

The title of this morning's sermon is "*Young Men Overcoming the Evil One By...*"<sup>i</sup>

I told you I had a few sermons on my heart that I wanted to preach before returning to my verse-by-verse study through Luke's Gospel, and this is one of them.

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Let me tell you about the different units in the Army. I will briefly break them down, starting at the brigade level:<sup>ii</sup>

- A brigade has 2-3 battalions and about 5,000 soldiers.
- A battalion has 4-6 companies and about 1,000 soldiers.
- A company has 3-4 platoons and about 200 soldiers.
- A platoon has 2-3 squads and about 36 soldiers.
- And a squad has about 10 soldiers.

Squads make up the platoons, companies, battalions, and brigades They are the building blocks of the Army, and they are filled with young men.

We don't send children, women, or old men to battle. We send young men. They are in the trenches and on the front lines. When a general decides to storm a beach, take a hill, or drop men behind enemy lines, he sends young men. They exert the greatest effort and make the greatest sacrifices. The greatest strength is required of them.

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Last week we started looking at 1 John 2:12-14. These verses divide our progressive sanctification into three stages: children, fathers, and young men. Twice it says to young men:

**young men have OVERCOME THE EVIL ONE.**

Young men are fighting the enemy. They are in the trenches and on the front line. They must exert the greatest effort and make the greatest sacrifices. The greatest strength is required of them.

Maybe this is why they are listed last in the verses. Children are addressed first, then fathers, and THEN young men, versus children, young men, and fathers as we would expect. Maybe John addresses them last because the most is expected of them, and he wants to give them the most attention.

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Let's quickly review what was written to children and fathers, and then we will look at what's written to young men:

**1 John 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.**

Now skip to the end of verse 13 to see the other thing said to children:

**1 John 2:13c I write to you, children, because you know the Father.**

Children know the gospel basics: their sins are forgiven and God is their Father. These are wonderful, yet simple truths we would expect new converts, or baby Christians to know.

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Next, for fathers:

**1 John 2:13a I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.**

And then again at the beginning of verse fourteen:

**1 John 2:14a I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.**

You probably notice the same thing is said to fathers twice.

To say fathers know him who is from the beginning is to say they have a deep knowledge and understanding of God.

The fact that fathers are the most mature and what is said of them is they know God tells us there is nothing more mature than this. There is no other level to attain that involves something different, or better, such as performing miracles.

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Now look what's written to young men:

**1 John 2:13b I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.**

And then the second half of verse fourteen:

**1 John 2:14b I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.<sup>iii</sup>**

Young men know more than the gospel basics of children, but they don't yet have the deep knowledge and understanding fathers have.

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Three things are said to young men, but only one thing is said to them twice, once in verse 13 and again in verse 14: they "have overcome the evil one."

It seems to me that if you are wondering when you move from being a child to being a young man, it is when you have victory over temptation. And this could be why some people spiritually remain children: they don't overcome sin.

Now, because none of us stop sinning completely, there must be some balance. I think the balance is young men have victory over life dominating sin. They still sin, but not habitually, or it does not dominate them.

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Let's talk about each thing said to young men, so we can equip them to overcome the evil one.

First, it says they are strong, and this brings us to lesson one:

**Young men overcome the evil one by (Lesson One) being spiritually strong.**

Because we are talking about young men we immediately think of physical strength, and that's probably part of it. Hopefully you young men are using your strength and energy in positive productive ways, not wasting your time on frivolous activities. But spiritual strength is even more in view.

And there is a relationship between a young man's spiritual strength and – as it says – "the Word of God abiding in [him]." God's Word is the source of a young man's spiritual strength. You young men can't be spiritually strong if the Word of God does not abide in you.

And notice the statement about young men overcoming the evil one follows the statement about the Word of God abiding in them. In other words, the Word of God allows them to overcome the evil one.

Think of what David said:

**Psalm 119:9a How can a YOUNG MAN keep his way pure?**

Pause there.

So, we're talking about young men. It doesn't say, "How can a child, father, old woman, or young woman keep their way pure."

It's not that these people don't need God's Word too, but when we're talking about being "keeping [our] way pure," or let's say we're talking about purity, God speaks right to young men.

