

JESUS WAS TEMPTED

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 4:1-13

CONTEXT

Following the glorious affirmation of the Father for the Son at Jesus's baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert, where He fasted for forty days and was eventually tempted by Satan. Jesus's responses to three specific temptations demonstrated both His commitment to God's will and His readiness for the ministry task before Him.

KEY CONCEPT

Like Jesus, we can turn to Scripture to help us resist temptation.

As you examine Luke 4:1-13:

- Reflect on the truth that Jesus, being human, experienced temptation just as we do.
- Identify the means Jesus used to resist temptation and to obey the Father.



TIMELINE

John the Baptist Calls People to Repentance in Preparation for Jesus (Matthew 3:1-12)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Is Tempted in the Wilderness (Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus Performs His First Miracle at the Wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11)

John Baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus Calls Disciples to Follow Him (John 1:35-51)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Mark 1:12-13
- Day 2:** Matthew 4:1-4
- Day 3:** Matthew 4:5-11
- Day 4:** Luke 4:1-4
- Day 5:** Luke 4:5-13
- Day 6:** Psalm 141



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

**WE ARE EASILY TEMPTED WHEN OUR NEEDS ARE UNMET,
BUT WE CAN RESIST (LUKE 4:1-4).**

Highlight the details from the narrative that led Jesus to be tempted.

1 Then Jesus left the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness **2** for forty days to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, he was hungry. **3** The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” **4** But Jesus answered him, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone.”

Following His baptism, Jesus departed from the Jordan River, and Luke said He was “full of the Holy Spirit” (v. 1). Not only had the Spirit descended upon Jesus after He emerged from the water after His baptism, but the Spirit’s indwelling presence was now with Him as He continued preparing for His earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit also led Jesus into the wilderness for a time of fasting and for the explicit purpose of being tested—tempted—by Satan. The Spirit’s involvement in Jesus’s time in the desert clues readers into the spiritual dynamics at play in Jesus’s earthly ministry. Spiritual warfare is the reality for all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior. Luke highlighted the spiritual warfare in this passage by recounting Jesus’s interaction with Satan after His time spent fasting.

LEADER NOTE: When Satan said, “If you are the Son of God . . .” (v. 3), he was not tempting Jesus to cast doubt on His relationship to God the Father. That would be absurd. Jesus has always been God’s Son and has always existed in perfect unity with His Father. Satan was tempting Jesus to assert His own will as God the Son to meet His needs instead of following God’s plan for redemption.

Why do you think God’s plan for our redemption included Jesus facing temptation?

For forty days, Jesus fasted from food, experiencing in His human body intense hunger. Therefore, Jesus was in a particularly vulnerable position as Satan seized upon the opportunity, telling Jesus that He could command a stone to become bread and His hunger could be satisfied. Indeed, Jesus could turn a stone into bread; later He would turn water into wine (John 2:1-11), but Jesus combated Satan’s temptation by citing truth found in God’s Word, namely, that “man must not live on bread alone” (Luke 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3).

Key Concept: Like Jesus, we can turn to Scripture to help us resist temptation.

How does Jesus’s response challenge your view of where true sustenance comes from?

As believers, we too will continue to face temptation as we seek to live obediently to God, especially in moments when we are in need. When we believe the gospel, we recognize that we are free from the penalty and punishment of our sin. Thankfully, by God’s grace, we are also free from sin’s power over us. Yet we still battle with the presence of sin in our lives. Like Jesus, we must rely upon God’s Word in our fight against sin. God also gives us the Holy Spirit, who helps by assuring us of our salvation and empowering us in our fight against sin that remains present in our lives.

LEADER NOTE: In addition to convicting us of remaining sin (John 16:8), the Holy Spirit empowers us to fight against sin, to resist temptation, and to flee from our spiritual enemy (Rom. 8:12-17). By God’s grace and walking with the Spirit, we are able to resist sin and put sin to death. As believers, we often will face temptation to sin, yet the Lord does not leave us to face our struggles alone.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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TEMPTATION AND SIN: Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet, He never sinned but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).

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TRUSTING GOD AND RELYING ON HIS WORD CAN HELP US RESIST TEMPTATION (LUKE 4:5-13).

Underline phrases that indicate Jesus’s appeal to Scripture in His responses to Satan.

5 So he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. **6** The devil said to him, “I will give you their splendor and all this authority, because it has been given over to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. **7** If you, then, will worship me, all will be yours.” **8** And Jesus answered him, “It is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.” **9** So he took him to Jerusalem, had him stand 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 give his angels orders concerning you, to protect you, **11** and they will support you with their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” **12** And Jesus answered him, “It is said: Do not test the Lord your God.” **13** After the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

Jesus was tempted by Satan two more times in the wilderness. In one, the devil took Jesus to a high place on a mountain, a vantage point from which they could see all the kingdoms on earth. Claiming authority over them, Satan offered Jesus the “splendor” of the kingdoms and the opportunity to rule over them, and Satan’s trade-off was straightforward: Jesus would only need to worship him (vv. 6-7).

