

“Shortcut to Disaster” // Matthew 4:1–11 // *The Whole Story* #30

Our vision is at The Summit Church is not simply to add people, but send out people—some of our best—to plant churches in places around the world that need them.

- Why a 2nd one in Orlando? We need a place to send cool mission trips. The way I see it, God and lost people are everywhere; Mickey is only in Orlando.
- If you are excited about this vision of multiplication, put your hands together

Matthew 4:1–11

Matthew 4, if you have your Bible! We read **this passage on Monday**, I believe, in our Bible reading.

- **Just out of curiosity:** How many of you are going to finish out the year with us reading the Bible? (*I didn't say you've been flawless up until now, but you're back in the saddle now, and planning to finish strong?*)

In Matthew 4, we pick up on the event in the life of Jesus that happens **directly after his baptism** (which of course we looked at *last week*). And that is his temptation.

¹ Andy Stanley, Matthew 4, Pause.

Works Consulted:

Tim Keller, “The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus”

Andy Stanley, “Pause, Part 3”

Mark Driscoll, “Jesus’ Temptation”

Tim Keller, “The Zeal of Jesus”

And while what we’re going to learn from the passage today applies to everybody, I agree with Andy Stanley¹ who says that the lessons from this passage are especially pertinent to a **certain kind** of person: Namely... **those who are uber-driven.**

- *And, by that, I don't mean those of you who take advantage of the popular taxi service; I mean those who are “really, really driven.”*
- The **13-year-old, who** when you ask what she wants to do with her life, pulls out a flow chart and talks for 15 minutes.
- The man **who always finds himself looking back** at the end of each day to evaluate what he accomplished that day.
 - He is addicted to **progress**. He loves **forward motion**.
 - He has **trouble disconnecting**. **Sometimes at dinner**, the family will be talking about something and his mind has **drifted off to what he's got to do next** to get his company or himself to the next level.
- Or the woman who gave up **corporate America** to be a mom, but now tries to dump corporate America into her kids.

These kinds of people are **addicted to efficiency**. Everything has to **run on schedule**, because they have their day organized to take advantage of the opportunities for progress.

You know these people, don't you?

- They are the **kind of people** who have a schedule for their down time and **get stressed out when things don't go according to plan** because they aren't going to be able to accomplish everything they wanted to accomplish in their down time.

Some of you this weekend **are those people**. Some of you are seated next to those people.

- I **know who you are in here because** you are the ones who know where my time clock is and are always keeping an eye on it. You're like, "I'm not sure that point was worth 4 minutes."
 - Others you are like, "There's a time clock?"

These people are usually supreme multi-task-ers. Since I started this sermon, they have paid 3 bills and sent 4 emails. You're like "I want to hear the sermon but the introduction is usually pretty fluffy, so I am going to get some stuff done in it."

Here's what I know about these people: A lot of times these kinds of people don't really care that much about money. What they love is **creating and conquering**. What's the next benchmark I can achieve? What's the next company I can turn around?

They feel **driven, almost called**, to get to the top. If that is you, **two things** I want you to know:

- First, **God created you that way**. It's part of the image of God in you, and in many ways God was like that. One day God was like, "*I am tired of nothing. I'll create a universe.*" And **when danger threatened it**, he couldn't rest until he'd turned it around.
- But second, being that way comes with some unique challenges, and Jesus shows us how to overcome them.

I'm going to walk you through this passage, and I'll show you the 3 specific temptations Satan threw at Jesus.

- (I'll tell you, this is one of **most illuminating and helpful** passages of Scripture for me, personally, because, if you didn't pick up on it, I'm included in the group above.)

4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (and then the most obvious verse of the Bible—**²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.** First,

the word "then" is very important. It doesn't just mean, "and then this happened." It means that what happens in chapter 4 **connects to what happened** in chapter 3.

And what was that? Jesus had just been baptized, **where the voice of the Father declared** over him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

This was a spiritual high. Right?

...Then... the devil.

This is how Satan works. Spiritual highs are followed by spiritual lows.

- You hear a voice from heaven followed by a voice from hell.
- New levels bring new devils.

Think of the baptism as a place of **celebration and friendship and joy**. There is water and lush vegetation. It is followed by a time of isolation in a dry, cracked, parched desert.

