

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

5

RESISTING TEMPTATION: JESUS' EXAMPLE IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Matthew 3:13—4:11

By Elizabeth B. Crawford

“All that the devil asks is acquiescence...not struggle, not conflict. Acquiescence.”
Suzanne Massie

“The power of all temptation is the prospect that it will make me happier.”
John Piper

“When a man listens to the voice of the tempter within him, he is inclined to do as others do, not to resist when temptation seems great. But when he looks into the laws of God, and hears the words of Christ, his natural sense of right and wrong is restored to him, and he becomes elevated, purified, and sanctified.”
Benjamin Jowett

AIM OF STUDY

- To learn how to resist Satan's efforts to tempt us to sin by examining Jesus' encounter with the tempter.

KEY VERSES

"...It is written...."

Matthew 4: 4, 7 & 10

PREPARATION

Read over the notes on "**how to teach the Bible in small group**" and "**some practical suggestions for leading a small group discussion**" in Vineyard Church of Columbus' *Small Group Leadership Training Manual*. Before you read over the Scripture, pray that God would give you direction for leading your group and teach you something relevant. Then read the passage and the Bible study below. **You will need to go over the questions and choose which ones you want to emphasize and which you could eliminate if your time is limited.** Note that the application questions are marked with an asterisk (*). Rather than leaving these to the end of the study, ask one or two as you work through the passage so people are being confronted by Scripture's truths and applying them to their own lives. If you find you are falling behind schedule and need to move ahead, you could summarize some of the passage and then go to the final questions.

These studies contain more background material and information on the passages than any group will cover in a meeting. The authors are providing this for the leaders' benefit—to help reduce your study and preparation time; to help resource you for possible questions group members may raise; and to clarify some gray areas of doctrine that may be in your mind as you prepare. Obviously we cannot exhaust any one subject in a document like this, so you may want to do further reading and discuss doctrine with your pastor. We highly recommend *The New Bible Dictionary* or *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* as excellent resources for study.

For this particular study, you may want to **copy** the page of Scripture references at the end of the study to hand out as a follow-up tool. You could also bring a 3 x 5 index card for each member. Copying down one helpful Scripture on the card and carrying it with them could assist in memorizing a verse.

Note: Because of the topic of this study, you want to be clear in your mind what the difference is between God testing people's faith and the devil, the world, or our own sinful desires tempting us to sin. Here is a preliminary overview.

Temptation

The Bible tells us the sources of our temptations (Manser et al, pp. 394-395).

1. James clearly states that God does **not tempt** us to do evil (Jas. 1:13). God may **test** us in order to strengthen or prove the depth of our faith. But God's purpose is always that we would overcome tests by turning in faith to Jesus Christ and relying on His Spirit and Word. God is not trying to cause us to fail the test and fall into sin (Keener, p. 138). James says that we are tempted when our own evil desires lead us away [from God]. When we entertain those desires instead of resisting them, we conceive and give birth to sin—in our minds, hearts or actions (Jas. 1:13-15).
2. John warns us about the temptations in the world, the values of our materialistic, secular culture, that promotes self-indulgence and independence from God (1 John 2:15-16).
3. Peter describes people who try to lure Christians away from the truth of God's word to believe and do evil (2 Pet. 2:18).
4. Finally, Scripture attributes some of our temptations to the devil, when he attempts to incite people to sin (1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 4:3; Acts 5:3). The devil desires that Christians and unbelievers alike fail miserably in moral, relational, physical and spiritual trials so that people would feel disconnected or distant from and utterly alone or abandoned by God. If he can stand by and watch people completely ignore God, no doubt that would be acceptable, too.

Sin

The Bible tells us when sin entered human history.

The devil appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden and succeeded in undermining her trust in God in three significant ways. He raised doubts about:

1. Whether she could believe in the goodness of God
2. Whether she could trust the truthfulness of God's words
3. Whether she could trust God's will

Eve and Adam doubted and disobeyed, breaking their harmonious relationship of trust and reliance on God. And humans have struggled with these same issues ever since.

OPENERS

Temptation. When I say that word, what comes in your **mind**? Do you see decadent chocolate desserts, a reality television show, sleek new sports cars racing down a winding road, slot machines with people giving it "just one more try", or an off-limits TV channel or Web site?

Invite a few group members to share their thoughts, though ask them to do so in a way that won't divulge something that would cause other group members to stumble.

Temptation. When you hear that word, what do you **feel**? Guilt, shame, or pleasure? Self-hatred for falling into a destructive pattern again? Disgust for others who don't have the moral backbone to resist some addictive behavior?