Satan’s words were filled with lies and deceit, and Jesus recognized his scheme at once. The crux of the matter was not merely splendor and power over kingdoms. Satan aimed at Jesus’s heart and desired the worship that belongs to God alone. What’s more, Satan’s temptation represented a shortcut away from the ultimate goal of Jesus’s mission—the cross.

LEADER NOTE: When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, humanity, whom God had given dominion over the earth, fell under the slavery of sin. But Jesus faced every temptation that humans face and yet never sinned in thought, word, or deed. Because of His sinless life and sacrificial death on the cross to take away the penalty of sin, we can be reconciled to God. After His death and resurrection, all authority was given to Jesus, and He has commanded His followers to go and rescue others from Satan’s grip (Matt. 28:18-20).

What are some ways we are tempted to take shortcuts to avoid suffering in our mission to take the gospel of Jesus to the world?

Key Concept: Like Jesus, we can turn to Scripture to help us resist temptation.

Jesus responded to Satan by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, reaffirming that God alone is worthy of worship. Again, Jesus countered Satan’s lies with truth found in God’s Word, wielding the Scriptures as a weapon in the fight against temptation and sin.

LEADER NOTE: Once more we see that Jesus wielded the truth of Scripture in His fight against temptation and sin, and we should do the same. The world is consistently vying for our affections, and we often are led away from worshipping God alone, tempted by deceitful claims and lies. Therefore, it is important that we continually steep ourselves in the truth found in the Word of God so that when temptation comes, we can rely upon God’s Word as a way out.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“The Bible in the memory is better than the Bible in the bookcase.”¹

–Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892)

In another attempt at tempting Christ, Satan brought Jesus to another high place, the temple pinnacle, and challenged Jesus to throw Himself down from it. This challenge was consistent with Satan’s customary subversive tactics because of an added twist—Satan quoted Scripture, referencing Psalm 91:11-12 to justify the temptation. If everyone saw Jesus jump and angels keep Him from hitting the ground, no one could deny Jesus is God’s Son, right? Jesus, however, was not persuaded. He recognized the temptation as an attempt to manipulate God to act. “Do not test the Lord your God,” Jesus replied, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16.

What Scriptures have helped you avoid temptation and sin in your life?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus was tempted as we are, yet He resisted the devil’s temptations and remained without sin. Thus, He was the blameless sacrifice needed to atone for our sins.

Notes

ARRIVAL

PREPARE: Pass out blank note cards to each person as they arrive. Ask them to write down things that tempt them to sin, whether it be overindulging in alcohol, social media, or food, for example, or other temptations like rage or filthy language. Note that this is for their own personal use and won't be shared.

ENGAGE: After everyone has had time to write, ask, "Why are temptations so inviting? What is that sinister voice in your head saying?" Invite them to discuss what is so appealing about temptation. Lead them to share what helps them to avoid giving in to temptation. Ask: "Why is resisting temptation so challenging?" Tell the group that they can keep this card in a common place so that they can be reminded to resist these temptations in their lives.

CONTEXT

SAY: We've seen that Jesus, who is the divine Son of God, took on human flesh to become like us in order to save us. He was born as a human child to Mary, and through His earthly parents and His own actions, Jesus obeyed the law of God perfectly. He also grew physically, mentally, emotionally, and relationally. And as part of the fullness of His human experience, Jesus experienced temptation while on earth (Heb. 4:15). After His baptism but prior to the start of His public ministry, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into a series of temptations by Satan.

RECAP

DISCUSS: Based on your personal preparation this week, how would you categorize the temptations Jesus experienced in the wilderness in our passage for today? (*For example: Satan tried to appeal to Jesus through temptation regarding hunger, pride, and greed.*) What might have been Satan's purpose in tempting Jesus? (*If Satan could lead Jesus into sin, then he could keep all of humankind separated from God, just as he attempted to do in the garden of Eden [Gen. 3].*)

TRANSITION: Satan's will is to steal, kill, and destroy (cf. John 10:10) as he prowls around like a roaring lion looking for those he can devour (1 Pet. 5:8). But God's will sent Jesus to become the better Adam, One who could resist temptation and reconcile all people to God (1 Cor. 15:22). Today we are going to discuss how Jesus resisted sin when He was tempted so we can follow in His steps when we are tempted.



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Key Concept: Like Jesus, we can turn to Scripture to help us resist temptation.