- The area Jesus is in is called **Jeshimon**, which literally means, "the devastation." I heard a guy one time compare a hiking trip he took with some buddies out to hike in Yellowstone National Park to Jesus' time in the wilderness here. Not at all.
- This was a horrible place to spend 40 days—6 weeks—alone with the devil—and not even some JV demon but *El Diablo* himself.
- Honestly, I can't imagine a worse situation. *I hate being alone for long periods of time; I hate not eating; I hate being in the desert; I hate camping out; and I hate being alone with Satan.*)

But **whenever God does something great in your life**, you can count on it: Satan will be right behind him to try and pull up the seeds that God has planted.

- Some of you are going through that now; some of you are about to go through it, and **I want you to recognize it** for what it is, so

that you don't panic: "**What is wrong?** God seemed so close, his voice so clear! Was it all an illusion?"

- No, times of revelation are always followed by times of testing: *Then, the devil.*

The **fact that you go through a time of temptation and struggle** doesn't mean you are a bad Christian or that **what you experienced at the baptism** wasn't real. Jesus was tempted severely right after his spiritual high, and so will you be!

In fact, **if it's been a while since you've had a head-on collision** with Satan, that's probably because you are going the same direction that he is.

- **So if I were you, I'd take a out a pen** and star that word in your Bible. If you don't have a pen, pull out a tube of and smear it; if you don't have that then just prick your finger and dab it in blood. Because you can count on this being the pattern of your life.

Second, **notice the reality of Satan.**

- Many people think it's naïve or unsophisticated to believe in Satan.
 - Seriously: with the horns, red spandex, pitchfork?
 - I'm talking about that; but a supernatural being that works in the world for evil and destruction.

Jesus didn't think it was naïve to believe in one. Neither did **Peter or Paul or John.** Satan is **mentioned 250 separate times** in the New Testament, which means almost once per chapter!

And I would say that it's actually **naïve to not believe in Satan.**

- First of all, **if you believe in God**, the idea that there is an evil, supernatural force is not strange. That's not a stretch.

- And when you look at the evil of the world, there has to be something more to it than simply misguided survival of the fittest at work.
 - If you think **all that was behind the Holocaust** was just Hitler or **all that was behind slavery** was just economics or racism, I think you are naïve.
 - If you think the **primary factor in your problem with pornography** is that you've got issues with self-control, I think you are naïve.
 - If you think all the distractions at work in your family that **make it hard to keep God at the center** are simply the result of a demanding schedule, I think you are naïve.
 - If you think all that is at work in the **discord in your small group or the trouble in your marriage** is conflict between difficult personalities, I think you're naïve.
 - If you think the **bitterness creeping up in your soul** is just the frustration of being misunderstood, I think you are naïve.
- There is **an enemy whose sole goal is to kill**, to steal, and to destroy, Jesus said; he prowls around **like a roaring lion** seeking whom he may devour.
- We **wrestle not against flesh and blood**, says Paul.
- And see, if you **don't know who you are fighting against**, you won't know how to fight.
- **Satan doesn't care if you believe in him or not.** In fact, it helps him if you don't because you're most vulnerable to an enemy when you won't even acknowledge the existence of that enemy. In the words of Kevin Spacey...

Now, watch what the Enemy does first: ³ **And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God,**

- *Wait—If?* What had God just declared at Jesus' baptism? **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."** (Matt 3:17) And now Satan is like, "If that is true..."
- Write this down:

- Satan’s go-to tactic is to break the hold of the word of God over you.
- Satan puts question marks in your life where God has put periods.

From the beginning, his tactic has been to separate us from the Word of God.

- In the Garden of Eden, he showed up in exactly the same way, saying, ‘Did God really say that? Are you sure he has your best interests at heart?’
- Jesus told a story about a farmer who went out to scatter some seed. After he did, a bird, who represents Satan, Jesus said, came along and snatched it up before it could take root.
- That’s literally what he is doing.
 - C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, His victim was thinking about God. What did you say? I didn’t argue with him, I brought him some pressing business matters that made him think, “I’ve got to get back into the real world and quit thinking about this stuff.”²)
 - His strategy is not just to make you doubt God’s word, but to distract you from it.
 - If you look over at the person beside you and they look distracted, looking at Twitter or something, grab it and sling it across the room and yell, Demons out!

² (“One day, as he [the ‘patient’] sat reading, I saw a train of thought in his mind beginning to go the wrong way. The Enemy [i.e. God], of course, was at his elbow in a moment. Before I knew where I was I saw my twenty years’ work beginning to totter. If I had lost my head and begun to attempt a defence by argument I should have been undone. But I was not just a fool. I struck instantly at the part of the man which I had best under my control and suggest that it was just about time he had some lunch. [Wasn’t this more important than lunch?] I said ‘Quite. In fact much too important to tackle at the end of a morning,’ By the time I had added ‘Much better come back after

Of course, for some of you, you don’t know enough of the Word of God for Satan to have anything to steal, which is why he leaves you alone. Because ignorance serves him best.

