



## **Discussion Guide — tempted+tried (week 3)**

**Date:** March 8, 2026

**Series:** tempted+tried

**Message:** To be Aligned or Applauded

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:5-10

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### **Opening Prayer**

God of mercy, meet us in the wilderness places of our hearts. Quiet the voices that demand we perform, prove, or pretend. Help us hear your voice naming us beloved, and form us into people who worship you alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Introduction & Context**

In Matthew 4, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness—an honest place where identity gets tested and desires are revealed. In today's text, the devil tempts Jesus in two ways: to perform for approval ("jump—make it spectacular") and to compromise for power ("bow—take the kingdoms"). Jesus refuses both by staying aligned with God: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" and "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

This week's conversation explores a modern temptation: living for an audience—chasing applause, affirmation, and control—rather than living from the secure approval of God.

### **Read the Scripture**

Matthew 4:5-10





## Discussion Questions

### 1) Check-in: The language of our need

1. When you hear the phrase “the temptation to live for an audience,” what comes to mind immediately—social media, work, family expectations, church life, something else?
2. The sermon suggested approval can become “an addiction disguised as excellence.” Where have you seen that dynamic in your own life (or in the world around you)?

### 2) The wilderness: what forms us when the props disappear

3. The sermon says the wilderness is where “identity gets tested.” What are the “props” (comforts, routines, reputation, control) you tend to rely on when life gets hard?
4. What practices or pressures do you think are forming you most right now: God’s love, other people’s expectations, fear, comparison, success, something else?

### 3) Temptation 2: Performing for approval

5. In Matthew 4:5–7, the devil quotes scripture and invites Jesus to do something dramatic. Where do you see temptation showing up as something “religious” or “spiritual” rather than obviously wrong?
6. The sermon used the phrase “God is not a prop in our performance.” What might it look like to use God as a “prop” today? (Examples: bargaining prayers, spiritual image-management, needing to be seen as faithful.)
7. Jesus refuses to “forget the voice that named him beloved.” What helps you remember God’s voice when other voices get loud?

### 4) Temptation 3: Power by compromise

8. In Matthew 4:8–10, the offer is influence without obedience. Where do you feel the pressure to trade alignment for access—truth for acceptance, integrity for popularity, obedience for outcomes?
9. The sermon said, “Whatever you compromise to gain, you will eventually have to compromise to keep.” Where have you seen that play out—in relationships, work, leadership, habits, or culture?



## 5) Alignment vs applause

10. What's the difference between healthy encouragement (which we need) and applause as a "false god" (which controls us)?
  11. The sermon asks: "Do you want to be formed or to be liked?" Where do you feel that tension most right now?
  12. What is one practical sign this week that you are moving toward alignment rather than applause?
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## Closing Prayer

Jesus, you refused the temptation to perform and the temptation to compromise. Train our hearts to worship God alone. When we feel the pull of approval, remind us that we are already named beloved. Form us by your love, not the crowd's expectations, and make our lives point toward God. Amen.

## Key Takeaway

God's approval is not something you earn through performance—it's a gift you receive in Christ. Alignment comes from listening to the voice that names you beloved, not the crowd that demands you prove it.

## Next Step — P.A.R.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you hear God's voice naming you beloved. Name where you've been chasing approval and where that need is forming your choices.

**Act:** Continue *Practicing the Way* — Week 3: Formation Pt. 2.

At minimum: write a letter to yourself **from the perspective of God**, listing the good and grace-filled words you imagine God whispering into your heart.

**Reflect:** Keep the letter with you. Read it throughout the week—especially when you feel you aren't "performing" up to expectations or when you feel the pull toward applause.

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