

It Is Written

Lesson 4

FOCUS THOUGHT

Jesus showed us how to resist Satan and overcome temptation by the power of God's Word.

FOCUS VERSE

Luke 4:4

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

LESSON TEXT

Matthew 4:4, 7, 10

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Luke 4:1-4

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

CULTURE CONNECTION

FOMO

One of life's greatest temptations is represented by four letters: FOMO. Known as the fear of missing out, it is one of the highest-octane fuels for temptation. Frans de Waal, a primatologist at Emory University, conducted an experiment on two capuchin monkeys to evaluate the power of FOMO.

In the experiment, de Waal rewarded the monkeys when they completed a simple task. All they had to do was hand a rock to the researcher. When they handed him the rock, he handed them a cucumber. When he gave the same reward to both monkeys for completing the same task, they were content.

But when he gave one monkey a grape while giving the other a cucumber, he saw markedly different results. The monkey who was perfectly content only seconds earlier with earning a cucumber began shrieking, baring his teeth, thrashing in his cage, and pounding on the table to show his anger. He was enraged because he wanted what he did not have.

The enemy of our soul is no kinder. He fills up his five-gallon jar of temptation in hopes of filling us with discontentment, envy, jealousy, covetousness, and resentment—a deadly cocktail of emotions.

In our day FOMO is still a formidable foe. It still lures us to the bar and urges us to open wide and drink up this deadly cocktail. But we are not missing out on anything in this life when we are living the abundant life Jesus gave His life to give us. So fill up on the precious Word of God, and when the tempter tempts you to drink his cocktail, be ready to say, "It is written."

OUTLINE

I. JESUS WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS

- A. Fasted for Forty Days
- B. Tempted by the Devil

II. TURN THESE STONES TO BREAD

- A. Satisfy Your Physical Hunger
- B. It Is Written

III. JUMP FROM THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE

- A. Test God
- B. It Is Written

IV. BOW BEFORE ME

- A. Offer Worship to the God of This World
- B. It Is Written

V. OVERCOMERS BY THE WORD OF GOD

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

Temptation goes with the territory. It is inevitable—a part of life none of us can avoid. As long as we are living in the flesh, temptation will come our way. We will never outgrow it or mature beyond it.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. JESUS WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS

In the Book of Matthew, we receive insight into two of the most significant events in the life of Jesus. These occurred at the beginning of His public ministry. First, Jesus was baptized by John. Then Matthew shared the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

Over the course of a lifetime, we learn there are times when temptation follows closely on the heels of great spiritual experiences. After a great worship service where God has blessed us, even temptations we have long forgotten can resurface. The key is to stay as led of the Spirit on Monday as we were on Sunday.

Interestingly, the Bible tells us Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness for the very purpose of being tempted by the devil. The Spirit directed Him to a place of aloneness and separation. In some ways this can be difficult to understand. Why would God lead someone to a place where He knows the person will be tempted? Would it not be better to keep the person in a spiritual environment where temptation would have little to no power or influence?

No doubt God can do that. But there are times when He will lead us to places in our lives where our spirituality can be tested, proven, and strengthened, so we must stay close to Him and His Word. Many people fall into temptation because they do not practice the necessary spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and reading the Word.

» *Why is it important to spend time on spiritual disciplines?*

A. Fasted for Forty Days

The very word *fasting* may cause some to cringe. We do not like the idea of not eating or drinking anything for any period of time. Our flesh craves to be satisfied with natural things and rebels against being denied. For some, the thought of giving up even one meal for spiritual reasons is a formidable undertaking. Imagine doing what Jesus did and fasting for forty days.

For almost six full weeks He denied His physical appetite. He refused to give in and take nourishment into His body.

It was a time of spiritual warfare. Such a season demanded the spirit be strong and ready for battle. The only way to accomplish this was to deny the flesh and feed the spirit. Prayer and fasting were critical to Jesus overcoming the temptations He would face throughout His ministry. Without preparing the spiritual man, surely He would fall in a weak moment. In His humanity, He may not have known all He was about to encounter. Yet, in His spirit, He was well able (just as we are) to recognize when a spiritual struggle was taking place.

B. Tempted by the Devil

And sure enough, the devil showed up. He did not show up at the Lord's baptism. He waited until Jesus was in the wilderness, denying Himself of the food He would need for strength in His body. The devil likes to show up in our weak moments. He does not always arrive when things are going well and we are full of the Holy Spirit. No, he tries to choose

his moments of temptation carefully. After all, if he knows we are in a strong spiritual season, why would he bother showing up at all? But on the other hand, if he can catch us when we are weak, he thinks he has half the battle already won.

II. TURN THESE STONES TO BREAD

Temptation offers an answer for a need or desire. It presents something that will satisfy the appetites of the flesh. The first thing the devil suggested that Jesus do was to turn the stones in the wilderness into bread that could be eaten.

The challenge was prefaced with the words, "If thou be the Son of God." This challenged Jesus' identity. It was an attempt to appeal to the Lord's pride in order to get Him to prove His identity. The devil knew if he could successfully stir up the ego of Jesus, he might get Jesus to yield to temptation. And Satan did so by not only appealing to Jesus' ego but also to His hunger. It was kind of a "come on Jesus, You can prove You are the Son of God and also take care of Your hunger at the same time."