³ “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” (OK, now, at last, we get to the specific temptations) 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.”

Temptation 1: To prioritize the gifts of God over God himself

- There was **nothing wrong with bread**, but it was **not God’s will** for Jesus at this time. He had been led by the Spirit to fast.
- It is significant that the first temptation is not to do something blatantly immoral; it’s to **go after something good** that’s just not in God’s plan yet.
 - Satan is not tempting Jesus with booze or breasts but bread.
- Satan’s **primary strategy is to take a good thing**—like a job, or marriage, or companionship, or children, and to **make it so important** that it drives all your decisions, because you think, “I want this more than *anything*.”

lunch and go into it with a fresh mind,’ he was already half way to the door. Once he was in the street the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday paper, and a No. 73 bus going past, and before he reached the bottom of the steps I had got into him an unalterable conviction that, whatever odd ideas might come into a man’s head when he was shut up alone with books, a healthy dose of ‘real life’ (by which he meant the bus and the newsboy) was enough to show him that all ‘that sort of thing’ just couldn’t be true. ... He is now safe in Our Father’s house.” C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 2–4

- You think: **I can't be single.** I can't be happy like this. And God is not working fast enough, so I'll take matters into my own hands.
- **I have to make more money.** I have to get ahead. God is moving too slowly.
- **I have to have the approval of friends.**
- **I have to be the best;** I have to be recognized.
- And that desire dominates your emotions, and controls your behavior.

What is Jesus' response? He quotes a verse from the book of Deuteronomy, where Israel had been wandering in the wilderness, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God."

- There is **something more important to me**, he says, than even bread—and that is **fellowship with God**;
- **something more sustaining** to me than even physical food, God's declaration over me that I am his beloved Son.
- **Physical bread is good**, but my soul finds its completeness in God.

Temptation #1 is to *prioritize the gifts of God over God himself; to turn a good thing into an ultimate thing and to replace God with it.*

- **To be personal, I've told you before that I know Satan wants me to be driven by being a good preacher or successful pastor.** And so often he's the first one when I come down off the stage to tell me how good of a sermon I just preached.
 - **There's nothing wrong with encouragement**, of course, but he wants me to **base my happiness and my identity** on how successful I am as a pastor,
 - **And it's a trap**, because he knows the next time I preach, if I don't do as good, or not enough people tell me it was good, I feel unsettled and unhappy, and that will make me vulnerable to all other temptations.

If you live by success, you'll die by success, because success cannot sustain you. But if you live by fellowship with the Father, you'll have life and joy never-ending.

The first temptation is to replace the Giver with the gift.

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, (there it is again! The doubt) 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.'" (Psalms)

Satan quoting Scripture? Listen: he knows his verses, and he knows how to use them.

Can I stop here and just say this: Just because you find a verse for something doesn't mean you're using the Bible right.

- People have given me, over the years, some of the most jacked up interpretations of Scripture you can ever imagine.
- The **Bible says God wants me to be happy**, and I can't be happy in my current marriage, so I know that means he wants me to leave. And don't argue with me, I have a peace about it.
- I just quit my job and liquidated my retirement and put it all into this magic bean business because the Bible says "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*"
- Poor Philippians 4:13: two wrestlers with it tattooed on their back... Jesus vs. Jesus

One of the reasons we encourage you to be in small groups is that you are **much less likely to interpret Scripture** wrongly when you read it in **community**—when **other people** can say, "I'm pretty sure that's not what that verse means." **The last thing you want is to end up being Satan** to somebody because you read the Bible in a lazy way.

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

OK, **what’s going on** here? The **key word, I think, is “test.”** Satan is tempting Jesus to test God to prove that God will take care of him.

- “You know, *if* you are really the Son of God—*if* God really cared about you—he wouldn’t let you get hurt in a situation like this. So why don’t you try this, and if he keeps you safe, *then* you’ll know that you are *really* his beloved Son?”

Jesus’ response? Why would I need God to *prove* what he has already *declared*? Why would I need to **test God** to see if he is telling the truth?

Temptation 2: To interpret God through your circumstances rather than his Word.

It is **so easy to succumb** to this one. **When life goes good** we think we think we have the pleasure of God. But **when it goes bad** we think God must be angry at us, if he exists at all.

- “God, **you say you love** me... but this?” Or we start saying, “God **what have I done wrong?** Why are you punishing me?”