Note: Go on to the next paragraph, since stopping here might be too embarrassing.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines *temptation* as "enticement" and *to tempt* as "to entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain." Scripture tells us that it is something every human being experiences as part of our less than perfect world:

No temptation has seized you except that which is common to [hu]man[s]
1 Corinthians 10:13a

If temptation is something we all face, then we might develop an attitude of "why fight it—it's inevitable!" What excuses do we use to justify ourselves when we don't resist the devil or our sinful desires?

Ask group members to share one that first comes to mind. You may hear comments like these:

- Jesus died to forgive all my sins, so He'll forgive me this time, too.
- This one bite/sip/peek/minute... won't harm me.
- I can quit after just one.
- Nobody is going to get hurt.
- Nobody will know.
- Just looking doesn't cost anything....
- If men and women in the Bible fell into temptation, then why should we expect to be any different?
- Doesn't the Bible say we are all born with a tendency towards sin?

The problem with such excuses is that once we entertain the sinful desire/idea and begin to justify our actions, we are probably not going to stop and reverse course. Also, some of these rationalizations are taking for granted Jesus' thirty years of perfect obedience and the unjust, horrific death which He endured to save us. Scripture warns us not to presume on God's free gift of saving and transforming us referred to as grace (Rom. 2:4; Rom. 6:1-4; Heb. 6:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:13-19; 2 Pet. 2:20-21). We dare not act as if grace were a debit card we can charge against His heavenly bank account!

Jesus did die to pay for our sin and offers forgiveness for us. But the story doesn't end there. The Bible is full of promises and hope for those who live in Christ and desire victory over the siren calls of our flesh, the world, others, and the devil. Today we'll look at how Jesus fought the devil's schemes so that we can imitate Him and find grace and freedom in this war.

Pray together that God would graciously reveal to each person the lies they have believed when they fall into temptation and then sinful behaviors.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Matthew was a Jew who collected taxes for the Roman government occupying Israel at that time (Matt. 9:9-13). Because the tax collectors worked for Rome, and often demanded both high taxes and a surplus for personal gain, these men were viewed as traitors by fellow Jews and considered “sinners” by the Pharisees (Matt. 9:10-11). When Jesus called Matthew to become a disciple, Matthew left his secular job and threw a banquet where Jesus dined with all his “sinful” friends. Matthew apparently wrote his account of Jesus’ life with a distinctively Jewish flavor since he continually stressed the fulfillment of the kingdom of God; quoted over sixty Old Testament passages; often avoided using the name of God as reverent Jews would (e.g. “kingdom of heaven”; “Son of Man”); explained the true meaning of the Law; and often referred to the Messiah. Matthew was also concerned with the theme of discipleship and addressed issues that might assist first century churches such as leadership, church discipline, and the end times. He wrote to strengthen the Jewish believers in Christ as well as to evangelize Jews and Gentiles alike.

God’s plan to rescue and restore humans to His original purposes for them leapt ahead around 27 B.C. Two remarkable young men, related through their mothers, announced the invasion of God’s kingdom power and ways. Zechariah, the father of the first messenger, was told that he and his wife would have a son in their old age in answer to their prayers. He would be named John, and would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. He would call many Jews back to God through preaching repentance and then baptize them indicating a desire for change. He would have the privilege of preparing the faithful for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:5-17). The second messenger was God Himself, in the flesh, Jesus Christ.

Our passage opens with John baptizing the people willing to repent and confess their sins. As John baptizes, he also announces that someone else would be coming to further the kingdom of God. This person would not baptize with water but with the Holy Spirit and fire—symbols of God’s indwelling and judgment (Luke 3:1-18). Jesus, John’s relative, appears with the crowd who are humbly turning back to God. This was a puzzling first step in Jesus’ public ministry. Instead of starting in Jerusalem, the political and religious center of the country, Jesus traveled away from the crowds to the Jordan River, blended in with those confessing sin, and then went into the desert for forty days.

STUDY THE PASSAGE: Matthew 3:13—4:11

Read Matthew 3:13-17. Ask someone to read this section aloud while the group reads along silently.

1. Why did Jesus come to John the Baptist (v. 13)?

Jesus came to John to be baptized along with others who were confessing their sins and repenting, i.e., turning back toward God (3:6,11). Although

Jesus did not need to confess any sin, He chose to identify with those He came to save (Phil. 2:6-8; Heb. 2:14,17). He lowered Himself to be counted among the sinful—rather than insisting on His status as “the Holy One of God” or equal with God (Mark 1:24; Phil. 2:6).

