

THE SAVIOR IS FAITHFUL

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. The Son of God trusts in the Father's provision (Matt. 4:1-4).
2. The Son of God trusts in the Father's providence (Matt. 4:5-7).
3. The Son of God trusts in the Father's plan (Matt. 4:8-11).

Background Passage: Matthew 4

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

In overcoming Satan's temptations, Jesus affirmed He is the greater Adam who succeeded where the first Adam failed.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Jesus stepped into our world and overcame the temptation to which Adam succumbed. Jesus showed He is obedient to the Father and He is the worthy One who would undo the consequences of Adam's sin and bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:3). Jesus's life of obedience led Him to the cross, the place where He conquered sin and death as our Savior.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have been credited with Christ's righteousness, we resist temptation by relying on the power of the One who overcame temptation in our place.

GROUP TIME



SCRIPTURE HANDOUT

Scan this QR code for a reproducible handout of this session's Scripture passages.

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: The wilderness provides the backdrop for a well-known interaction between Jesus and Satan. In essence, the wilderness is a backdrop to the story of the Old Testament. The Israelites spent decades wandering in the wilderness as a result of their sin. This was a place of judgment, a place of failure, a place of hopelessness and death. The wilderness was anchored in the Israelite mind as the foremost location where they experienced the implications of sin. The Messiah entered into His ministry through the wilderness, presenting Himself to the world as the One who succeeded where Israel failed.

EXPLAIN: Temptations are a part of life. Being human means we will be tempted. Whether or not we succumb to those temptations or resist them will be a key factor in our growth as a disciple of Jesus.

DISCUSS: What comes to your mind when you think of the word *temptation*? (an overwhelming desire and longing for something that gives immediate pleasure; a feeling that an outside force acts upon you; the memory of past times when you've given in to temptation, so you feel a sense of shame and regret; a fear that you can't help yourself, so you give in; times when God's strength has helped you to resist)

TRANSITION: All people experience temptation, and we experience temptation all the time. Jesus came to the earth as a man. He wasn't a make-believe person. He was a real human being. As such, He experienced real temptation from Satan throughout His earthly ministry. Matthew 4 shows us a few examples of this temptation and provides both a motive for our worship of Jesus as the One who overcame temptation and a model for our own fight against sin.

OPTIONAL QUESTION: What makes you want to grow in your fight against temptation? (our work in the world hinges on our faithfulness, so it's important to seek holiness; overcoming the frustration of failing to temptation; not wasting time engaging in sin that we could be using for good works; our leadership in the church depends on us fighting sin)

POINT 1

THE SON OF GOD TRUSTS IN THE FATHER'S PROVISION (MATT. 4:1-4).

NOTES

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3** And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” **4** But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Matthew 4:1-4** from his or her own Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 1-2** commentary to highlight the following key doctrine (*the bold words fill in blanks in the Daily Discipleship Guide [DDG]*):

KEY DOCTRINE #51: The Sinlessness of Jesus: While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely **sinless** throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real **temptation** of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

DISCUSS: What might we learn from the high point of Jesus's baptism being followed by a difficult time of challenge, such as facing Satan in the wilderness? (life comes with high points and low points, good times and challenges; Jesus seems more approachable to us because He faced the same difficulties of life that we face; following Jesus will often lead us to places of difficulty and temptation, but we have Jesus and His strength to trust God more)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 3-4** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Satan tempted Jesus at a place of **pain**, and Jesus countered that temptation by pointing to God's **truth**.

DISCUSS: How should we react knowing Satan is real and ready to tempt us at any time? (alert about the spiritual battles that are happening; be prepared with the armor of God and the sword of truth; prayerful, relying on God's strength and help; humble in realizing we are susceptible to sin through temptations)

TRANSITION: Matthew describes three scenes of Jesus's temptation in this narrative. The first confronted whether or not Jesus would trust the Father to provide. The second addresses Jesus's trust of the Father's providential care.

