

# **The Temptations**

**Lesson**

**6**

## **TEACHER TO TEACHER**

**V**ery early this morning I felt drawn to my study to spend time praying. As I often do, I picked up an old worn Bible and turned to Psalms to begin to prepare my heart to listen. My attention first was drawn to Psalm 25:4-5 where David says:

*Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. (Psalm 25:4-5)*

David had such a heart to learn from God his Savior. What better teacher could he have? At this time in his life, David yearned to have his spiritual eyes opened to God's ways. He needed the Pathfinder, Guide, and Teacher. He placed his hope in God and trusted Him for revelation!

In Psalm 27 David prays,

*Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. (Psalm 27:11)*

David's reign as King of Israel was periodically blessed with peace. However, he spent a lot of time warring against foreign armies who threatened his country. He had, too, more than his share of conflicts with his family members, as well as with political enemies and disloyal "friends." David had learned that when he was oppressed by his enemies, he needed to again turn to his Teacher and Pathfinder. You don't want to stray from God's ways when you are threatened by the enemy.

**J**esus is referred to or addressed by the name "Teacher" approximately fifty times in the four Gospels. Just as David looked to God to be his teacher, we look to Christ and the Holy Spirit to be ours. In this lesson we turn to Jesus for instruction on how we "stay on the right path" when we are tempted by Satan's oppressive demons.

As we study a pattern for resisting the enemy modeled for us by Jesus in His wilderness temptations, I encourage you to place yourself in His shoes. Imagine being in the harsh desert environment without food—alone without human company. Somehow you know that you are enduring "make or break" tests. And your tester is not a kindly teacher who has your best interest at heart. Rather, it is your archenemy who desires nothing but your failure and destruction.

The trials are real and painfully tormenting: the temptation to take control of the situation and provide for your own needs, the temptation to force your Father to prove His love for you, and the temptation to chase after another god who seems able to give you all you desire.

I again invite you to put yourself in Jesus' shoes. Learn how He faced temptations common to us all and stayed on the path laid out for Him by His Father. Learn from your Pathfinder, Guide, and Master Teacher.

## Resisting the Enemy

## Studying the Word Together

*Against the background of the desert, mysterious, utterly isolated and infinitely remote, two figures are struggling for a huge stake.*

*Are they gambling or are they involved in a relentless battle in this solitary place? And what is the stake?*

*We know the reason of the conflict. Here in the midst of the desert far from the world of men, these two are struggling for the earth and for man. And this earth is my world and yours. And this Man—*

*is you and I. And those in conflict are God's Son and Satan.*

*—Helmut Thielicke<sup>1</sup>*

We took a brief look at Christ's wilderness temptation in Lesson Two: Spiritual Warfare is Part of Every Believer's Journey. In this lesson, I want to discuss in depth Matthew's account of the Temptations of Christ, focusing our attention on a pattern of resistance that Jesus modeled while engaged in an all-out conflict with Satan. Let's begin with some "stage-setting."

### The Temptations: Setting the Stage

Our appreciation of Jesus' pattern of resistance of the enemy can be enhanced by an understanding of our own struggles with temptation. Thielicke remarked:

*To be in temptation means to be constantly in the situation of wanting to be untrue to God. It means being constantly on the point of freeing ourselves from God. It means living constantly in doubt of God.... Thus temptation gnaws at our hearts. It brings us almost to the point of freeing ourselves from God. We doubt his godhead and begin to remember that we are but human.<sup>2</sup>*

It is important to recall that there is no sin in being tempted. Sin occurs when we yield to a temptation.

#### ► Sin and Human Nature

Next, remember that temptation does not always have origin in external factors. James tells us: "...each one is tempted when, by his own evil

desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (Jas. 1:14). It is the darkness in our own hearts—the desires of our sinful natures (Gal. 5:16)—that sets us up for temptation: our lusts, greed, jealousy, pride, etc.

Neither the serpent nor the fruit of the tree of knowledge could have swayed Eve and Adam to sin had they not already had the capacity within their human nature to desire to be like God and to doubt the truth of His Word. This capacity to choose disobedience—to rebel against God—made Satan's words seductive: "Did God really say...?" (Gen. 3:1) and "You will not surely die..." (Gen. 3:4). These words appealed to the dark side of Adam's and Eve's human nature, giving birth to doubt that led to sin.