2. Who might have deterred Jesus from obeying God’s will that He be baptized (v. 14)?

John tried to deter Jesus from being baptized. When Jesus appeared among those asking for baptism, John hesitated but we do not know why for certain. Some think John knew that Jesus was the One greater than He that would come after him. Thus, John wouldn’t want to minister mere water baptism to his Messiah but rather be baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Others believe John didn’t know that Jesus was the Messiah until after Jesus had been baptized and the Father had sent the Holy Spirit to rest on Jesus (John 1:31-34). Thus, John might have been hesitating because of some respect for or vague awareness of Jesus’ godly life. However, John’s mother, Elizabeth, and Jesus’ mother, Mary, were relatives (Luke 1:39-56), so John probably had heard about the miracles surrounding his own birth as well as Jesus’. He may have known the prophecies about Jesus saving God’s people from their sins (Matt. 1:20-21, Luke 1:30-33). Also, though John was truly a great prophet, filled with the Holy Spirit from conception, he must have known the limits of his flesh, and perhaps longed for more of God’s presence and power in his own life. When this relative appeared with the repentant, John may have realized that Jesus had no need to repent and confess sin (Carson, *Matthew*, p.107). Whatever John knew, he seemed eager for Jesus to baptize him instead of vice versa.

***Why did Jesus undergo water baptism (v. 15)?**

Jesus replied that humbling Himself in baptism was to “fulfill all righteousness.” Matthew uses the word *righteousness* to refer to conforming to God’s will (Bonnard, cited in Carson, *Matthew*, p.107). So, Jesus was being obedient to what the Father had told Him to do (John 5:19-20). Also, Jesus identified with those He came to save by going through their experiences—without sinning (Heb. 2:14,17). Rather than remaining aloof or separated from sinners, like the Pharisees, Jesus lived among broken but honest people who recognized their need for God’s forgiveness.

2. What happened after Jesus humbled Himself (vv. 16-17)?

After Jesus came up out of the water, He experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the affirmation of God the Father. When Matthew wrote, “heaven was opened,” he used words similar to Isaiah (Is. 64:1) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1) when they had visions of God (Carson, p. 109). Keener believes this could also indicate a revelation of God, which could mean Matthew

wanted us to view this as an objective experience—not just something in Jesus’ mind/imagination (pp. 132-134).

Then, Jesus “saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.” Matthew does not necessarily mean Jesus or John saw a real bird fly down. Some think the Spirit descended gently—as a dove might land. However, the dove could symbolize a new period in God’s saving work, just as the dove in Gen. 8:8-12 returned to Noah with an olive leaf signaling a new chapter in God’s relating to humankind (Keener, pp. 132-133). For whatever reason Matthew used a dove image, he wants us to understand that Jesus was anointed by God’s Spirit for the next phase of His life—His public ministry.

However, this outpouring was not the first time Jesus had experienced the Spirit of God, since He was God from all eternity (John 1:1). Likewise, He was divine at every moment from conception onward while taking on human likeness (Matt. 1:18,20-21; Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:14). Although He emptied Himself of His divine powers while ministering on earth (Phil. 2:7; Carson, p. 113) and seems not to have relied on divine traits such as being all-knowing (Matt. 24:36) or all sufficient (hungry—Luke 4:2; tired and thirsty—John 4:6-7), we believe the Holy Spirit remained in Him. Therefore, we don’t interpret this outpouring of the Holy Spirit as Jesus’ initial experience of the Spirit, nor a second work baptism of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we view this as an empowering by the Holy Spirit something all of Jesus’ followers are urged to seek continually for life and ministry (Eph. 5:18).

This coming of the Spirit was followed by the audible voice of God the Father stating His love and approval of Jesus. The Father authenticated Jesus as His Son, referring to Ps. 2:7, a psalm for Israel’s king taking the throne. Most agree that the gospel authors saw this as a reference to Jesus as “Messiah,” the chosen and anointed One of Israel (Page, p.93). Some scholars also see the words of Is. 42:1 being fulfilled in Jesus’ receiving the Holy Spirit and the Father’s pleasure. This prophecy referred to God’s Servant, who would bring justice (Keener, pp.134-135), but also suffer by God’s will to save others (Is. 53). There also may be a reference to Gen. 22:2, when Abraham is told by God to take his son, Isaac, whom he loved, and sacrifice him. Thus in God’s own words, Jesus is identified as God’s human Son, set apart for leading God’s people, and chosen to be a sacrifice for the sins of the people. These unique roles—which He would one day fulfill—distinguished Jesus from other rabbis (teachers of Jewish law) and the prophets (John the Baptist or those from centuries before).

