

# THE SAVIOR IS FAITHFUL

**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

In overcoming Satan's temptations, Jesus affirmed He is the greater Adam who succeeded where the first Adam failed.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Matthew 4

**+** **SETTING:**

The wilderness provides the backdrop for a well-known interaction between Jesus and Satan. In essence, the wilderness is a backdrop to the story of the Old Testament. The Israelites spent decades wandering in the wilderness as a result of their sin. This was a place of judgment, a place of failure, a place of hopelessness and death. The wilderness was anchored in the Israelite mind as the foremost location where they experienced the implications of sin. The Messiah entered into His ministry through the wilderness, presenting Himself to the world as the One who succeeded where Israel failed.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**Matthew 4:1-11**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 4:1**

## NOTES



### **KEY DOCTRINE #51: THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS**

While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely sinless throughout His earthly life (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matthew 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

Prove it!

Anyone who makes a claim to be able to do something great is immediately met with this challenge. If you say you can dunk a basketball, then someone is going to want you to prove it. If you claim to be able to drink a whole gallon of milk, then the same request will be made. If you made an offer to buy a home for a million dollars, sooner or later a bank is going to ask you to prove it. The greater the claim, the greater the need to prove it.

Jesus began His earthly ministry with some strong claims. He said that He is God. The Father Himself spoke from heaven declaring Jesus to be His beloved Son. Soon He would invite people to repent of sins and come to Him for forgiveness because He is One who can forgive. These claims require validation. You can't say that you are God and not prove it.

Jesus proved His claim to be God in a host of ways throughout His life. Ultimately He would prove it by going to the cross to die and then rising again and defeating death. This is surely something that only God can do. But long before that, in the remote wilderness, Jesus proved He is God by facing off against Satan. Matthew tells us that the Spirit led Him there, knowing that His victory over sin and death would prove that He is God. This showdown with Satan was a primary way Jesus proved He is God. God graciously recorded this experience in the Bible so that readers today could be reminded that Jesus is God through His sinless perfection.

**How do you know that Jesus is God?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

**Matthew 4:2-4**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 4:2-3**

## NOTES

A fisherman knows that you can't catch fish with just any bait. You might be able to throw a little bread into the water and see some fish come to the surface to take the bait, but you can't catch a prized fish this way. They are too smart. You have to know the bait the fish like and present that to them in just the right way at just the right time. You trick them into eating by presenting the bait and hiding the hook.

Sin works in the same way. Satan knows how humans are tempted to sin. He knows there are some common patterns for all people—we are prone to anger, lust, passivity, pride, and other sins like these. But even more, Satan is precise. He doesn't merely know the general sin patterns of people, but he knows the unique temptations to which each person is susceptible. In other words, he knows what bait we are likely to consume.

In this passage, Satan knew that Jesus was hungry. It's no wonder since He hadn't had food for forty days. Satan started in the place of clear need and held out a temptation that seemed too easy for Jesus to pass up. You might imagine that His stomach was growling with the ache of hunger, and all He had to do was say the word and a rock could become bread. Jesus stood up to this temptation through the power of God's Word.

This reminds all Christians that we should be alert to the enemy because he is aware of what is most likely to cause us to fall.

**How does sin present the bait and hide the hook for you?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Matthew 4:1-11**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 4:4**

## NOTES

It doesn't come easy for most of us to depend on the Word of God. After all, there is so much else in the world that we can depend on. When we face temptation, these false sources of dependence come to the forefront.

We might try to depend on our own strength. We know that sin is not good for us, so we try to work our way out of places of temptation by our will power alone. Or we might try to depend on others for help: "Maybe if there are enough people around holding me accountable or checking up on me, then I won't be as likely to give in." Sometimes we try to depend on morality—maybe since we've fought temptation in the past, then the good we've done will sustain us even if we blow it this time.

Jesus modeled dependence on the Word of God. He knew that the truth of God in the Scriptures reveals the unchanging nature of God's character and His work in the world. The best means of fighting current temptation is to observe how God has acted in the past, how the people in the past have fought similar temptations, or what truthful lessons can be learned from their failure. To depend on the Word of God, we have to know the Word of God. We will not be able to recall the truth of God in places of suffering and challenge if we do not store that Word in our hearts each day. The more we dwell on the Word, the more the truth of that Word will come out when we are tempted to sin.

**How will you grow in your dependence on God's Word in your fight against sin?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

**Matthew 4:5-7**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 4:7**

## NOTES

It sounds somewhat strange to think about “testing God.” How do people put God to the test?

