

Year 3, NT Lesson 2: Tempting the King

Lesson Highlights:

- ✓ **Scripture References:** Matthew 4:1-11
- ✓ **Teaching Point:** Jesus must stand against the temptation to believe that God cannot be trusted to provide, protect and grant an inheritance to His people.
- ✓ **Unit Memory Verse:** *Matthew 4:17* – From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- ✓ **Alternate Verse:** *Matthew 4:4* – Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but from every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Lesson

Overview

From the very beginning of our story in the Garden to the days of the Patriarchs to the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon, God’s people have lost faith in God as their Father. Now as Jesus is about to call His disciples and start His public ministry, He is first led to the wilderness by the Spirit to prove that He is the true Son of Man and Son of God...the one who deserves the crown of King of kings. Satan will aim where he always has...and still does at us today. Will we believe that God our Father can be trusted to provide for us, protect us and give us the inheritance that His Spirit is guarding for us? Christ must stand as we have not...as we will not...in complete submission to His Father trusting that He is good and good for us.

Story

Well, last week we started in a new book of the Bible that was named after the disciple who wrote it. Anyone remember which book that was? (**Matthew**) **Matthew** is a great book to read after thinking about kings like Saul and David and Solomon because Matthew talks a lot about the kingdom of God. God people have not only been confused about what that kingdom is supposed to look like, His people have deliberately rejected that kingdom. Adam and Eve in the Garden believed a serpent’s words rather than God’s. The Israelites wanted to honor the god who helped them leave Egypt and their life of slavery so they made a golden statue of a cow to worship. In the time of the judges, we saw God’s people leave Him again and again to do what they wanted when they wanted. We saw the same thing happen with the first king Saul when he refused to wait for Samuel and went into the temple where he knew he was never supposed to be.

David was the one God said would reign forever. And he did pretty well, didn’t he? He had the chance to take the throne away from Saul...the opportunity to kill him again and again... but he didn’t take it. He waited for God to give him the kingdom...but even that didn’t last. He betrayed his men...he had a man killed...he refused to punish his sons when they did evil...and his sins even lead to the death of one of his sons. Another of his

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sons, Solomon, also seemed to start off well. He didn't ask for money or power or fame when God offered to give him whatever he wanted. He asked for wisdom. That was good...but then with that wisdom, he built a kingdom of power and wealth and fame. Exactly what God told him not to do. In all of these situations, the people of God were facing the same questions...and they're really important for us to know about because we're faced with the same questions every day...every hour of every day.

From the very beginning of creation, from our earliest times in the Garden, God has been wanting His people to understand their relationship to Him. He is our King...He is our God...but He is more than that. He is our Father. In fact, did you ever stop to think about the fact that the only reason we even have families on earth is to show us something about what God means when He says, "I will be your Father."? When He gave us the gift of fathers, He was showing us something about Himself...and what we could trust Him to give to us. The battle that's been happening from that first man, Adam, until now for us is the battle to believe that God really will give us all that He's promised to give us...and for us not to try to take it for ourselves.

This is the important understanding about sin...every sin begins first with the sin of pride. Every sin begins by choosing to believe what we see, what we desire, what we want as better than what God is offering. There are three things that He gave to those first people...and to His chosen men and women like Abraham and Sarah...and to His people as they left Egypt...and to David and even to Saul. These three things are the same thing that He's offering to us...to everyone who calls upon Him as Father God. Those things are **provision, protection and an inheritance**. These are ours from Him because of Jesus' life and atoning death. They are as sure today for us as they have always been for His people. The problem is that His people have failed every step of the way to believe Him. Eve chose to take the fruit from the only tree she was supposed to leave alone. Moses killed a man to make himself the savior of God's people. Everyone looked at God...and then to look at what they wanted...and chose themselves.

We understand that, don't we? Because we're just like them. We get new things for Christmas and we're so happy, aren't we? Until our brother or sister wants to play with them...or until we get bored with them. Then we just want more and more for ourselves. We lie and steal...we are selfish and greedy. We are just like people have always been with our Father. We want what we want...and we want it now. The question before Jesus...this new man...was whether He would do what we never have. Would He trust God to give Him was really was His. Now...with all of that, let's turn to **Matthew 4:1-4**.

