

## **Fighting Temptation**

Matthew 4

SERIES “Fight”

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Intro – This morning, as we continue our series Fight for what matters, we’re looking at Fighting Temptation! That’s our title if you’re taking notes: Fighting Temptation. If you have your Bible, open with me to Matthew 4, and as you do, check out this video!

[https://youtu.be/Hl0812k0yNw?si=1FCrxgo5QIQ\\_KNNp](https://youtu.be/Hl0812k0yNw?si=1FCrxgo5QIQ_KNNp)

Those kids never stood a chance! They weren’t strong enough, didn’t have the willpower, the fruit snacks were right there – so tempting. Now, you may be thinking...no big deal. You could sit there all day and not eat the fruit snacks, you may be right. BUT – I’m right when I say this – none of us are as strong as we think we are when it comes to temptation.

Proverbs 16

18 Pride goes before destruction,  
and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Wisdom from Proverbs would say do your best not to even sit at the table with temptation...whether that temptation is fruit snacks or the serious issues of life that could ensnare us. The reality is, because of the world we live in, we’re all going to be tempted in ways that are dangerous to our lives and our souls. Jesus was tempted...and we will be too. Look in Matthew 4 at the temptation of Jesus.

Matthew 4: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

These first two verses set the scene for us here. Jesus has just been baptized by John the Baptist and is now led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. This is one of the great miracles of the incarnation, Jesus fully God and fully man...here we see the Holy Spirit leading Jesus just like Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will lead us. Don’t miss the fact that the Holy Spirit is at work here and as a believer, he’s at work in YOU!

Jesus goes to the wilderness, a place of isolation in the countryside. He’s fasting. This is time with the Father before he begins his public ministry. It’s a great reminder for us – Make sure you carve out time to pray and get alone with the Lord daily – that’s the model Jesus gives.

At the end of his time of fasting, look at verse 2, Jesus is hungry. That’s when the devil shows up and temptation begins.

Now, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit and the Devil are about to go head-to-head with real temptation here. Before we read about it, think for a minute about the goals of both Jesus and the Devil. John 10:10 puts it very clearly: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Jesus is very clear that his goal is to give us ABUNDANT LIFE. Eternal life. I need it, you need it, and we can have it, because of JESUS. The Devil’s stated goal is to destroy – to kill.

Matt Carter said it like this, “We think about our sin in terms of a struggle rather than a life and death issue.” And he’s right, that’s a problem!

As we look at temptation here, understand how serious the temptation you face on a regular basis actually is! The mission of the devil with every temptation you face is to ruin your heart and to rob you of the goodness of God!

3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

Stop there – IF you are the son of God? Well, is Jesus the son of God?? If your Bible is open, look back at chapter 3 – verse 17 - a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” God just opened Heaven and declared Jesus to be the son of God.

3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

So, IF you are the son of God – we know that Jesus is. Jesus knows that He is. But don’t miss this strategy of the devil because he uses it on us too. The devil takes what God has declared and tries to get us to doubt it! JD Greer says, Satan puts question marks in your life where God has put periods!

When you face temptation, understand who God says you are! If you’ve placed your faith in Him, when you face temptation remember that you too, are a child of God! That’s the big lesson here – Jesus is the SON OF GOD and as children of God we can turn to him when we’re tempted. He’s tempted in several ways here...

First, we see Jesus tempted in the area of provision. FIRST in the area of provision... We’re often tempted in that exact same way...tempted by finances, comfort, worldly items we need or think we need to survive. Jesus is tempted to provide for himself bread in a moment where he was physically hungry. You may be thinking, what’s wrong with that? Good question – listen, sometimes when we’re tempted, the action isn’t necessarily wrong, sometimes the issue is the motive behind it! The devil is trying to get Jesus to take a shortcut here rather than trusting God to provide. Be aware, sometimes temptation is the devil trying to get us to move for the wrong reasons or in the wrong time. Jesus resists, and he does so quoting scripture. Look at verse 4: 4 But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

By using the phrase “it is written,” Jesus is pointing to the full authority of God and the word of God. And it is written in Deut. 8:3 – where Moses tells the people of Israel that they should trust the word of God even more than the manna God fed them with when they were in the desert.

