



## Unit .20

### Session .02

# Jesus is Tempted

#### Scripture



## Luke 4:1-13

**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.’” **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.”” **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.

## Intro Options



**Main Point:**  
Jesus overcame  
temptation through the  
power of God's Word.

### Option 1

While there is never a good time to be tempted, or to engage in intense spiritual warfare, it seems like it would be better not to go through it at the beginning of ministry. Wouldn't it be better to first get our footing? Wouldn't we be able to handle temptations better at that point?

Regardless of whether later is better, the truth is that intense trials and temptations often occur during a season of transition, perhaps shortly after a making a big decision to pursue God's call on one's life. It's a pattern we see in Christ's life here as well. Thankfully, He demonstrates for us what total dependence on the Father looks like and shows us how, through His Spirit and through His Word, we can be empowered to trust God, no matter the circumstances or temptations we face.

- **In what ways have you experienced temptation in your life?**

### Option 2

Many Christians are surprised when their temptations seem to grow in intensity, even after they commit to Jesus. The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness teaches us that struggle always follows commitment. Even more, struggle is the test of faithfulness.

When the first disciples dropped their fishing nets to follow Jesus, they probably never anticipated the struggles that would follow. Tradition says that all but one of the disciples would be martyred. Saying "yes" to God came with a cost, and the same is true of us today. Experiencing temptation and overcoming the Evil One is one of the ways we become stronger—able to continue saying "yes" to the great cost and great reward of following Christ.

- **What are some common temptations Christians struggle with today? Why are these temptations so common?**

## TEACHING PLAN

### Read Luke 4:1-4.



The story of Jesus' baptism, which we studied in a previous session, and Jesus' temptation must be understood together. At Jesus' baptism, the Father affirmed Jesus' identity as His beloved Son, and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. The same Spirit who descended upon Jesus at His baptism led Him into the wilderness to be tempted. Not surprisingly, the first temptation had to do with Jesus' identity as the Son of God—a question of the affirmation He just heard at His baptism.

One important point of application already we see here is that God is not absent in the midst of our temptations. He is not absent in the midst of our pain and trials. He was as present with Jesus in the wilderness as He was at His baptism. And He is as present with us in our wilderness as He is on our mountaintops. Our emotions may tell us otherwise. We may not feel His presence in the same way, but that doesn't change the reality of His promise or His character. He promised He would never leave us (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5). He doesn't break his promises. God is working and active in the midst of whatever trials or temptations you are facing. You are not alone.

- **Why should we always consider that God might be leading us into a trial?**
- **How might trials be a way of strengthening our faith, knowledge, and trust in God?**

Does Jesus' first temptation remind you of the temptation in the garden? Both Adam and Christ were tempted with food; they were tempted to give into the desires of their flesh instead of maintaining their spiritual priorities. And we probably all know what happened in the garden—Adam and Eve failed. They gave in and ate what looked pleasing to them rather than standing firm in obedience and trusting that what God told them was good. But here in the wilderness, we see a totally different response from Jesus.

Even though Jesus was vulnerable and hungry, 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 Christ and Adam. Where Adam failed and the curse of sin entered into the world, Jesus succeeded and ushered in a new era where sin is being conquered and death will one day be no more. Not only that, we see through Jesus that we too have the power to withstand temptation no matter how vulnerable we are. 

- **In what ways can we protect ourselves from giving into temptation when we are in a vulnerable place?**

### Read Luke 4:5-8.



In this second temptation we see that Jesus is tempted to believe that God is withholding from Him. Again, isn't that exactly a tactic Satan used with Adam and Eve in the garden? He told Adam and Eve, "If you eat of the tree, you will become like God" (Gen. 3:5), tempting them to believe that there were good things God was hiding from them. Similarly, here in the wilderness Satan tells Jesus, "If you worship me, all authority will be yours" (Luke 4:6-7). Shouldn't Jesus have all authority? Of course! But here, Jesus would have to shift His allegiance to get it.

# COMMENTARY

**Main Point:**  
Jesus overcame  
temptation through the  
power of God's Word.

## Luke 4

**1.** Remember, in context this is coming on the heels of Jesus' baptism and initiation into public ministry. So He goes from a total ministry high—the audible voice of God has just affirmed Him in front of the crowds, the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, John the Baptist confirmed He was the promised Messiah—and He leaves the Jordan, leaves this “mountaintop,” and heads straight into the wilderness.

