

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

The Temptation

Goal for the Session *Children will examine how Jesus responded to temptation and explore ways that the Holy Spirit might be with them.*

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

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

The season of Lent has begun, and children may be aware of this change in the church year. No blaring music or ads welcome the season of Lent. However, temptation is not unknown to children. Long before they can say or define the word, they have experienced it. The chair to climb to get to something beyond their reach on the table is an early temptation. Taking a cookie when no one is looking after being told it's too near mealtime comes later. And they never stop.

Merciful God, so many things and activities tempt us to turn away from you. Give me the power and strength of your Holy Spirit to turn back to you. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- Christ candle
- Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022
- CD player
- Bible
- Offering basket
- Color Pack 1, 2, 30
- newsprint
- markers
- Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, small heart or cross stickers, zip-seal sandwich bags, crayons
- option 2: newsprint, markers
- option 3: Color Pack 2, small smooth stones, permanent markers
- option 4: *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place a bookmark at Luke in the worship table Bible. Print the Lenten response for Gathering on newsprint. For option 1 in Responding, place forty heart or cross stickers in a zip-seal sandwich bag for each child. For option 2 in Responding, create the three sheets of newsprint with the sentence stems and the sheet with the prayer to complete.

Invite the first children to arrive to arrange the worship table with the purple cloth, Christ candle, Bible, and offering plate.

When everything is ready, gather around the worship table. Invite a child to receive the offering. Ask:

✠ What does this white candle represent?

Light the Christ candle. Say that we light the Christ candle as a reminder that Jesus is always with us. Point to the purple cloth. Ask:

✠ What season of the church year does the purple cloth represent?

After the season of Lent is named, recall that the forty days of Lent lead to Holy Week and Easter. Lead the children in the Lenten response on the newsprint:

God is love!

God is with us today!

Easter is coming. Amen!

Show Color Pack 1. Ask:

✠ What do you think is going on in this picture?

temptation: when someone or something tries to get you to do something you know is wrong

Use their conversation to introduce *temptation*, the idea and the definition of the word. Tell the group that the title of this session is “The Temptation.”

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and hold it so the group can see where the book mark is. After the group has recognized that it is near the end of the Bible, they will guess that it is from the New Testament, the part of the Bible that tells about Jesus and the early church. This is a move from a story about Moses from the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament in the previous session.

Ask children to tell you about the baptism of Jesus, a story they may have heard on January 9 and one that they hear every year. When the baptism story is complete, explain that today’s Bible story happened just after Jesus’ baptism. Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (But You’re God’s Son).

Show Color Pack 2. Have the children identify each of the three temptations in the illustration. As they identify them, help them remember Jesus’ response. Ask:

- ✪ What do you think about the evil spirit tempting Jesus to do wrong?
- ✪ How do you think Jesus was able to say no to each temptation?
- ✪ Perhaps no evil spirit takes you to high places, but when are you tempted to do something wrong?
- ✪ How do you think God’s Spirit might help you from making the wrong choice?

Their conversation around the final question above will lead into the Responding options.

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children.

- 1. Lenten Calendar** This calendar will help children and their families observe Lent. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (40 Days of Lent). Tell the children about Lent and any practices that your congregation has for this season, such as daily devotion aids or worship services during Holy Week. Look at the resource sheet, and count the spaces on the path. Explain that the forty days of Lent do not include the Sundays during that time. Give each child a bag of stickers. Have them place stickers on the first four spaces (Ash Wednesday through Saturday). Then they can color the picture of Jesus on the space for today. Talk together about where they can display this calendar at home. Make a calendar to use with the group.

**EASY
PREP**

Give the prayer to a worship leader to include as part of congregational Lenten worship.

2. **Prayer for Strength** Seeking the strength to resist temptation as Jesus did, children will write a prayer together. Show children the first newsprint sheet with “Children my age are tempted to . . .” Ask them how to finish this sentence, and write their answers on the newsprint. Do the same with the sheets with “Things that help me say no to temptation are . . .” and “It would be great if we could be more like Jesus by . . .” Then work together to complete each line of the following prayer, also on newsprint:

God, sometimes we are tempted to _____.

Give us strength to say no to temptation to _____.

Help us be more like Jesus, to _____.

Hear our prayers. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

3. **Pocket Rocks** An object to touch can provide strength in the time of temptation. Look at Color Pack 2, and note that one temptation was for Jesus to turn the stones into bread. Give each child a small, smooth rock. Invite them to create a pocket rock to remind them of Jesus’ choice to stay with God’s way. Together, talk about words or symbols that would fit on a rock to be an additional reminder of God’s Spirit with Jesus and with us. Provide permanent markers for children to use to write on their rocks. Suggest that they keep their rocks in a pocket or backpack.

Dona Nobis Pacem

Dona nobis pacem, pacem.
Dona nobis pacem.

4. **Music** Peaceful music can also give strength. The simple words of “Dona Nobis Pacem” can be sung, hummed, or remembered in the mind when strength and calmness are needed. Listen to the song (track 5 on *Singing the Feast, 2021–2022*). Then sing it together. Finally, have the group close their eyes and hear it in their minds. Talk together about when this song might be helpful. Remind them that they can listen to it without anyone knowing.

CLOSING

Gather at the worship table.

God Is with Me

Our God is with me
everywhere;
All day and night I’m in
God’s care.
It doesn’t matter where I
go,
Because God is with me,
this I know.

Repeat two times

Sing “God Is with Me” (Color Pack 30; track 7 on *Singing the Feast, 2021–2022*). If children do not know this song, play it for them and read the words together before singing it.

Remind the children that this new season of the church year, Lent, continues until Easter. It is a time when the whole church follows Jesus to Jerusalem.

Invite each child to think about how to say no to temptations this week. Pray:

Loving God, we will seek the presence of your Spirit when temptation comes to us. Amen.

To each child, say, “Thank you for coming. See you next week.”

March 6, 2022
The Temptation

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

But You're God's Son based on Luke 4:1-14

John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. Luke reports that Jesus was about 30 years old when this took place. Then God's Spirit led Jesus into the desert wilderness. Jesus stayed there for 40 days. During all that time, he didn't eat anything and he was really hungry, not just a little hungry, but starving hungry!

During these days, more than a month, the devil, an evil spirit, tempted Jesus. The evil spirit wanted Jesus to worship and follow the evil ways, not God's ways.

First, the devil said to Jesus, "I know you are starving hungry. You are God's Son; just turn some of these stones into bread."

Jesus said, "It is written in God's word, 'People don't live by bread alone.'"

Well, that didn't work. Now the evil spirit took Jesus to a high mountain, where he could see a long way. "Look, Jesus," said the devil. "I can put you in charge of all the lands that you see because I can give these lands to anyone I want. If you will worship me, I will give them to you."

Jesus looked around. He said, "It is written in God's word, 'Worship only God and serve only God.'"



The evil spirit must have been feeling a bit frustrated now because nothing seemed to persuade Jesus to join him. But the devil had one more idea. "Jesus," the devil said, trying to sound friendly, "come with me to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem."

When they got there, the evil spirit said, "Jesus, since you are God's son, I know that if you fall from here angels will protect you so you won't be hurt. I know this because it is written in God's word. Come on, give it a try."

But Jesus was not going to be tricked. He answered, "It says not to tempt or test God."

The evil spirit had had enough for now. He left Jesus until he could find another time to tempt him.

40 Days of Lent

Directions: The Season of Lent is a time to prepare for Easter. It lasts 40 days, but we don't count the Sundays. Draw a cross or put a sticker on the chart each day, except for Sundays. Pray for God's love to help you grow.

