

THE BIG IDEA: Temptation only works if transformation isn't happening.

The Take-Off

Sometimes preachers preach about things and topics that we convince ourselves don't apply to us, right? It may be the preacher's style, or the content, but there are, admittedly, times and passages of Scripture that make it easier for us to buy the lie that some parts of the Bible aren't relevant to us.

But not this passage at the beginning of the 4th chapter in Luke.

This is all about temptation, and temptation is something that every last one of us can relate to.

I love this true story shared a few years back in a magazine:

While my wife and I were shopping at a mall kiosk, a shapely young woman in a short, form-fitting dress strolled by. My eyes followed her. Without looking up from the item she was examining, my wife asked, "Was it worth the trouble you're in?"

We THINK that temptation gets us in trouble, but it doesn't. It's our RESPONSE to temptation that does that.

For years the running joke in my circle of youth pastor friends was that I wished the teens in my group struggled with sin, because that would be progress over them enjoying it so much!

So this morning, let's read about when Jesus was tempted and learn from how he handled it.

I think it can help us overcome temptation, too.

Let's read Luke 4:1-13, and then let me make a few observations.

1. We've got to be FULL OF THE SPIRIT if we're going to be LED BY THE SPIRIT

- a. If you had to rate your life on a scale of 1-10 on how well you think you're led by the Holy Spirit, what number would you give yourself? The lowest? The highest?
- b. I don't know any true follower of Jesus who doesn't want "led by the Spirit" to be how they're described
- c. But so many aren't, and maybe you'd throw yourself in that group
- d. Do you know why Jesus was led by the Spirit? It's because he was FULL OF the Spirit!
- e. So, how can we make sure we stay full of the Spirit so that we, too, can be led by the Spirit?
- f. We can get some answers from Ephesians 5:18-20
 - Sometimes can fill ourselves with the WRONG things and have no room for the Spirit (v. 18)
 - We can fill ourselves with the Spirit through encouraging one another with truth (v. 19)
 - We fill ourselves with the Spirit in worship (v. 19)
 - We fill ourselves with the Spirit by being thankful (v. 20)
 - Have you noticed that nothing DRAINS us of the Spirit more than ingratitude?

2. God doesn't lead us into TEMPTATION, but he does lead us into CONFRONTATION.

- a. Look where Jesus was led - into the desert!
- b. It's funny how much we try to get OUT of places like that, and yet Jesus was led INTO a place like that!
- c. So Jesus, full of the Spirit, was led by the Spirit into a desert place where he was tempted
- d. How do we reconcile that with James 1:13 which clearly say that God doesn't tempt us? Easy...
- e. God doesn't lead us into TEMPTATION from evil, but he does lead us into CONFRONTATION of evil.
- f. There was a fight to be fought in the desert, and the Spirit led Jesus there to win it.
- g. Can we just state the super obvious? Satan was willing to come after Jesus. Jesus!
- h. If Jesus was a target for temptation, how much more will we be?
- i. And so know this: God has filled you so that God can triumph through you!!
- j. Remember the promise of Isaiah 54:17 - "no weapon formed against you will prosper!" - That's NONE!!
- k. Maybe you're in the desert right now. Don't forget: Jesus won there, and you will, too.

3. God turns the places of greatest TEMPTATION into the places of greatest TRANSFORMATION

- a. So often we only see the bad side of temptation and forget that even though our enemy tempts us to trip us up, God can use temptation to build us up!
- b. 1 Corinthians 10:13 is huge here! We already know from James 1:13 that God doesn't tempt us, but he does stay with us through the temptation and uses our response to jump start transformation in us!
- c. God is a God of transformation, and here are just some verses that reveal that truth: Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17; Philippians 1:6

- d. Of course, Jesus didn't need to change, but what happened in the desert here when he was tempted is the very event that launched him with authority into his ministry.
- e. It's the same with us. We may be tempted in the desert, but we'll leave the desert transformed!

4. GOOD THINGS become BAD THINGS when they remove GOD as Lord of EVERYTHING

- a. Here's another truth I want you to notice about temptation: not every temptation is a bad thing.
- b. In fact, each one of the temptations that Jesus faced didn't seem all that bad on the surface.
- c. Temptations never do with Satan.
- d. See, Satan never tempts us with the truth; he tempts us with our preferred truth.
- e. Eating isn't bad, increased influence isn't bad, and protection from God isn't bad, either.
- f. But look a little deeper and you'll see the real temptation behind each one:
 - The first was about identity (WHO ARE YOU?)
 - The second was about authority (WHO WILL YOU WORSHIP?)
 - The third was about reliability (WHO WILL YOU TRUST?)
- g. The ultimate test of whether something is good or God is who is on the throne of our lives if we say yes?
- h. If Jesus had said yes to any of these, he would have ending up making Satan the ruler of his life.
- i. Ultimately, any temptation from Satan has that as the end goal.
- j. Good things become bad things when they remove God as Lord of everything.

The Landing

So how do we overcome temptation? If part of living in this world is being tempted in the world, how can we be ready? I love this story that reveals how NOT to handle temptation:

"Son," ordered a father, "Don't swim in that canal."

"OK, Dad," he answered. But he came home carrying a wet bathing suit that evening.

"Where have you been?" demanded the father.

"Swimming in the canal," answered the boy. "Didn't I tell you not to swim there?" asked the father.

"Yes, Sir," answered the boy.

"Why did you?" he asked.

"Well, Dad," he explained, "I had my bathing suit with me and I couldn't resist the temptation."

"Why did you take your bathing suit with you?" he questioned.

"So I'd be prepared to swim, in case I was tempted," he replied.

So what's the right way to deal with and overcome temptation?

Martin Luther said this: "When the devil comes knocking at the door of my heart, and asks 'Who lives here?' the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, "Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here."

Here are steps you and I can take to help Jesus reside more and more in our hearts:

- Fast
- Know the Bible and use it (Jesus refuted all 3 temptations with scripture!!)
- Pray

That's how we resist the devil - and the temptation that he brings.

James 4:7 says that we submit to God first - those 3 things are how we can do that - and then we'll find the strength to resist the devil.

Once that's done, he HAS to flee.

Let's pray.