First of all...before we get to what Satan offered Jesus...let's look at one little detail. Why did Jesus go out into the wilderness to be tempted? Who led Him there? (*the Spirit of God*) That's a really important point. This wasn't Satan catching Jesus by surprise. This wasn't Satan trying to get around God's plans. It was God's plan for His Son that before He began to teach us about the kingdom...before taking His place as the King of kings... that Jesus show Himself to be unlike anyone else who ever lived. This was no mere man. This was the one who was fully God and fully man. So, then Satan finds Jesus in that wilderness place, and what's the first thing he tries to get Jesus to do? (*turn the stones*

into bread) Why is this a big deal? How many of you are really wishing you had a big loaf of bread right now? (you know someone's going to raise their hand) We might be interested in a big bowl of ice creams, but if Satan was going to offer us something to tempt us it probably wouldn't be bread.

Why was this a real temptation for Jesus? What had he just done for 40 days and nights? (*fasted*) What does that mean? (*didn't eat anything for those 40 days*) That's so hard for us to imagine. We usually start asking for a snack right after we eat a meal! But after 40 days? We'd be begging for food. And Satan knows that Jesus is weak. So, what's at stake with this temptation? What would Jesus be giving up by making bread for Himself? God as his Father. That's what. This wasn't about bread...this was about whether Jesus would try to take care of His own needs or whether He'd depend on His Father. David failed this test. Adam and Eve failed it. Abraham, Saul, all of them...and all of us...have failed this test. But Jesus didn't. He'd rather have God than a loaf of bread. If He could only have one, He'd rather be hungry. What would Satan offer next? Look at **verses 5-7**.

Where did Satan take Jesus? (*to "the holy city", Jerusalem, and set him on top of the temple of God*) And what did Satan tell Jesus to do? (throw Himself down) What in the world? Why was Jesus supposed to do that? What did Satan say would happen? (*angels would stop Him from being harmed*) Again, it wasn't a matter of just showing off. This was a test about trusting God as His Father. Would Jesus believe that He didn't need to seek His own protection? Could He trust His Father's protection? David didn't believe it; he made treaties with other countries. Abraham didn't believe it; he even gave his wife to Pharaoh in Egypt so that he would be safe. Solomon, Saul...even Moses. They all failed to trust God. Would Jesus believe that God is a good Father who protects His people? Yes. He passed this test as He did the first one, by quoting a verse from the Old Testament. He would not put His God to the test. What's next? **Verses 8-11**.

This is the last one. Jesus has been tempted with provision and protection. Now what? His inheritance. What did Satan offer? (*all the kingdoms of the world and their glory*) Jesus would have it all. He would have everyone in the world under His power. He would have the glory of the nations as His. He would go from being a nobody in an unknown town to the greatest leader that ever lived. And you know what? He had a right to all of that. He wanted all of that. It's what God had promised to Him from before time began. The world would be His...and the full glory of it. All the nations bowing before Him. It's what the Father told Him He'd get...and since He deserves it, He should just take it now, right? It's what the Israelites wanted. It's what Solomon tried to get. It's what we've all been after...more for us, more now...taking whatever we can get whenever we can get it. Would Jesus? No. Jesus did deserve it. The whole world was His. But it would be given as a gift from the Father. He would not take it by Himself. He would wait. He need only obey His Father, trusting in Him to do good at the right time.

At that moment, Satan left...and angels from His Father came and took care of Him...just as Jesus had believed they would do. He did it. He passed the test. He took back the kingdom of the world from Satan at that moment...though it didn't look any different to anyone else watching. But everything changed in that moment. Jesus wasn't just

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declared to be king; He proved that He was deserving of the crown. He is His Father's true Son. He is the Prince, the Son of the King. When we see Him next, He will start telling us about the kingdom. Now we know to believe Him. He has done what no other had...what no other could. He has chosen God above all things.

The question for us today is to look at our own lives and decide if we will follow after Him...or if we will follow all the rest. He showed us that we can trust God to take care of our lives. He will give us what we need. We don't need to grab after it for ourselves. We can trust God to protect us. We don't need power and to worry about our lives. We can trust God to give us our inheritance at the right time. There are so many things we've been promised...good things that really are ours because we are His. But WHEN we get them is just as important as WHAT we get. We need to believe that God knows best and will exalt us, give us good things, at just the right time. While we are here, we must look to Him alone for this provision, protection and inheritance. Only then will our lives look like Jesus' life...only then will God look like the good Father that He really is. Let's pray.

Prayer Time

Before you pray, allow the kids time to share with you things that are happening in their lives. Be sure you write these down with their names for you to pray for as the week goes along. Ask individuals about how things went with the things they mentioned the previous week. Older kids can be asked if they will pray for another who mentions something. As the leader, begin by opening in prayer and thanking God for this lesson:

- Praise Jesus for winning the battle against the temptations of Satan...and showing us the way that we can defeat Him, too.
- Ask Him to help us to believe that because He won that battle, we have victory too through His perfect record which is ours if we are His.