THE NUMBER 40

The number 40 in the Bible has often been linked with a time of testing of character and the ability to trust and remain faithful. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights when Noah was on the ark. Moses was in Egypt 40 years, in the desert 40 years, and with Israel in the wilderness for 40 years. Saul, David, and Solomon reigned for 40 years. Nineveh was given 40 days to repent. And Jesus was tempted for 40 days.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

“Unbelief, just like Satan, will always take the easy way out. It will tell us to eat the fruit in exchange for knowledge, instead of fearing God to gain real wisdom. Unbelief will unravel our perceptions of both suffering and the blessedness of life and beckon us to skip self-denial at all costs with the faux promises of comfort that can't extend beyond the grave.”¹

–Jackie Hill Perry

COMMENTARY

VERSES 1-2 / The narrative told in Matthew 4:1-11 provides a clear link between the Old Testament and Jesus. One way we see this connection is through the superscript links in our Bibles that point out the fact that much of what Jesus says in this section is quoted from Deuteronomy 6 and 8. Since Deuteronomy is a collection of teachings from Moses to Israel just prior to them entering the promised land, Jesus's quotes immediately take the reader back to the time of Israel's wandering in the wilderness.

Additionally, the time and the place clue us in to this same link. Jesus was led out to the wilderness for forty days, and Israel sojourned in the wilderness for forty years. Note that Jesus didn't merely wander to the wilderness, He was **"led up by the Spirit."** God had a plan, and it included allowing Jesus to be tempted. So Jesus fasted from food for forty days and experienced hunger. This is reminiscent of the Israelites in the wilderness being hungry. God's people complained, and God still fed them manna from heaven. Jesus, in His perfection, resisted Satan's temptations and faithfully depended on God. Jesus succeeded where Israel failed.

Something else to note about Jesus's hunger is that it reminds us of His humanity. Jesus was not immune to something so basic as physical hunger. When He did not eat, He got hungry, just like all other people. It's encouraging and humbling to see the Son of God stoop to human form in all ways, and this gives substance to the genuine fight against temptation that Jesus experienced.

VERSES 3-4 / At the conclusion of Jesus's sojourn in the wilderness, Satan entered the story as **"the tempter,"** bringing the reader back to the story of the fall in Genesis 3. There, Satan tempted Eve and Adam to take and eat, much like he did here with Jesus. While Adam was not fasting, the temptation to eat of the forbidden fruit was a question of whether or not Adam

and Eve would trust God to provide. Adam, our representative head, failed. Jesus, the better Adam, however, did not.

Satan met Jesus at a point of weakness. Here is a good learning point for all subsequent Bible readers. Satan knows our weaknesses and does not throw temptation at people whimsically. Rather, he comes to us in a place where he knows we are susceptible to sin and holds out an alternative to God's design.

Jesus had the power to turn stones into bread—He is the Creator and Sustainer, after all. Whereas other people would not have this power, Satan recognized Jesus's identity at this early point in His ministry. He was aware that Jesus is the Son of God. As the Son, He could easily, with a word, make stones into bread or meet His hunger needs in any way He wanted. Yet this wasn't an issue of how Jesus would get food; the issue revolved around whether Jesus would trust God to provide or whether He would try to do things on His own.

In response to Satan's verbal temptation, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. These words were given by God to Israel following their failure to enter the promised land to remind them of the lessons of the wilderness. They were there to learn to depend on God to provide. Had they trusted God's provision—had this principle been settled in their hearts—they would have been faithful to God in conquering the promised land the first time around. But they weren't, and so they didn't. By quoting this verse, Jesus was telling Satan that He would not follow Adam's or Israel's pattern. Jesus acknowledged that it is more important to learn to depend on God's Word and not physical bread. He trusted that God would feed Him at the right time. In this way, Jesus set a model for all His followers who are faced with this decision: Will I trust God to provide in His way at His time or will I try to meet my needs on my own? The latter choice lies at the core of most of our sin and failure.

POINT 2

THE SON OF GOD TRUSTS IN THE FATHER'S PROVIDENCE (MATT. 4:5-7).

NOTES

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6** and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Matthew 4:5-7** from his or her own Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 5-6** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Satan tempted Jesus to demonstrate His **power**, departing from His mission; but He **resisted**, trusting God's providence.

