



LET PLEASURE DRIVE YOU
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May 16th, 2021

The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

We are beginning a new series this week called How to Wreck Your Life in 3 Easy Steps. This may seem like a strange title since most of us already know how to let pleasure drive us and others have already done so! The interesting thing is that no matter what weaknesses we have or temptations we struggle with, they are not unique to us. The methods of temptation may be different, but the model is the same – that model for overcoming our temptations is found Matthew chapter 4 - Satan's temptations of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE¹

1 John 2:26 For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world.

Matthew 4:1 The Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

1 John 4:4b The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Matthew 4:4 During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.” But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ “

Hebrews 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

OBSERVATION

The model that Satan used to tempt Jesus is the same model he uses on you and me. As Jesus' ministry began, He went to the Jordan River to be baptized. The Holy Trinity is there together for the celebration: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, (in the form of a dove that descended upon Him from Heaven.) God identified Jesus as the promised Messiah as He said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.” Immediately after this spiritual high point, that same Spirit led Jesus into the desert where He faced the devil's temptations. This is a warning for us: When we experience a spiritual moment, we can expect Satan to attack us. He absolutely doesn't want us to enjoy the presence of Jesus!

QUESTION: When have you felt elated about something Jesus has done and Satan has tried to spoil it? What did he do?

Satan is depicted in various ways. Sometimes he has a pitchfork and horns, or he is sitting on one shoulder as if he is equal to Jesus on the other. A common belief is that the devil is a symbol of evil, but not an actual being. But the Bible tells us he is a created being, equal to Gabriel and the Archangel Michael, but he is a

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

fallen angel who became proud and wanted to replace God. Knowing that, we shouldn't be fooled into thinking he has any power over us. He is not omniscient, omnipresent or omnipotent.

QUESTION: What has been your perspective of Satan? Have you changed your mind about him?

Let's pick up our story of Jesus in the desert. He had no tent, no food or water. He was out in the elements being tormented by Satan for forty days. Satan tried to plant doubt about His identity when he said, "If you are the Son of God..." He tries to do that to us, too, when he causes us to doubt our identity as disciples of Christ. But our identity as children of God matters. We know that the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world.

QUESTION: When have you been tempted to doubt your relationship with Jesus? How did you resist?

APPLICATION

There are three kinds of temptations that Satan uses to deceive us: Pleasure, or lust of the flesh, is craving physical pleasure that is outside God's design for us. **Possessions, or lust of the eyes,** are those things we are jealous of when someone else has them and we don't – it is greed at its worst. And then there is **Pride of Life** which keeps us from celebrating other people's success. It keeps us from admitting fault or showing weakness. It causes us to feel good when others fail or to elevate ourselves over others.

QUESTION: Which of these three temptations cause you the most grief?

If we understand the root of our most vulnerable temptations, we will be better equipped to overcome them. So, let's talk about **pleasure** this week: **1) Sin distorts our appetites.** God created sexual pleasure, but when we take it out of the context of His plan in order to satisfy our own desires, it becomes sin. Satan tempted Jesus with food or to use His divine power for a selfish physical desire. God created us with appetites for food, for acceptance, for sex, for intimacy, or to be loved and respected, but when a good thing becomes an idol, it's just a matter of time before it turns into a bad thing. **2) Appetites are never fully satisfied.** We can overeat and then two hours later we are opening the refrigerator door. No matter how successful we are, we want more money. We always want more! **3) Our appetites always whisper NOW - never LATER.** This temptation's purpose is to shortcut God's will and fulfill an appetite ourselves that only He can truly satisfy. We have no patience when it comes to what we want.

QUESTION: What appetite are you struggling with today?

Jesus responds to Satan's torment by quoting Scripture. This is so powerful because if we don't know God's Word, we can deceive ourselves by our own truth – we will believe anything that sounds spiritual to us, especially if it supports what we want to do.

QUESTION: How well do you know what the Bible says? What is your plan to increase your knowledge of the Bible? Have you considered ReadIt as a study option in the Fall?

Our appetites will either control us or be controlled by us. If left unchecked, they have the potential to destroy everything that is good in our lives. So, let's do two things: **1) Identify our desires.** We already know them, don't we? So, let's write them down: Excessive drinking, gambling, inappropriate sex, obsession with success or money, the desire to be envied, etc. Then, **2) Redefine the consequences.** What's at stake? Don't take a chance of saying years later, "What was I thinking!?" The secret for saying "no" to a strong immediate desire is to concentrate on an even stronger future desire.

QUESTION: What does your list of current desires look like?

QUESTION: What are your stronger future desires?

Jesus understands what temptation is all about. He suffered them just as we do – but He never sinned. He knows we are struggling with our failures and He offers us mercy – deserving punishment, but not receiving it. Instead, we are given grace – not deserving anything good yet being given everything. This is all available to us if we will surrender, submit, obey and demonstrate humility in our relationships with others, but most importantly in our relationship with God.

QUESTION: In what ways have you surrendered to God? What are you withholding from Him?

QUESTION: Which weapons in your arsenal of the Armor of God² are you using to defend against Satan?

QUESTION: Which one weapon is offensive rather than defensive? Why is that true?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to surrender everything to You as we fight against Satan's plans to destroy us. We know that of, ourselves, we have no power over him, but You are our fortress in these battles – our foundation where we have victory over sin. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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QUESTION: What has been your perspective of Satan? Have you changed your mind about him?

QUESTION: When have you been tempted to doubt your relationship with Jesus? How did you resist?

QUESTION: Which of these three temptations cause you the most grief?

QUESTION: What appetite are you struggling with today?

QUESTION: How well do you know what the Bible says? What is your plan to increase your knowledge of the Bible? Have you considered ReadIt as a study option in the Fall?

QUESTION: What does your list of desires look like?

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² Ephesians 6:10-18