And listen to how he says they do that:

**Psalm 119:9b By guarding it ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD. 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from YOUR COMMANDMENTS! 11 I have stored up YOUR WORD in my heart, that I might not sin against you.**

We see the importance of God's Word for young men to be spiritually strong and pure. And this brings us to lesson two:

**Young men overcome the evil one by (Lesson Two) being in God's Word.**

There are many reasons young men should abide in God's Word as 1 John 2:14 says:

- So they move from being children to young men, and then from young men to fathers.
- So they are spiritually strong.
- So they have victory over temptation and sin.
- So they overcome the evil one.

And I want to provide one more reason:

Whatever God wants young men to do later in life, God's Word equip them to do that. Here's what I mean:

Young men wonder:

- What should I do with my life?
- How should I serve the church?
- Should I go to college?
- What profession should I pursue?
- Who should I marry?
- How will I take care of a family?
- When will I become a father?

And there are plenty of other questions young men might ask.

But regardless of what young men end up doing, the one thing they need, for whatever path their life takes, is God's Word abiding in them.

I became a Christian later in life, and I got married somewhat later in life. I have some regrets from my years of singleness, but one thing I'm thankful for were the years spent in God's Word with little distraction. They still benefit me today.

I would encourage all the young men to use this time you have to be in God's Word before your lives get busier and more complicated.

Now please turn to Titus 2. We won't turn back to 1 John 2. Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus.

In these verses Paul talks about four groups: older men, older women, young women, and young men. He tells each of them what they should be and do. Let's start at verse 2 for context:

**Titus 2:2 Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.**

This is a pretty good list. Older men are to be these six different things.

Now Paul talks about older women:

**Titus 2:3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,**

Older women are to be three things – reverent, not slanderers, not addicted to wine – and they are to do one thing: teach.

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Now Paul talks about young women:

**Titus 2:4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.**

Young women have the longest list. When I was going over the sermon with Katie, she said, “You know how women love their lists.”

Young women are to do two things – love their husbands and children – and be four things: self-controlled, pure, homemakers, and submissive to their husbands.

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Now, because older men are supposed to be six things, older women are supposed to be three things and do one thing, and young women are supposed to do two things and be three things, I would expect young men to have a handful of things to be and do.

Don't we have a long list for young men? Aren't there lots of things we want from them?

Let's see if that's the case:

**Titus 2:6 Likewise, urge the younger men to BE SELF-CONTROLLED.**

This is it!

Only one thing for young men.

And this brings us to Lesson Three:

**Young men overcome the evil one by (Lesson Three) being self-controlled.**

It is fitting to say this to young men, because it relates to what is said to them in 1 John 2. Young men face immense temptation, and if they are going to overcome the evil one, they must be self-controlled.

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Now let me make what is going to sound like a detour, but then I will connect it back to young men.

I understand the world works against everyone in different ways:

The world works against children by tempting them to waste their time, disobey their parents, and nowadays they face even wicked temptations such as trying to become a different gender.

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The world works against young women by discouraging femininity and encouraging feminism, or by encouraging them to find their value, not in their relationship with the Lord, but in their relationship with a young man.

As a father of five girls, my biggest fear for them, second only to them rejecting Christ, is they would have a relationship with an ungodly young man. I can't think of much that would damage a young woman more than being with an ungodly young man.

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The world works against older women by encouraging them to find their value outside the primary roles God has given them, which I read just a moment ago:

**Titus 2:4 Train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.**

It seems like you could get into a ton of trouble today – and I don't mean in the world: I mean even in the church – for saying what this verse says, such as women should work at home and submit to their husbands. But that's what it says, so I mean this as gently as possible: if you have a problem with women working at home and submitting to their husbands, you don't have a problem with me, you have a problem with God because he wrote it.

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The world works against older men, in particular fathers and husbands, by tempting us to be one extreme or the other: passive or domineering, spiritually lazy or harsh. Just as much as women's roles are under attack, so are men's roles. There is no shortage of people who want to criticize male leadership, which makes it tempting for men to be passive.

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So, to be clear I believe the world is working against children, young women, older women, and older men, and these are just a few ways.

But with that said I believe young men have it the most difficult.

I went back and forth for two weeks about whether to make this point, and maybe I will change my mind in the future, but for now I believe this.

I don't mean to minimize anyone else's temptations. I say this as a father, or as someone who no longer considers himself a young man, that the temptations I face are not as strong as they were when I was a young man.

It seems like our world is designed to destroy young men. My heart goes out to my sons and other young men who must grow up in our culture that is set on ruining them.

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Please turn to Proverbs 7. This is a chapter that every young man should be familiar with. And if you are a father of a young man, this is a chapter you should read with him as soon as he begins to be tempted by women.