Look at Jesus. He was the Beloved Son, completely pleasing to God. Completely in step with the Spirit. **Exactly where** he was supposed to be. **Yet not shielded from pain.** In a desert.

Jesus said that **for those who follow him**, the cross would be the center of their lives.

- **The cross means** misunderstanding and betrayal by friends; suffering—often unjust suffering, and sacrifice.
- He said, **the servant is not better than the master**, and so what Jesus experienced, we can expect to also.

- **When Jesus said, “follow me”**, he wasn’t beckoning us into a barefoot walk through a meadow of waterfalls and rainbows, but to the cross, where he went.

When that happens—when the Spirit takes you into the **desert of financial hardship**, betrayal by friends, an uncooperative spouse, disrespect, unappreciative children, what will you believe?

- Will you interpret God’s word through your circumstances, or your circumstances through God’s word?

Because listen, we have something even better than Jesus and all the OT prophets had. They had the **promises of God’s word** in the prophets; we have the demonstration of God’s love at the cross.

- John Owen said that the greatest insult you can give to God, after the cross, would be to doubt his love for you.

- A **hymn we used to sing** when I was a kid, I never forgot:
I need no other argument, I need no other plea, It is enough that Jesus died, And that he died for me.
Enough for me that Jesus saves, This ends my fear and doubt;
A sinful soul I came to Him, He did not cast me out.

Or one we sing now: *When Satan tempts me to despair...*

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.”

Temptation # 3: To pursue a good thing in the wrong way

- Let me tell you why *this* temptation was so powerful: **the kingdoms of the world are exactly what Jesus had come for.** What God had promised to Jesus.
- **Satan is offering him a chance to have it**, through a short cut. Avoid the pain of the cross. Get there through a short cut.

- To walk on a path parallel to the will of God, but not in it.
- This is the **temptation to compromise**.
 - You really, really want to get **here**, and you think that's what God wants, but God doesn't seem to be getting you there fast enough.
 - *I heard a guy say that when he was a child he used to pray every night for the Lord to give him a bicycle and then one day he realized that in all of his wisdom, God doesn't work that way. So he said he just stole one and asked for forgiveness.*
- The **temptation to take a shortcut to things** you think you are entitled to.
- **It's the temptation, for example to...**
 - To **sacrifice your integrity, or your family responsibilities** to get to that next level.
 - Your wife tells you that you are working too much and your family is suffering and their kids need their dad and you're like, "Yeah, but I really want to be there! And there is a good place, and once we get there things will be so much easier. It's not like I will be an **atheist**. I can **re-adopt all my values**, and my family in such a **better position**. I will be able to **give more money**. So right now I am going to have **shortcut my morality** or **my responsibilities** to my family or my **involvement in the local church**, just a little, but it will get me there faster.
 - *When you say that, you are in the grip of Satan himself.*
- Let me tell you where this lie starts: **It starts in this moment when you are frustrated with life**, and you think the issue is your circumstance you are in: the **person you're married to**, or that you are not married, or the job, or the amount of money you

make, and you think, "*If I could just get this other thing*, then I would be happy."

- **But that is not the issue.**
 - **If you really want to have joy**, you need to be able to look up at a dark ceiling in bed at night and know you are exactly where God wants you to be, doing exactly what God wants you to do. That is the only way to true peace.
- **Jesus wanted fellowship with the Father** more than he wanted anything—more than he wanted to achieve his goals and dreams, even more than he wanted bread.
- **And because of that**, he could resist Satan. He kept his integrity. **Because fellowship with the Father** was his choice portion, his highest ambition, his living bread.
 - ((And, btw, guess what he got at the end of his life? He got all the kingdoms of the earth—because he sought unbroken fellowship with the Father first.
 - **Lewis**: first things and second things
 - **Matt 6:33**))

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

- I get the image here of **angels coming in like X-wing fighters** and Darth Vader tumbling away at the end of the 1st Star Wars...
- But **Satan is coming back**—just like Vader did. Both to Jesus and to you.
- **These 3 temptations are the core of his strategy**: to prioritize something good more than you do God; to evaluate how God feels about you by your circumstances, and to go around God to get something good.

So let me spend our **last few moments explaining why the way Jesus overcame these** temptations will give you the ability to overcome yours.

And it's not just that we learn Scripture and quote it to Satan, as important as that is. **That's what people always think.** Know the Bible. But there's something more here. **Jesus is more than just our model.** He does something here that enables us to overcome temptation.