This is all about trusting God to provide...Jesus did, do we?

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up,

lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Jesus has been tempted with provision, and now we see the devil tempts with protection. Look at the words of the devil here. He questions Jesus’ identity as the son of God and does it by using the words of Scripture! Jesus has been answering with the word...and now the devil decides to bring the word into the temptation just like he did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Right??

Think about this for a minute. Satan knows scripture...he takes parts of Psalm 91 and distorts it. In Ephesians 6 where we read about the armor of God, we see it’s so we can stand against the devil’s schemes. Distorting and twisting the words of God is a SCHEME of the devil, we see it right here used against Jesus. I can promise you, the enemy knows the word of God, he knows the power that God’s word has in the life of a believer, and he wants to do anything he can to get us to doubt it, question it, ignore it, turn from it or pervert it.

The enemy is using people in the world today to share HALF TRUTHS from the Bible, just like he does with Jesus here...messages that may sound good, that may have you leaning in a bit, messages that start from the word and then get twisted...with the soul intent of leading people astray!

Be careful around people who quote the Bible but don’t live it!

Don’t fall for cheap or twisted imitations – KNOW the word of God! Think about that for a minute...sometimes the enemy’s most effective work in the life of a believer is to get us so distracted that we begin to ignore the words of God on a daily basis.

It could be that the temptation Satan throws at you has nothing to do with adultery, lying, murder, or stealing...that would be too obvious to you...slow down a minute here and think about your life. So often, Satan’s greatest temptation is seemingly innocent distractions...that cause us to simply ignore the word of God.

There’s a cell phone sitting on the nightstand and when you wake up you innocently scroll for a bit and before you know it so much time has passed you rush through your morning leaving no time for prayer or Bible reading.

Our lives are fast paced and full of distraction. Sometimes the enemy’s greatest temptation in our lives is simply distraction. Pay attention.

Here, Jesus is tempted with a distorted promise of protection. The temptation was to let his circumstances bring meaning to the word of God INSTEAD of the word of God bringing meaning to his circumstances. That’s backwards...and Jesus knew it. He answered from Deut 6 again and said do not put the Lord your God to the test. The devil quoted scripture, but Jesus lived it!

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God  
and him only shall you serve.”

11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Third, we see, the devil tempts with power.

He shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world and says bow to me and you can have it all. Now, that desire to have it all, to be in control, for ultimate power...that's been a temptation at one level or another for people since the garden of Eden...and that's what the devil promises Jesus.

Jesus doesn't entertain it for a second! He understands, it doesn't matter what the promise is behind the temptation, if it means we trade obedience to God for it, it leads to spiritual death, not life!

Think about what Satan is offering Jesus here...he's telling Jesus that he can take the crown without enduring the cross! That's not God's plan for Jesus...God had already promised that the Messiah, that Jesus, would be lifted up, that he'd have it all, be over all...that every knee would bow to him...BUT remember, Jesus came as the SON of God to live and die so that we could all become sons and daughters of God...God promised to lift Jesus up AFTER the cross.

Phil 2 - 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To follow the words of Satan over God would derail God's plan of salvation, which is exactly what the devil is trying to do...remember, he's all about steal, kill, and destroy.

Jesus answered the lie with truth from the word. Look at verse 8...it is written “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve HIM only.” It's written in Deut 6:13 – Jesus quotes the true words of God...he rests on that.

There's real spiritual truth here – crowns that come through disobedience come at a high price. Jesus said in Mark 8:36 - 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Remember what we said earlier – temptation is serious, the mission of the devil is to ruin our hearts and to rob us of the goodness of God...