If you are unfamiliar with this chapter, it describes a young man who is drawn away and killed by a woman who is given different names depending on your Bible:

- The NKJV calls her the immoral woman and seductress.
- The NIV calls her the adulterous woman and wayward woman.
- The NASB calls her the adulteress and strange woman.
- The Amplified calls her the immoral woman.
- The ESV calls her the forbidden woman and adulteress.

Let me say this as clearly as possible and I'm asking every young man to look at me:

If you want to overcome the evil one, you must resist this woman. You will never overcome the evil one if you don't.

Look at the last verse of the chapter:

**Proverbs 7:27 Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.**

We will look at this verse more later, but I wanted you to see it now to understand the seriousness of what we are discussing. Her house is the way to death. This is the woman who kills young men.

And this brings us to lesson five:

**Young men overcome the evil one by (Lesson Four) resisting the harlot.**

I was going to reference Proverbs 7 in this sermon to set up a message I wanted to teach at an upcoming men's breakfast. But the elders and their wives said, "Preach on Proverbs 7 during the worship service." So that's what I am doing next week as well.

Please be praying for the young man in our church over the course of these sermons. They are in the trenches as we talked about. They are the future leaders of their families and the church.

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With that, let's look at a young man that we can learn much from:

**Proverbs 7:6 For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, 7 and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, A YOUNG MAN lacking sense,**

We're talking about young men, and here's one of them. But he is "Simple" and "Lacking sense." These are both ways of saying that he is foolish and lacking wisdom. He shows young men what not to do. He is the opposite of the young man in 1 John 2 who has overcome the evil one.

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Proverbs is filled with verses about wisdom and foolishness, and I can tell you this:

This young man disobeys so many of the verses that we couldn't look at all of them or it would take months just to get through this chapter. I will draw your attention to some of the Proverbs that apply to him, but keep in mind this he is the picture of foolishness.

Look how his foolishness begins:

**Proverbs 7:8 passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house**

Let me get you to notice three things.

First, it says "her corner." As a harlot she has a corner that belongs to her.

Second, it says "her house." This is where she lures her victims.

Third, it says, "Passing along" and "Taking the road." This is how the temptation begins.

This is exactly what James 1:14 describes:

**James 1:14 Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.<sup>iv</sup>**

The young man was lured away toward her house and soon he will be enticed by her.

Let me share something fascinating with you.

The phrase “when he is lured,” in James 1:14 is four words in English, but only one word in Greek: *exelkō* (pronounced ex-hell-ko). It is a metaphor for – and I quote – “the seduction of a harlot.”<sup>v</sup>

So, when James wants to describe how we’re tempted, he uses a harlot. That harlot is personified for us in Proverbs 7.

Let me say it like this:

Proverbs 7 illustrates James 1:14 for us.

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Briefly turn to the left to Proverbs 4:14:

**Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.**

The young man did the opposite of this. He entered the path of the wicked and walked in the way of the evil when he took the road to her house.

**Proverbs 4:15 Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.**

He did not avoid it. He went on to it. He did not turn away from it and he did not pass on.

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Look one chapter to the right at Proverbs 5:8:

**Proverbs 5:8 Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house,**

Again, we see the young man doing the opposite of what Proverbs, or wisdom, says: he didn’t keep away from her and he did go near her house.

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Bill Shannon said, *“It’s easier to avoid temptation than to resist it.”*

This young man could’ve avoided temptation. He had no business going toward her house. But this is often how temptation begins: going to the wrong places.

- For this young man it meant going down the wrong street.
- For young men in our day, it means going to the wrong places on the Internet.

Young men must be disciplined to stop temptation before it begins by deciding not to go to the wrong places, or wrong sites, and if they happen to stumble on something they shouldn’t see, then they quickly rip their eyes away. To fail to do so is choosing to continue to pass along the street near her corner and take the road to her house.

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Consider this verse that both describes the problem and reveals the solution:

**Romans 13:14 Put on the lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**

You can tell the application this verse has for the foolish young man: he did the OPPOSITE and made provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

But here’s the question:

Why does the beginning of the verse say, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ”?

What does “putt on the Lord Jesus Christ” and “make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires” have to do with each other?

They might seem unrelated, but “Put on the lord Jesus Christ” is the solution to the second part of the verse: “make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

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The reason this is so important is counsel against temptation so often sounds like, “Try harder.” A young man is struggling with pornography, and he’s told, “You’re not trying hard enough.”

Yes, effort and self-control are needed as we saw in Titus 2:6 when Paul told young men to be self-controlled.

