

Deut. 26:1–11
Ps. 91:1–2, 9–16
Rom. 10:8b–13
Luke 4:1–13

Jesus Is Tempted

Goal for the Session

Tweens will enter Lent hearing about Jesus' testing and explore ways that the Holy Spirit can help them to follow Christ.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 4:1–13

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Sharon H. Ringe

Jesus' time in the wilderness is a time of “testing” (*peirasmos*). These are not “temptations” to do things that are desirable but not good for him (like our “temptation” to eat an extra piece of cake). Rather, these are tests to see whether even good things can lure Jesus from a focus on God's will—or can lure believers into following a more comfortable messiah. In two of the three the devil's hook to catch Jesus is the challenge “if you are the Son of God . . .” Does Jesus really believe what he has heard? Will God make good on the implied commitment? Let's find out before you go charging off into dangerous places.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Lori Brandt Hale

The story is more about the responses Jesus gives to the temptations than to the temptations themselves. Jesus' responses underscore his faithfulness to God, setting the stage for the whole of his ministry and, ultimately, his sacrifice. His responses come with the full knowledge that obedience to God will bring persecution, misunderstanding, and the cross. To say yes to the world would have required Jesus to say no to God, to the way of God, and to an idea of God's kingdom that those followers simply did not understand. It would have required him to say no to the freedom and love for humanity that are the marks of his death and resurrection.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Jeffery L. Tribble Sr.

By taking on “intentionality” and “receptivity to God's grace” during Lent, new converts and members gain the spiritual depth to be faithful to “the mystery of God-with-us” even in our unexpected trials and temptations. Jesus did not ask for trials and temptations; he accepted that they could not be avoided if he would do God's will. Jesus' season of testing was not for a day or two; his season of forty days of temptation suggests to us that we may have faithfully to endure seasons of long and protracted difficulty. Jesus did not have just one encounter of diabolical testing; he overcame multiple temptations. His temptations were real and riveting.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Kimberly M. van Driel

The text tells a story about how evil works on the basis of distortions and lies. The devil presents wants as needs, falsehoods as truths, distrust as faith. The devil's second pitch is false, as revealed by the demand for false worship. At stake is who will be trusted and worshiped. We ask: Where else do we hear lies that sound truthful? From politicians or the media, or the pulpit? How might clinging to God's word unveil such lies as lies? Also, of the first and third temptations, we could ask: Where else do we see wants presented as needs? Where are we tempted to think of faith as something God must earn?

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 4:1–13

Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens may feel sometimes that they are in a “wilderness” as they navigate the challenges of becoming more independent. Typically, they are looking more to their peers for approval, and they may try to impress friends by engaging in risky behavior or taking on new identities. Discovering who they really are can be challenging amid cultural pressures. In today’s text, tweens will encounter Jesus confirming his identity and call to ministry as he makes defining decisions. Help tweens to follow his example, and look to the guidance of the Scriptures and the Spirit as they mature.

Holy Spirit, help me during this Lenten season to grow more and more into the person you are calling me to be. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- Christ candle
- matches or lighter
- wall calendar
- 4 name tags
- markers
- Color Pack 1, 2, 26, 27
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player

For Responding

- option 2: Color Pack 2, small smooth rocks, permanent markers
- option 3: masking tape or sidewalk chalk in three different colors, copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils; *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, designate a place (bulletin board, wall, clothesline, or door) for a Lenten display that can remain in place for six weeks. Place Color Pack 1 in the center of the display. Print each of the following names on a separate name tag: Narrator, Jesus, Devil, The Spirit. If you are using option 2 in Responding, bring one smooth rock, about 1½" across, for each learner. If you are using option 3, choose a location to mark three lines for three tweens to walk along at the same time, each about twelve feet long. Use masking tape (indoors) or sidewalk chalk (outdoors) and make each line a different color. Start and end the paths about one foot apart, and have them wind around and cross each other several times.

Greet tweens as they arrive. Ask for volunteers to arrange the purple cloth in the center of your learning space and place the Christ candle on it. Play “I’m Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing” (Color Pack 26; track 11 on *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022) as you gather the group around the candle. Invite tweens to offer ideas about why the cloth is purple. As is helpful, say that the church is now in the season of Lent and purple is the seasonal color. In Jesus’ day, purple dye was rare and extraordinarily expensive. Only wealthy people, usually royalty, could afford cloth dyed purple. Purple continues to symbolize Jesus as King of kings. Its dark hue is also a symbol of repentance and waiting. Light the Christ candle, welcoming Jesus’ presence with the group. Pray aloud:

Dear God, thank you for bringing us together to learn more about living as your child. Bless our time together, and open our hearts to your Word. Amen.

Extinguish the candle.

I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing

I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing,
 I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing,
 I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing,
 and obey the Spirit of the Lord.

I'm gonna walk . . .

I'm gonna leap . . .

I'm gonna praise . . .

It may be helpful to explain that in Jesus' day, people understood the devil to be the leader of evil powers that work against God's will and God's people. The devil was thought of as a "tester" or "tempter."

Dig Deeper: Help learners use a concordance, study Bible, or search engine to find the Old Testament passages Jesus was quoting.

Show the wall calendar and ask a volunteer to count back forty days from today. Invite tweens to recall some things that have happened during these forty days. Ask:

✧ Does forty days seem like a long or a short period of time?

Explain that today is the first Sunday of Lent. Lent began on Ash Wednesday and ends on Easter. Lent lasts for forty days, not counting Sundays. Ask them to look for an explanation of these forty days in today's Bible story.

