

Natalie Ford-Cowling
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Temptation
Matthew 4:1-11

We all have one. Mine is stuffed with batteries, scissors, dog lint remover, a random CD, some pens, pencils, plastic spoons, bits of scratch paper, rubber bands, band-aids...it's the junk drawer. We all have one, whether it's in your kitchen, bedroom, office, or garage. What's in yours?

In the junk drawer you can usually find things that need to be thrown away, odds and ends that we haven't taken the time to deal with.
And at least in my house, the junk drawer can easily get so full that it gets stuck.

What about the junk drawer in your heart?
What needs to be discarded, decided, or let go?
Do you have a drawer full of hurts, grudges, fears, and failures?
Is your drawer so full that your heart is stuck?

What about the **temptations** that lurk in the junk drawer of your heart?
You know, the ways we overindulge, try to take control,
make the wrong decisions, harbor the wrong attitudes.
That drawer can easily get stuck, can't we?

So **what do we do** with all the temptations we face?

We have some answers here in Matthew 4.
The story of Jesus' temptation in the desert shows us how to clean the junk out of our hearts,
how to fight the temptations we face.
His temptation story is powerful for us because his temptations are the same as ours today.
Jesus was tempted just as we are.

But before we get to the temptations themselves, we find a few **KEY POINTS** to remember in the story.

First, Jesus was led by the **Spirit**—
in other words God took him there,
just as God allows us to be tempted and tested today.

Jesus was led into the **desert**—
 in the Bible ‘the desert’ is a place of testing,
 challenge, stress, and vulnerability.

And he was there for **40 days**—
 the number 40 being a symbol for a time of testing.
 The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years,
 Noah was in the ark while it rained for 40 days,
 Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days.

After going without food for forty days, Satan comes to tempt Jesus.
 The **1st temptation** is one of **indulgence, of immediate gratification**.
 Satan says “*If you are the Son of God, turn these stones to bread*”
 He is tempted to use his power for what he wants right now,
 without regard to who is asking for the miracle,
 and without waiting on God to provide.
 Jesus is tempted to do it himself right now, instead of
 waiting for God to supply his needs.

How often do we give into this temptation to immediate gratification?
 We certainly do it with **food**.

It was no accident that Jesus was tempted by food—
 all too often our physical appetites rule our emotions and our decisions.
 How often do we find ourselves overeating to satisfy an emotional need or
 desire, we don’t care how many pounds it adds?
 How many times do we eat what’s bad for us,
 forgetting our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?
 We eat for all the wrong reasons,
 and in the end we are still hungry.

We indulge in **shopping**.

We buy something that we want or think we need at the moment,
 without regard for the consequences.
 Can’t afford it? We just charge it, take it home, and worry about it later.
 We spend to try and make ourselves feel better,
 to solve our problems, but it only leaves us empty.

We even indulge in **relationships**.

We dive into what looks good at the moment,
 not thinking about the future at all.
 Maybe we date someone troubled because it feels good,
 even though it alienates our friends and family.

Or, when a coworker seems to really understand us,
sometimes better than our spouse,
we start to get involved emotionally or physically,
not thinking about the drastic long-term consequences.

How many times have we indulged in ***food, buying, or relationships*** to make
ourselves feel better about who we are?

How often have we tried to meet an immediate desire without regard for the
consequences?

How often have we grabbed what we want right now,
instead of waiting for God to meet our true needs?

So what does Jesus teach us about ***FIGHTING this temptation***
to indulge in our immediate desires?

We learn that we have to ***rely upon God***—

Jesus said ‘man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that
proceeds from the mouth of God’.

We don’t have the willpower on our own—
we need God’s help to fight temptation.

We also need ***boundaries*** in place before we even get to the
tempting places and people.

We need to know our choices beforehand,
so we can decide based on what’s right, on God’s will—
not what feels good at the moment.

Jesus knew God’s word and will, and knew he would follow that.

Jesus shows us that we shouldn’t rely upon ourselves—
but wait on God and God’s provision for us.

Jesus had faith that God would provide,
and we can count on that in our lives as well.

Jesus’ ***2nd temptation*** was the temptation to ***IMPRESS***.

Satan said to Jesus, “*if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down off this building, for
it is written he will give angels charge over you*”.

Jesus was tempted to test God’s power instead of following God’s will.

In fact, Satan quoted the Bible, Psalm 91 to tempt him!

We all know about this temptation to **IMPRESS**.

