

“The Sequence of Temptation”

A lesson about decisions, avoiding temptation, and free will.

By Katie McRee

Key verses:

1 Corinthians 10:13, and verses from Genesis 2 and 3

Objectives:

- ACKNOWLEDGE the predictability of the consequences of our actions.
- LEARN about how to avoid temptation.
- PRACTICE making decision that will end in a peaceful outcome.

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- Hook: Unexpected Sequence (10 mins): Inserting absurd endings to various sequences as a way to reveal that the consequences of our actions are usually fairly predictable.
- Book: Garden Sequence (10-15 mins): Constructing the sequence and consequences of the Sin in the Garden.
- Look: Find the Way Out (5-10 mins): Practicing scenarios where you would have to think critically in order to avoid temptation and/or find a way to escape.
- Took: Resist and Escape (3 mins): Thinking of ways that we are currently feeling temptation and praying for God’s help to resist and/or escape.

The Supplies:

- Copies of lesson
- Sequencing cards (printed or purchased, see links in the hook section)
- Copies of the “Garden Sequence,” 1 per student
- Pens/pencils
- Bible
- Copies of “Choose Your Way Out,” 1 per student.

(Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

Unexpected Sequence (Hook, 10 mins)

In this section, you will be using a children's learning tool to talk about how, if we step back and aren't making emotion-filled decisions, we can usually use common sense to know where we will end up as a consequence of our decisions.

** You will need some children's sequencing cards in for this section. There are links below for two different options- one that you can purchase from Amazon, or ones you can print up for free. I prefer the ones from Amazon, but if your budget or timeline is limited, the online version will do the trick!

- Amazon option: www.amazon.com/Learning-Resources-Sequencing-Puzzle-Cards/dp/B000NZN874/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1489516036&sr=8-2-spons&keywords=sequencing+cards&psc=1
- Online option: www.education.com/slideshow/first-next-last/?cid=10.571

The conversation in this section comes from something I realized while spending time with my young children. I have talked about it with the youth at my church, and they connected really well to the idea. Below is the story as I would tell it, but you are welcome to tell it however you would like, using your sequencing cards as visual aids when it feels right, and adjusting the more "mature" examples in a way that is appropriate for the group you are teaching. **It feels really long in the write up, but I promise that it is engaging!**

I would say:

When my son was younger, he liked to play with children's sequencing cards. If you are unfamiliar, basically you have a bunch of pictures, and you have to put them in the sequence that those things would normally occur. For example: 1. A girl has messy hair, 2. The girl combs her hair, 3. The girl has nice, manageable hair. Or 1. A boy has all the ingredients for lemonade, 2. The boy mixes them all together in a pitcher, 3. The boy drinks a glass of lemonade.

I would imagine that for young children, this helps with brain development or something, but as a parent its super boring... so I came up with a little game to keep myself amused! Whenever we constructed the sequence, I would imagine the 3rd image being something that would almost never happen and was sort of terrible. For example: 1. A girl has messy hair, 2. The girl combs her hair, 3. THE GIRL'S HAIR STARTS ON FIRE FROM THE FRICTION!! Or 1. A boy has all the ingredients for lemonade, 2. The boy mixes them all together in a pitcher, 3. THE BOY PUTS HIS FISH IN THE PITCHER AND USES IT AS A LEMONADE FISH BOWL!!!

<<< This may be where you want to bust out your sequencing cards and let them come up with some funny options of how those sequences may end...>>>

What I realized when coming up with these ridiculous endings, is that life is much more predictable than we often acknowledge. More often than not, we can predict the consequences of our actions. For example: 1. I have a test on Monday, 2. I stay up all night on Sunday watching the Walking Dead, 3. I fail my test, or 1. I need to go to the bathroom, 2. I get up and go, 3. I don't have wet pants.

All those things seem obvious, right? But we sometimes do things that would logically produce unfavorable outcomes and then have to suffer the consequences when we end up in a bad place. For example, if you lived this sequence, which ending do you think is the more likely scenario?: 1. Your boyfriend's parent's are out of town and he invites you over, 2. You disrobe down to your underwear, 3. You play chess OR you are physical in a way that is compromising your commitment to yourself and your faith

Or what about this scenario: 1. You are invited to a party where there is no adult supervision, and you go, 2. Someone hands you a beer, 3. You drink the beer OR you go make pancakes?

The final scene of each of those sequences is so obvious that it is almost laughable. When you are looking at a scenario from the outside, it is not surprising at all that if we put ourselves in a place to make a bad decision, we will probably actually end up making a bad decision... not pancakes!!!

Before moving on, give them a chance to weigh in, ask question, or share about their own scenarios.

Garden Sequence (Book, 10-15 mins)

Constructing the sequence and consequences of the Sin from the Garden. Looking at the order in very simple terms shows us how God is faithful in keeping his promises, even if it means allowing us to choose poorly.