DISCUSS: How does succumbing to temptation lead us astray from God's mission for our lives? (it keeps us from the fullness of joy God has to offer; it leads us to dire consequences as a result of sin; it sours our witness to others who are searching for Christ; when we're led astray, we can lead others astray)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 7** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Jesus **quoted Scripture** to reject Satan's temptation of an inappropriate use of power.

DISCUSS: Why did Jesus use Scripture to counter Satan's attacks? (Scripture records truth; Scripture is the foundation for understanding God's will and ways; Jesus did not have to make up a response in the moment because He knew God's truth; the work of God in the world is consistent, so these patterns of response that should have happened in Israel's story were still applicable in Jesus's day and in ours; this serves as a model for Christians for how they should respond to temptation)

TRANSITION: The second temptation was more vague than the first, but it hit on a temptation that we all experience as well—the thirst for and misuse of power. The third temptation also feels familiar—preempting God's plan with one of our own.

ANGELS

Angels are “messengers” of God, as is communicated by the Greek word used to refer to them. They are supernatural beings created by God. In both the Old and New Testaments, they brought a word from God or ministered to His people.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 5-6 / The “**holy city**”—Jerusalem—and the temple both connect this story to Israel’s history. Jerusalem was a symbol of God’s faithfulness to bring His people into the promised land. The temple was a tangible sign that God dwelt with His people and that His glory was among them. Both the city and the temple set Israel apart as God’s people. The nations were meant to be able to look in on the greatness of the city and the magnificence of the temple and see how remarkable God’s care was for His people. This glory would then prompt the nations to worship. But more often than not, the sin of the people unfortunately distracted others from God’s glory.

In the second temptation attempt, Satan took Jesus to the city and to the top of the temple to get Him to show off His power. Satan knew that Jesus is the Messiah, and He wanted Him to prove it by doing something that only God could do. He asked Jesus to throw Himself off the temple. More than a thrill-seeking act, this was a means to have Jesus call the angelic army to come and rescue Him before He hit the ground. Satan even quoted the psalmist to couch this temptation in biblical words (see Ps. 91:11-12).

This, again, was something the Son of God could do. He commands all and has power over all. Jesus later acknowledged this reality just before His arrest: “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:53).

But in both cases, the display would shortcut God’s intention. Yes, Jesus could throw Himself off the temple and call the angels to His side to stop His fall, and this act would likely cause those watching to see and respond to His deity in a moment. Yes, Jesus could have called the angels to stop His arrest and even His enemies would know that He is God. But this was not the Father’s intention. There was a clear plan for Jesus’s work, and this included all of the work and teaching that would transpire

between this moment and Jesus’s death and resurrection three years later.

VERSE 7 / Jesus’s response to Satan’s temptation was simple and direct: You should not put God to the test. Here again, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 6:16 comes from a time when the people grumbled against Moses because they had no water to drink. They had just been freed from slavery in Egypt but continued to complain: Why had Moses brought them out in the wilderness to die? Would God provide for them? There, God used Moses to provide water for the people in a miraculous way (Ex. 17). Moses renamed that place in light of the quarreling of the people who did not seem to believe that the Lord was among them.

The issue for Israel wasn’t the water, nor was the issue in Jesus’s life whether or not the angels would protect Him from harm. The issue was whether they trusted God or whether they would put God to the test. Of course, God could do something—He’s God! But to put God to the test and presume upon His actions at our sinful, selfish demand is arrogant and wrong.

Jesus was patient to trust God’s plan rather than test Him in this moment. He was surely making a statement of condemnation to Satan, who was testing the Son of God in the moment. But more so, He was making a statement of His identity and mission. He was not going to test His Father; instead, He would trust Him. This action set a paradigm for Jesus’s entire ministry. For example, in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus longed for the Father to take the cup of God’s wrath away (Luke 22:42). He could have side-stepped the process and avoided the cross, but He did not. He chose to continue the path God determined for Him rather than test Him to save some other way. Because Jesus did not test God but acted as God by submitting to the Father’s plan, He showed Himself to be God and the One who could save His people from their sin.

POINT 3

THE SON OF GOD TRUSTS IN THE FATHER'S PLAN (MATT. 4:8-11).

NOTES

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9** And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." **10** Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" **11** Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Matthew 4:8-11** from his or her own Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 8-9** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Jesus was tempted to use His power and position **pridefully**, to claim the kingdoms of the world apart from God's **plan**.

DISCUSS: What are some occasions when we might be tempted to use our power and position pridefully? (if we are a leader, getting what we want without considering others; if we have authority, not humbling ourselves to do minor tasks; if we are part of the majority, not considering the situations of the minority; not grieving with those who grieve)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 10-11** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Jesus responded to Satan's temptation by directing **worship** to God **alone** and telling Satan to leave.

TRANSITION: Jesus set Himself apart as God by facing Satan in the wilderness and winning. It was head-to-head combat but was no contest. Jesus fought and overcame temptation with the Word of God, the same weapon the Lord has given to us as well.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 8-9 / Finally, Satan took Jesus to a high place and showed Him **“all the kingdoms of the world.”** It’s unclear how this happened, but somehow Jesus was given a glimpse of all human kingdoms.

But one thing to consider: Jesus had made all of this. Not only was He ruling with His Father as these various kingdoms came to be, but He was also the One who created all things in the first place. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, as we have already seen. He upholds all and is over all. Had Jesus succumbed to pride as people do, He easily could have exalted Himself, but He didn’t.

Jesus also is the rightful owner of all of these kingdoms. He rules over them already. One day they will bow down before Him (Phil. 2:10-11; Rom. 14:11). All that Satan offered, Jesus already possessed, though He willingly laid aside the glory of these possessions to take on humanity. In essence, Satan’s temptation was to rush the process, to take the glory of His position now rather than wait for God the Father to elevate Him in due time. “Have what is Yours now,” Satan was saying.

The price for such an act was steep. Satan said that Jesus could have this position if He would merely fall down and worship Satan. This might seem like a large leap, but it was what Israel did in the wilderness. Rather than worship the rightful God—the One who saved them and provided for them in the wilderness—they continually chose to worship the false gods of the day. They fell down before idols of wood or stone that “have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them” (Ps. 115:5-8).

Worship of anything other than God is worthless. Israel proved this to be true, and therefore, they were judged for their

false worship. Jesus was presented with a similar path, but this time it was not merely to worship false gods but to worship Satan himself. Doing so could catapult Jesus to His rightful place of authority. Would Jesus follow Israel’s path? Of course not.

VERSES 10-11 / Jesus would not give in to Satan’s temptation. Looking at the different temptations, each one was compelling in its own right. You would surely want to eat if you’d been fasting for forty days, and you’d want to show off your power if you had all of the angelic armies at your command. This final temptation wasn’t any more significant, but it certainly was alluring from the human perspective. Who would want to walk the path to the cross if you could avoid that and get the position of honor another way? How easy it would be to fall for Satan’s schemes.

But Jesus knew what is true. He knew that Satan isn’t worthy of worship. Only God is. Somewhat flippantly, He was able to command Satan to go away because of the folly of the temptation. Jesus knew that there is a singular, rightful object of worship—the one, true, and living God. Once again, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 to make His point. Jesus said what His life would prove—that only God is worthy of worship. And His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection would make a way possible for all Christians to worship the one true God.

The passage then ends with the angels ministering to Jesus. The angels that Satan referenced to tempt Jesus in the second scene were now there caring for Jesus. But they didn’t come because Jesus threw Himself off the temple—they came because Jesus was faithful to obey God in the face of great temptation. Jesus’s baptism and His work in the wilderness were the basis for His claim to be God and the foundation from which He would launch His earthly ministry. Through it all, Jesus proved Himself to be sinless and perfect for our salvation.

MY RESPONSE



NOTES

PACK ITEM 8: THE FIGHT OF FAITH: Pass out copies of this card to your group members to help them in their faith-fueled, Spirit-empowered fight and resistance against temptation for the glory and worship of God.

Because we have been credited with Christ's righteousness, we resist temptation by relying on the power of the One who overcame temptation in our place.

HEAD:

Jesus is God, and He proved He is God through His sinless life. The temptation episode in the wilderness was not the only time that Jesus experienced temptation, but it was a focus for Matthew as an introduction to Jesus's earthly ministry. Three times Satan tempted Jesus, and each time Jesus responded with the Word of God to fight sin. Because of His victory over sin, Jesus proved Himself to be worthy of our worship, and He provided a model for Christians as to how they should fight sin.