**2-4.** Satan's intent was revealed in the opening words of his first assault: He questioned Jesus' identity as the Son of God. In order to understand the strategy Satan used against Jesus, we must understand how his opening move was intended to lead Jesus to doubt His identity and to indulge an earthly appetite.

Jesus fasted for forty days, so Satan attacked Him at His weakest moment. Behind the temptation to turn the stones into bread was the assumption that physical food is the most important nourishment we need, but Jesus' response said otherwise. In each of the three temptations, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. His reference here, to Deuteronomy 8:3, noted the Word of God as the most needed nourishment.

Bread is one of the sustaining foods for physical life. However, more important than bread is the life of the Spirit. Our spiritual lives are sustained by the Word of God. Jesus understood that although His body was starving, He had feasted on God's Word, spoken over Him at the Jordan River. Jesus knew He was the Son of God—not a starving beggar in the wilderness, but a Son who delighted in the Word of His Father.

Satan transported Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. Herod's temple was a marvel. The 35-acre complex was surrounded by a colonnade. In the center of the splendor was the temple itself, fashioned from glistening white marble and also crowned with gold leaf. It is said that when the sun shone directly on the temple, one had to look away because of its brilliance.

Satan took Jesus to the top of this magnificent building, and he altered his attack by adopting Jesus' method of warfare. Here, Satan also quoted the Bible—Psalm 91:11-12—which refers to God's tender provision of protection to the ones He loves. Satan intended for Jesus to understand these two verses in isolation, apart from the larger context of the Psalm. But Psalm 91 speaks of a person who rests in faith and trusts in the Almighty. The psalmist wrote about why he was not afraid and why he had made the Lord his refuge. In short, the song is from someone who placed his total trust in God.

## 99 Essential Doctrines (p. 64, DDG)

### Sinlessness of Jesus

While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely sinless throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.



## TEACHING PLAN

Time and time again, Satan tempts us to distrust God and begin to question Him in two primary ways: 1) Did God really say that? and 2) Can we really trust him? We have to be careful because this doesn't always look like blatant sin. We need to be on guard and recognize the ways we are tempted to distrust what God said, that His plans are good, or that He withholds good things from those who walk with Him.

### ▪ In what areas do you tend to struggle to trust God the most?

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 stood on the Word of God, allowing God's words to speak for Him when He was tempted in this vulnerable place. Jesus' experience helps us understand our own struggle against temptation in our personal wilderness. God's Word provides the basis of our confidence. Our faith and trust in His Word provides the strength to resist Satan's continual lies. If Jesus had to rely on the Word of God, how much more should we?

### ▪ Satan tried to manipulate the meaning of God's Word in his attack on Jesus. What does this teach us about our need to properly understand God's Word?

Read Luke 4:9-13.



Jesus was taken to a high mountain. Mysteriously, here Jesus had a glimpse of all the kingdoms of the world at once. Satan's goal was for Jesus to worship him in order to receive power. However, Jesus knew who He was. He knew that His kingdom would be centered on a cross. He knew that His kingdom would be based on His self-sacrifice, not His self-exaltation. He knew that His glory would flow from His identity as the Son of God. And so, once again, He quoted Deuteronomy, saying that only God was deserving of His worship and service. 

In Jesus, we see what an absolute and reliant trust in God looks like. Rather than take it on 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 doesn't change His identity and it doesn't change the character of God. God can be trusted even when we don't understand the ways he chooses to provide. And 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?

# COMMENTARY

**Main Point:**  
Jesus overcame  
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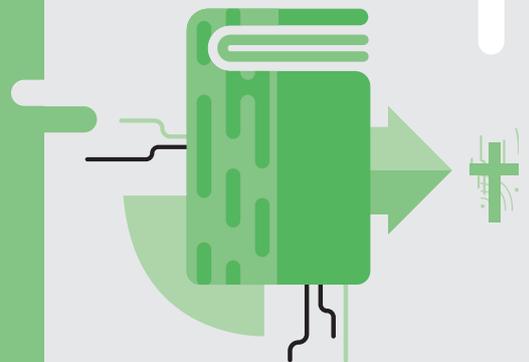
## Luke 4