How often are we tempted to impress others with our possessions or abilities?

Or what we look like?

How often do we try to impress others by who we associate with,
or with our own knowledge or power?

So how do we **FIGHT** the temptation to impress?

First and foremost, we can't test God—

asking God to rescue us when we do something stupid.

And we must avoid trying to be God!

But most importantly, we fight this temptation by seeking what *God wants for us, not what other people want us to be or do.*

Galatians 1:10 has a good question for us to ask ourselves,

“Am I seeking human approval, or God’s approval?”

I Thessalonians 2:4 says *“We speak to please God, not people”*.

That’s easier said than done, though isn’t it?

It’s far easier to be a people-pleaser

than to have the **COURAGE** to follow God,

regardless of what other people think.

God doesn’t need us to try and impress Him or anyone else.

Instead God asks us to seek things beyond impressing people.

Like the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5—

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, or self-control.

The **3RD temptation** is the temptation to **POSSESS**. Satan told Jesus, *“All these kingdoms I will give you, If you will fall down and worship me.”*

Jesus was tempted to take all the worldly prestige and power, *but at a cost.*

We find ourselves tempted the same way,

tempted to take what we want, but at what cost?

How often are we tempted by more money? Power? Popularity?

It’s so easy for us to want **MORE** than what we have...

Just a little bit more money, bigger house

To be known as a successful businessman,

or supermom, or popular kid?

But what is the cost when we focus our life on work?
 Or being popular, or gaining power?
 The cost might be losing our own family, friends,
 respect, or integrity.

So, How do we **fight** this temptation to **POSSESS**?
 First, we have to realize we don't actually possess anything at all.
 Nothing.
 Everything belongs to God.
 And God gives us everything we need.

And we have to admit the **cost** of trying to possess the things we want
 Instead of accepting the things God has to give.

Deep down inside we know that all the money, power, and popularity in the world won't
 make us happy,
 It won't give us a life,
 It won't get us closer to God, or make us God.

In fact, if we let go of trying to possess,
 God will give us everything we need.

Listen to this promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *'no testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and will not let you be tested beyond your strength, he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.*

I just finished an Acts 16:5 Conference with 5 members of our church—
 it's all about church transformation, moving your church forward,
 following God's Spirit,

and one of the basic tenets is that as Christians we are called
to be and to make disciples—everyone of us.
 That's the job of the church—not for people to just be members,
 who show up for an hour here or there,
 but for everyone to become disciples of Jesus Christ,
 followers who actually imitate the life of Christ.

And here in this temptation story we see some ways we can be disciples--
 Disciples that fight temptation, and grow in their faith.
 We see Jesus relying upon his relationship with God
 And we are inspired to do the same.

During the season of **Lent**, we are going to talk a lot about being disciples.
 What it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ—
 How we learn to imitate the life of Christ.

Because that's why we are here.

We're not here to be a part of a club, a religious organization
 We're here because we follow Jesus Christ.
 And following Jesus Christ means doing what he did.
 And letting him help us do what's right

Prayer

Worship

Bible Study

Faith

Service

Giving

Witnessing

These are the marks of a disciple—the keys to being a follower of Jesus Christ.
 to **pray** every day
 to **worship** every week
 to **study** the Bible every day
 to live by **faith**
 to **serve** others
 to **give** generously
 to **witness** by sharing the good news

These are **not optional** activities, things to pick and choose

These are the things Jesus did, and the things we are called to do.

In fact, we are called to not only be disciples

But to make disciples—

that's right, we are called to help other people do these things too!

It's a **tall order**, being a disciple. It's far easier to just be a club member at church.

It's easier to just do what makes people happy, what we want at the moment

Instead of what makes God happy

But what kind of life do you want to have?

A new life, a full life--following Jesus

Or the emptiness of following things

we can't really have and don't really need?

What about that ***junk drawer*** of your heart?
Do you want to have that drawer cleaned out by Jesus?

We've heard a story about Jesus' temptation,
but it might as well be us out there in the desert with Satan
We are faced with hard choices and decisions each and every day
We are tempted in every kind of way.

But ***this is the good news*** of the gospel---we have all the help we need.
We have a road map.
We have Jesus.

Hebrews 4:16 sums it up pretty well: *We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every respect as we are. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace boldly, that we may find mercy and help in our time of need.*

We follow Jesus
He is who and what we need
He will help us each and every step of the way.

May we have the COURAGE to follow him,
to live like him, to receive the new life he promises. Amen.