- I told you last week that **Jesus began his ministry of substitution at the baptism.**
 - There he repented of our sins for us, and began to live the life we are supposed to live, so that he could die the death we are condemned to die.
- From **there, in this wilderness, he is re-enacting** the temptation of mankind, **so that he can reverse** the fall.
 - **Man had been in a perfect environment**—the Garden of Eden, when Satan came to him and said, “Did God really say this... are you sure that he's good? Eat this fruit, it's more important than fellowship with God. This is a better way.”
 - And the **first man, Adam, in a perfect environment**, believed Satan's lies, prioritized the gifts of God above God himself, doubted the goodness of God, and compromised God's laws in pursuit of a good thing.
- **Jesus, the second Adam, by contrast**, rejects Satan's lies—not in the Garden of Eden where all his needs have been met, but in the wilderness, where he is hungry; he prioritizes fellowship with the Father above all.
- **All that we did wrong, he did right.** So when it came to die, he could bear our condemnation, because a perfect life that ended under the condemnation of death could free those under the condemnation of death and restore to them everlasting life.

And what that **does is assures to us our place with the Father, which gives to us the** strength to overcome the temptations of Satan. **And, even more,** he **united** himself to us **by his Spirit**, which means that

the **same one who overcome these temptations for me** can now overcome them *through me*.

You see, **many people interpret the big point this passage** as meaning that the way we overcome Satan is by knowing more Scripture than he does.

- Growing up this was always explained to me like **Jesus' use of Scripture was like some kind of Harry Potter duel...** where Satan throws a temptation. And you ward it off by going, “Oh no, 1 Peter 3:8.” Bam! And it counters Satan's power.
- **And Satan throws another one** at you and you're like, “Ah, but I know the genealogy between Eliud and Jehoiachin” and Satan says, “Ooh, I can't touch that” and so he flees.
- **Satan always knows more verses than you**, and reciting the one verse you know, Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, isn't going to make Satan run away, cowering in fear.

There is something specific about the Word of God that Jesus recalls each time, something that undergirds every verse he quotes, something so powerful that not even Satan can refute it: his identity in the Father's eyes.

- Satan says before the temptation, “*If you are the Son of God.*”
- **Everything Jesus quotes** ultimately goes back to the security he possesses in who he is in God's eyes.
 - **People think Satan's main work is weird stuff...** making people foam at the mouth and levitate above their beds... and he does some of that, but Satan was not out in the wilderness showing Jesus porn. He was making him question God's presence and plan. Making him doubt the goodness of God toward him.
- This is your **main temptation**, the **root of all temptations**—to establish your identity on something other than God's declaration over you in Christ.
 - **Satan wants you to base your identity on how you live.**

- “You’re good, God must approve of you.”
 - “You are struggling; God’s withholding his verdict on you until he sees if you make it.”
- Or he wants you to **base what you believe about the love of God** on your circumstances.
 - “There’s no way God can love you and these things be happening.”
- **But Jesus—God’s own Son—came to earth to substitute himself for you**, which secures your place before the Father, because he paid your sin debt entirely; and it assures you of God’s steadfast love for you—if he would go through all this for you, can’t you trust that he’ll be **constant, present Father** in your life?
- **That’s what shatters the power of Satan**—the prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him! One word—not a lot of words, just one! The word of the gospel.

Satan will **do anything to take your eyes off your identity** in Christ, because he knows that once he does that, he can **shake your foundation** to its core, which makes you **really vulnerable** to sin.

- He’ll **try to get you to base your identity** on how well you’ve lived: “You’re no good because this is what you’ve done.”
- **Both Satan and the Holy Spirit will convict you of sin**, but they do it in entirely different ways.
 - Satan **starts with what you did** and uses that to tear down your identity: you are no good, you have no future.
 - The HS **starts with who he’s made you in Christ**, and helps you rebuild what you have done.
 - Yes, you have sin and corruption, but God has made you a new creation in Christ, separating your sins as far as the east is from the west, promising to make all things new in your life.
 - You can **tell whose voice it is based on where they start**
 - **Illus. Kharis and Allie**
 - **Satan speaks true words; Jesus speaks a louder word**

There’s a little prayer I pray, almost each day—to fortify my mind in the gospel so that I can resist Satan. I call it the gospel prayer, and it has four components:

Because I am in Christ...

- ...there is nothing I have done that could make you love me less, and nothing I could do that would make you love me more.
- ...you are all I need for everlasting joy.
- ...as you have been to me, so I will be to others.
- ...as I pray, I’ll do so according to the compassion you’ve shown at the cross and the power you demonstrated through the resurrection.
 - (Both great faith and great trust)

If not this, use something!