3. Let’s move on and someone can read Matthew 4:1-11. After filling Jesus with the Spirit, what did God send Him to do (v. 1)?

Surprisingly, after God had announced His chosen leader, the same Spirit of God that equipped Jesus for ministry, led Him into the desert rather than a public place. (No doubt, most of us would have chosen to launch our “work”

right away!) Matthew tells us the purpose for this was that Jesus would be tempted by the devil. It is not far-fetched to relate Jesus' trial in the desert to the forty years that the Hebrews spent in the wilderness after being delivered from slavery in Egypt and rescued from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. Moses specifically states in Deut. 8:2 that "...the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands." Keener points out that this was similar to God acting as Israel's father (Deut. 8:5), teaching an important lesson not simply about obedience but about how trustworthy the Father was since He never failed to provide for them over forty years (Keener, p.140)! It is essential in learning to trust God that He sometimes allows testing of our faith in order to demonstrate the extent of His faithfulness. This process would not only increase our trust in Him but also bring honor to His reputation as the One who lovingly, generously, and graciously provides for His own. It is also important to recognize that where Eve, Adam, the nation of Israel, and all of us have failed, despite God's faithfulness, Jesus will demonstrate perfect trust and obedience (Keener, pp.138-139), so that His sinless record can be accounted to us (Rom. 5:19).

***When has God tested your faith recently?**

4. After fasting forty days and nights in the desert, whom did Jesus encounter (vv. 2-3)?

It may be hard for some to imagine a desert experience, much less fasting for over a month! Into this lonely, rugged, sometimes threatening, and inhospitable environment (Sanders, p.113, cited in Keener, p. 137), comes the devil himself, to tempt Jesus much the same way he tempted Eve and Adam. However, they had the luxury of living in a perfect environment, with all their needs met, while enjoying a perfect relationship with God the Creator. Jesus was at the height of deprivation—physically and socially, at least—when the most hostile creature on earth came to undermine His perfect obedience to His Father.

5. What did the devil tempt Jesus to do supernaturally (v. 3)?

The devil suggested that Jesus turn the stones near Him to fresh bread, to satisfy His hunger. The word *if* is better translated "since" (Keener, p. 139), which your group may not understand until you share this with them. Many people see the devil's statement designed to raise doubt as to Jesus' identity, and call into question whether or not the Father's words in John 3:17 were true. Some scholars see that the kind of Messiah Jesus will be, or how He will fulfill the Father's call at His baptism is more likely what Satan was calling into question (Carson, pp. 112-113; Keener, pp. 139-140).

It is worth noting that we are often susceptible to temptation when we feel deprived, or feel an unmet need. We can turn to Jesus as the One who

satisfies us (Ps. 63:5; Ps. 103:5; John 4:13-14). Or, we can fall into the temptation to try meet our longings or needs outside of God—in whatever we choose for comfort: relationships, money, power, sex, food, drugs, achievement, recognition, material things, etc. (Nathan).

6. What did the devil imply about God's promises to care for His own?

Satan tried to plant the idea that God had neglected to provide even the basics of Jesus' "needs"—food and water. This could be seen as sowing doubt about God's goodness just like he did with Eve in Genesis 3. In his question about whether she and Adam were supposed to eat from any of the trees in the Garden of Eden, the devil may have been raising the issue of whether God would provide for her and Adam (Gen. 3:1). Her reply called attention to the one tree they were not to eat from (Gen. 3:2-3), which Satan quickly made even more appealing by telling her that they wouldn't die (Gen. 3:4). He even went on to imply that God was holding back from them, because the forbidden tree would make them "like God" (Gen. 3:5). Similarly, when he suggested Jesus use His divine power to whip up a quick meal, Satan implicated God as someone who was uncaring and unwilling to provide.

***When are you tempted to doubt God will care/provide for you?**

7. How did Jesus reply (v. 4)?

Jesus wasted no time in replying to the devil with a verse from Scripture. Jesus began with, "It is written...." He quoted the Word of God as His authority and demonstrated that His decisions were based on God's eternal, unchanging truth, not feelings or passing thoughts. Jesus demonstrated this pattern throughout His life, and anyone who wants to be His follower must also humble himself or herself under the authority of God's written Word.