But I have never known a young man to look at porn and be filled with anything but regret and shame. To say he hasn't been trying would be untrue.

The problem with counseling people to try harder, besides the fact they probably already feel like they’re trying hard, is it puts all the emphasis on the individual.

Paul says to, “Put on Christ.” He lifts our focus from ourselves to our Lord. We stop looking at ourselves and start looking to Christ. We think about what he’s done for us, and it helps us resist temptation. This is how we rely on the gospel versus human effort.

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Now, last week’s sermon was about fathers. We haven’t talked about fathers this morning, but this is one moment I would like to ask all the fathers to pay attention.

Brothers, we need to be helping the young men in our lives, especially if they are our sons.

I meet with numerous young men in the church, and I try to ask each of them about their purity.

When I have one-on-one time with my daughters, the first question I ask is, “What have you been reading in the Word?”

But this is the second question I ask my sons. I think if you talk to Ricky and Johnny they will tell you that the first question I asked them is, “How is your purity?”

Fathers, this is the question we need to ask our sons, or other young men God puts in our lives.

And sons, or young men, if you have a father, or older man, who asks you this question, you should thank him.

And if you don’t, please seek out me or one of the other elders.

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Turn back to Proverbs 7:9 to see when the young man does all this:

**Proverbs 7:9 in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.**

This almost sounds like a scary movie or story, and in a sense it is. The young man is going to be killed.

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The young man wanted to do all this at night because he believed nobody would see him. But somebody was watching. Look back at verse 6:

**Proverbs 7:6 For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, 7 and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense,**



No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't hide what he was doing.

We know Solomon wrote most of Proverbs, so let me ask you this:

When we read verse 6 are we supposed to think, "Uh oh, Solomon is watching. Solomon knows what the young man is doing!"

No, this isn't Solomon watching. It is God watching.

**Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.**

So, young men, keep this in mind:

If you try to meet with the harlot, you can do so at night in the darkness and:

- You might be able to hide it from your friends at church.
- You might be able to hide it from your siblings.
- And you might be able to hide it from your parents.

But God is watching. He looks down and sees among the simple, a young man lacking sense. He sees a foolish young man who is on his way to his death.

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Let me conclude with this:

The verse says God sees everything, the evil and the good. I focused on the evil, but let me also focus on the good:

- God sees you fathers who are seeking out your sons, disciplining them, and encouraging them in their purity.
- God sees you mothers who are fervently praying for your sons.
- God sees you young ladies who are dressing and acting modestly to protect your brothers in Christ.

And God sees you young men who are fighting the good fight:

- He sees you in the trenches and on the front lines.
- He sees you saying no to the lusts of the flesh, and yes to the spirit of God.
- He sees you overcoming the evil one as you put on Jesus Christ.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, seeing everything, and he wants to help us live for his glory.

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If you have any questions, or I can pray for you in any way, I'll be up front after service, and I'd consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.

<sup>i</sup> Done:

- John MacArthur
- Moody
- Nelson
- ESV commentary
- Life application
- EW

<sup>ii</sup> [Military Units: Army \(defense.gov\)](http://www.defense.gov)

<sup>iii</sup> Each stage of the Christian life builds upon the previous one:

- Children learn about God and grow in their ability to win battles over temptation.

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- Young men moved from victory to victory as they grow in their relationship with God.
  - Fathers who have known Christ for years and developed the knowledge and wisdom start the cycle all over again by discipling children.

<sup>iv</sup> The Greek word for desires in Romans 13:14 is the same word for desires in James 1:14: [\*epithyma\*](#) (pr: eppy-thew-mia):

**Romans 13:14 Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, TO GRATIFY ITS DESIRES (*epithyma*).**

**James 1:14 Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire (*epithyma*).**

<sup>v</sup> Listen to these quotes from commentators discussing the Greek word *exelkō*:

- Benson said, “James presents men’s desires as a harlot, which entices their understanding and will into its impure embrace.”
- Matthew Poole said, “[Exelkō] is a metaphor of a harlot drawing a young man out of the right way, and alluring him with the bait of pleasure to commit folly with her.”
- The Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary says, “Temptation is personified as a harlot that allures the man.”
- The Pulpit Commentary says, “Temptation is personified, and represented as a seducing harlot, to whose embrace man yields, and the result is the birth of sin, which in turn gives birth to death.”
- Lange said, “The man is first drawn out from his inward self-control and fortress, and then is attracted by the allurements of the harlot.”