

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

# In the Wilderness

**Goal for the Session**      *Children will act out the story of Jesus' temptation and wonder what it means to be tempted.*

## ■ 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 notion of temptation is familiar to most children this age but may be difficult for them to define. They are learning to “do the right thing.” This includes learning the rules that go with their expanding environments, and often there are different rules for home, school, and church. Children may understand temptation as someone trying to convince them to make a bad choice. As they continue to learn about making good choices, be quick to assure them that God is always there to guide them and to forgive them when they make a mistake.

*Ever-present God, bless my Lenten journey with your love and mercy.  
Strengthen me to learn and grow and teach in Jesus’ ways. Amen.*

## LEADING THE SESSION

### YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ purple cloth
- ❑ battery-powered candle
- ❑ Bible
- ❑ Color Pack 1, 2, 30
- ❑ Resource Sheet 1
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022; CD player

### For Responding

- ❑ option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock; crayons; small heart or cross stickers, zip-seal sandwich bags (optional)
- ❑ option 2: blankets, beach towels, or floor cushions; assortment of children’s Bibles or storybooks about Jesus; quiet music, CD player (optional)
- ❑ option 3: construction paper, plain paper, pencils, scissors, masking tape, glue sticks, dry sand, newspapers

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, recruit two adults or older youth to help with the Bible drama and give them copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Storytelling Guide). If you are using option 1 in Responding, place forty small heart or cross stickers in a zip-seal sandwich bag for each child. If you are using option 2, plan how you will set up the quiet area described in the activity description.

Greet each child by name. Invite learners to arrange the purple cloth in the middle of your learning space, and place the candle on it. Explain that the church is now in the season of Lent, the time when Christians prepare for Easter. Purple is the church color during Lent. As you light the candle, say, “Lent is a time for us to remember how Jesus’ love shines on us and guides us in living God’s way.”

Pray aloud, encouraging the children to repeat each phrase:

*Dear God, / thank you for the quiet season of Lent. / Help us to journey with Jesus every day. / Amen.*

Show Color Pack 1. Invite the children to wonder about what this child is doing. Ask:

- ✧ Do you think she is supposed to eat the cake? Why or why not?
- ✧ What do you think she is thinking?
- ✧ Do you think she will take a piece of cake? Why or why not?

Invite the children to recall times when they really wanted to do something that they knew they shouldn’t do (for example, eat too many sweets, take a toy that belonged to someone else, or join with a friend in misbehaving/breaking a rule). Define such situations as “being tempted.” Discuss:

- ✧ How does it feel when you really want to do something that you shouldn’t?
- ✧ When is it easy to say no when you are tempted? When is it hard to say no?

Say that today’s Bible story is about a time when Jesus was being tempted.

If learners ask about the devil, explain that in Jesus' day, people thought the devil was the leader of the powers of evil that work against God. Some learners may be frightened of the devil. Assure them that God is more powerful than anyone or anything.

## EXPLORING

Show Color Pack 2 and say that this is a desert wilderness, a place that doesn't get much rain. Invite learners to imagine what it would be like to be in this place. Ask:

- ✪ If you were in a place like this, where would you rest? What would you eat? What would you drink? How would you get help if you needed it?

Say that the Bible story today is about a time when Jesus was in a place just like this. Open the Bible to Luke. Recall that this book of the Bible has many stories about Jesus. Follow the instructions on Resource Sheet 1 (Storytelling Guide) to tell the story.

Afterward, discuss the Bible story:

- ✪ What did you like about your part in the story?
- ✪ What did the devil tempt Jesus to do?
- ✪ If you had been tempted like Jesus was, do you think you would you have said the same things he did? Why or why not?
- ✪ Jesus was in the wilderness a long time. What do you think helped Jesus to remember that God loved him?
- ✪ How do you think Jesus stayed so strong when he was tempted?
- ✪ How does God help us to stay strong when we are tempted?

Say that after Jesus left the desert wilderness, he was ready to carry on with doing God's work. Comment that Jesus knew that God loved him and trusted God to guide him. Praying—talking with God—helped Jesus to remember these things when he was tempted. Wonder how Jesus was strong enough to do the work God wanted him to do. Comment that praying can help us to be strong, too.

### **Dona Nobis Pacem**

Dona nobis pacem, pacem.  
Dona nobis pacem.