So, three times Jesus is tempted and three times he resists temptation and remains obedient to God the Father. But look at the end of verse 11...the devil departed until an opportune time. This wasn't the final time temptation would come...that's a great reminder for us, we will be tempted...and when the temptation passes, we'll be tempted again.

1 Peter 5:8-9 - 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

The enemy brings temptation to believers – his mission is to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus perfectly resists temptation, and as we strive to do the same, we have some lessons to learn here.

First, The devil will tempt you.

Plan on it, count on it, and be ready for it. Don't be surprised. Understand he doesn't tempt with scenarios that look bad...to Jesus he presented food, power, and protection...all good scenarios – but with evil intentions. Temptation looks good – but there's a hook.

My kids and I fish often...and we catch fish by making them eat plastic...think about that. Why would they eat it? Because we make it look good...when the devil tempts, he makes it look good...and it happens to all of us.

Temptation doesn't make us unique; it makes us human. 1 Cor 10:13 - 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Temptation is common. God is faithful. Temptation isn't the sin, giving in is. I love how Martin Luther phrased it:

Martin Luther: "You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

God always provides a way out, a way to resist. How did Jesus resist? That's our second lesson: Second, Fight Temptation with Truth.

We have to spot the lie, right? Sometimes it's obvious...have you ever opened your emails and found an email that was clearly a scam? I remember one of the most popular scams was an email claiming that it came from a dethroned prince in Nigeria and if you would send him your bank info, he'd transfer his many millions of dollars to you and then you could split it with him. As I say that out loud, you're thinking...who in the world would fall for that. Well, that email scam became popular when I was in college and I remember a professor talking to us about it letting us know there were many in college station who fell for it and had millions stolen from them...there's an unfortunate aggie joke in there I'm afraid. Spot the lie. Then fight it with truth. Jesus did – three times. Every time the lie was presented, he answered with truth. Not his truth, not cultural truth...the only truth. He spoke God's word into the situation. That's a huge part of this for us, we have to know the truth and we have to bring the truth into every temptation we face!

The devil's playbook is to create DOUBT in your mind and heart...he puts a question mark where God put a period...we can stand strong against him by confidently KNOWING what God has said.

Psalm 119:11 - I have stored up your word in my heart,  
that I might not sin against you.

How much of God's word have you stored up in your heart? Think about that...if you were going to sit down and write out all the scripture you've got stored in there, how many verses would it be? Memorizing, locking God's word into our heart is a discipline we must embrace – if you took Experiencing God with Pastor Jarrett this semester, each week you memorized verses – you stored them up. And here's what's going to happen – the Holy Spirit is going to bring them to your mind and heart when you need them!

Memorize God's word and fight the lies of temptation with truth from God. Let God's word shape your heart, mind, and life – and when temptation comes, we'll be ready.

Parents – summer is coming. Make a list of verses you want your kids to store up this summer...they can do algebra; they can understand and memorize scripture! As a kid, an awesome couple right here from champion forest, Don and Rose Marie Marvin, they led me through a program called Bible drill and as an elementary school kid had me memorize HUNDREDS of verses...parents, invest in your kids this summer! Don't just think...yea, that would be nice – do it!

Because here's the cool reality of this, if we're really soaking up the word of God, we're going to constantly be reminded of WHO we really are in Christ – Children of God!

Look back at the temptation – this was all about the identity of Jesus...what did the devil say?? IF YOU ARE the son of God... Of course, he was, God opened the heavens and declared it! That's the passage – he's the son of God and we can trust Him! And if you've trusted Jesus, you too are a child of God...that brings us to our third lesson here:

Fight Temptation by Remembering who you are in Jesus! When you remember who you are as a child of God, when temptation comes, your desire will be to draw close to God!

If your battle plan is to grit your teeth and muscle through on your own, you're missing it...we fight temptation by remembering who and whose we are! We are in the hand of our father!

