

# Jesus' Temptation - Practical Lessons

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Date: 18 September 2016

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, as I said when we were reading God's word, we are going to turn back to Luke chapter four and we are going to look at the temptations of Jesus.

We began looking at this great event last week and we're going to spend a little bit more time on it today. So I'll just read the first 13 verses so that we can remind ourselves what took place.

Luke chapter four, and Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days and when they were over he was hungry.

The devil said to him, if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread. Jesus answered him, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone. And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said to him, to you I will give all this authority and their glory for it has been delivered to me and I give it to whom I will.

If you then will worship me, it will all be yours. And Jesus answered him, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

[ 1 : 11 ] And he took him to Jerusalem and said to him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here for it's written, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you. And on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

And Jesus answered him, it is said, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Last week we began by asking two questions concerning the temptations of Jesus. We're going to basically ask what happened and why did this happen.

And last week and this week we're spending a bit of time focusing on that first question, what happened? And last week we ran through very briefly what took place in this event and we started to try and draw some practical lessons from that.

And next time, which I think will be in a fortnight's time, we'll move on to the second question which is why did this happen? But today I want us just to finish off looking at the practical lessons that arise from what took place here.

[ 2 : 23 ] We've been asking what happened and we want to draw out some practical lessons from that. And we looked at the first of these lessons last week and don't worry if you weren't here because I'll just recap very briefly.

The first practical lesson that arises from this is the fact that the temptations of Jesus show us the tactics that the devil uses. It's a great illustration of how the devil works.

And if you look at the three temptations, you see that everyone is very carefully, very deliberately targeted by the devil. In the first temptation he goes straight for Jesus' point of weakness.

Jesus has fasted for 40 days so he's hungry. That's his weakness and the devil targets it by saying make these stones become bread.

You can see him targeting him at that point of weakness, trying to present before Jesus something that would be so satisfying, something that at one level is just what he needs.

[ 3 : 26 ] And so it reminds us that the devil attacks at a point of weakness. And we must bear that in mind. We must be on guard.

The devil, as we said last week, is like a lion. Not looking for the strong one in the herd, but looking for the weak one. And so very often he attacks at the point of weakness.

Isn't that so clearly the case in our lives when it's the same things that bother us, isn't it? It's often the same things that we struggle with. Maybe it's within security, maybe it's with doubts, maybe it's with fear, maybe it's with anger, whatever it may be.

It's so often it's the same things we struggle with because the devil is going for our weak point. He's going for us where he thinks he can get us. And so we must, must bear that in mind.

Be on guard. The devil attacks at a point of weakness. The first temptation shows that. The second temptation is almost like the opposite end because it's trying to not up exploit Jesus's weakness, but all that's almost exploit Jesus's strength because it's presenting a legitimate goal before Jesus. [ 4 : 37 ] He's saying to Jesus, you are the king. Therefore I will give you all these kingdoms and it sounds so legitimate. It sounds so plausible. And the devil is just trying to get Jesus to do what is at one level the right, the, the right thing, but he's trying to get him to do it for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way.

So there's this legitimacy about it, but really it's a trick. He's trying to get Jesus to do the wrong thing for the right reason. And again, the devil does that to us, doesn't he?

Tries to catch us out and he can seem so plausible, so plausible. So many things can just, it can be the easiest thing in the world to, to find a reason not to come to church.

It can be an easiest thing in the world to find a reason not to read your Bible. I can just speak personally. So often I think to myself, I'm going to read the Bible and then a million and one reasons why I shouldn't come to mind.

And they're all legitimate reasons. Oh, I better reply to that email. I better just get this done or I better go and do this. I better go and do that. All legitimate. But they're all just getting me to not do the most important thing.

[ 5 : 51 ] And so I'm sure, well, I'm just speaking personally. You try to read the Bible. You want to read the Bible, but it's so easy to be distracted, so easy for other things.

Uh, to come into your mind. So the devil can attack us in that way again. We've got to watch. And in the third temptation, the devil is trying to spoil the relationship between Jesus and his father.

He's trying to get Jesus to test God and even use a scripture to try and take him. He says, the Bible says, if you throw yourself down from here, God will send his angels to protect you. And he's trying to get Jesus just to question God's care.

He's trying to just get Jesus to doubt that his father will look after him. Now again, the devil does the same to us. Have you ever doubted whether God will care for you?

Have you ever thought to yourself, God isn't really interested in me? I think that probably every day. Do you think does God really, how could he really care for me?