Play "Dona Nobis Pacem" (track 5 on *Singing the Feast*, 2021–2022). Tell the learners that the words mean "Give us peace." Encourage the children to sing along with quiet voices as a singing prayer.

**EASY  
PREP**

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Lenten Calendar** Children will make a Lenten calendar to help them observe the season with their families. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (40 Days of Lent). Take a moment to talk about how your church observes Lent and to encourage learners to take part in Lenten worship services and activities with their families. Count aloud the number of spaces on the path. Explain that the forty days of Lent do not include Sundays. Invite learners to use a crayon to draw a cross on each of the first four spaces and to color the picture of Jesus on the space for today. Option: Give each child a bag of stickers and have each one put a sticker on each of the first four spaces. Encourage the children to take the calendars (and stickers) home to use with their families during Lent.

2. **Quiet Place** Children will create a space where they can pray and listen to God. Explain that sometimes people need a quiet and private place where they can go and be with God. Tell about the space where you go when you want to pray, read the Bible, or sit quietly with God. Invite the children to help you arrange blankets, beach towels, or cushions to create a comfy corner in your learning space. Place children's Bibles or storybooks about Jesus in the area. Option: Play a CD of quiet music. When the space is finished, have children spend a few moments there, reading, praying, or just sitting quietly. If possible, leave this area in place for all of Lent, and encourage the children to spend a few quiet moments there each Sunday.
  
3. **Sand Footprints** Children will make an image of a footprint in the sand to help them remember to spend quiet time with God, as Jesus did in the wilderness. Trace each child's foot on a sheet of plain paper. Have children cut out their footprints, put a small roll of masking tape to the underside of it, and tape it to a piece of construction paper. Have them rub on a thick layer of glue stick around the edge of the footprint. Lay the paper on newspaper and sprinkle sand on the glue. Remove the footprint and shake off excess sand from the paper. Invite them to write a few words to remind them of God's love with them always.

## CLOSING

Gather with the children around the candle. Invite them to pray silently, asking God to help them make good choices, as they listen to "Wherever I May Wander" (Color Pack 30; track 19 on *Singing the Feast, 2021–2022*). When the song ends, pray aloud:

*Thank you, God, for being with us when we are tempted. Help us to always trust you. Amen.*

Say good-bye to each child by name, offering this blessing: "(Name), God loves you and will be with you wherever you go."

## Storytelling Guide

(Based on Luke 4:1–13)

### About drama and children

Drama helps children acquire good listening skills and taps into their creativity. Many children love the idea of dressing up, play acting, or pretending, and are eager to participate in dramatizing stories. Some children prefer quieter roles. Encourage learners to participate in ways that feel comfortable, even if that is being an observer. You may find the children will have lots of suggestions as they become familiar with a story. Consider keeping simple costumes—such as shawls, head covering, robes—on hand for children to use as they dramatize stories.

**Directions:** Form two groups of learners. Option: Ask one adult or older youth to lead each group. Give each leader a copy of the script. Encourage the children to copy the actions of their group leaders.

### Storyteller

Jesus went to the desert to pray. *(Fold hands and bow heads.)*  
He prayed forty nights and forty days. *(Show ten fingers four times.)*  
He was very hungry and wanted to eat. *(Rub stomach.)*  
Then the devil appeared and took a seat. *(Bend knees as if preparing to sit.)*

### Group 1

The devil picked up a rock and said,  
“If you are God’s Son, make this into bread.” *(Pretend to pick up a rock and hold it.)*

### Group 2

Jesus said, “Bread is good to keep us fed,  
but we don’t live with only bread.” *(Hold up hands, palms facing out and shake head.)*

### Group 1

The devil said, “If you are who you say you are,  
take all the riches from near and far.” *(Move hands and arms slowly to make a big circle.)*

### Group 2

Jesus said, “No way! I serve God and God alone.  
I worship God and God alone.” *(Extend arms straight out and then fold over heart.)*

### Group 1

The devil said, “Then jump from here, from way up high.  
The angels will catch you. You cannot die.” *(Crouch down and then jump in place.)*

