

## Faith in a Tempting World

### Matthew 4:1-11

### Message Outline

Three truths to remember:

Temptation is always...

a test but not all tests are tempting.

wrapped in beauty or goodness.

dependent on forgetfulness.

Three actions to take:

I will...

anticipate temptation.

avoid isolation.

accept responsibility.

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### Looking Back

Just after his baptism and in preparation for his public ministry, Jesus faces human temptations alone, weakened, and in the desert—to assume a life of physical security and comfort (stones to bread to feed himself), prestige or status (jump from the Temple pinnacle to prove God's love), and power (worship\submit to Satan) in contrast to the humble life (and death) of service that he chose. While our specific temptations may be unique to us, everyone faces common themes in temptation. In the temptations Jesus faced, we find a model for fighting against temptation in our lives. How can we follow his example to overcome temptation?

## Thinking It Through

disagree|agree, consider|contemplate

*There are events or experiences in life through which the Father intends to prove and improve our character and faith, but the evil one sneaks in and intends to destroy our character and faith. ~ Darrell Johnson*

*In our members there is a slumbering inclination towards desire which is both sudden and fierce. With irresistible power, desire seizes mastery over the flesh.... It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire or ambition or vanity or desire for revenge or love of fame and power or greed for money or, finally, that strange desire for the beauty of the world, of nature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God. ~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

*We must always remember again and again we are tempted through our gifts. ...It is the grim fact of temptation that it is just where we are strongest that we must be forever on the watch. ~ William Barclay*

## Working it Out

1. Read the passage of Matthew 4:1-11. When you notice in verse 1 that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, what questions (and answers) rise in your mind?
2. What is the difference as well as connection between God's "testing" or "proving" of our character and the devil's "temptation" toward evil?
3. Jesus faces three specific temptations in this passage. What makes these temptations so alluring or "tempting?"
4. How would you categorize or generalize the themes behind each of these specific temptations:
  - a. Stones to bread:
  - b. Jump from Temple pinnacle:
  - c. Worship the devil:
5. How are each of these temptations different but also similar? While our temptations are distinctive, can you discern any connections between our temptations and those Jesus faced?
6. When you reflect on this passage, how can you grow in self-awareness? Do you notice anything about yourself...your strengths or weaknesses that make you vulnerable to

temptation, specific temptations you should guard against, practices that can help you resist the devil's tempting, etc.?

7. How does Jesus' experience and response to temptation guide, comfort, or challenge your response to temptation?
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