It works the same with us. Greed is part of human nature. I might experience an evil spirit speaking to my mind saying, "Did God really say, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's'?" (Matt. 22:21). And "Surely you will not get caught by the IRS if you fail to report all of your earnings and save back some for yourself."

Finally, I want to remind you that Scripture says that Jesus was tempted but never sinned:

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*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.  
(Hebrews 4:15)*

In the human nature that Jesus adopted (Philip. 2:6-8), He was tempted. He suffered through the enticements of the enemy as do you and I. This is important because we cannot learn from Jesus to resist temptation and the enticements of the enemy if He suffered no temptation to sin.

### ► **The Affirmation of Christ**

All three Gospels place the Temptations immediately after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River at the hands of His relative John the Baptist (Luke 1:36). Matthew records the Messiah's baptism this way:

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*

*Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.*

*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17)*

Jesus certainly had heard the family stories about His birth. His very name meant Savior. By the age of twelve He knew that He had a heavenly Father (Luke 2:46). He was insistent that He be baptized by John. He considered it the righteous thing to do. It was perhaps a ceremonial cleansing, setting Him apart for service to His Father. How affirming it must have been to experience the anointing of the Holy Spirit and to hear His Father's

blessing: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." This may be the first time He knew in His heart that He truly was (and is) the Son of God. It will be the knowledge of His Sonship that Satan attacks in the Wilderness.

### ► **The Three Temptations**

Now let's turn our attention to the Temptation narrative. May I ask that you take time to carefully meditate upon the passage below before you go further?

*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*

*Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

*Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

*Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*

*(Matthew 4:1-11)*

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As you reflect upon the verses, ask yourself some questions like:

1. Why do you think the Spirit led Jesus into the solitude of the desert, away from all other people?
2. What is the likely significance of Jesus' forty-day fast? The significance of His hunger?
3. Why and how did Satan challenge Jesus' identity as the Son of God?
4. Remembering that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, to what part of Jesus' human nature do you think Satan appealed in each of the three temptations?
5. Do you see any identifiable patterns in Jesus' responses to the Tempter?

(NOTE: The Lesson 2 Commentary will provide a good review of these verses. Please don't leave this section until you are satisfied that you are completely familiar with the passage and have wrestled through the questions.)

### The Pattern of Resistance

Now it's time to consider the tactics that Satan used to tempt Jesus into sin and Jesus' pattern of resistance. We will make five observations. The first two deal with Satan's tactical approach to Jesus. The last three are reflections upon Jesus' method of resisting the Adversary—His pattern of resistance.

#### ► **First Observation: Satan attacks at an opportune time.**

The first two verses of Matthew 4 are short, but they tell us a great deal. Look at them again:

*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.*

*After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*

*(Matthew 4:1-2)*

Following His very public baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus was compelled by the Holy Spirit to seek the solitude of the desert. He goes there for a daunting purpose—to be tested by the devil. I wonder whether Jesus thought about Job's testing as He entered into His own time of trial. As it was with Job, the enemy's attacks would be very personal to Jesus. But unlike Job, Jesus would not have any human companions to comfort His suffering. To the contrary, He was led into His desert to experience a quality of quiet seclusion in a place from which human activity was generally absent.

The solitude of the desert can at once be both soul-soothing and ominous. Most of us from time to time long for a little peace and quiet—someplace away from the noisy distractions and busyness of everyday life. However, few can bear being completely quiet and alone for an extended period of time. Although solitude can make it easier for us to hear the voice of God, it also can make it easier to hear the dark voices that whisper to us from the depths of our human nature and soul.

Imagine being without human company for forty days and nights, alone in the harsh desert environment with neither shelter nor food. There can be little doubt that Jesus suffered during this period. He even might have been tormented. (Luke tells us that He was tempted by the devil for the full forty days [Luke 4:2].)

We do not know whether Satan sought permission to tempt Jesus as he did prior to attacking Job or whether God simply foreknew that Jesus would be severely tested by the devil in the desert. Whatever the case, it is apparent that Satan seized upon an opportune time to tempt Jesus. He sensed or somehow understood Jesus' vulnerability. It was a matter of timing. The evil one chose to attack the Christ when He was emotionally and physically exhausted, having little human energy to resist. He does the same with us. Satan is a good warrior. And any good warrior learns to identify his enemy's vulnerabilities and

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take advantage of them. As Sun Tsu said in *The Art of War*: “Force [your enemy] to reveal himself, so as to find his vulnerable spots.”<sup>3</sup>

► **Second Observation:**  
**Satan takes advantage of that part of our human nature that wants to doubt God and His Word.**

We don't know what thoughts Jesus had—what conversations He had with Himself—while He wandered alone in the desert. However, in both verse 3 and 6 Satan says to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God...” This is a conditional phrase and it infers doubt. It reminds me of Satan's words to Eve in the Garden: “Did God really say...?”