EXPLORING

Distribute Bibles and have tweens turn to Luke 4. Ask volunteers to review what they know about the Gospels. Recall that you recently have studied stories of Jesus' birth, his baptism, and some of his early ministry. Point out that today's story takes place soon after Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:21–22).

Show Color Pack 2 and invite comments about what it might be like to spend a few weeks in this place. Say that today's Bible story takes place in a wilderness that would have looked like this.

Explain that the group will act out the story. Ask for four volunteers to take the parts of Narrator, Jesus, Devil, and The Spirit. Put a name tag on each actor, and give each one a copy of Resource Sheet 1 (Bible Story Drama). (Note that the Spirit has no lines. Have that volunteer pantomime actions mentioned in the text). Ask these four to stand in front of the group and present the drama. If more learners want to participate, repeat the drama with other learners playing the parts.

Give each learner a copy of Resource Sheet 1 and discuss:

- ✧ With what did the devil tempt Jesus?
- ✧ Why might Jesus have been tempted to take each of these offers?
- ✧ How did Jesus respond to the devil after each temptation? Why do you think Jesus responded in these ways?
- ✧ When Jesus says, "It is written," what is he saying about his words? (*They come from the Scriptures.*)
- ✧ How might his time in the wilderness have helped Jesus learn more about who he was and prepare to do what God was calling him to do?
- ✧ How do you understand the work of the Spirit in Jesus' time in the wilderness?
- ✧ In what ways might the Spirit be at work in your life when you face temptations?

**EASY
PREP**

It may help to discuss how the Spirit is God's presence in our lives and works in countless ways. For example, the Spirit works in us through prayer, worship, and the words in the Bible; through our consciences; through words spoken by friends or caring adults; through kind deeds given and performed; and many ways.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. True to Be You** Tweens will role-play situations of temptation and consider how the Spirit might guide them to remain faithful followers of Jesus. Work with tweens to brainstorm situations when people their age are tempted to be someone or do something they know is contrary to their identity as God's child. Form pairs or groups of three and ask each group to prepare a skit about one of these situations to perform for the class, including an ending of how the Spirit might be at work to guide the characters. After the skits, invite discussion about strategies to try when facing temptation.
- 2. Pocket Rocks** Tweens will create a reminder to be true to God's Word. Place Color Pack 2 on a table or floor. Invite learners to sit around it and give each one a small smooth rock. Remind them that one of Jesus' temptations was to turn rocks into bread. Yet, a very hungry Jesus chose to rely on God's Word instead of giving in to the devil. Invite tweens to create a pocket rock to remind them of Jesus' choice by drawing a cross or writing a phrase like *Stand firm* or *Keep the faith* on the rock with permanent markers. Encourage them to keep the rock in a pocket or backpack to remind them of Jesus' example when they are faced with temptations.
- 3. Following Jesus** Tweens will practice listening for the Spirit's calling. Move to the area where you prepared the three paths. Ask for three volunteers and assign each one a different color to follow. Have them start walking at the same time and tell them not to step off their own path. Repeat until each learner has had a turn to follow a path alongside others. Be seated and distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (*Led by the Spirit*) and pencils. Discuss the questions at the top of the page. Invite tweens to sit apart from one another and spend a quiet moment completing the sheet and thinking about the ways the Spirit might be leading them. Play "Harp Music" (track 9 on *Singing the Feast, 2021–2022*) in the background as they write or draw.

CLOSING

Gather with tweens around the Lenten display and comment on the connection between the forty days of Lent and Jesus' time in the wilderness. Invite tweens to tell what they will remember from the story of Jesus' temptations.

Sing "My Heart Cries Out to You" (Color Pack 27; track 15 on *Singing the Feast, 2021–2022*). Place Color Pack 2 near Color Pack 1 in the Lenten display.

Invite learners to join in the "amen" of the closing charge:

Let us go out from this place and into the world, following Jesus.

Amen! (Clap twice.)

My Heart Cries Out to You

My heart cries out to you,
O God, my Savior.
I've wandered from your
way;
I have done wrong.

I need you to forgive,
That I may truly live.
O God, forgive me;
O God, forgive me;
God, forgive me.

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Tweens
Resource Sheet 1

Bible Story Drama (Luke 4:1-13, CEB)

- Narrator:** ¹Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. ²There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterward Jesus was starving. ³The devil said to him,
- Devil:** “Since you are God’s Son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”
- Narrator:** ⁴Jesus replied,
- Jesus:** “It’s written, “People won’t live only by bread.”
- Narrator:** ⁵Next the devil led him to a high place and showed him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶The devil said to him,
- Devil:** “I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It’s been entrusted to me and I can give it to anyone I want. ⁷Therefore, if you will worship me, it will all be yours.”
- Narrator:** ⁸Jesus answered,
- Jesus:** “It’s written, “You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”
- Narrator:** ⁹The devil brought him into Jerusalem and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him,
- Devil:** “Since you are God’s Son, throw yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it’s written: He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you ¹¹and they will take you up in their hands so that you won’t hit your foot on a stone.
- Narrator:** ¹²Jesus answered,
- Jesus:** “It’s been said, “Don’t test the Lord your God.”
- Narrator:** ¹³After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from him until the next opportunity.

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Tweens
Resource Sheet 2

led by the Spirit

Think about following the chalk or tape path:

- How challenging was it to follow your own path?
- Did having other people walk near you help or hinder your staying on your own line?
- In what ways might God's Spirit be guiding you each day?

Pause to pray:

Think about a situation in your life right now that is pressing you to make a choice about what you will do or who you will be. Ask the Spirit to guide you as you make those choices. Use the space below to draw, doodle, or write a prayer for guidance:

