

Facing Temptation In Our Lives

Facing Temptation in Our Lives by Vu Ngoc Each of us at one time or another has been tempted. None of us is too old or too young, too sophisticated or too naive, to escape some form of temptation. Of course, some of us are tempted more than others. In a Bible sharing group in which I helped coordinate last Friday; we talked about Jesus's temptations. I asked the group, "Have any of you ever been faced with temptation and, with Jesus's help resisted?" A young woman who was attending her first Bible sharing raised her hand. "A couple years ago," Cindy began, "I was into cocaine really big. You know what that's like! You know how that stuff makes you crazy." She told the group that a few years before she and her boyfriend robbed a gas station. "It was as simple as taking candy from a baby," she said. That night her boyfriend also wanted to rob a convenience store, but something inside of Cindy told her it was wrong. Even though her boyfriend beat her for refusing to go along with him, she felt good saying no, "cause that was the only time in my life I ever said no to anything," as she told the group. Through the stunned silence in the room I said softly, "Well, that's resisting temptation. That's sort of what this text is about." I then led the group in the closing prayer. Temptation is a reality in our lives. We all face temptations large and small. We are also aware that there are many people who are tempted with situations that you and I cannot even imagine. Even Jesus faced temptation. Out in the wilderness, for forty days, Jesus was tempted just as we are tempted. But He overcame his temptation by praying and putting his complete trust in God. That's a good example for us. Whenever we are tempted; we need to learn from Jesus; we also need to pray and trust that God will provide all that we need. Of course, Jesus was not alone in his confrontation with temptation, and neither are we. "You shall not tempt the Lord your God," Jesus resisted. Jesus was warning Satan that he was confronting not simply human power, but the very power of God. That same power is also available to us. Jesus was not left all alone in the wilderness. God was with him. I was born and attended school during the Vietnam War. At our school, we sometimes had to evacuate from bombing. Unfortunately, one day we were hit by a bomb and the school was almost completely destroyed. Luckily, many students were only injured, but no one died. In the midst of the confusion, my father left home and rushed to my school. When he arrived there, he discovered the building was as flat as a pancake. Standing there looking at what was left of the school, my father remembered the promise he made to his son, "No matter what, I will always be there for you!" Tears began to fill his eyes. It looked like a hopeless situation, but he could not take his mind off of his promise. My father remembered that my classroom was in the back right corner of the building. Along with some other people he rushed there and started digging through the rubbles. After many hours of digging, my dad finally heard my voice. He screamed my name, "Bich!" And I answered him, "Dad? It's me Dad" Then I said, "I told the other kids not to worry, I told them if you were alive, you would save me and when you saved me, they would be saved too. You promised, 'No matter what, I will always be there for you!' You did it, Dad." That was a very special relationship between my father and me. I believe you and I have that same relationship with God. When we come face to face with temptation, we need not fear because God is there with us. God promises each one of us that no matter what, He will be there for us. We have a God who loves us unconditionally. We have a God who never gives up on us. We have a God who will not let us fall. If we ask for His strength, He will give it. A few weeks ago, I was reading the National Catholic Reporter and I found an interesting story entitled "The Pit." Let me share just a little bit of it with you: A man fell into a pit and he couldn't get out. Buddha said: "Your pit is only a state of mind." A Hindu said: "This pit is for purging you and making you more perfect." Confucius said: "If you would have listened to me, you would never have fallen into that pit." However, Jesus saw the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit. A pit is an awful place to be -- particularly the pit of temptation. There are times when all of us are tempted. Nothing in this world is surer than that. But there is One who will help. God will be there for us. He will surely help us to overcome. During this Lenten Season, we