Notes

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct the group to page 74 in the Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart with the headings “Internal Desires” and “External Influences.” Recreate the chart on a board in the room and record the group’s findings as they discuss the Scripture passages.

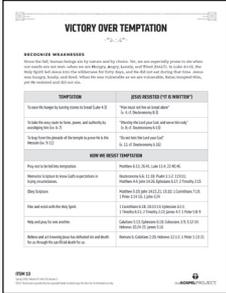
Deliver Us from Temptation	
Read the passages below. Record insights on how internal desires and external influences tempt us and how we can resist those temptations.	
INTERNAL DESIRES	EXTERNAL INFLUENCES
Romans 6:11-14	Luke 22:31-32
Galatians 5:17,19-21	Luke 23:33-39
Ephesians 2:1-3	Ephesians 6:10-18
James 1:12-15	1 Peter 5:8-9

ANALYZE: Divide the group into two teams. Assign one team the “Internal Desires” column; assign the other team the “External Influences” column. Instruct the groups to read the verses and to analyze how temptation comes from our own sinful desires and/or external temptations and to note ways we can resist temptation. After a few minutes, regroup and discuss their findings. Record these on the board and encourage them to do the same in their PSG. Say: “Let’s see how our experience with temptation compares to Jesus’s.”

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Luke 4:1-13.

SAY: Scripture is clear that we fallen human beings struggle with temptation and sin because of our own sinful desires and the sinful influences around us. While Jesus never sinned, He was tempted as we are (Heb. 4:14-16), and He fought against temptation in the same way we should.

Notes



DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss the difference between temptation and sin. Ask: “Are temptation and sin the same thing? How are they different?” Temptation is not the same as sin because a person can be tempted to sin without actually sinning, though external temptations often connect with our internal sinful desires. For Jesus to experience the fullness of humanity, He had to go through temptation like all humans, yet He never sinned. In this He set an example for our own victory over temptation. Even better, though, He defeated sin and death on the cross. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10: Victory over Temptation** and discuss ways to resist temptation when it comes up in our lives.

DEBRIEF

How does Scripture help us to resist temptation?

What are some ways we can use Scripture proactively in the battle against temptation and sin?

SUMMARIZE

Through Adam, sin entered the world and brought death to humankind. Now people continually struggle with giving in to temptation and sinning against God. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, however, He provided an example of what it means to live in perfect righteousness. He defeated Satan in the wilderness where Adam failed, and on the cross, dying for our sin, He provided a way for us to be reconciled to God. Though we believers still struggle with temptation, we have the tools to resist sin through the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God’s Word.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 75). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.

 **HEAD:** Often when we are tempted, our access to God’s Word may be limited. Thus, it’s important that we seek to commit passages of Scripture to memory so that we are equipped to respond to Satan’s lies with truth from God’s Word.

How can we find passages of Scripture that will be helpful in our battle against temptation and sin?

 **HEART:** Ultimately, Satan tempted Jesus to doubt God’s provision and to take shortcuts to attain purely earthly desires, yet Jesus remained steadfast in the truth. We often fall for Satan’s temptation to doubt God’s goodness or to seek a shortcut. Therefore, we should look to Jesus, who resisted every temptation we struggle with, and pray for the Lord to help us to rely on His strength in our weakness.

Key Concept: Like Jesus, we can turn to Scripture to help us resist temptation.

Notes

How does Satan make us doubt God's goodness and faithfulness in our lives?



HANDS: Though we believers are free from the penalty and power of sin by God's grace in Christ, we still deal with temptation and sin in our lives. As obedient children of our heavenly Father, we are called to resist temptation and to flee from sin for His honor and glory.

What action steps will you take to avoid or resist temptation in your everyday life?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read 1 Peter 5:8-9. Reflect on how you can resist temptation. Identify changes you need to make to be more alert and ready to battle temptation.
- Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal areas in which you are giving in to temptation. Develop a plan to guard yourself against temptation.
- Reach out to a friend and share about temptations you are experiencing. Ask the friend to pray with you about the temptation, and set up a regular time to check in with one another for accountability.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 75 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 141:1-5 with your group. Thank God for always being our refuge when we need rescue from temptation. Pray for His wisdom and strength in the battle against sin and for His faithful conviction when we fail.

References

1. C. H. Spurgeon, "A Private Enquiry," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 37 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1891), 29.

OF DEMONS AND THE DEVIL

Adapted from an article by Mark R. Dunn



“Face your demons,” says popular advice, but such salty wisdom severely disregards humanity’s pest-ridden history with demons and the devil. For millennia, people struggled to understand the diverse supernatural powers teeming at seemingly every juncture of human life. Despite religious cults that erected temples and shrines to numerous gods and goddesses, the ancients never found a satisfactory approach to deal with the relentless demons that mercilessly harassed people. Such was life until Jesus arrived. Now the demons implored him not to send them to their final destiny (Luke 8:31).

