a delight to her eyes, which parallels what 1 John calls “the desires of the eyes.” Third, the tree was desirable to make one wise, a reflection of what 1 John 2:16 calls the “pride of life.”

### The consistent pattern of committing sin

The three enticements to sin – desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and the pride of life – have remained a constant throughout history. Not surprisingly, Adam and Eve’s pattern of willful sin is a mirror image of anyone who sins today.

- A person investigates what God forbids.
- A person desires self-centered gratification that sin promises to provide.
- A person selfishly decides to please “self” instead of obeying God.
- A person commits sin.

### The primary basis of willful sin

Adam and Eve committed sin because they opted for the *immediate satisfaction of self-oriented desire* instead of *loving obedience to God’s commands*. Throughout history, when a person sins, self-centered desire wins over God-honoring devotion.

**James 1:13-16** says, Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.<sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.<sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Predictably, Satan emphasizes “gratification with no limitations.” God, on the other hand, tells us in His Word of the limitations He has designed for us to be satisfied and protected. God says, “Obey my limits.” Satan says, “There are no limits.”

### The constant battle of two options

The self-centered option states, “I will live according to my fleshly desires.” The God-glorifying option states, “I will live according to my faith in God and honor the Lord Jesus Christ.” These two options:

- have two different sources of authority: “self” or God’s Word.
- have two separate goals: temporary pleasure or lasting joy.
- highlight one of two masters: Satan or God.
- have two ways of dealing with sinful choices:
  - (1) The self-centered response is to indulge in sin, run away, cover up, lie, and shift blame.
  - (2) The God-honoring response is to flee temptation or, having sinned, to confess, speak the truth, assume personal responsibility, seek forgiveness, and renew a walk of biblical obedience.
- produce one of two results:
  - (1) Spiritual weakness for believers in this life and loss of eternal rewards in the life to come . . . and for unbelievers, sinful bondage in this life and eternal loss in the life to come, or
  - (2) The safety of God-ordained limits that lead to lasting joy.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they abandoned an obedience-oriented life of love to one of self-centered desire gratification. That same choice exists today.

- The lust-motivated life is oriented toward self and Satan’s deceitfulness.
- The love-oriented life is focused on the Lord Jesus Christ and God’s glory.

Many observers have noted, “Christians make more bad decisions on the basis of self-oriented feelings than for any other reason.” When one chooses a way of life based on immediate self-gratification instead of the biblical pattern of loving obedience, two opposing questions surface. A self-oriented person makes his decisions by asking, “What do *I* want?” On the other hand, a person fully committed to Christ makes decisions by asking, “What does *God* want?”

Self-oriented people fail to understand that feeling-oriented happiness based on gratifying fleshly desires is *not* the issue. On the other hand, delighting in the Lord through loving obedience to God’s Word *is* the issue . . . and loving Christ and living for Him is the result.

(Excerpts from [Gratifying Yourself or Glorifying Your Savior](#))