What encouragement do you find in the sinlessness of Jesus?

HEART:

Jesus is a man, and He faced temptation as a man. Satan used against Jesus the same kinds of allurements that cause humans to fall to sin and the same temptations that led to Israel's failure in the Old Testament. Since Jesus faced temptation as a man and He did not sin, He is uniquely able to sympathize with our weaknesses and to know what it's like to face and fight temptation. Because He knows, Christians should be able to turn to Him when we face temptation and find help in our own fight against sin. When we do sin, we also can turn to Jesus because He understands the difficulty of standing strong in the face of compelling temptation to sin.

What steps will you take to fight against temptation in your own life?

HANDS:

Christians need to know the Word of God. It is critical whenever we face temptation to sin, but it is true for all situations we face in life. Jesus shows in this passage that He fought temptation with the truth of God's Word. If anyone had a reason to fight in another way, it was Jesus since He is God. But He knew that the best means of protecting Himself from sin was to answer Satan with the truth of God's Word. Christians should do the same today. Whenever we face temptation to sin, or we need a word of truth, or we want to share with others the love and work of Christ, we need to proclaim what's written in God's Word.

What will you do to grow in your knowledge of and love for the Word of God so that you may share it with others?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"His whole life and death were nothing else but perfect obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, and he was always fully occupied in that task. He teaches us that if we look to be children and co-heirs by adoption along with Christ of his Father's kingdom, we must also along with our Master and Lord yield ourselves up wholly to the will of our heavenly Father and always be occupied in his business."²

—Bernard Gilpin
(c. 1517-1583)

POINT 1: THE SON OF GOD TRUSTS IN THE FATHER'S PROVISION (MATT. 4:1-4).

+ COMMENTARY

“‘Devil’ in Greek means accuser, as does ‘Satan’ in Hebrew (v. 10). Scripture teaches that he was a created being, an archangel, and the leader of the rebellious angels who became forever opposed to God and whose ultimate doom Christ’s death ensured (e.g., Job 1–2; Zech 3:1-2; 1 Chr 21:1; Luke 10:18; Rev 20). The desert location again recalls the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus will succeed as the true representative and fulfillment of Israel where Israel failed (Deut 8:2). *Peirazo* can mean both to test and to tempt (NIV). As something the devil does, it must here be taken as to tempt, in the sense of to try to entice to sin. But what the devil sees as a temptation, God may simultaneously use as a more positive test to prove Jesus’ faithfulness.”³

+ ILLUSTRATION

Where does my food come from? When we sit down at a restaurant and order a meal, it can be tempting to forget that food arrives at our table because of the work of another person. Actually, several people or groups of people had to be involved in getting a meal from the field to our dinner table. Parents see this in their kids far too often. The kids have done nothing to help with meal prep and then sit down at dinner thanklessly. They merely plop down as if the meal appeared out of thin air. We tend to be an entitled people. Imagine the temptation if you could just make food appear out of thin air. What would it be like if you could speak to a rock and turn it into food? Now imagine that you had this power when you were really hungry. Poof, and the food was there. Jesus had this power. He could have bypassed dependence on the Father to provide and merely fed Himself. Instead, He recognized that His provision came from the Father alone, and He entrusted Himself to the Father’s care.

EXTRA

POINT 2: THE SON OF GOD TRUSTS IN THE FATHER'S PROVIDENCE (MATT. 4:5-7).

+ COMMENTARY

“We all struggle with various temptations. Maybe you’re tempted to cheat, lie, steal, or lust. Maybe you’re tempted to look the other way when wrongdoing is done around you. Maybe you’re tempted to indulge in sexual sin—when you’re on a business trip, when you’re all alone and no one’s looking. Maybe you’re tempted to indulge in sinful anger, and that tongue of yours is like a wildfire that once one spark hits the surface, you let rage consume you and anyone in your way. Maybe you’re tempted to engage in pride—to think you’re better than everyone else, especially the weak-willed and ill-willed, those who cheat, lie, steal, lust, and rage. In 4:1-11 we come again to our Lord Jesus Christ. We come to look at his victory over temptation. And as we do so, we’ll see how his victory reinforces his identity—‘Truly this is the Son of God’—and how it gives us an example, the ultimate example, of resisting the devil. Jesus was tempted in order to show us that we have a Savior who ‘is able to help’ us when we ‘are being tempted’ (Hebrews 2:18), a Savior who is able to ‘sympathize with our weaknesses,’ because, as Hebrews 4:15 says, he was tempted in every respect as we are, ‘yet without sin.’”⁴