ANCIENT UNDERSTANDINGS

Long ago, dealing with demons was like handling lice, flies, or gnats: get rid of one and seemingly more arrive. Shrines and temples did not help. Ancient religion was useless against the frustrating, daily incursions from an ever-encroaching spirit world. To get relief, one was taught to honor countless traditions: do not stay overnight in a house of study; do not sit under a drain pipe; do not crush a louse on your garment; do not drink water at night.

Initially, ancient peoples understood demons to be intermediary spirits occupying the undefined realms between the gods and humanity. Some regarded demons as spirits of the dead that intervened in human affairs. Later, philosophers upgraded them to the sphere of the divine: lower than the gods but higher than men. In early usage, the Greek words *daimonion* and *diamon*, from which the English word *demon* derives, meant “divine being” and referred to the lower divines while *theos* referred to the higher divines. Many ancient people did not associate all the demonic with evil.

They thought some demons did good, while others brought evil upon humanity.

Mesopotamia, by far, struggled the most to understand the demonic. They clearly associated evil with demonic entities and believed demons won power over humans when people violated religious values and prohibitions. Mesopotamians eventually characterized violations as “sins,” actions that exposed people to demonic curses and possession.

Horrified, Mesopotamians viewed their world as becoming saturated by evil spirits that supposedly worked mischief among defenseless humans. They thought demons assumed animal forms and preferred uninhabited locations: deserts, mountains, ruins, and burial places. People even associated demons with air, believing these unseen entities could arrive on strange winds from faraway lands. Nevertheless demons turned up everywhere: in homes, foodstuffs, and water containers. People eventually blamed demons for all adversities, especially personal sickness and widespread disease. Mesopotamians named their demons, hoping magic could neutralize the mayhem these unseen beings created.

Elsewhere, Egyptians assigned natural phenomena like storms and floods to the gods but were terrified of the disembodied spirits of the dead who supposedly devised a range of evil deeds against humans. Rattled, Egyptians fumigated the inward spaces of their temples and homes to chase away lingering spirits.

Like the Egyptians, eventually all peoples realized that institutional religion had no effect on demonic activity. Expedient measures were needed. Thus, talismans, amulets, spells, incantations, and exorcisms became a common, essential part of life.

OLD TESTAMENT ERA

Remarkably, the Old Testament gives little attention to demonic activity. Twice it renders the Hebrew word *shedim* as “demons” (Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37). Otherwise people either assigned supernatural phenomena to God or described them in ways that did not convey demonism. Though evil phenomena went under-explained, the Israelites did not experience the terrible sense of being occupied by demons in the same way the Mesopotamians had interpreted their experiences.

The Old Testament does affirm, though, the presence of a being that is evil personified. This was the serpent that tempted Eve in the garden. This being, Satan, brought accusations against Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7); stood in front of the angel of the Lord to accuse Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3:1); and incited David to conduct a census (1 Chron. 21:1).

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Having survived the horrendous experience of being forced from their homeland, being put into Babylonian captivity, and then living under post-exilic domination by foreigners caused the Jews to ponder the systems of evil. Many of their ideas concerning fallen angels and their leader, the prince of darkness, solidified during these

experiences and afterward. During the intertestamental period, most people believed that the world was full of supernatural agencies working for good or ill. Angels did good, and demons did evil. Satan, who had Old Testament cameo appearances, led the demons.

NEW TESTAMENT ERA

By the first century, both Jews and Gentiles had developed a greater understanding of demons. The New Testament thus depicts demons as being both powerful and pervasive. Demons appeared shortly after Jesus’s wilderness temptation (Matt. 4:24). The New Testament depicts demons tormenting humans and harassing the progress of God’s kingdom. They moved in swarms, lived among the dead, and invaded people’s lives. They caused disease and inflicted untold misery upon defenseless people.

Christ the Deliverer, though, arrived. To Him demons would powerlessly yield. Jesus talked about entering the strong man’s house, binding him, and plundering his property (Mark 3:27), a reference to His coming into the kingdom of the devil and delivering those in darkness. Thus, from Mary Magdalene, He cast out seven demons (Luke 8:2). Many times demons recognized Jesus; they knew He came to conquer them (Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24). Additionally, He gave His disciples power to “trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). Indeed throughout His ministry, Jesus showed that His authority is greater than the sum of all demonic power.

Since the first century, people have had a fascination with demons and the devil. Such interest, though, can be dangerous. Christians need not give their attention to the evil one. We can have assurance that Jesus still gives His followers victory over “the father of lies” (John 8:44) and the “cosmic powers of this darkness” (Eph. 6:12).

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