[ 6 : 57 ] And that's exactly how the devil wants us to think. And that's why we must not listen to him. We must be on guard. The devil's attacks on Jesus are subtle, they're deceptive, they're ruthless.

And he attacks us in exactly the same way. So that was the first lesson and we looked at that in more detail last week. Just be on guard against the devil's attacks.

But today I want us just to move on and focus on two other very practical but very important lessons that we learn from the temptations of Jesus. And so the second lesson that we learn from here is that the temptations show us how important it is to know and to use your Bible.

If you look at the temptations of Jesus, the devil's tactics are very varied. Every temptation is going to a different ploy, a different way, a different tack, a different angle.

But Jesus' responses are all exactly the same. He does the same thing every time. What does he do?

[ 8 : 11 ] He quotes the Bible. He uses God's word. And we see Jesus use this key phrase, it is written. After the first temptation, Jesus answered him, it is written.

And then he quotes the Bible. After the second temptation, Jesus answered him, it is written. And he quotes the Bible. After the third temptation, Jesus says, Jesus answered him and says, it is said, which is basically meaning the same thing.

And he quotes the Bible. Jesus uses God's word to overcome the devil's temptation.

And this is reminding us of a very basic but an incredibly important lesson for all of us, that the Bible is incredibly important for every single day of our lives.

And as Christians, our Bible is essential for what we go through, as we go through life. As Jesus says in verse four, when he says that man shall not live by bread alone, he's telling us that life, real life, it's not so much dependent on what goes in your mouth.

[ 9 : 18 ] It's dependent on what goes in your ears. You've got to hear God's word. We've got to feed on God's word.

We have to ingest God's word into us. The Bible is so important, and we must, must make sure that we feed ourselves with it.

That's why the sermon is the longest part of our service. It's not just that I talk too much, even though I do talk too much, but the sermon is a focal point because we are trying to bring God's word into our lives.

We're trying to open God's word up to see what it says and to apply that to our lives, so that we learn more about God, so that we grow closer to Him, and so that we walk in the light of everything that Scripture says.

And my great hope and my great desire is that every week as we study the Bible together, whether it's in the morning or the evening, and in the evening at the moment, by the way, we are doing a kind of study on how the whole Bible fits together.

[10:23] And if you don't always come to the evening service, come along because it's amazing to see how the Bible fits together. But anyway, that's just our side comment. The Bible is so important, and our great desire as we come together in church is that we will be learning what the Bible says and that we will be applying it to our lives.

That's why the sermon is the biggest part of our service. And that's why you should try and read the Bible every day. And in many ways, it's great nowadays because God has provided so many technological means to do it.

You're going to get the Bible on your phone, which is fantastic. It means you've got the Bible with you all the time. Get a Bible app. Get a verse of the day to come to you every morning. It's so easy. It's so convenient.

If you're sitting in the car waiting to pick someone up, if you're waiting for a meeting, if you're stuck, whatever, get your phone out. Read the Bible. It's there.

Listen to a sermon in the car. That's one of the great things about living in Carlyway. You drive from Carlyway to Stornoway, and it's just enough for one sermon. Well, you maybe have to drive slowly for a Thomas Davis sermon because they're always 10 minutes too long.

[11:34] But for a preacher who can actually preach for a decent length of time, listen to a sermon. Half an hour. Stornoway to Carlyway. You can listen to some great sermons. And if any of you want to know where to get good sermons, which preachers to go to, ask me and I'll tell you.

And there's loads of great ones. You can listen to the free church and from other congregations as well, other denominations. You can listen to sermons from all over the world. It's a great way to spend your drive, feeding on God's word as you go from Carlyway to Stornoway.

And back. So we should read the Bible every day. But we should also talk about the Bible. We should talk about the Bible together.

And that's something I wish that we did more of. And I hope that we will do more of. That after our services, we would just chat together. Talk about the sermon and say, what did you think of that? How was that? You know, what did you think of what that verse said? To meet together in fellowship more. Maybe to have Bible studies more, to spend more time talking about the Bible.

[12:37] That's what we should be doing as Christians. And it's something that's so helpful and so encouraging. So let's spend time reading the Bible, talking at the Bible, thinking about the Bible.

The Bible is essential for every part of life. Now that's actually a very big statement that I've just made.

The Bible is essential for every part of life. And I would say that every single person in Britain and indeed in the whole world needs the Bible in their lives. Now I'm making a big claim there, but I believe I can prove it.

Because if I ask you the question, what are the biggest problems in our country today? You think of Scotland or Britain.

What's the worst things about our country? What's the biggest problems? And I'm sure you would come up with a few things. Maybe you would say poverty. Poverty is a real problem in our country.

[13:41] You've got housing schemes, communities where poverty is just ingrained. People in desperate need. People who have nothing. People who are dependent on food banks.

People who are in desperate situations. That's a huge problem. Social deprivation is linked to that. You've got countless people homeless, crippled by addiction in a mess.

And if you go and you walk into some of these situations and you look and you think, where do we start? And you know, Lewis is not exempt from that.

And there are a lot of people in Lewis whose lives are in an awful mess. What else is wrong with our country?

Broken families. That's a huge problem. Money and debt. That's a huge problem as well, isn't it? As a nation, we are, I don't know how many bazillions of pounds in debt, but we are in a lot of debt and a lot of people are in debt.

[ 14 : 44 ] So these are the big problems. And do you know that the Bible gives us brilliant advice about all of these things?

Poverty for example. What does the Bible say about that? Well, I'll read a few verses from James. My brothers show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothes comes into your assembly and a poor man in shabby clothing comes in, did you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit here in a good place while you sit in the poor man, you stand over there or sit down at my feet? Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has God not chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor man. What is that saying? That is saying, give poor people dignity.

[ 15 : 44 ] Don't think of them as lesser human beings because they're poor. Don't treat them differently from somebody who is rich. Be kind to them. Be fair to them.

Welcome them. Look after them. Now, you imagine that we did that all across our country. What a difference it would make.

What about families? The broken families is a problem in our society. Well, I'm going to read a verse from Hebrews 13. But it says, let marriage be held in honour among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Now, I don't want to talk about this in any great detail, but I don't need to say any details to emphasise the point that if we just listened to that command and if sexual relations were kept in a stable, committed marriage, many, many of our nation's problems would be solved.

It is the most simple command and our nation thinks it's so backward, but you imagine that everybody actually did that.

[ 17 : 06 ] You would never have adultery. You would never have unwanted children. You would never have children growing up, torn between homeless and instability.

You would never have women just left abandoned having made a mistake with some guy who doesn't care about them. All of that will be gone.

The answer is in the Bible. I'll do one more example. You think of money. What does the Bible say about money? Well, the Bible says a lot about money, but I'm going to read one version as year 55. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which does not satisfy? You say, why spend money on stuff that actually is empty?

And I have to hold up both hands to say that I've done this. How often do you think, oh, if I just had this in my life, if I just had this new laptop, or if I just had a new phone, or if I just had this, or if I just had that, I'm going to pour my money into it, and it can be small things with pair of shoes or anything like that, or it can be big things like a massive house that's going to leave us in debt for the rest of our lives.

[ 18 : 25 ] And we think if I just had that, and the Bible is saying these things will not satisfy, don't spend your money on that which will not satisfy.

I can think about the simplicity of that advice. Don't spend your money on something that's going to leave you unsatisfied. And if we just listened, if I just listened to that, I would prevent so much disappointment in my life.

The point in all that is that the Bible has the advice that we need. The Bible is everything that we need. You think of all the problems in our church.

You think of the difference, all the problems in our nation, the difference it would make if people came to church and heard the word of God. You think of the difference if everybody in the housing schemes on our island and on our nation could go to a place where they would have company, where they're not alone, where they're not projected, where they're welcomed, where they're respected, where they're given dignity.

You think of having churches everywhere where people could come and find strength and help and encouragement from God's word. You think of all the people who feel that they are worthless.

[ 19 : 40 ] What do they need to hear? They need to hear that God loves them so much he gave his son for them.

That's the Bible's message. That's what our nation needs to hear. The message of the Bible is everything that our nation needs.

Everything that you and I need. So please, never, ever, ever have a small view of the Bible. Never have a small view of the Bible's power to change our nation.

Never have a small view of the Bible's power to change the world. Here's a really interesting question. Why is the West the West? Now let me explain.

Why is the West, which is Europe, America? Why the West is the developed, successful, why is it an important part of the world with good law and order?

[ 20 : 39 ] Why the West is a good healthcare place? Why the West is a ruin? Why is it the West, where people with food and health have according to their needs is the West. Why is it not another part of the world? Well where has the Bible had the most influence? Where did the Reformation happen? Where was God's word printed and distributed? Where was it that the Bible shaped nations? In the West? And now we are seeing a change because the West has tragically thought that it's smarter and cleverer than God and doesn't need the Bible anymore and other places are turning to the Bible. What is the most successful country in the world at the moment? What's the country that's taking over the world in terms of economy, production, money, power, status? What country? China. Do you know how many Christians are in China? A hundred million. A tenth of the population of China would call themselves a Christian and there God's word has been influential and there a country is growing. So you can, I can prove the power of the Bible and we need to listen to it. So the Bible is essential for us as we go through life and this is a really important point if we come back to Luke's

Gospel. In the temptations Jesus was confronted by the devil. He was there about to begin his ministry. The devil has come to oppose him, to tempt him, to try and get him to fall and you ask the question how does Jesus respond? Does he do a miracle? No. Jesus does not overcome the devil's temptations by performing miracles. He does it by listening to and using God's word.

That's why Paul calls it the sword of the Spirit and you can picture Jesus using God's word like a sword to fight off the devil and it's a reminder that you don't need miracles in your life. You don't need astonishing events. You don't need these things. You need the Bible. You need to hear God's word and so this week I want to encourage you to do something that means you have more contact with the Bible in your life. Now this does not have to be big and it's so easy to get into the temptation to think oh I must read a chapter, four chapters, three chapters, whatever every day and it becomes almost with a slave to it. I'm not saying to do that. The emphasis with Bible reading is not about quantity, it is about quality and so even if you read one verse or one paragraph, read it, think about it, take it with you and you can do that in different ways. You can write a version, a piece of paper, stick it in your pocket. You can get the verse of the day on your phone. You can try and memorize a verse. I'm not very good at memorizing verses but but some people are. That's a great thing to do. Take God's word into every day of your life and apply it and so if you face temptation always ask the question what is written. If you're tempted to hold a grudge against somebody, if you're tempted to be angry with somebody and for that to linger in your heart, remember that it is written forgive one another. If you're tempted to indulge in something that you know is wrong whether it's on the telly or in terms of possessions or in terms of an inappropriate relationship or whatever, remember that it is written be self-controlled and if you're tempted to wander off after all of the world's idols and lies, remember it is written fix your eyes on Jesus. The Bible is incredibly important so take it with you in your life. That is what Jesus did and we must do the same. The third and final lesson and we'll just try and get through this very quickly through to form

I've taken a bit too long. The third lesson that we have here is that we learn from the example of Jesus. If you look at the temptations Jesus is a brilliant example and I'm going to say three things in this regard and we'll be as quick as we can. First of all Jesus is an example of someone experiencing temptation. Now this is an incredibly important point it's one of the most important points in this passage. Jesus knows what it is like to be tempted. Jesus knows what that it's like. Have a look in verse 4 there's an incredibly important word in verse 4. Jesus answered the devil and he said it is written man shall not live by bread alone and when he uses that word man he is

identifying himself with you.

He is saying that I that he is one of us. He is saying that he is part of the human race that's one of the reasons why we have that big genealogy at the end of chapter 3 in Luke's Gospel. Jesus is one of us and he knows what it is like to be tempted. When he says man shall not live by bread alone he's making a glorious statement of solidarity with you and with me. Jesus is identifying himself with us. The devil is trying to wreck Jesus's mission to save the human race but Jesus says we do not live by bread alone. The devil might want to destroy you but Jesus has come to stand alongside you and that's why we have the amazing promise of Hebrews 4 which we read at the very beginning. We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with their weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now when you are tempted it is hard. Always remember that temptation is tempting. Part of us will want it and resisting it will mean going against a voice in our heads that's saying take it do it and the battle with sin is a battle and the devil can be plaguing us and sometimes we think we are such a mess because I keep on struggling with the same things again and again and again but do you know the amazing thing? If you feel like that, if you struggle, Jesus knows exactly what you're going through. Jesus knows what you're going through. This is really important because when we struggle with temptation we can often feel that this means we should stay away from God. It's not true. You think that you know I'm not doing very well as a Christian or I'm not doing very well in my life and not doing well with my Bible reading, I'm not doing well with anything. I should keep away. I'm struggling with temptation. I should keep away from God. I'm struggling with temptation. I should keep away from church.