He also used Scripture as His weapon against Satan's suggestion to meet His own needs rather than waiting for God the Father to act. We'll see that Jesus repeated the word written each time Satan tempted Him. Thus, relying on God's Word is also a pattern Jesus intended for us to imitate when we are tempted.

The Scripture Jesus quoted came from Moses' explanation of God's testing His people in the wilderness. Note how appropriate this is to Jesus' situation! In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses told the Israelites that God purposely humbled them and made them dependent on Him even for their food, to teach them that everything—even their food—came only by God's words or commands (Thompson, pp. 134-135). He wanted them to learn that their very life depended on Him, and that they should always turn to Him rather than try to find security or life in themselves, a foreign idol, government, wealth, or another source of power.

***Which hunger do you pay more attention to: physical or spiritual? Why?**

***In what ways do you struggle to depend on God?**

8. What did Satan propose Jesus do next (vv. 5-6)?

Matthew wrote “Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple” (5). We do not know if Jesus physically traveled to Jerusalem and got atop the temple complex, just as we don’t know if He traveled to some mountain that would give a view of many nations in the third temptation (Carson, p.111; Keener, pp. 141-142). Herod the Great had expanded the temple complex, including the temple building, courtyards, porches, and colonnades, etc. Parts were built on a platform overhanging the Kidron Valley, which lay at least 100 feet below (Barker, pp. 1447, 1544). Satan’s second temptation was to challenge Jesus to jump from “the highest point of the temple”, God’s house or dwelling place on earth. There are numerous ironies in this temptation. Satan selected the very place God chose for humans to meet with Him on earth (Gerhardsson, cited in Brown and Schneider, p. 805), not some remote, obscure, desolate area of the world where one might feel forgotten by God, to test whether God would keep His promise to protect His chosen ones (Deut. 23:14; 28:7).

Then, he mimicked Jesus’ use of Scripture both by saying, “For it is written,” and by quoting from Ps. 91:11-12. However, this was a psalm in which the author was affirming his trust in God’s protection (Ps. 91:1-13) and repeating God’s promises to rescue, protect, deliver and save (Ps. 91:14-16). But Satan took these verses of faith and made them into a challenge. As a liar and accuser, Satan was accusing God of not being truthful, but he foolishly used God’s own words, which testified to His faithfulness! Williams points out an irony in Satan’s use of this psalm since it applies to our defense from demonic attack (Williams, p.166).

Gerhardsson notes this irony this way: “Satan wants Jesus to “tempt” God, i.e. demand from God a token that he is going to keep his covenantal promises.... Satan exhorts Jesus to endanger himself by his own act, so as to challenge God to save his life in accordance with the covenant promises” (cited in Brown and Schneider, p. 805). Satan is twisting God’s own words to tempt Jesus to test God’s truthfulness and reliability. Meanwhile, God was allowing the tempter this opportunity in order to prove Jesus’ faith in the Father’s word and character behind that word!

9. What promises of God did Satan want to create doubt about?

Satan wanted to create doubt about God’s promises to protect His chosen people, as well as the promise of God to always keep His word. Satan takes several verses from Ps. 91 literally, though he completely twists the meaning

by using them out of context. He is living up to his name, “the father of lies” (John 8:44). On face value, the glorious statements in Psalm 91 seem hard to understand in light of the tragedies and painful experiences of real life. If we read it during a family crisis or international disaster, we may wonder how to find safety from traps, disease, and attack.

Don Williams points out that there are several keys to understanding and applying this psalm. It is addressed to those who abide or remain in God’s presence through continual worship and prayer (Williams, p. 167). “God’s presence in verse 1 leads to His protection” (Williams, p. 167). The psalm may be read on the surface as talking about the natural crises of life, but verses 5 and 6 more strongly indicate the psalmist is referring to spiritual attack and warfare (Williams, pp. 169-170). The key to defense, Williams sees, is taking refuge or fully trusting in God as it is spelled out in verses 9-13. The psalm also indicates in verses 11-12 that God will send angelic help (Williams, pp. 170-171). The psalm ends with God’s promise to deliver or save—which includes His presence, power, protection, and provision (Williams, p. 172). Williams sees that the key to all of this is our willingness to pursue an intimate relationship with God, which He responds to with intimacy and protection over our heart [inner being], which Satan tries to destroy (Williams, p. 170).