### Group 2

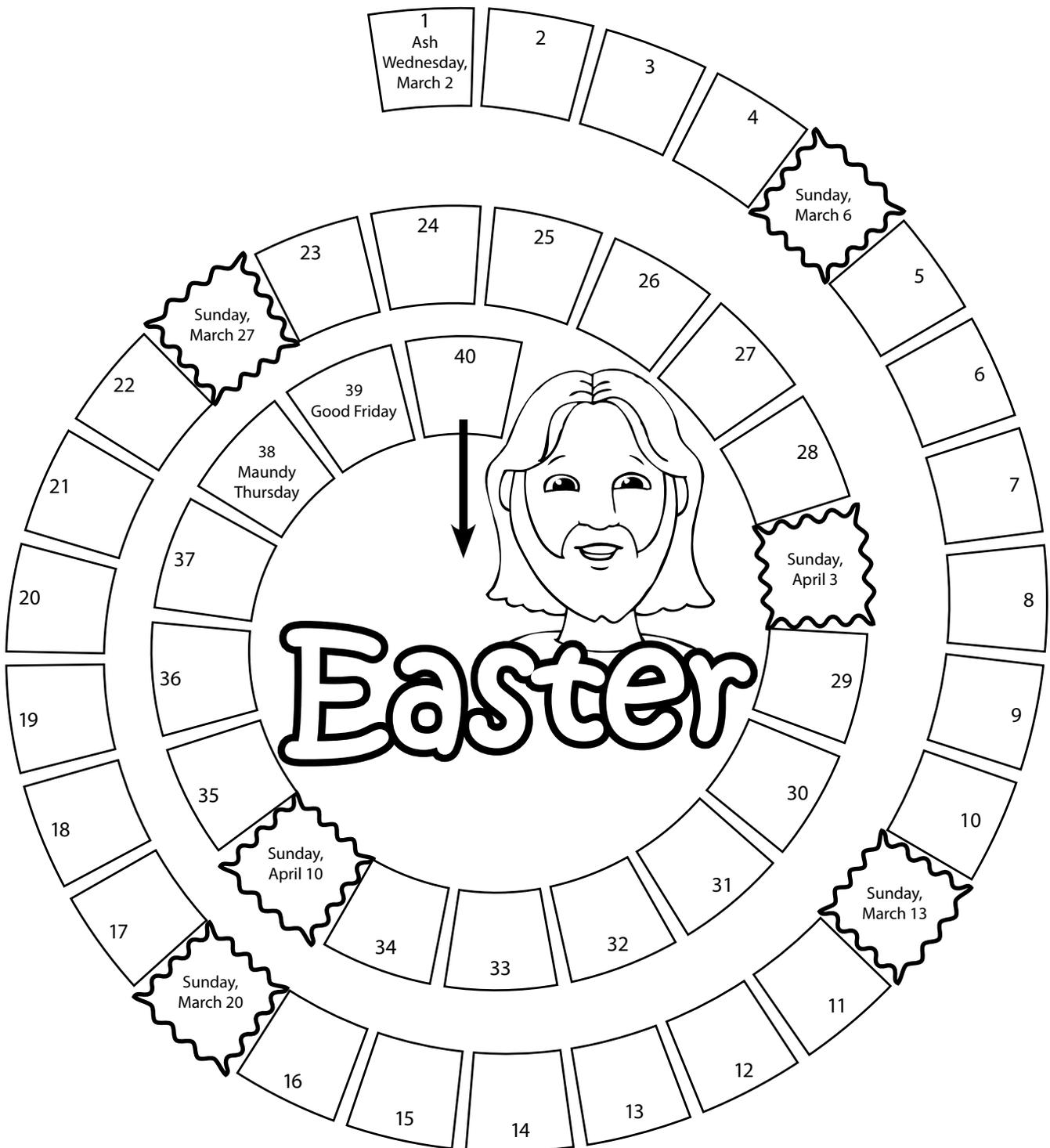
Jesus said, “I’ll never do what you tell me to do. *(Point thumb to chest.)*  
Get away now! We are through!” *(Jerk thumb to the side in a “Get away” motion.)*

### Storyteller

Jesus knew that God was with him in the desert. He felt safe and strong. Jesus knew that he was God’s Son, and he was ready to begin God’s work in the world.

## 40 Days of Lent

**Directions:** The Season of Lent is a time to prepare for Easter. It lasts forty 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.



*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.*

## ■ 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

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.

A circular calendar for the 40 days of Lent. The calendar is divided into two concentric rings of 40 numbered boxes each, arranged clockwise from the top. The outer ring contains boxes numbered 1 through 40. The inner ring contains boxes numbered 1 through 40. The word "Easter" is written in a large, bubbly font in the center. Above the word "Easter" is a line drawing of Jesus with long hair and a beard. An arrow points from the top of Jesus' head down to the word "Easter".