Is it possible that in His time of suffering Jesus thought about those wonderful words He heard immediately after being baptized: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”? Do you suppose that in a weakened human state, He might have asked Himself, “Did I really hear that?” Or might He have asked Himself, “Did God really say that I was His Son?”

Doubt is the antithesis of faith. And Satan often seems to either appeal to the doubt innate in our human nature or to entice us into mistrusting that which we have previously believed to be true. He apparently did so with Jesus and he does so with us.

► **Third Observation:**  
**We must choose to resist temptation.**

In each of the three temptation scenarios, Jesus made a conscious decision to resist the seductive ploys of the enemy. He discerned the enemy's lies, chose the truth, and acted upon His faith in God and His Word to stand up to Satan.

In the first test Satan appeals to Jesus' physical hunger and suggests that He might

soothe the gnawing pain in His stomach by stepping into His “glory” or His Sonship and turning some stones into bread.

*...he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (Matthew 4:2-3)*

Reading between the lines we can almost hear Satan suggesting, “Aren't You God's beloved Son? Why doesn't Your Father feed You? Why has He stranded you here in this desolate place without food?” These kinds of questions might have been posed in order to subtly and falsely suggest that the Father does not really love the Son and, therefore, will not dependably provide for His needs. (Have you ever heard someone say, “God would not let this happen to me if He really loved me”?) After forty days and nights without food and weary from battling the stark conditions of the desert, Jesus essentially is challenged by Satan to:

1. Doubt His Sonship or mistrust His Father's love
2. Become self-reliant and provide for Himself

Can you feel the confusion and conflict? If He is the Son of God, He can certainly perform the miracle. But if He is the Son of God, He must trust His Father for provision. He can't do both. If He is not the Son of God, He cannot miraculously transform the stones into bread.

Jesus now comes to the fork in the road—to the point of decision. He must make a choice. To reach a point of decision, He recalls Moses' message to the Hebrews in the midst of their wilderness:

*He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 8:3)*

Jesus chose to allow this truth to dispel the lies ministered to Him by Satan.



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In the second Temptation of Christ, Satan again tries to spin doubt in Jesus' mind and craftily uses Scripture to try and confuse the Lord.

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"* (Matthew 4:5-6)

Again the devil challenges Jesus' Sonship: "If you are the Son of God..." But by quoting Psalm 91:11-12 (v. 6) he also seems to call into question how truly trusting Jesus is of His Father's loving care.

Again coming to the point of decision, Jesus decides to set aside any doubts that He might have had and chooses to place His faith in the complete Word of God, refusing to force the Father to prove His love and care for the Son with the test proposed by the devil. Once more, Jesus sets aside any doubt and stands upon the truth of Deuteronomy 6:16:

*Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* (Matthew 4:7)

The full text from Deuteronomy underscores the point and demonstrates the basis of Jesus' submissive obedience to His Father's instructions:

*Do not test the Lord your God as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you...as the Lord said.*  
(Deuteronomy 6:16-19)

It should not be surprising that we find a similar pattern of resistance in the third temptation.

*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their*

*splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."* (Matthew 4:8-9)

Permit me to stretch your imagination by injecting some additional dialogue into that provided by Matthew. I can imagine Satan saying something like this: "Look, Jesus, I know that you gave up your glory to become a man (Philip. 2:6-7); your Father will never let you have it back. But let me tell you what I can do for you. I am the prince of this world and I will give you all of these kingdoms to rule as you like. You can accomplish all of the good for mankind that you have dreamed of. Simply turn your back on God; become the master of your own destiny—the captain of your own soul. You can have it all." (This very lie of Satan finds a home in the minds of many in our Western culture.)

Again Jesus finds Himself at a time of decision. As before, He chooses God's truth, allowing His faith to rest in His confidence in the reliability of God's written Word. He says,

*"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"* (Matthew 4:10)

Jesus quotes from the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy again. Look at the text in its context.

*Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.*  
(Deuteronomy 6:13-15)

In all three temptation scenarios, we observe Jesus:

1. Confronting any doubt present in His human nature to which Satan might have appealed
2. Discerning lies
3. Choosing to trust God and placing faith in the written Word

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### ► **Fourth Observation: We declare aloud the truth from God's Word.**

In each of the three temptation scenes, Jesus speaks aloud the truth of the written Word to Satan. In Matthew 4:4 He says, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" In verse 7 He says, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Then He declares in verse 10, "For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" In faith, Jesus stood against the enemy and declared aloud to Satan the truth of the Word.

Satan is not omniscient. He cannot read our minds. Therefore, it seems necessary to declare the truth of God's Word aloud to the evil one and to his army of demons.

### ► **Fifth Observation: We command demons to depart from us in the Name and Authority of Jesus, the Christ.**

Finally, Jesus instructed Satan to depart from Him. He said in Matthew 4:10, "Away from me, Satan!" This is a matter of house cleaning (Luke 11:26). Satan and the demons were subject to Christ and had to obey His commands. They must obey ours as well when we dismiss them in the Name of Jesus. We might say to an evil spirit that has been harassing us, "I command you to depart from me in the Name of Jesus, the Christ. I further command you to go where the Holy Spirit sends you, never to return."

### **Application Ideas and Questions**

What have you learned as you studied the Temptations of Christ?

I hope you learned that Satan has a habit of attacking us at opportune times. He attacks at times when we are vulnerable. I also hope you learned that the evil one usually appeals to the darkness in our human nature—our sinful nature. He lies to us in ways that stir the doubt that is part of our sinful nature, hoping to lead us into sin.

AND—I trust that you learned that Jesus modeled for believers a way to resist the enemy. He taught us by example to:

1. Confront any doubt present in our sinful human nature to which Satan might have appeal.
2. Discern lies that may have become part of our thinking process.
3. Choose to trust God and place faith in the written Word.
4. Declare God's Word aloud.
5. In Jesus' Name, command evil spirits to immediately depart from us and to go where the Holy Spirit sends them.

As you continue to prepare to teach, you might consider these reflection questions:

1. At what times am I personally most vulnerable to demonic attacks? When I am tired, depressed, angry, confused?
2. In what areas am I most prone to doubt God or the truth of His Word?
3. How well have I learned to discern demonic lies in my thinking process?
4. How versed am I in the truth of Scripture, particularly where the Bible addresses the areas in which I am most vulnerable?
5. Has there been a time when you have used the "pattern of resistance" taught in this lesson to counter an attack of the evil one? Are you willing to share the experience with your Bible Fellowship?

<sup>1</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *Between God and Satan* (translated by C. C. Barber), copyright © 1958 by Longman Group Limited. Reprinted 1980 by Baker Book House Company with permission of copyright holder in *A Thielicke Trilogy: Between God and Satan, The Silence of God, Out of the Depths*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Sun Tsu, *The Art of War*, Dover edition. Translated from the Chinese by Lionel Giles; published in 2002 by Dover Publications, Mineola, NY, p. 62.

# Commentary

## ELEMENTS OF A FULLY DEVELOPED TEMPTATION NARRATIVE

*The information in this Commentary is adapted and summarized from the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, copyright © 1998 by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA.*

**T**he conflict between good and evil is present throughout Scripture, beginning with Satan tempting Eve and Adam in the Garden and ending in Revelation with Satan being cast eternally into the “lake of fire.” Numerous biblical temptation stories reflect the God at war with Satan motif or theme.

At its most basic level, temptation is a testing of a person. In each test the one tempted is called upon to make a choice that in some way gives shape to his or her identity and future destiny.

In a completely developed temptation story there is a confluence of predictable ingredients. These include:

1. Two principle actors: a subtle tempter and the victim of temptation who is often weak-willed and easily deceived
2. Action that consists of a:
  - a. Process through which the tempter entices or lures the victim into sin
  - b. Process by which the victim deals with the enticement
  - c. Final closure in which the victim resists the tempter or commits the forbidden act (sin)

**T**he most familiar biblical temptation narrative is, of course, the story of Eve’s and Adam’s temptation that ultimately leads to the Fall (Gen. 3:1-7). It contains all of the essential ingredients of the archetypal temptation event:

1. Satan subtly engenders doubt and confusion in Eve’s mind by calling into question God’s instruction to avoid eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

(Gen. 3:1); Satan contradicts God’s promise of death for disobedience (Gen. 3:4); Satan gives Eve reasons for desiring the fruit (Gen. 3:5).

