

Jesus Is Tempted

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: The devil tempted Jesus three times, but Jesus overcame each temptation by the Word of God and succeeded where the first Adam had failed.

BACKGROUND PASSAGES: Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13

Intense trials and temptations often occur during seasons of transition, even shortly after making a big decision to pursue God's call on one's life, whether that be in ministry or simply making a lifestyle change in order to better follow Christ. It's a pattern we see in Christ's life as well. Thankfully, He demonstrated for us what total dependence on the Father looks like and showed us how, through His Spirit and through His Word, we can be empowered to trust God no matter the trials or temptations we face.



Why do you think trials and temptation seem like a normal part of human life?

Group Time

Point 1: The Son of God is tempted to use His power for His own needs (Luke 4:1-4).

¹ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” ⁴ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”

Right in the first verse of this chapter is an interesting and important point for us to note: The Holy Spirit was the One who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Often when we are in seasons of great trial or temptation, we don't even pause to consider that God might have led us there for a purpose. While sometimes we might wander into the wilderness on our own, we should also consider in this passage that it was the Spirit of God who led Jesus into the wilderness.



How should the belief that God might lead us into a trial or temptation change the way we respond to these experiences?

Even though Jesus was hungry and vulnerable, He succeeded where Adam failed. Jesus chose spiritual priorities over the desires of His flesh. He fought back against temptation using the Word of God. Do not miss the parallels throughout these temptations between Jesus and Adam. Where Adam failed and the curse of sin entered into the world, Jesus succeeded and would usher in a new era where sin is being conquered and death will be no more. We also see through Jesus' example that we too have the power of the Spirit and the Word to withstand temptation, no matter how vulnerable we are.

Sinlessness of Jesus: While the Bible affirms the full _____ of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was _____ sinless throughout His earthly life. Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced _____ temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness.

Point 2: The Son of God is tempted to pursue His reign apart from the Father's plan (Luke 4:5-8).

⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

In this second temptation we see that Jesus was tempted to believe that God was withholding good things from Him. And again, isn't that exactly like a tactic Satan used with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden? In the wilderness, Satan told Jesus that if He worshiped him, then all authority would be His. Shouldn't Jesus have all authority? Of course! But here Jesus would have to shift His allegiance to get it.

Temptation and Sin: Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and _____ desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of _____ rather than giving glory to _____. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin, and we pray for God to _____ us from evil.

We can learn a lot from Jesus' response to Satan's temptation here. He did not try to reason with Satan or argue with him. He didn't try to explain why He trusted God's plan. He didn't get into an argument with him about it. He simply stated God's command and left it at that. He shielded Himself completely behind the Word of God, allowing God's words to speak for Him when He was tempted in this vulnerable place.

 What are some satanic shortcuts that lead people away from God's good plan?

Voices from the Church

“Unbelief, just like Satan, will always take the easy way out. It will tell us to eat the fruit in exchange for knowledge, instead of fearing God to gain real wisdom. Unbelief will unravel our perceptions of both suffering and the blessedness of life and beckon us to skip self-denial at all costs with the faux promises of comfort that can't extend beyond the grave.”¹

—Jackie Hill Perry

Point 3: The Son of God is tempted to test His Father's promise of protection (Luke 4:9-13).

⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ ¹¹ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” ¹² And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Jesus resisted this third temptation, **first, by staying secure in His identity.** Jesus knows who He is—the Son of God—and He doesn't feel the need to prove it to anyone, not even Satan. So, He stayed out of the ego battle and power struggle altogether. **Second, Jesus didn't hold God hostage to meet His expectations.** Rather than be presumptuously self-righteous, Jesus didn't demand that God act in a certain way to meet His own desires. You trust and obey God; you don't test Him.



What are some reasons we should not treat our relationship with God as transactional, as if He owed us for our obedience to Him?

In Jesus we see what absolute reliance upon God looks like. Rather than take it upon Himself to demand a specific type of provision or blessing from God, Jesus chose to trust the plan and provision God gives. He chose to trust that regardless of how God's provision is displayed, it wouldn't change His identity and it can't change the character of God. God can be trusted even when we don't understand the ways He chooses to provide. Jesus rested in that promise, once again using the Word of God as a shield to protect Him from the enemy's temptations.