***When are you most fearful that God won’t protect you from harm or the enemy?**

10. How did Jesus respond (v. 7)?

Jesus again replied with Scripture as His guide and defense. He quoted another part of Moses’ speech from Deuteronomy. Near the end of his life, Moses warned the Israelites not to put God to the test as they had in previous situations (Deut. 6:16). Moses referred to the incident at Massah, where they doubted God’s promise to provide when they could not find water. God graciously met their need—in spite of their complaining—by telling Moses to strike a certain rock, and water flowed miraculously from it (Ex. 17:1-7). Despite God’s mercy, the Israelites continued to doubt God’s promises to provide, protect, and lead them to a rich land where they would enjoy a special relationship with Him. Jesus, the obedient Son, as opposed to the stubborn and rebellious sons and daughters in Moses’ day, would not presume on His relationship with the Father, and utterly refused to challenge His Father’s truthfulness (Page, p.97).

If people in the group are confused about the difference between God testing us vs. Satan tempting us, you might want to take a moment and clarify this. Be sure that the discussion participants understand while God tests us to reveal what is in our hearts/inner being and whether we will trust Him or not, God’s intentions are for good, not evil. (See **Preparation** section for further information.) He may allow hardship and deprivation, or remain silent while we wonder what His next step will be, but this only proves to develop our “faith muscles” making them stronger by frequent usage. When we trust Him even

in difficulties, His reputation can increase in our minds and in that of others watching this trial. As He ultimately comes to our aid or satisfies us, His Name will be worshipped not only by those who already trust in Him, but He may also receive praise from those who up to that point have been uncertain about His character.

On the other hand, Satan's intentions are for evil. He tempts us to mistrust God, to blame God, and/or act independently of God by trying to meet our own needs. He lies about God's character and promises, and about the consequences of our actions, and plants ideas in our minds that will cause a disruption in our life in Christ. Then, when we fall prey to his tactics, he will accuse and degrade us for doing the very thing he suggested!

Thus, as we often learn too late, not trusting God and His word = sin, while faith is utterly important to/pleasing to God (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6).

11. What was Satan's third temptation (vv. 8-9)?

The scenery shifted again—or the vision of what Jesus “saw” did. Atop a very high mountain, Satan showed Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” Carson noted that Satan didn't show the sin—only the glitter and attractive parts (p. 114)! Satan offered to give all this to Jesus, on one condition: “If you will bow down and worship me.” The Greek word, *pipto*, translated here as “bow down” means to fall down humbly and reverently before someone (Bauder, p. 609). The word, *proskyneo*, translated “worship” is used throughout the New Testament, especially in The Revelation, for worship meant exclusively for God the Father and Jesus Christ. When Satan asks Jesus to worship him, he is trying to steal what rightly belongs to God making it clear that he is God's greatest rival for our devotion (Schonweiss and Brown, p. 877).

Thus, the third temptation is by far the most detestable one! This time there is no twisting of Scripture or subtlety in the devil's words. He wants Jesus to honor him above God the Father and everything else. He wants to steal the worship that God alone deserves, foil God's perfect relationship with this Second Adam (Rom. 5:12-19), and derail Jesus on the path to the cross where He was destined to break the power of Satan and death (Heb. 2:14-15).

Of course, this would seem to be the least likely of the three tests for Jesus to fall for. Yet in our human nature, if we were faced with one moment of bowing down in private versus the prospect of rejection, betrayal, injustice, physical torture, and a painful, shameful death, what would we do?

In Luke's account of this temptation, Satan tells Jesus, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours” (Luke 4:6-7). Marshall pointed out that Satan was lying since God the Father has always had

ultimate authority and “...the devil’s claim was not true, nor was his word to be trusted” (Marshall, p. 172).

12. What was Jesus’ response this time (v. 10)?

Unlike during the first and second temptation, Jesus ordered the devil to leave. He displayed righteous anger in response to the lies and distortions hurled at Him. This is the most despicable of all three temptations since it would mean blaspheming and betraying His Father, rejecting His call to save us by His voluntary, substitutionary death, and denying all the prophecies of the Old Testament. Jesus could not have avoided the cross and still fulfilled God’s plan. However, He also had to endure this testing to demonstrate His perfect dependence on the Father. Therefore, He could not have banished the devil at the very beginning of their meeting and still achieved victory.

Jesus again quoted from Deut. 6, Moses’ speech warning the Israelites to remember all that God had done for them and to remain loyal in their worship of Him. Moses knew that God’s people had already sinned by lack of trust and lack of pure devotion during the forty years of testing in the wilderness. When God had summoned Moses for a forty day meeting to give the Ten Commandments and other important laws, the people became afraid that Moses wouldn’t return and questioned what God would lead them. In their fear, doubt and foolishness, they demanded Aaron make a visible form for them to worship—a golden calf (Ex. 32). They also complained about God’s lack of provision of water and food, and doubted when He would give them victory over the people living in the Promised Land (Num. 11 and 14).