Key dates and events are labeled in specific boxes:

- Box 1: 1 Ash Wednesday, March 2
- Box 24: 24
- Box 25: 25
- Box 26: 26
- Box 27: 27
- Box 28: 28
- Box 29: 29
- Box 30: 30
- Box 31: 31
- Box 32: 32
- Box 33: 33
- Box 34: 34
- Box 35: 35
- Box 36: 36
- Box 37: 37
- Box 38: 38 Maundy Thursday
- Box 39: 39 Good Friday
- Box 40: 40

Sundays are marked with starburst shapes and labeled:

- Box 5: Sunday, March 6
- Box 17: Sunday, March 20
- Box 22: Sunday, March 27
- Box 35: Sunday, April 10
- Box 39: Sunday, April 3
- Box 40: Sunday, March 13

*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.

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#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

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

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

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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.

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

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

March 6, 2022  
Jesus Is Tempted

Tweens  
Resource Sheet 2

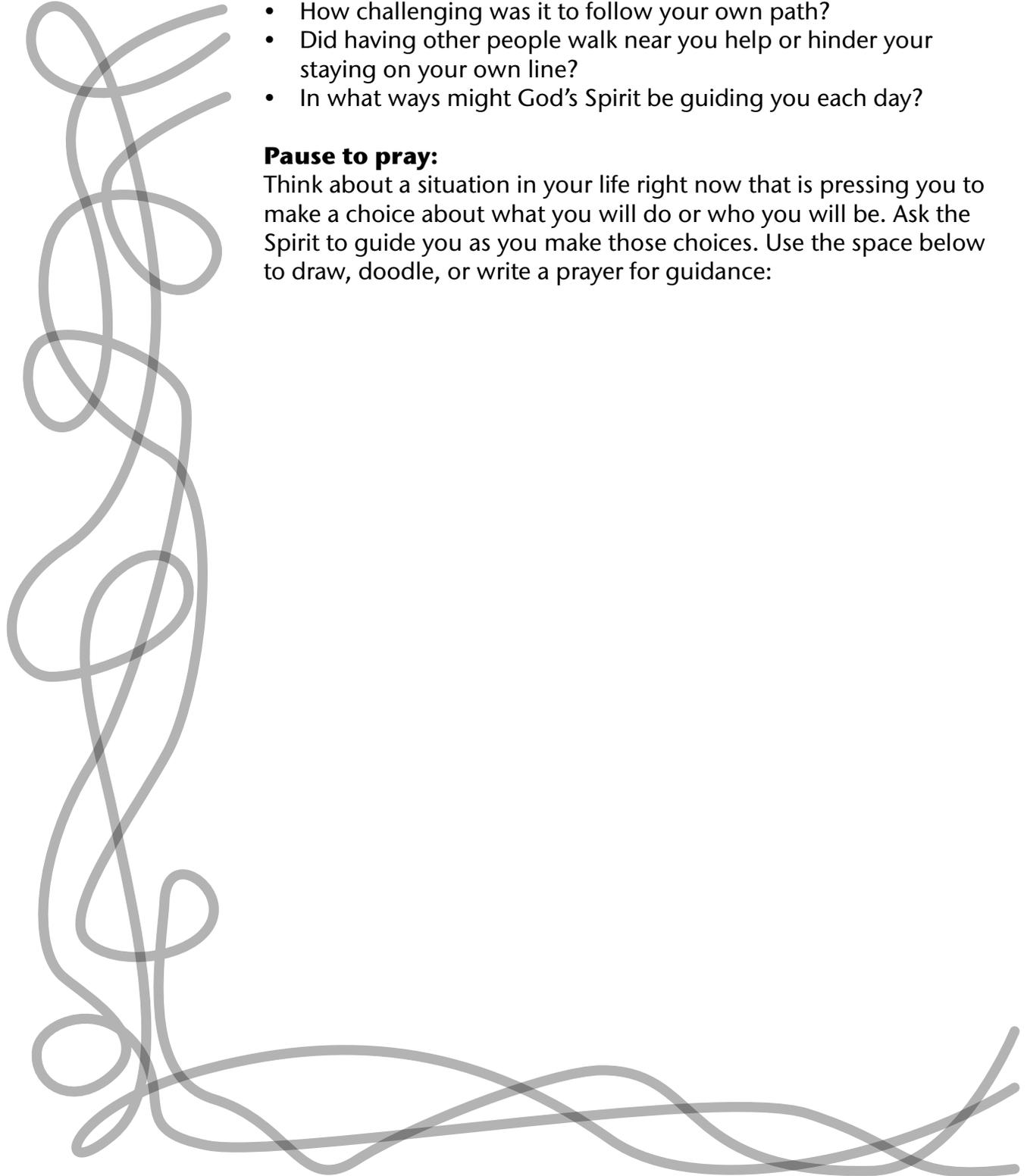
## led by the Spirit

### 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:



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

# Wilderness Testing

**Goal for the Session** *Heeding Jesus’ response to his testing in the wilderness, adults will commit to Lenten practices to strengthen their faith.*

## ■ 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

Many adults are familiar with the wilderness experiences of life. The hardships of lost jobs, damaged relationships, or life-threatening illnesses test the resolve or the faith of the strongest. Yet prosperity can prove to be a far greater temptation, turning us away from centering our lives on the Holy One. To be sure, prosperity itself is not a bad thing. The test comes when the good things money can buy take center stage. Lent offers the opportunity to shine the clear light of God on our lives, turning toward penitence and away from those things, albeit good, that may test our relationship with God.

*Eternal God, focus my attention and my intention on you as I prepare to lead. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- copies of Resource Sheet 1 for March 13, 2022
- candle, matches

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pens
- option 2: Resource Sheet 1, newsprint or board and marker, writing paper, pens
- option 3: writing paper, pens

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session, for option 2 in Responding, print the following on newsprint or a board: In my daily routine, how might I become more intentional in my relationship to God? How might I become more receptive to God's grace?*

Welcome participants, reminding them that today is the first Sunday of Lent. If in the last session the group did a personal relationship inventory, invite those who are willing to tell about their discernment of ways to strengthen their relationship with God.

Ask adults to think about a time when they were tested through some difficult or challenging experience. Ask:

✠ Do you recall feeling God's presence in the midst of that experience?