What are some things that help you trust God's character even when you can't see or understand His provision?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Luke 4:1-4

In the first test, Jesus was tempted to choose physical desires over spiritual priorities. Notice that when Jesus was at the peak of physical hunger at the end of a forty-day fast, the devil came to Him to tempt Him with bread. Have you noticed this happen in your life? At the peak of your hunger for intimacy, attention, joy, or peace, a temptation comes along that offers a shortcut solution to meet your desires.

Physical hunger isn't bad. Neither is our hunger for intimacy, attention, joy, or peace. And food isn't bad either. Often the things that satisfy our hungers aren't bad things. But they can be good things used in the wrong time, in the wrong way, and for the wrong purpose. They can be shortcuts that keep us from having to trust God and do things in His way.



When are you most vulnerable to neglect spiritual priorities?

Day 2: Read Luke 4:5-8

In this second test, Jesus was tempted to pursue the right thing in the wrong way. Satan offered Him all the power and glory of the resurrection without the pain of the cross. It was the ultimate shortcut. All He had to do was worship Satan. Isn't that true for the shortcuts we are often faced with?

We can take shortcuts to power, promotions, connection, and prestige. All we have to do is turn from our allegiance to the Lord for a brief moment and we can have what we want. Just a little cheating. Just a little change to the contract. Just a little manipulation. Just a little passivity. These moments seem little and insignificant until we begin to consider how we have to change the orientation of our worship in order to make these choices.



What things are you tempted to pursue with a shortcut?

Day 3: Read Luke 4:9-13

Do you ever feel as if God owes you? Have you spent years following the Lord and serving Him faithfully only to lose a child? To get cancer? To lose your job, to struggle in marriage, never to get married, never to have children, to struggle financially, or be totally miserable in your job but not have any other options? But the truth is that God owes us nothing. Saying this, however, is much easier than believing it in the heat of the moment.

The moment tragedy or suffering strikes, something wells up within us questioning how God could allow this to happen to us. We love Him, we serve Him, we've given everything to follow Him. And now *this!*? We have a tendency to measure God's faithfulness by our own physical comfort and success. If we have a good job and a nice house, that means God is faithful. If our family is healthy, then God is faithful. But God's faithfulness cannot be measured by our circumstances. He will take care of us and do all He promised, but that doesn't mean it must look like we expect.



In what ways are you tempted to presume upon God?

Day 4: Read Mark 1:12-13

Where Matthew and Luke detail all three temptations, Mark just gives us two verses and a quick, succinct overview of the whole forty days. But there are some key similarities that Mark is sure to point out. He notes that the temptations happened immediately after Jesus' baptism, and he writes that "the Spirit drove him into the wilderness."

Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke wanted us to miss seeing God's hand in Jesus' wilderness experience. And while we don't always have the privilege of knowing what trials in our lives happen because God leads us directly into them and which trials happen as a result of our sin—or just the brokenness of the world—we can be assured that God is always present. When we are tempted, He is with us. When we feel isolated and alone, He is with us. And He will not waste a trial or temptation or test. He will use every struggle and pain to make us more like Jesus, to draw us into a deeper relationship with Himself, and to remind us of His love for us.



How does it make you feel to know that God might lead you into a trial?

Day 5: Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-14

Temptations can feel heavy and overbearing, as if we have no way of escape. But that's just a part of the trap. It's never true. Anytime you are faced with temptation, there *is* a way out. Every single time. God promised, and He has never made a promise He did not keep. He will always give us a way out; we just have to look for it and ask Him to show us where the escape route is.

Verse 13 also says God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure. It's as if God has a shield around us and He knows what our limits are when it comes to being tempted. He protects us from being tempted beyond what we can take. That means no matter the temptation you are facing today—even if it feels impossible to carry, even if it seems like there is no way out—you are able to stand firm. There is a way out. In the same way, Jesus withstood temptation; He will empower you to remain faithful to Him.



When was a time in your life that you clearly saw God give you a way of escape in the midst of temptation?

