

middle school



Lesson 7 / January 12, 2025

Chocolate Temptation

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 

Lesson 7

Focus:

We can resist temptation as Jesus did.

Lesson 7

Bible Basis:

Matthew 4:1-11

Lesson 7

Memory Verse:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.
—Hebrews 4:15

Students will distinguish between “harmless” temptations and temptations to sin as they watch a video about children who were tempted with sweet treats.

Materials:

- Internet access

The most delicious part of the holiday season may be the baked goodies that pop up everywhere: Christmas cookies, pumpkin pies, and chocolate cakes fill our holiday gatherings. It’s January, and we’re past all that...but is anyone getting hungry all over again for these treats?

- **What’s the treat that tempts you most during the holiday season?** (Accept all reasonable answers.)

Eating sweets is a fun part of enjoying the holidays! There’s no shame if you gave into temptation and ate some goodies. Cookies speak to us in a way that broccoli doesn’t.

We’re going to watch a video telling us a little bit about an experiment with little kids facing temptations, called the **Stanford Marshmallow Experiment**.

Play the following short video clip for your students [0:42].

Delayed gratification explained by the marshmallow experiment

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/D6OTXVOP4Pk>

As the video mentioned, some children chose to eat the marshmallow right away, whereas others chose to wait so they could be offered a second marshmallow.

- **Is there anything morally wrong with tasting a treat when it’s left right in front of you?** (Of course not. At least so far as we can tell from the video, eating or not eating the marshmallow wasn’t a matter of disobedience. Children were allowed to eat the marshmallow in front of them or wait for a second—it was their choice.)

The kids faced temptation to eat their treats before waiting for the second treats. They aren't disobeying if they give in—they were given the choice. They will get a reward if they *don't* eat their treats, but it's okay if they choose to eat it and give up the reward. However, sometimes temptations can lead us to sin.

➤ **Did the kids who gave into the temptation to eat their treats before waiting for the second treats commit a sin?** (No, but allow students to share their perspectives.)

Life is full of temptations—from eating treats to lying. *Some* temptations can be harmless—like an occasional marshmallow! But *other* temptations can lead us to violate God's will.

As Christians, God wants us to resist the temptations that lead us to sin. It's not easy, but it can be done, as Jesus demonstrated in the Gospels. Let's look at the most famous time that Satan tried to persuade Jesus to disobey God.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Chocolate Temptation

for use as
STEP 4 

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Bible Basis:**

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Materials:

- Ruled paper
- Pens/pencils
- Optional: whiteboard and markers (or screenshared document)

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

Sadly, while there are some harmless temptations like kids eating their marshmallows, there are some temptations that can lead us into disobeying God.

- **What are some common temptations that lead middle schoolers to sin?** (Encourage students to think beyond obvious misdeeds, like drugs or sex, to everyday temptations like making fun of peers or disrespecting parents. List the temptations on your whiteboard or screenshared document if you have one.)
- **Would someone be willing to share a short story about a time when you resisted one of these temptations instead of giving in? What kept you from disobeying God's will?** (Hopefully, some of your students can suggest pointers for avoiding sin as they narrate their stories. If they struggle for temptation resistance strategies, tell a story of your own and mention a few ideas that worked for you. List the strategies on your whiteboard.)

We've brainstormed a bunch of different temptations this morning. Whether they seem big or small to us, they can all result in sin. And sin is a big deal in your relationship with God.

The good news is that *temptation doesn't have to end in sin*. There's nothing wrong with temptation by itself—it even happened to Jesus! The key is to *resist* instead of giving in. When you do, you're following in the footsteps of Christ.

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). **Let's finish our lesson by drafting a letter to ourselves. Think of something that really tempts you to sin personally and then give yourself your best advice for avoiding that specific temptation. Writing out a letter—even if you don't send it—can help you focus your thoughts.**

Let's say you choose the temptation of making fun of people at school. You might write, "When you think about mocking someone, consider how you would feel if someone said mean things to you."

Your letter doesn't have to be long—two or three sentences is fine. Just write an idea or two that could genuinely help you fight back against sin! We've brainstormed strategies on the whiteboard if you need help.

Give your students a few minutes to think and write. If time permits, invite (but don't require) student volunteers to read their letters aloud.

It's easy to give into temptation. But Jesus showed us that with the power of the Holy Spirit, it's possible to resist! Keep this letter in your room as a reminder to fight back against sin all week long. Ask for God's strength to resist temptation every day.

Close in prayer.

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