- They can do this next activity alone, in small groups, or all together. It is VERY simple and won't take but a minute or two.
- Pass out pens/pencils and copies of the "Garden Sequence" located at the back of the lesson. For kids who have spent any time in church, this won't take but a few seconds, so depending on the size of your group, you may want to hand it out face down so they all finish around the same time.
- ****This is SUPPOSED to be incredibly easy! That is the point- just like with the sequence cards, God makes things so obvious, but we are still idiots!!!****
- Once they complete the sheet, go through each item. If you have time, read the verses that are associated with each story point:
 - 1- God told Adam and Eve to not eat from one particular tree. If they do, they will die. (Genesis 2:16-17)
 - The serpent was like, "You aren't going to die if you eat that. God is just trying to hold out on you." (Genesis 3:1-5)
 - Adam and Eve ate the fruit (Genesis 3:6)
 - Adam and Eve became self-conscious, covered themselves in leaf-clothes, and hid. (Genesis 3:7-8)
 - God made Adam and Eve clothes out of animal skin. (Genesis 3:21)
*****make sure to note that God made them clothes out of animal skin because the penalty was death. We will dig into that a little more in a minute.**

Before moving on to the discussion questions, say something like:

For most of us, that was a pretty easy exercise, and that was the point! Just like the last frame of each set of sequencing cards was obvious, God said what he was going to do, and then he delivered. When you list out the order of events, it's almost laughable that Adam and Eve thought that things wouldn't work out the way they did. But at the same time, there are so many things about this sequence that relate to all of us, and there are things we can learn from it. Let's look at a few more things that we can learn from this sequence...

Discussion Questions:

- Why did God even make a tree that they couldn't eat from? (You can have a conversation here about free will. The way we show we love God is to do what he asks of us, and trust what he says. If he didn't make that tree, we would have no option to choose him, we would be forced to obey him.)
- Why do you think that Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit even though God had told them not to? (The serpent/Satan placed a thought in their head that God was intentionally keeping something good from them.)
- Why do you think that Adam and Eve hid and covered themselves? (They became self aware and lost their innocence)
- Why did God instead make them clothing out of animal skin? (Make sure they understand this act represents the consequence that he promised- death. But since God has mercy and loves us, he gave them a way out. The animal flesh is a temporary fix... the real consequence comes later when Jesus is crucified for us. Still, the penalty is death, but Jesus paid the consequence.)
- **Have everyone look up 1 Corinthians 10:13 and choose one person to read out loud.** (Here it is for your planning purposes: There isn't any temptation that you have experienced which is unusual for humans. God, who faithfully keeps his promises, will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to resist. But when you are tempted, he will also give you the ability to endure the temptation as your way of escape.)
- From the verse we just read, what can we learn about how God is present when we feel tempted and/or are in sticky situations?

Transitional Statement:

From the verses we just read, we learned 3 things about God:

1. The temptations we face are nothing new to God... they have been around since the beginning of time.
2. God promises to give us what we need to resist temptation.
3. Even when we choose to give in to temptation (like Adam and Eve in the garden), God will show us the way out!

Keeping these things in mind, let's practice thinking about ways to resist temptation, as well as find ways to escape when we choose to not resist....

Find the Way Out (Look, 5-10 mins)

Practicing scenarios where you would have to think critically in order to avoid temptation and/or find a way to escape.

- Hand out copies of “Find the Way Out” at the end of the lesson (2 pages). The can complete these alone or in small groups.
- Feel free to edit the scenarios based on the age/maturity of your group.
- The rules of the worksheet are a little confusing, but basically, they are supposed to change 1 of 2 things... either cross out Scene #2 and think of a way to resist temptation OR come up with an option for Scene #3 where they are able to escape, even if they did not resist temptation.
- ***If you have plenty of time, you can let each person work on each scenario. If you are limited in time, you can assign one scenario to each individual/small group***
- Give them a few minutes to complete the activity, and then share the solutions with the larger group.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- How is God present in these situations?
- Is it easier to make a good choice before approaching the temptation (#1), or after approaching the temptation (#2)? Why?
- When the #3 part of the sequence ends in something that is not what God would want, how does God respond? (He still responds with love. He ALWAYS responds with love. But there are STILL consequences for our actions, and that’s where Jesus comes in.)
- In relation to this activity, how can we show God we love him? (By doing what we know he would want- choosing to avoid temptation, and/or escape from temptation, even when it means we end up looking foolish)

Resist and Escape (Took, 3 mins)

Thinking of ways that we are currently feeling temptation and praying for God's help to resist and/or escape.

- Explain that you will be guiding them through a time of prayer where you ask them to think about things and offer up their prayers silently. There will be long periods where you are not speaking, and that is okay- that is when they can focus on God.
- When the prayers and time of silence is over, you will end in the Lord's Prayer, which they can say with you.
- Ask them to find a comfortable position and close their eyes.

