

Overcoming Temptation

(Lessons from the Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness)

"When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time." Luke 4:13 NLT

- *Is life a struggle? Are you tired of battling life's problems? Do you believe in a literal devil? Could there be behind-the-scene spiritual reasons for life's conflicts?*



People struggle with temptation in many different ways - drug addiction, alcohol, pornography, gambling, shoplifting, over-eating, infidelity, same-sex attraction, lying, anger, etc. But there is good news - we CAN overcome temptation with Godly weapons.

The Central Lesson:

We all face temptation - but we can win with Godly weapons.

1. The Devil is **REAL** and Has Some Authority on Earth (4:2-13).

"2...he [Jesus] was tempted by the devil for forty days..." "6 ...they [the world kingdoms] are mine...."

Some people do not believe in a literal devil. They claim he is just folklore or symbolism. But the Bible records that he is real. He is the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), and the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). He has **limited rule** over the present world order.

2. Everyone Experiences Temptation from the Devil, Even the **MOST** Spiritual (4:2).

"...he [Jesus] was tempted by the devil for forty days...."

If Jesus was tempted by the devil, then we will not escape his attacks. Every Christian experiences the attacks of the devil - and more often than we realize.

3. Experiencing Temptation Is NOT a Sin, **YIELDING** to Temptation Is the Sin (4:1-2).

"1 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where he [Jesus] was tempted by the devil for forty days...."

Experiencing temptation is NOT a sin. Proof of this is seen in the fact that Jesus, who was without sin, also experienced temptation. Sin is committed ONLY when we YIELD to temptation.

4. Following the Leading of the Holy Spirit May Expose Us to the **GREATEST** Opposition of the Devil (4:1).

"1 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where he [Jesus] was tempted by the devil for forty days...."

The more we are devoted to God and serve Him, the greater threat we become to Satan and his schemes. Don't be surprised when you face greater difficulty when trying to do the most for God and His Kingdom. That is just a sign that you are making the devil upset, and God happy.

5. The Devil Often Tempts Us When We Are the **WEAKEST** (4:2).

"...Jesus ate nothing all that time [40 days] and became very hungry."

Jesus had not eaten during the 40 days of temptation. He was physically at his weakest point when Satan tempted him. The devil even tried to use Jesus' hunger against him. Satan said, *"...If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread."* (4:3). But Jesus rejected the temptation. In the same way, Satan will often attack us when we are at our weakest point. He will attack when we are tired, confused, disappointed, discouraged, sick, being criticized, etc.

6. The Devil's Temptation Is Rarely Ugly, But Usually the Most **ATTRACTIVE** and Appealing Things in Life (4:3, 5-7, 9-11).

We have record of Satan making three offers to Jesus. There may have been many others during the 40 days, but only three are recorded. All three were **attractive, appealing** offers: (1.) End the 40 day fast and hunger with rocks being turned into bread (4:3). (2.) Worship the devil and receive the glory of the world kingdoms which are under the devil's authority (4:6-7). (3.) Jump off the top of the Temple and manifest divine intervention and God's protective glory (4:9-11). All of these temptations are **attractive, yet sinful**. They would cause Jesus to give obedience to Satan over the will and plan of God. In the same way, Satan will try to lure us into sin with temptation that is **attractive and appealing**.

7. The Devil Will Use **DISTORTIONS** of the Bible and Religion to Manipulate People (4:9-11).

"9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, 'If you are the Son of God, jump off! 10 For the Scripture say, 'He will order his angels to protect and guard you.'"

Twice Jesus defeated the Devil's temptation by quoting scripture (4:4, 8). Now the Devil quoted Scripture to Jesus, citing Psalm 91:11-12 that assures God's people of His protection.

8. The Devil Is Always Looking for the **NEXT** Opportunity to Tempt Us (4:13).

"When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came."

9. We Can Overcome Temptation by Following the **EXAMPLE** of Jesus (4:4, 8, 12).

- **ANCHOR** Ourselves in God's Word - Like Jesus, quote scriptures to combat temptation.

"But Jesus told him, 'No! The Scriptures say....'" (4:4). "Jesus replied, 'The Scriptures say....'" (4:8). "Jesus responded, 'The Scriptures also say....'" (4:12).

This is one of the reasons scripture memorization is important. Some of my favorite Bible passages I often quote when I sense I am under attack - Galatians 5:16-17, 22-23; James 4:7-8; 1 John 4:4; Proverbs 3:5-6.

- **RESIST** the Devil by Telling Him **"NO!"**

"But Jesus told him, 'No! The Scriptures say....'" (4:4).

- **Remain DEVOTED** to God

"Jesus replied, 'The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'" (4:8).

- **Stand FIRM** in the Authority of Christ (see James 4:4).

"'Get out of here, Satan,' Jesus told him...." (Matthew 4:10)

CONCLUSION

We all face temptation - but we can win with Godly weapons.

- ▶ Receive Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ.
- ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.