» *What areas of pride in our lives often fall prey to temptation?*

A. Satisfy Your Physical Hunger

We understand that as we fast, the spiritual man is made more sensitive and is strengthened. However, anytime we fast we are going to feel hungry. If we fast long enough, we may feel really hungry. After a certain period of time with no food, a person may start to feel weakness as well. In a natural sense, we can avoid that by satisfying our physical hunger. Eat something. Break the fast.

We could easily assume the devil realized those physical tendencies our bodies experience during a fast. The devil knew Jesus was physically hungry and would naturally want to satisfy that physical hunger. He was planting a thought of satisfying the hunger when he said, "Turn these stones into bread."

» *Can you discipline your physical hungers to the point where they do not control you? Explain.*

B. It Is Written

The temptation is not what destroys us. Not responding correctly to the temptation is what destroys us. The power of choice belongs to us, just as it did to Jesus. We can look at what Jesus did to find what we need to do.

First, Jesus did not give in, nor did He simply ignore the temptation. Instead, He confronted it head-on. He did not confront it with His own ideas or thoughts. He leaned on the Word of God. He knew the Word was forever settled in Heaven and Earth, and it would not fail Him, especially in times of temptation.

Jesus boldly looked at the devil and said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). By appealing to the Word of God, Jesus was appealing to the highest authority known to humanity. When we use the Word to counter the attacks of the devil in our lives, we literally place God on the battlefield and not just our own flesh. When we do that, we cannot be

defeated.

III. JUMP FROM THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE

During times of temptation, the flesh can do some strange things. It can either embrace what God is doing or challenge what God is doing. In the wilderness the devil was tempting Jesus to challenge God.

A. Test God

In our wilderness moments of temptation, it can be easy to question God. We may wonder if God really cares at all. Our minds may run rampant with thoughts that we may not survive this or that God will not save us if we start to fall.

To prove the point, the devil took Jesus to a pinnacle of the Temple and told Him to jump. The devil also whispered in Jesus' ear that it would be okay; God would send angels to catch Him. During times of temptation, we may become disillusioned and subject to deception. When that occurs, we might do things that sound good at the moment, but we would never have done otherwise. Jesus refused to allow that to happen to Him.

B. It Is Written

Once again Jesus appealed to the Word of God. From the pinnacle He declared to the devil, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7). In other words, He was not going to put God to the test just because He was being tested. He was going to have faith in God and hold to the promises of the Word of God.

It would be easy during times of temptation to try and put God on the spot—to challenge Him to prove He really is God. We must remember that the process of facing temptation strengthens our faith and our walk with God. Foolishly challenging Him will serve no good purpose. Rather, appealing to the Word and standing firm will deliver us in due season.

» *Why is knowing God's Word and putting it to memory crucial to gaining victory over temptation?*

IV. BOW BEFORE ME

Beyond fleshly temptations are spiritual temptations. Jesus was not immune to this simply because He was God manifested in the flesh. He still had to submit Himself to the Spirit of God when He was tempted by the devil.

A. Offer Worship to the God of This World

The devil was well acquainted with true worship. He knew what it was like to be in the presence of God and offer worship to Him. The reason the devil was removed from his place in Heaven was partly due to his desire to be worshiped like God was worshiped.

That desire has never left him. When confronting Jesus in the wilderness, the last area of temptation the devil brought was for Jesus to worship him. He mistakenly thought that being in the wilderness would make Jesus feel as if He has been forgotten and forsaken. Since we all have an inherent need to express worship, the devil thought Jesus was prime for a redirection of His worship.

Once again the devil missed it by a million miles. He allowed his desire for worship to overshadow just how committed Jesus was. If Jesus did not succumb to turning stones to

bread and jumping off of a pinnacle of the Temple, there was no chance He was going to cease His worship. Jesus knew that if our worship falls to temptation, so will everything else.

B. It Is Written

This time Jesus was much bolder and more straightforward. We get the sense there was fire in His eyes as He got as close to the devil as He could and said, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

Amazingly, after this the devil left Jesus, and God sent angels to minister to Jesus. Once the devil realized Jesus’ worship could not be shaken, he knew any further temptation would be futile.

» *Do you make a sincere effort to hide God’s Word in your heart? Explain.*

V. OVERCOMERS BY THE WORD OF GOD

We must never underestimate the value of the Word of God in our lives. God’s Word is our wellspring of hope and encouragement. During times of temptation, His Word is a source of supernatural strength in fighting off the enemy. II Corinthians 10:4 lets us know, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”

David knew this lesson well. He realized that hiding the Word in his heart would help him not to sin against God (Psalm 119:11). He also knew the Word was a lamp to his feet and a light to his pathway (Psalm 119:105). On the battlefield with Goliath, David boldly declared the power of the name and the Word of the Lord (I Samuel 17). Because he did so, God gave him a great victory.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

When we commit ourselves to regularly studying and applying the Word of God in our lives, we are fortifying ourselves for our wilderness experiences. We can overcome the temptations of the flesh and spirit by standing and declaring the Word of God to the enemy we face. Whether it be our physical appetites, our spiritual struggles, or being challenged in our worship, the Word of God remains our best defense.