2. Eve weakens, exaggerates God’s prohibition (“neither shall you touch it” [Gen. 3:3]), and gives three reasons for eating the fruit (Gen. 3:6).
3. Eve gives in to the temptation and eats the fruit and offers a bite to Adam, who also eats (Gen. 3:6).

**T**he Temptations of Christ provide a New Testament counterpart to the story of Adam and Eve’s struggle with Satan and serve as a prototype for other New Testament temptation stories. The second Adam, Jesus, undoes what the first Adam did by resisting Satan and stealing final victory from him. In the story of Jesus’ wilderness temptation the usual ingredients again are present: a subtle tempter who can quote Scripture to advance his own agenda, a back-and-forth volley in which the “victim” thwarts the “tempter,” and a closure marked by Satan stealing away from the battlefield to wait for another opportune time to strike.

Other completely developed biblical temptation stories in this biblical genre come quickly to mind:

1. Potiphar’s wife, the archetypal seductress who tempts Joseph to engage in sexual sin; Joseph resists the temptation but loses his standing in Potiphar’s household (Gen. 39:6-20)
2. The naive “young man without sense” of Proverbs 7:7 (RSV) who, after an elaborate invitation from an adventuresome adulteress, “at once ...

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follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter” (Prov. 7:22, RSV)

3. The story of Samson and Delilah (Judges 16), based on a three-plus-one pattern in which the intended victim resists the temptation three times, but then tragically succumbs

In addition to the above examples of temptation stories controlled by a tempter who seems to direct the action, we can find briefer versions where the common pattern is for the victim to be tempted by circumstances and inner desires rather than an external agent of temptation. Stories involving sexual temptation are one example.

1. In the familiar story of David and Bathsheba, Bathsheba does not have to make a play for David in order to be the occasion of his sexual temptation. Naked beauty is enough to propel the mechanisms of inner temptation forward for the sexually aroused David (2 Sam. 11).
2. Judah (Gen. 38) and Samson (Judges 14:5-16:1) are additional examples of males who are driven by their own desires when confronted with feminine attractiveness and fall easy prey to sexual temptation. The antidote to such behavior is faithful marriage: “Because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2, RSV).

The largest category of self-tempted characters in the Bible is those who find the appeals of materialism irresistible and who accordingly succumb to greed. The first in this group starts when Lot is tempted to choose the material prosperity represented by the well-watered Jordan valley, at the price of spiritual compromise (Gen. 13). The roll call of characters tempted by the greed for money and goods includes: Achan (Jos. 7); Ahab in the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21); the rich young ruler who “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (Matt. 19:22); the rich farmer of Jesus' parable who succumbed to the temptation to lay up treasure for himself instead of being “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21); Judas in his betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver; and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). No wonder Paul says that “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction” (1 Tim. 6:9).

Ambition can also tempt the mighty who are greedy for power and leadership. As examples we have: King Saul (1 Sam. 15), Absalom (2 Sam. 15:1-12), and Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:22).

False worship, false teaching, and the urge for self-protection also can entice a person to sin.

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#### RESOURCES NEEDED:

- ◆ 2-sided copies of Lesson Notes / Take-Home pages
- ◆ Pencils or pens for each person
- ◆ Dry erase markers and marker board or felt tip markers and a flip chart

#### TIMEFRAME:

- ◆ 35 minutes

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## Suggested Lesson Plan

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** This *suggested* lesson plan contains many elements that, if employed, will help maximize learning for life-change in your Bible Fellowship. If you are an experienced teacher, you have freedom to create your own plan based upon the “Studying the Word Together” section. If you are less experienced, we suggest that you “stick to the plan.” However, even less-experienced teachers should feel free to modify the plan based upon the needs of your Bible Fellowship. This plan is designed to be presented in 35 minutes. It is important, therefore, that you carefully plan your presentation so that you communicate the main points with brevity and clarity.