Jesus was able to go to the word and cling to truth because he was clinging to God! It wasn't an academic exercise of memory; it was a personal relationship with his heavenly father...Look:

Hebrews 4: 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

So, when we're tempted, draw near to the throne of grace so we can get mercy and help...who sits on the throne of grace?? JESUS DOES! The devil sits on a throne of lies...Jesus sits on a throne of grace, and as his children, we can draw near to it...and Hebrews tells us we can do so with confidence!

When you are tempted, when the devil begins to question who you are, your identity, your past, your very worth...fight back by telling him you ARE a child of God and then RUN to JESUS. We can't run from temptation without running to God! Just like a kid running from something that could hurt them...when my youngest was smaller and would pick a fight with his older brothers...when things got a little out of control, he'd run...you know where he'd run to? Not his room...there was no help there, he'd run to his father for protection. That's the big lesson here – remember you have a heavenly father and run to him! I said it up front, we're nowhere near as strong as we think we are – when that trouble comes, and we know it will...run to Jesus - He's stronger than we could ever imagine...

Because of Jesus we have victory over temptation. There are so many practical tools and lessons and discussions we could bring into our lives when fighting temptation...but honestly, if those tools don't flow from our IDENTITY in CHRIST, we're just spinning our wheels and setting ourselves up for frustration. Let every tool and strategy flow from who you are, a child of God...with that said, here are three tools I want to leave you with before we wrap up:

To Fight Temptation:

1. Prepare Before: Make specific covenants before God.

In Job 31, Job says he made a covenant with his eyes to not look upon something that would cause him to lust. He gets specific with what he's going to do when tempted. Do that. If there's an area where you struggle, get specific this morning. Here's a couple examples:

If you're tempted with greed or materialism – make a covenant before God today...the rest of this month you're going to not spend on yourself, but you're going to use your resources to bless those in need. That's a specific action you can take when tempted. Get specific.

If lust is a temptation for you – get specific before God today. Commit to not be alone with a screen that may cause you to stumble. Be specific and be intentional...and while I'm on this line of thought, parents...and everyone really, but especially parents. I heard an illustration YEARS ago about Proverbs 7 and the temptation of lust...look at the verses and I'll share it with you:

6 For at the window of my house  
I have looked out through my lattice,  
7 and I have seen among the simple,  
I have perceived among the youths,  
a young man lacking sense,

10 And behold, the woman meets him,  
dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.  
13 She seizes him and kisses him,

Proverbs 7 gives us a warning against the adulteress, the one who would tempt us with sexual sin...parents, we've got to be careful here. In the physical world we do a pretty good job watching over our kids, and because of that, more than likely, they won't engage with a prostitute in the streets,

But here's the reality – if we're not paying attention to what's going on with them online, we're opening a door for her to come right into our homes, into their rooms through their phones and computers – Parents, don't turn a blind eye here – pay attention, help your kids get specific to battle the temptations the enemy is absolutely trying to use to destroy them.

2. In the Moment: Pray for Strength.

Psalm 119:37 - Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;  
and give me life in your ways.

We have an enemy who comes to steal to kill and to destroy. We have a savior who came to give us life. When you're tempted...before you're tempted. Let this be part of your prayer life. Lord, turn my eyes from the worthless things...things that may lead me to sin. Give me LIFE by living according to YOUR ways.

And when needed: 3. Recover - Repent Quick! Why? Because we're not perfect...there will be times where temptation gets us...when that happens, turn to God for forgiveness quickly and

keep walking with him...like a kid running back to their father...to the throne of grace! Don't beat yourself up –Let the Lord pick you up...and keep going, knowing you're forgiven. 1 John 1:9 – "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

That's the key – that's the way for us as believers.

When we're tempted – let's follow the example of Jesus and stand firm as CHILDREN of GOD clinging to our heavenly father. He is our strength, our shield, our victory. We defeat temptation when we cling to the truth of the Gospel.

**PRAYER:**

1. Are you tempted now? You know your heart...what area of your life...look at it now as a child of God...how is it different?? Ask God for the confidence and assurance to RUN TO HIM.
2. Going at it alone? Trust HIM and become a child of God.

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