Say that in this session, adults will encounter a time when Jesus himself was tested.

Light a candle. Invite the group to imagine themselves to have gone to a place of solitude, where they sit quietly, breathing in and out slowly. Ask them to consider what in their lives serves to distract them or turn them away from God. Encourage them to bring those things before God, offering them up and committing to move those things from the center of their lives.

Pray the following:

*Holy God, we give thanks for your enduring presence. Guide us now as we seek to discern more clearly your loving intent for the world. Amen.*

Throughout his Gospel, Luke continues to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit. While here the presence of the Holy Spirit does not mean the absence of testing, the Spirit is the power of God available for the contest.

Adults come with a variety of past experiences with Lent, from not observing it at all to giving up meat on Fridays. Encourage them to come to the season open to fresh expressions of attentiveness and penitence.

**EASY  
PREP**

## EXPLORING

Remind participants that five weeks ago, they explored Luke's account of Jesus' baptism, where the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. In today's focus scripture, which immediately follows his baptism and genealogy (Luke 3:21–38), Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tested.

Before reading the focus scripture, distribute Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on Luke 4:1–13), and ask adults to silently read the "What?" excerpt. Ask adults to consider the following:

✪ What is the difference between a temptation and a test?

Form two groups. Ask one to listen closely to how the devil tests Jesus, while the other listens for Jesus' responses. Then read the focus passage, Luke 4:1–13, aloud. Afterward, ask the group listening for the devil's tests to describe them in turn, while the other group describes how Jesus responded.

Form small groups of three. In each group, ask one person to read Deuteronomy 8:1–3, one to read Deuteronomy 6:10–16 (the two passages from which Jesus quoted in his responses) and the third Psalm 91 (from which the devil quoted). Ask each person in a group to briefly summarize his or her passage for the other two. In the total group, discuss:

- ✪ What are the parallels between how Deuteronomy describes the experience of the Israelites and Jesus' experience?
- ✪ Who accompanied the Israelites in their long years in the wilderness? Who accompanied Jesus in his testing?
- ✪ In the absence of witnesses to this key event in the life of Jesus, how might we ourselves serve as witnesses?
- ✪ The phrase translated "If you are the Son of God" can be translated "since you are the Son of God." What difference, if any, does that make in understanding the passage?

To transition to Responding, ask volunteers to read aloud the "Where?" and the "So What?" excerpts. Ask them to reflect on the following:

- ✪ How does one say yes to God and no to the world?
- ✪ What spiritual tools do we have to remain intentional and receptive to God in seasons of protracted difficulty? In prosperous times when the good things of the world put us to the test?