+ COMMENTARY

“The second temptation brings Jesus to the holy city, Jerusalem. ‘The highest point’ is the wing or portico, not ‘pinnacle’ (NASB). Portico refers to the flat-topped corner of Solomon’s porch on the southeast corner of the temple complex overlooking the Kidron Valley. This time the devil asks Jesus to demonstrate miraculously God’s ability to preserve his life. The devil again knows that Jesus has the power to do this, and he cites Ps 91:11–12 to justify it. There God promises all who ‘dwell in the shelter of the Most High’ (Ps 91:1) safeguarding and protection. The devil’s mistake is to confuse the psalmist’s stumbling so as to fall with Jesus’ deliberately jumping off. We must not test God’s faithfulness to his word by manufacturing situations in which we try to force him to act in certain ways. We dare not deliberately put our lives in danger as some kind of fleece. Jesus thus replies by quoting Deut 6:16 on not testing God. The original context alluded to Israel’s rebellion against the Lord at Massah (again harking back to Exod 17:1–7).”⁵

+ ILLUSTRATION

The entire industry of fishing equipment and lures is predicated on the notion of temptation. Those who fish are after one thing—they want to present the bait and hide the hook. They want to present the exact type of bait that is most appealing to that type of fish at just the right time of the day. They use all sorts of materials and smells to disguise the bait so that the fish will bite. The right bait is literally irresistible to the fish.

The same is true for the notion of temptation as a whole. Satan presents the bait and hides the hook, and he does so with bait that is uniquely appealing to different people at just the right time and in just the right way that they are most apt to bite. Since we know there is bait in the water all around us, we must be on guard lest we take the bait that God has told us to avoid, only then to find ourselves hooked.

POINT 3: THE SON OF GOD TRUSTS IN THE FATHER'S PLAN (MATT. 4:8-11).

+ COMMENTARY

“But there is something else we have to consider in this temptation of the Lord, dearly beloved. When the Lord was tempted by the devil, he answered him with the commands of sacred Scripture. By the Word that he was, he could have easily plunged his tempter into the abyss. But he did not reveal the power of his might, but he only brought forth the precepts of Scripture. This was to give us an example of his patience, so that as often as we suffer something from vicious persons we should be aroused to reach rather than to exact revenge. Consider how great God’s patience is, how great our impatience. When we are provoked by some injury or threatened harm, or moved to rage, we seek revenge as far as possible. When we are unable to obtain it, we make our threats. But the Lord endured the devil’s opposition, and he answered him with nothing except words of meekness. He put up with one he could have punished, so that this might all the more redound to his praise. He overcame his enemy not by destroying him but by suffering him for a while.”⁶

+ ILLUSTRATION

We all talk to ourselves. You might picture the young kid whispering words to their imaginary friend in their bedroom, but those aren’t the only people who talk to themselves. Think about what you do when something bad happens. Maybe you get troubling news from a call when you are riding down the road in your car. You then cut the music off and sit in silence. But you aren’t really silent. You are having a conversation, even if no one else is in the car. It might merely play out in your head, or you may speak the words out loud. You attempt to process pain by putting words to all that’s playing out in your mind.

Christians, especially those who want to do a good job of fighting temptation, must learn to be people who use the Bible to talk to themselves. This is what Jesus did in the wilderness. He countered Satan’s attacks with the Word of God. Since we can’t see Satan in this way, our dialogue will look different, but the process must be the same. We simply speak God’s Word to ourselves, and as we do, we remind ourselves of what’s good, right, and true. The truth of God’s Word, spoken to ourselves when no one else can see or hear, is the best guide for our actions and the basis for our fight against sin.

References

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4. Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 82.
5. Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary*, 84-85.
6. Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies 16.2-3*, as quoted in Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1-13, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 63.