#### Important Scripture References:

- ◆ Matthew 3:13-17
- ◆ Matthew 4:1-11

#### Teaching Goals:

- ◆ **Learn:** Bible Fellowship members learn the five-step “pattern of resistance” for dealing with temptation
- ◆ **Experience:** Bible Fellowship members receive encouragement from one another not to be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness (Heb. 3:13)

#### Before Class Begins:

- ◆ Distribute handouts

#### STEP ONE: GETTING READY TO LEARN (8 MINUTES)

- ◆ *The Affirmation of Christ:* Ask your Bible Fellowship to divide into groups of three to four people.
  1. Ask one person in each group to read Matthew 3:13-17 (on handout) aloud.
  2. Invite each group to discuss the following questions (on handout):
    - a. If you had been Jesus, how would you have felt after hearing God say, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”?
    - b. Do you think that this was the first time Jesus was fully convinced that He was the Son of God? Why or why not?

#### STEP TWO: THE TEMPTATIONS: SETTING THE STAGE (5 MINUTES)

- Use the material found on pages 6-2 through 6-4 to prepare for this section.
- ◆ Tell your group that today’s lesson examines how temptation occurs and how we can resist and defeat it.
  - ◆ *Sin and Human Nature:* Remind them that temptation can originate from external or internal sources and that our human nature makes us vulnerable to temptation. Yet Jesus, when tempted to indulge His own human nature, did not sin.

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- ◆ **The Affirmation of Christ:** Mention that all three Gospels place Jesus' temptation in the desert immediately following His affirmation that they have just discussed.
- ◆ **The Three Temptations:** Read Matthew 4:1-11 to your group. (Note: Scripture on Handout includes bracketed Old Testament passages from which Jesus drew His responses. Let them know that they may look up the references later for their own study, if they so desire.) Encourage your classmates to "think deeper" about the passage by briefly sharing your opinion regarding answers to one or two of the following questions. Encourage them to think through the questions for themselves.
  1. Why do you think the Spirit lead Jesus into the solitude of the desert, away from all other people?
  2. What is the likely significance of Jesus' forty-day fast? Of His hunger?
  3. Why and how did Satan challenge Jesus' identity as the Son of God?
  4. Remembering that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, to what part of Jesus' human nature do you think Satan appealed in each of the three temptations?

### STEP THREE: THE PATTERN OF RESISTANCE (17 MINUTES)

Use the material found on pages 6-4 through 6-7 to prepare for this section.

- ◆ Explain to your group that the objective for this lesson is to identify the "pattern of resistance" to temptation that Jesus has modeled for us in this passage.
- ◆ Briefly explain each of the following observations. As you explain the concepts within the observations, ask your group to think about a time when they may have found the observations to be true in their own experience. Model vulnerability for

your classmates by sharing some of your own experiences that illustrate the truth of these statements.

1. **First Observation: Satan attacks at an opportune time.** Consider sharing what times seem to be Satan's favorites to harass or distract you.
2. **Second Observation: Satan takes advantage of that part of our human nature that wants to doubt God and His Word.** What area of your belief system does Satan most often attempt to derail? Might it encourage your group to know that they are not alone in their struggles with doubt?
3. **Third Observation: We must choose to resist temptation.** What Scriptures have enabled you to return your focus to God's truth so that you can resist the temptation and defeat the enemy?
4. **Forth Observation: We declare aloud the truth from God's Word.** Is the verbal declaration of truth against the enemy a new concept for you or is it something you have practiced regularly?
5. **Fifth Observation: We command demons to depart from us in the Name and Authority of Jesus, the Christ.** What does it do to your heart to realize the power that you may exercise in Jesus' Name on behalf of yourself and your loved ones? Celebrate with your group!

### STEP FOUR: APPLICATION AND CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

- ◆ Refer your group to the closing exercise on their handout where they will find the five steps in the "pattern of resistance." However, the steps are listed in the incorrect order. Ask them to place a number between 1 and 5 to designate the correct order of the steps.

## Lesson 6

### The Temptations

Notes 

# Resisting the Enemy

- ◆ Read the correct answer to your group:
  - 2 Satan takes advantage of that part of our human nature that wants to doubt God and His Word.
  - 5 We command demons to depart from us in the Name and Authority of Jesus, the Christ.
  - 4 We declare aloud the truth from God's Word
  - 1 Satan attacks at an opportune time.
  - 3 We must choose to resist temptation.
- ◆ Ask each person to identify when they believe themselves to be most

vulnerable to Satan (e.g., when they are tired, angry, depressed; when things are going well).