The first of the Ten Commandments God gave Moses on Mount Sinai was “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7). The second was a natural corollary to the first: they were forbidden to make any idols or bow down and worship them (Ex. 20:4-5; Deut. 5:8-10). The Israelites agreed to God’s covenant laws and demands, and He vowed to be their God and to provide for and protect them in a unique way (Ex. 19:3-8; Deut. 7:6-24). To worship anyone or anything other than the Lord God would bring about their destruction (Deut. 8:19-20; see also the curses in Deut. 27 & 28; 27:15 on an idol maker).

Knowing the history behind Moses’ warning, Jesus firmly resisted the devil’s third temptation. There was no hesitation or wiggle room in Jesus’ reply. He quoted, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only...” (Deut. 6:13). In addition to worshipping God, the idea of serving Him meant being obedient to Him, which was the right response of those grateful for all He had done in saving them and caring for them (Hess, p.550). Jesus, the obedient Son of God, had no alternative but to worship and obey His Father, if He wanted to pass the test of obedience, so to speak, that everyone had failed before. Without Jesus’ life of perfect obedience, He could not have been the perfect Lamb of God, sacrificed in our place as a payment for our sins (John 1:29; Is.

53:7; Rev. 5). Thus resisting Satan's third enticement made all the difference in Jesus' destiny and ours.

***When have you been tempted to accomplish a kingdom goal through unrighteous means? Why doesn't the end justify the means?**

13. Who appeared when the devil departed (v. 11)?

Just as Psalm 91 promised, God's angels came and ministered to Jesus. Note that they didn't come under the circumstances Satan had tried to set up—when the Son of God had put His own life in danger. Instead, they came while the Son continued to trust His Father. God Himself was vindicated in Jesus' obedient trust and in this demonstration that He keeps His promises!

***When have you waited with faith and seen God's mercy break through in your life?**

APPLYING THE TEXT

***What were Jesus' main weapon(s) against temptation?**

Jesus resisted the devil primarily through faith in the character and words of His Father. He did not recite Bible verses like a formula to ward off evil spirits—as some hokey movie might portray. When He quoted Scripture, He was quoting the words of someone He believed had His best interest always in mind. He knew the heart of His Father, the loving, good and absolutely trustworthy nature of Almighty God. Rather than doubting what He had seen of God's actions in the past, learned of God's faithfulness in His Word, or believed about God's intentions for the present and future, Jesus trusted God. By totally relying on God, Jesus therefore rejected the human tendency to act independently of God to meet our own needs. Jesus battled the devil and temptation on other occasions. Each time, it was His faith-filled life, faith in the goodness of His Father, which enabled Jesus to continue on the path to lay down His life to save us. One misstep and Jesus could no longer have been our perfect sacrifice. Viewing life from the context of a trusting relationship with God, meant Jesus did not fall for the temptations of His human flesh, the world system at odds with God, or the devil and his demons.

***How do your beliefs about God impact your obedience to His words?**

Whether we realize it or not, we act out of what we believe at the core of our being, not merely what we say we believe (Prov. 4:23; Luke 6:45). So, when we disobey God, some faulty belief about Him, others, or ourselves underlies that sin. Once Adam and Eve chose to act independently of God, sin entered human experience. Ever since then, every human has experienced alienation and separation from God. We have rejected God's purposes and ways, attempting to live as our own master, director, or CEO. The Bible calls this independent, self-acted living sin. We fail to live in the harmonious, loving

relationship of dependence upon and delight in God that He designed for us. Instead, we believe the lies that the serpent introduced in the Garden: God won't take care of or satisfy us; God's Word isn't true or reliable; and, we can live without someone 'telling us what to do.' "The power of all temptation is the prospect that it will make me happier" (Piper, p. 334).

Many of us, both in the church and in the world, fail to grasp that our disobedience has a greater negative cost for us than the cost of giving up self-centeredness and submitting to God (Willard, p. 263). Rather than being tied down through submitting to God's way of life, we are freed from the chaos, fears, and overwhelming burdens of life. Obedient living made possible by faith in Jesus' obedient life, His sacrificial death, His glorious resurrection, and the outpouring of His Spirit in us—is the abundant living Jesus promised (John 10:10). Continuing to live out this truth is the truth that Jesus promised would set His followers free (John 8:31-32). We may need to ask God to reveal the ways we think or act independently of Him, repent, and pray for grace to learn how to abide, listen and live in response to His Spirit and His Word.