Pray for any specific requests named either by praying yourself or by opening it up to those who said they would pray.

Suggested Follow-up Activities

Teachers are free to choose the activities that they feel are best for their group. The idea is that as the children work and play, remind them of the truths they just learned.

Scripture Memory: Figure out your reward system for memorizing the Scriptures provided in this section. Give the children several opportunities to tell it to you in class. Play a memory game with the kids if you have time.

Activity: Do You Trust Me? – Remind the kids that today we learned about the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness followed by the temptations from Satan. During those, Jesus had to decide whether He would trust in God as His Father for His provision, protection and inheritance. He did what no one else has ever done, believed God's Word which told Him that whatever God would give is better than anything He could get for Himself.

There are a couple of different ideas for how you can use your time in the classroom as an object lesson for your kids about temptation. For the **youngest kids**, you might try to demonstrate what temptation is. You can do this by placing small pieces of loose candy such as M&Ms or Skittles at their places at the table while you have them work on a coloring page. Ask them not to touch it or eat it. While they are working, have all of the grown-ups busy off to the side somewhere or have all of the step outside the classroom briefly. When you feel like enough time has passed, come back in and ask the kids how many of them have been thinking about eating the candy. Ask whether it was harder when they were left alone since no one could see them if they took one. Tell them that this is what temptation is...the feeling inside that rises up to try to talk you into doing what you know you should not do. Continue on with the story.

With **older kids**, you can reinforce the idea that what's really at stake is whether or not we trust our heavenly Father. Ironically, this can be just as hard when things are going well as when circumstances are hard or confusing. Think through your normal classroom experience. Try to make as many changes to it as you can. Change the setting somehow. Change where they sit. Change what's happening as they enter. Change the order of activities. Change how you supervise them...either becoming more lenient or becoming more strict about how they are to do things. You'll know you're succeeding if you can get them to ask you over and over again about what's happening. You want to hear them off-balance. Do your best to simply say the words, "Trust me," as you go along.

At some point, talk to them about what you've been doing. Talk about what happens inside of us when it looks like someone is making us do things we don't like...or even when others do things that are great, but unexpected. The temptation along the way is to distrust the one in charge, try to control your surroundings, try to get for yourself what you think will provide for you, protect you from harm and give you good things. Talk about Christ's overcoming of that temptation in His three verses from the Word.

Craft: 3 for 3 – Remind the kids that today we learned about the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness followed by the temptations from Satan. During those, Jesus had to decide whether He would trust in God as His Father for His provision, protection and inheritance. He did what no one else has ever done, believed God's Word which told Him that whatever God would give is better than anything He could get for Himself.

Give each of the kids both of the craft pages. Talk to them about how important the Word is when faced with temptation. Knowing the truth about God and leaning on that instead of our own understanding will give us the help we need from God's Spirit to withstand the schemes of Satan which haven't changed for us today. Have them cut out the various parts of the grid and match them up by gluing them in place.

Materials: craft pages; scissors; stick glue

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Craft: Bread Puzzle – Remind the kids that today we learned about the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness followed by the temptations from Satan. During those, Jesus had to decide whether He would trust in God as His Father for His provision, protection and inheritance. He did what no one else has ever done, believed God’s Word which told Him that whatever God would give is better than anything He could get for Himself.

Give each of the kids the craft page copied on brown cardstock. Have them cut it out. You can do a few things after this. They can simply place them in plastic baggies for carrying home. You can also let them practice it as their memory verse by having them turn them over and shuffle them and then race to see who can get it together first. They could also glue the pieces to another piece of paper. For younger kids, cut out the pieces for them. Consider cutting them into larger pieces for the youngest kids and allow them to glue them in place.

Materials: copies of craft pages; scissors; plastic baggies

Craft: Bread Loaf – Remind the kids that today we learned about the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness followed by the temptations from Satan. During those, Jesus had to decide whether He would trust in God as His Father for His provision, protection and inheritance. He did what no one else has ever done, believed God’s Word which told Him that whatever God would give is better than anything He could get for Himself.

Give each of the kids the craft page copied on brown cardstock. Have them cut out the slices and stack them in order. Allow them to hole punch all of them in one corner and provide either yarn, key rings, etc. so that they can thread them in order. Practice the verse with them as you talk through the importance of the Word of God in meeting temptation in our lives. Younger children will need the pictures cut out prior to class.

Materials: copies of the craft pages; scissors; hole punches; yarn, key rings, etc.