[ 28 : 44 ] I'm struggling with temptation. I should stay away from the Lord's table. I'm not good enough. Things aren't going well for me. I'm not what I should be. I should stay away. That's how we think. But look at what Hebrew says. When you are tempted, God says, draw near. Isn't that amazing? If you are struggling in life, if you are a million miles from where you should be, if you feel that you are just nowhere near the standard that God expects, nowhere near the standard a Christian should be, you're nowhere near everything that you think everybody else is, you're just rubbish. God says to you, draw near. Don't ever stay away. Don't ever keep your distance. Draw near. Whoever you are, whether you have been a Christian for many years, whether you're struggling as a Christian, whether you're maybe not sure yet if you are a Christian, maybe you want to be, but things aren't coming together, just hear these two words. Draw near. Whatever you're going through today,

Jesus knows what that is like. And that's why so often we see a beautiful prayer in the Bible. I'm going to read a version from Ezekiel which sums up, I think, a prayer that I want us all to remember and to use. God says to Ezekiel, in Ezekiel 37, son of man, can these bones live? Ezekiel was seeing a vision of dry bones.

And God asks him a question, can these bones live? And Ezekiel's answer is a prayer that I want you to take with you every day. And I answered, oh Lord God, you know. Make that your prayer every day. Come to God and say, Lord, you know. You know what I am struggling with. You know the mistakes I've made. You know everything that I find difficult. And God will help you. And by saying you know, you're just acknowledging your dependence on God. If you want to go to the prayer meeting, but you're nervous, just pray to God, you know. If you're thinking about coming forward at the Communion, pray to God, you know. If you're worried about work, worried about finances, worried about whatever. If you are under pressure, if you are stressed out, if you are finding each week hard, just say to

God, you know. Make that your prayer. So Jesus is a brilliant example of someone experiencing temptation. But he's also an example of how to cope with temptation.

Now this is a really interesting point. How did Jesus cope with his trials in his life? When Jesus went through difficulties, what did Jesus do? Well, I can tell you what he did. He prayed. He read his Bible. He spent time with other Christians. And he relied on the fact that the Holy Spirit was indwelling him. That's the four things Jesus did. And do you notice something incredibly significant about those four things? They are all available to you. Jesus didn't do anything that you can't do. He didn't do anything that was different from what you should be doing.

[ 32 : 51 ] He prayed, we should pray. He read his Bible, we should read his Bible. He spent time with other Christians, we should spend time with other Christians. He relied on the fact that the Holy

Spirit was indwelling him. The Holy Spirit is indwelling you if you are a Christian as well. Jesus did not have any resources that are not available to you. And that means we can follow his example. We can do what he did. We can be like Jesus because he is just like us. And so he's a great example for us. And in many ways what we said at the start about using God's word is a key part of that example. So that's the second thing. Jesus is an example of someone experiencing temptation, somebody coping with temptation. But thirdly and finally, Jesus is an example to us in the way that he trusts his Father. Jesus uses God's word because he trusts God. And this is why

God is not to be tested. Because if you're testing God then you are indicating a lack of trust. Isn't that true? Jesus is saying, Jesus is an example to us of one who trusts God. And this again is one of the simplest but most important lessons we can ever learn. You and I, we've got to trust what God says. And God says a lot of wonderful things in the Bible. And I'm going to just put four of them up. God says to you, I will never leave you, no forsake you. We have got to trust him when he says that. Trust the fact that he has promised to be with us.

That his spirit indwells us and whether we go out to the depths of the sea or whether we go high into the sky or wherever we go, he will never leave us, no forsakers. Trust him. God says we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. Life brings a lot of things. Sometimes they are good, sometimes they are incredibly hard, but all of them are being worked for our good by God. Now means you can rely on him no matter what the situation. When he says these words we must trust him. Same in Matthew, the amazing words, Jesus come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Trust those words. Do you need rest in your life? Do you rest in your heart? Rest from stress, rest from fear, rest from worry. Jesus says come to me and I will give you rest. Trust him. But the Bible also says unless you believe that I am he you will die in your presence. You've got to trust that side of it too because that's true. And maybe this is what's holding you back from becoming a Christian. Maybe you feel like you just want God to prove himself to you, to prove that he will be faithful. But God does not have to prove anything to you because he already has. Does God love you? Yes he does and the cross of Jesus Christ proves it. Will God look after you?

Yes he will and every promise in his word guarantees it. Can God forgive you for your sins? Yes he can because his word promises it. And will you be able to live the Christian life? Yes you will because God himself, God the Holy Spirit will dwell within you and will lead you through every single day. And so I want you just to strip away everything and forget about every worry or everything or whatever whatever has held you back and ask yourself the question do I trust God? [ 37 : 55 ] Well do you? Please do because you'll never let you down. Amen. Let us pray.