

**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

How would you define the word “temptation”?

Share one of the earliest memories you have of being tempted to do something you knew was wrong or disobedient. You probably don’t remember the first time you were tempted, because it happened when you were so young. You only have to be around young toddlers for a little while to see them reach for something they know they’ve been told not to touch. We are all naturally prone to give in to temptation. Let’s look together at how Jesus countered temptation. (Yes! He experienced it too and understands how it feels!)

**If you could remove one temptation from the world, what would it be and why?** Stop and give thanks that Jesus has conquered temptation and will one day do away with it completely. He is worthy of every praise we can give Him!

**INTRODUCTION**

For countless generations, humans lost the battle to temptation . . . until Jesus. Where all before Him had failed, Jesus was led into temptation beyond what we can imagine and emerged on the other side faithful. We’ll study Matthew’s account of Jesus’s temptation today and discuss what we can learn and apply in our own lives when we are tempted as all people are.

**What makes temptation so deceptive and appealing in our lives even when we can tell ahead of time there will be destruction and pain on the other side?**

**Have you ever thought about going on the offensive against temptation rather than just defending against it? Strive to master the Word of God. Immerse yourself in its wisdom and you will be much better equipped to recognize, avoid, and counter temptation.**

***READ Matthew 4:1-11***

1. **Jesus’s temptation happened right after His baptism, and ahead of His public ministry. Why might God have ordered these events this way?**
2. **Even more than daily food, we need God’s wisdom that comes from His Word. Being obedient to what God has called us to do is more important than meeting our needs the way we believe is best. Where are you tempted to provide for yourself, instead of relying on God’s provision, today? How might you rely on Him by focusing on His Word instead?**
3. **All of the things Satan offered Jesus seemed like good things. He appealed to Jesus’ appetites (Satisfy yourself!), approval (Prove yourself!), and ambitions (Show your power!). How do the temptations you face fall into these three categories?**
4. **How can you recognize when Scripture is being taken out of context and misrepresented? What proactive approach could you take?**
5. **How the third time of testing a temptation for Satan to give Jesus the right things in the wrong way? How might Satan seek to entice us similarly?**

**WRAP UP**

**What one question, verse, or point might you keep thinking and praying about? How would you apply it to your life?**
*Ask for any prayer requests, and pray for one another.*

Memorize this Verse: **He answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” – Matthew 4:4, CSB**

**EXTENDED CUT**

Humankind is no stranger to temptation. Since the dawn of time, humans have been faced with temptation, and failed the test, time and time again. Adam and Eve gave into temptation and first introduced sin into the world when they ate the fruit from the tree God had warned them not to eat of (Genesis 3:1-6). In the days of Noah, humans gave into all kinds of temptation that were corrupt in the eyes of God, leaving none but Noah as righteous before the Lord (Genesis 6:9-13). Esau, tired from a day in the field, was tempted by Jacob’s stew and sold his birthright to eat one meal (Genesis 25:29-34). Joseph’s brothers were tempted by the solution of pawning him off to traders bound for Egypt, so they gave in and sold him for twenty shekels of silver (Genesis 37:23-28). This is not even an exhaustive list of where temptation led people in the first book of the Bible.

The story of temptation to sin has unfolded, throughout the people we know from Scripture, through every family and generation, right down to your life and mine today. The only way to conquer temptation is through Jesus, because He is the only one to live without ever giving in to it. He was tempted in every way and prevailed sinless. This is why He is the only worthy sacrifice to pay for sin, which He did willingly to remove sin’s curse from all who trust Him.

Jesus was tempted early in His ministry on earth. Once Jesus was baptized, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted**. In the wilderness, the devil sought to entice Jesus to sin three times by tempting Him to: provide for Himself instead of obediently relying on God, test God and His faithfulness, and to seize power on His own.** The enemy is still alive and well today, working against believers in similar ways. The backdrop and specific temptations may be different, but his strategy hasn’t changed. And it often works! The enemy has had millennia to hone his strategy of temptation, and he is very good at it.

In the wilderness, Jesus countered the devil’s temptation with Scripture, an example we

can model when we are tempted to turn away from God today. Jesus didn't just save us from hell, He brought us back to life so we could have a relationship with Him and glorify Him through good works. God gives us life to the fullest!

After the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted, He fasted. In fasting, we dedicate intentional time to prayer and fellowship with God. We see this trend in the Old Testament too. When God’s people were preparing for a big undertaking in which they especially recognized their need for the Lord’s help, they would often fast. Jesus prepared Himself for the great temptation He would face by spending time with the Father. Likewise, we should take our time with the Lord in prayer and worship seriously. Fasting is one way we set aside specific time to do this. “He was hungry” (v. 2) is an important addition here as it confirms again that Jesus was both fully man and fully divine.

Paul would later write that we have a sympathetic high priest in Jesus (Hebrews 4:15)—He knows what it feels like to be tempted. Jesus was hungry and said no to the temptation of bread even though it was within His power to have it. Note that the enemy picked a vulnerable moment to approach Jesus. He didn’t approach Him when He was fresh from His baptism and newly arrived in the wilderness. He waited until Jesus had fasted 40 days and was hungry. **The enemy often chooses similarly vulnerable moments to tempt us, moments when we are especially prone to give in to his temptation.**

In his second temptation, the devil sought to tempt Jesus by taking Scripture out

of context. It is important to recognize the enemy knows Scripture and can apply it

incorrectly to his own advantage. This is still a tactic he uses today. **We must know the**

**truth in God’s word to spot Satan’s lies. This is one of the reasons it is so important to**

**study the Word regularly.**

Jesus demonstrated deep trust in the Father to give him the food He needed, the worship He deserves, and the power of dominion He owns through the Father’s plan. All of this unfolded, and continues to unfold, according to the timing of the Father. Jesus put the Father’s will above His own, even though it undoubtedly felt harder in the moment to do so. He glorified God by resisting the temptations of the enemy to take shortcuts.

Satan’s lie was that Jesus could have the things God promised outside of God’s way (the cross). God’s will for us does not always lead to the exact thing the enemy attempts to tempt us with, but we can be sure that, every time, no matter the temptation, following God’s will lead to something so much better. Anything the enemy can tempt us with only stands in the way of that.