***How does self-effort or living apart from God rob Him of the glory He is due?**

Whenever we fail to love, trust, and obey God wholeheartedly, we offend Him. We were created to enjoy His presence, provision, and protection. But the power of sin in each person promotes rebellion against God. In the passage we just studied, Satan was attempting to ruin the Son's perfect relationship of love, trust, and obedience with the Father, and to gain the upper hand in Jesus' life. His plans are the same for all of us.

When we try to usurp or sidestep God's role as the ultimate Resource, Ruler, Judge and Savior, we often attempt to get credit for what He alone should be praised for. This can happen as we to seek to meet our own needs, try to run our life or someone else's, attempt to use the His gifts to satisfy our egos or agendas, etc. We may need to ask God in prayer to show us where and when we consistently rob Him of the credit that should go to Him alone.

***When are you prone to doubt God's loving character, His promises to care for you, or His plans? *When has doubt eroded your resistance to sin?**

***What disappointments or unmet needs in your life do you try to meet without God?**

***What verses from the Bible could help you refute the lies the enemy often uses to tempt you to doubt God and His ways?**

There is a handout below that lists some verses often used to battle tempting thoughts, situations or life patterns. Also, you may want to ask your group members what Scriptures they rely on when undergoing temptation. You could hand out the list of Scriptures and other passages brought up in your discussion could be jotted down on it. Encourage the members to select one

of these, write it on a 3 x 5 card, and keep it with them throughout the week. They could refer to it often and begin to memorize it. Some members might want to have a partner to work on the same verse at the same time or to encourage them in forming this habit. Others might want to find an accountability partner who will help them in faith turn to Christ when facing temptation. If there is an interest in this, try to suggest guidelines so that unhealthy dependencies do not become the norm.

WRAPPING IT UP

The devil appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden and succeeded in undermining her trust in God in three significant ways. He raised doubts about whether she could believe in the goodness of God; whether she could trust the truthfulness of God's words; and whether she needed to depend on God or could live apart from Him and His ways. Humans have struggled with these same issues ever since Eve doubted, disobeyed, and suggested Adam rebel against God.

When Jesus had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and was fulfilling His call to ministry, As the second Adam, He met the tempter and faced the same issues. However, His trust in God the Father did not waiver, enabling Him to withstand Satan's attempts to mislead Him. This encourages us in two ways. We know that Jesus has experienced temptation, and therefore can understand our struggles (Heb. 2:17-18, 4:15-16). And, we know that He resisted and overcame temptation, since Scripture says that He was tempted but did not sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-22; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Because Jesus remained united with the Father and obedient to the Father's will, He not only overcame Satan in the desert at the beginning of His ministry but also overcame him in the Garden of Gethsemane and at Golgotha. On the cross, Jesus disarmed the powers of evil and cancelled the law's death sentence against us. When Jesus arose, God made us alive with Him (Col. 2:13-15). Jesus' victories serve not only as an example for us of how to battle temptation, but also as the means by which we can be free of sin's hold and yield ourselves to serve God instead (Rom. 6:11-14).

The Scriptures assure us that we now have the power to overcome the temptations we face—whether from evil desires within, the allure of the world around us, or from the chief tempter, the devil (1 Cor. 10:13). As follow-up to this study, take home the list of Scriptures and begin memorizing and putting them to use when confronted by those thoughts, sights, feelings, or other triggers that have enticed you in the past. Or turn to Christ and ask Him to show you how to handle the temptations that assault you.

Scriptures Useful in Combating Temptation

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Hebrews 2:17-18

Hebrews 4:15-16

Romans 6:17-18

Romans 8:31-39

Matthew 6:25-33

1 Peter 5:7

Matthew 7:7-11

Galatians 6:7-10

1 Timothy 6:6-12

Hebrews 12:1-3

Hebrews 13:5-6

Philippians 4:11-13

James 1:2-3

James 1:12-13

James 4:7-10

James 5:7-11

1 John 4:4

1 John 5:3-5

Some of these references came from Gospelcom.net's *Online Guidance: Temptation*, and from John Piper's *...Future Grace*. Memorizing them will help renew your mind. We do not recite them like a magic formula that will overrule our choices of behavior, but rather we recall them in temptation to help us turn to the One who can give us victory.

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