**12.** “Jesus recognized right away that in spite of the fact that Satan was quoting Scripture at him, he was using a defective hermeneutic, that is, he was twisting and distorting the meaning and interpreting Scripture against Scripture itself. And Jesus said, ‘It says: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ In other words, ‘I’m not allowed to put God to the test; instead God is testing me.’ ‘When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time’ (4:13). Here we see the most significant difference between Jesus and Adam: Jesus believed God. Let me say it again. It is not simply that Jesus believed in God, but he believed God. He believed the word of God, and in the midst of this crisis, he trusted the truth of God’s word. What happens when we are put to the test? More often than not we follow the example of Adam rather than the example of Christ. One of the greatest crises in the church today is the crisis of unbelief in the word of God. It is one thing to believe in God, it is another thing to believe God. Christ triumphed over Satan because he believed God. He trusted God, he put his life in the hands of God, and he was victorious.”<sup>1</sup>

**13.** Here in Luke, we see Jesus flee this temptation, first, by staying secure in His identity. Jesus knows who He is, and He doesn’t feel the need to prove it to anyone, not even Satan. He stays out of the ego battle and power struggle altogether. Second, Jesus doesn’t hold God hostage to meet his needs. Rather than being presumptuously self-righteous, Jesus didn’t demand that God act in a certain way to meet His own desires.

## (p. 65, DDG) Christ Connection

Jesus stepped into our world and overcame the temptation to which Adam succumbed. Jesus showed He is fully obedient to the Father and He is the worthy One who would undo the consequences of Adam’s sin and bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:3). Jesus’ life of obedience led Him to the cross, the place where He conquered sin and death as our Savior.



# Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

## Head



**What can we learn about being tested in our faith from looking at this account?**

**What are some key things to remember when going through temptation?**

## Heart



**What is the appeal to sin? Why do we turn to sin so often?**

**What made it possible for Jesus to resist the allure to sin? Why is this important for us?**

## Hands



**What does Jesus' response to Satan teach us about the importance of God's Word?**

**What are some ways you can become better equipped to use the weapon of God's Word against your sin this upcoming week?**

## Main Point: Jesus overcame temptation through the power of God's Word.



### Head

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As difficult as it is for us to understand, sometimes God uses trials to test us. In every temptation that Satan brought to Jesus, we see him overcome temptations where Adam failed to obey. Jesus chose spiritual priorities over fleshly desires. He rejected the temptation to pursue the “right” thing in the wrong way. He fled from the temptation to presume upon God in order to serve His own agenda. Jesus trusted the character of God and used the Word of God to fight every temptation used to attack Him.

In Jesus’ baptism, we see public confirmation of Jesus’ identity. Then, in the temptations, we get a glimpse of exactly the type of Messiah Jesus is—a Messiah who is tested just as Adam was tested, but remained faithful. He is a Messiah who stands firm in the face of the enemy, in turn simultaneously giving His people a model for overcoming temptation. He is a Messiah who is fully obedient to the Father, no matter the cost. He is a Messiah whose obedience culminated in the ultimate display of love on the cross, and then whose victory culminated in the ultimate display of power through the resurrection.



### Heart

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Sin has a way of enticing us with the promise of a better life now—of taking shortcuts to more power, more comfort, more money—all for a better price and a faster timeline than you could ever get without giving into sin. Sin tempts us to circumvent God’s plan and timeline, to take shortcuts to get the result without walking the path God has for us. Like Adam and Eve, we can find ourselves tempted by the allure that “God just wants us to be happy.”

Jesus chose to trust the character of God, that God’s plan was better than any shortcut Satan could offer. Jesus rejected immediate gratification—even for a good thing that was rightly due to Him. But Jesus knew that Satan’s shortcuts always come with a cost and He chose to trust God’s character and God’s Word to prove what is faithful and good and best.



### Hands

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When talking about the armor of God in Ephesians 6, the apostle Paul mentioned only one offensive weapon—the sword of the Spirit—and identified it as the Word of God. Jesus’ wilderness experience clearly illustrated Paul’s point. When looking at how Jesus countered the temptations of the devil, we see a perfectly good example of what it looks like to use Scripture in the fight of faith. Thus, instead of trying to overcome temptation or fight sin through self-strength or clever tactics, Christians are to unsheathe the Word of God by believing God’s promises in the fight for faith.