Suggest that Lent is a time to further develop, or take on for the first time, practices that can increase intentionality and receptivity to God.

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of these activities depending on the length of your session.

1. **Fasting to Strengthen Faith** By refraining from that which dilutes a focus on God and giving themselves to other practices, adults can strengthen their faith. Say that when Jesus went into the wilderness to be tested, he fasted and prayed. Distribute Resource Sheet 2 (Slow Down—and Fast) and pens and invite someone to read aloud

the explanation of fasting. Invite adults to consider the expanded definition of fasting as abstinence and the suggested options for abstinence. Ask them to name other options from their own lives, as well as posing questions. Encourage adults to take the sheet home and commit to practicing fasting and prayer during Lent.

- 2. Commit to Intentionality and Receptivity** In exploring an understanding of intentionality and receptivity to God's grace, adults can commit to practices to strengthen their faith that fit the way they live. Refer the group to the "So What?" excerpt's focus from Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on Luke 4:1–13) on intentionality and receptivity. For a variety of reasons, many adults do not set aside time for daily devotions.

Call attention to the posted questions and hand out writing paper and pens. Suggest that, rather than guilt tripping themselves for what they may not be doing, they examine their daily routine, identify ways to practice intentionality and receptivity in the midst of daily living, and write them down.

For example, if they take a commuter train to work, are in a video meeting, or are dropping children off at school, suggest that they notice people and situations around them and say a silent prayer for them. Encourage them to keep track of how often they are able to do this in the coming week.

- 3. Identify Forms of Prayer That Work** By identifying forms of prayer that fit their lives, adults can commit to practices that can strengthen their faith. Suggest that breath prayers—inhaling while praying one phrase, and exhaling while praying another—can be a powerful way of being more mindful of God throughout the day. Two other examples of prayers that fit the fabric of many people's lives are praying the newspaper—intentionally praying for the events and people in news stories one reads in the paper or online—and praying while walking, in which one prays for what one observes while on a walk.

Form small groups, distribute writing paper and pens, and invite adults to make a list of forms of prayer that they have used. Make a master list, or ask a volunteer to do so, and e-mail it to all members of the class.

## CLOSING

Pray the following:

*Gracious God, as your Spirit was with Jesus in his time of testing, be with us now as we seek to be more mindful of you, more intentional in discerning your presence and will, and more receptive to your abundant grace. Amen.*

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for March 13, 2022, or e-mail it to the participants during the week. Encourage participants to read the focus scripture and Resource Sheet 1 before the next session.

## Focus on Luke 4:1–13

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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.

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## Slow Down—and Fast

*Fasting is a form of interior “spring cleaning”*  
—Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast*, 80.

When Jesus was faced with his tests in the wilderness, he combined prayer and fasting. This and other examples in the Gospels suggest that the combination of prayer and fasting invites a greater measure of God’s power to be released through us than by prayer alone.

Lent is the traditional season of prayer and fasting in preparation for the great “feast of feasts,” Easter, the great fast of the church year. What real significance can Easter have if we do not know the experience of Lent? As Protestants began to recover church seasons, many of us took on the tradition of “giving up” things—dessert, chocolate, popcorn, chewing gum, or other frivolities. What we have participated in and witnessed is the trivialization of a very profound discipline. The question we need to ask in any spiritual discipline is:

- What does God want to accomplish in me in this discipline?

While refraining from eating food is the original meaning and most basic expression of fasting, one might consider fasting in terms of its inner dynamic: *abstinence*. In a culture obsessed with consumption, we need to consider fasting in terms of the whole of our affluent and addictive lifestyle. The purpose of abstinence is to learn to enjoy rightly God’s good gifts. What would it mean to abstain from the following:

- constant media stimulation?
- overpackaged, processed foods?
- needless shopping sprees?
- personal recognition?
- judging others?
- overpacked schedules?

Prayerfully consider the question of what you are doing or consuming to excess, that may be serving to distance you from experiencing God more fully. If you choose to fast from a thing, practice, or habit, keep a prayer journal to record your thoughts and prayers for a time.

—Excerpted and adapted from “The Practice of Self Emptying: Rediscovering the Fast,” in *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life, Newly Revised Edition*, 2014, by Marjorie J. Thompson (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 81–94.