Prayer leader says something like:

All-knowing Father, we know that there is nothing under the sun that is new to you. You have seen all the temptations that we face and know how to help us resist and escape. Help us now to think of the things in our lives that are causing us to stumble... the things that are a distraction from you and your goodness...

(long pause)

As we hold these temptations in our heads, reveal to us our greatest hope for resistance...

(long pause)

And if we have already approached the temptation and find ourselves in a mess we were never supposed to be in, show us our clearest route for escape.

(long pause)

We know you love us and want us to live lives that are characterized by peace and joy. Be with us and guide us towards the peace that can only be found in you...

Our Father, who art in heaven....

Amen.

Garden Sequence

The following is a paraphrase of what happened in the Garden of Eden when Sin first entered the world. The parts of the story are out of order and all you have to do is put them in the order they happened, labeling them 1-5.

___ Adam and Eve became self-conscious, covered themselves in leaf-clothes, and hid.

___ God told Adam and Eve to not eat from one particular tree. If they do, they will die.

___ Adam and Eve ate the fruit.

___ God made Adam and Eve clothes out of animal skin.

___ The serpent was like, "You aren't going to die if you eat that. God is just trying to hold out on you."

Choose your Way Out

We've just learned 3 things: 1. That God knows about all the things that tempt us, 2. He will has given us the strength to resist temptation, 3. He will provide a way for us to escape when we chose not to resist.

Knowing those things, think of ways to either avoid temptation (by responding in a favorable way to scene #1), **OR** finding a way to escape the temptation, even if it results in something unfavorable for you (thinking of an option for scene #3 that brings glory to God.)

Example Scenario:

Scene 1: You have a huge test on Monday, but your favorite show is having a marathon all weekend. (*Resist: DVR the shows, study over the weekend, and watching the shows over the next few weeks*)

Scene 2: (If you chose NOT to resist:) You watch the shows all weekend, and even stay up until 2:30am on Sunday night to finish the marathon.

Scene 3: What is the "escape?" (*You accept responsibility for your choices, do your best on the test, but still get a D. You work hard for the rest of the semester to make up for your choice and get a B- in the class.*)

Scenario A:

Scene 1: You've only had your license for a few months and aren't yet allowed to drive with passengers. There is a championship game on Friday night and one of the coolest kids in school is having a party afterwards. He only lives a few miles away from school, and a bunch of the other kids that are going are not yet driving. They have all assumed that you would drive them to the party. You are worried that one of the main reasons you were invited was so that they wouldn't have to have their parents come back and take them to the party.

Scene 2: You show up to the game on Friday night without having told anyone that you aren't supposed to be driving them. They still think that you are driving them.

Scene 3: What is the "escape?"

Scenario B:

Scene 1: There is a girl at school that is really strange and takes it out on other people by bullying them. One of her favorite people to pick on is one of your closets friends. Your group of friends have decided to get back at her after school tomorrow and they haven't told you all the details, but they asked you to bring a carton of eggs.

Scene 2: You show up at school the next day with your eggs. School will be over in about 15 minutes.

Scene 3: What is the "escape?"

(OVER)

Scenario C:

Scene 1: Without asking your mother, you told all your friends that your mom was going to let you wear her VERY extravagant and expensive diamond necklace to prom. You ask her the day before prom and she laughs at you like you are crazy and says, “not a chance!”

Scene 2: You wander into your mother’s room a few minutes before your friends are supposed to pick you up, and you slip the necklace into your purse.

Scene 3: What is the “escape?”

Scenario D:

Scene 1: Your girlfriend’s parents are out of town and she has asked you to come over. You’ve been alone together before and you didn’t do anything that you really feel like you shouldn’t be doing... but you have also never had the security of knowing that there was NO WAY her parents would be coming home while you were hanging out.

Scene 2: You go over to her house, and after just a little bit of time, you are being more physical than you have ever been before.

Scene 3: What is the “escape?”

Scenario E:

Scene 1: You have your own laptop, but you aren’t allowed to use it in your room. Your parents require that you use it downstairs in the common area because they say they want to, “make sure you aren’t looking at anything that you aren’t supposed to see.” It’s not usually a big deal, but all of your friends have been talking about an online movie that you REALLY want to check out, and you know your parents wouldn’t approve.

Scene 2: After your parents go to bed, you go downstairs to get your laptop so that you can watch the movie in your room. You understand why your parents wouldn’t want you to watch the movie, but it’s not that bad... it’s nothing you haven’t seen before. But when the movie is over, before you close your laptop, you get a pop-up add on your screen to visit a website that is highly inappropriate.

Scene 3: What is the “escape?”

Scenario F:

Scene 1: You are invited to a party where people will be drinking and you know your parents would never allow it.

Scene 2: You tell your parents you are at the home of a church friend and go to the party anyways.

Scene 3: What is the “escape?”