- ◆ Then ask them to share their vulnerability with one other person and encourage each other using the pattern sentence (on handout) below:

*I am confident that you will be able to resist the enemy and make him flee from you, even when you are most vulnerable. I pray that the Lord will sustain you in your vulnerability and that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you the truth of God's Word that you can use to defeat the enemy's deceptive schemes and not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Heb. 3:13).*

# Resisting the Enemy

## Today in My Bible Fellowship

### Lesson 6

#### The Temptations

#### The Affirmation of Christ

1. If you had been Jesus, how would you have felt after hearing God say, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased"?
2. Do you think that this was the first time Jesus was fully convinced that He was the Son of God? Why or why not?

#### The Temptations of Christ

As you reflect upon Jesus' temptations in the Matthew 4 passage, consider the following questions:

1. Why do you think the Spirit led Jesus into the solitude of the desert, away from all other people?
2. What is the likely significance of Jesus' forty-day fast? Of His hunger?
3. Why and how did Satan challenge Jesus' identity as the Son of God?
4. Remembering that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, to what part of Jesus' human nature do you think Satan appealed in each of the three temptations?

#### The Pattern of Resistance

Place a number from 1 to 5 in the blanks below to designate the correct order of the steps.

- \_\_\_ Satan takes advantage of that part of our human nature that wants to doubt God and His Word.
- \_\_\_ We command demons to depart from us in the Name and Authority of Jesus, the Christ.
- \_\_\_ We declare aloud the truth from God's Word
- \_\_\_ Satan attacks at an opportune time.
- \_\_\_ We must choose to resist temptation.

#### Facing My Temptations

Reflect upon the following questions, then mutually share your answer to question one with another person in your Bible Fellowship. Pray for each other, using the prayer below as a model.

1. At what times am I personally most vulnerable to demonic attacks? When I am tired, depressed, angry, confused?
2. In what areas am I most prone to doubt God or the truth of His Word?
3. How well have I learned to discern demonic lies in my thinking process?
4. How versed am I in the truth of Scripture, particularly where the Bible addresses the areas in which I am most vulnerable?
5. Has there been a time when I have used the "pattern of resistance" taught in this lesson to counter an attack of the evil one?

*I am confident that you will be able to resist the enemy and make him flee from you, even when you are most vulnerable. I pray that the Lord will sustain you in your vulnerability and that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you the truth of God's Word that you can use to defeat the enemy's deceptive schemes and not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Heb. 3:13).*

#### Today's Scriptures

**Matthew 3:13-17:** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

**Matthew 4:1-11:** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" [cf. Deut. 8:3].

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone'" [cf. Ps. 91:11-12].

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" [cf. Deut. 16:16-19].

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" [cf. Deut 6:13-15].

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

**Next Week's Lesson:**  
**How We Become Vulnerable to Satan**

**Daily Reflections**

**B**egin each daily reflection by meditating a few minutes on the suggested Scripture passage. Seek to listen to the Holy Spirit as He speaks to you. Then consider the comments and questions about the passage. Be aware of both your thoughts and your feelings. Respond to God through both.

**Monday:** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)*

Temptation always leads us to a point of decision. We must choose to resist temptation or to succumb to sin. What does it do to your heart to know that you have a Lord who struggled to the point of decision with every temptation, but always chose to resist rather than succumb to sin? Express your heart feelings to Him—whatever they are.

**Tuesday:** *...Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.... The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:1-4)*

When faced with our preservation needs—the things we need for survival—we must make a decision about who we will trust for our provision. Will we trust God or will we trust ourselves? As a child of the God Who is Love, do you trust Him to provide for your needs, relying only on yourself to be a good steward of His provision? Share your heart with Him.

**Wednesday:** *... the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Matthew 4:5-7)*

At the center of this temptation is whether we will choose, by faith, to trust God's love for us or whether we will succumb to the temptation to try to force Him to prove His love for us. Where do you stand on this issue? Does anything need to change for you regarding this issue? Talk it over with Him.

**Thursday:** *... the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world.... "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (Matthew 4:8-11)*

The question is simple and straightforward. Do you choose to worship God and God alone? Or have you chosen to share your worship with other gods: self, another person, materialism, work, an addictive drug or behavior? Rejoice in the One True God. Confess what needs to be confessed and ask for a godly sorrow that will lead to repentance.

**Friday:** *Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan.... Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (Matthew 4:10-11)*

Jesus promised that we will never be tempted beyond what we can bear and that He will always provide a way of escape that we can choose. We can choose to resist demons and their enticements and, in the Name of Jesus, command the tempters to depart from us and they must obey. Express your gratitude to Christ for the privilege of rebuking and overcoming evil spirits in His Name!

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