It’s helpful to think about this using a human illustration. A parent might tell a child that they will be there should anything happen in the middle of the night. The parent puts the child down for the night, pulls up the covers, turns off the light, and leaves the room. The parent is completely dependable. The child, wanting to make sure, calls out to the parent thirty minutes later: “Mom, are you there?” The mom comes into the room and reassures the child. An hour later, the child calls again, this time with a more alarmed voice. The mom reenters the room with an exasperated look. “Why are you continuing to call out to me?” the mom asks. The child responds, “I just wanted to make sure you will keep your word.”

The child is testing the mom to see if she is dependable. In some ways this is sweet and endearing, but in other ways it’s frustrating. After all, the mom wants the child to know her character enough to trust her without having to test her time and time again. Her past history and proven character should be enough.

In an even greater way, God is entirely trustworthy. He does not want us to “test” Him by asking Him to prove His trustworthiness over and over again. He wants us to trust that He will come through for us in places of temptation. He is there, even if we can’t sense that in the moment. His past faithfulness to His people, demonstrated throughout the Bible and throughout our lives, should be enough to train our hearts to take Him at His word.

**What is one promise of God that you need to remember to trust Him for this week?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

**Matthew 4:8-11**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Matthew 4:11**

## NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“The Bible teaches us in times of temptation in the flesh, there is one command: Flee! Flee fornication. Flee idolatry. Flee youthful lusts. Flee the lusts of the world. There is no resistance to Satan in lust other than flight. Every struggle against lust in one’s own strength is doomed to failure.”<sup>1</sup>

–Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
(1906-1945)

The angels came to Jesus’s aid. This is a vivid picture of God’s care for His people when they face temptation and fight with the strength that God provides. He is not inattentive to the challenge of sin and the brokenness of the world. He loves His people and wants what’s best for them. He knows that they will face all sorts of suffering in this life—some that will come at them from the outside and some that will emerge from their sinful hearts.

You may have seen a video of someone who completes a marathon. They’ve been running for hours and have depleted every bit of energy they have. The finish line appears, and they painstakingly grind to it and across it. As soon as they cross, medical professionals and loved ones surround them to provide care and encouragement.

In a sense, this is a picture of God’s attentiveness to His people. When they fight sin throughout life, they will be greeted in heaven by God, who will usher them into eternal rest. But this alone is not enough. Not only will God minister to His people when they die, He meets us in this life as well. And He doesn’t merely meet us after we’ve battled sin, but He meets us in the midst of the battle and provides a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). This escape will not come easily, nor will it come in our strength alone, but we have the Spirit of God living inside of us as believers to remind us of God’s Word and give us the strength to fight sin by the power of God.

**When have you experienced encouragement from God’s presence in the midst of your battle against sin?**

# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Unbelief, just like Satan, will always take the easy way out. It will tell us to eat the fruit in exchange for knowledge, instead of fearing God to gain real wisdom. Unbelief will unravel our perceptions of both suffering and the blessedness of life and beckon us to skip self-denial at all costs with the faux promises of comfort that can't extend beyond the grave."<sup>2</sup>

—Jackie Hill Perry

## POINT 1: The Son of God trusts in the Father's provision (Matt. 4:1-4).

### KEY DOCTRINE #51: THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS

While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely \_\_\_\_\_ throughout His earthly life (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real \_\_\_\_\_ of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matthew 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

**?** What might we learn from the high point of Jesus's baptism being followed by a difficult time of challenge, such as facing Satan in the wilderness?

Satan tempted Jesus at a place of \_\_\_\_\_, and Jesus countered that temptation by pointing to God's \_\_\_\_\_.

**?** How should we react knowing Satan is real and ready to tempt us at any time?

## POINT 2: The Son of God trusts in the Father's providence (Matt. 4:5-7).

Satan tempted Jesus to demonstrate His \_\_\_\_\_, departing from His mission; but He \_\_\_\_\_, trusting God's providence.

**?** How does succumbing to temptation lead us astray from God's mission for our lives?

Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ to reject Satan's temptation of an inappropriate use of power.

**?** Why did Jesus use Scripture to counter Satan's attacks?

### **POINT 3: The Son of God trusts in the Father's plan** (Matt. 4:8-11).

Jesus was tempted to use His power and position \_\_\_\_\_, to claim the kingdoms of the world apart from God's \_\_\_\_\_.

**?** What are some occasions when we might be tempted to use our power and position proudly?

Jesus responded to Satan's temptation by directing \_\_\_\_\_ to God \_\_\_\_\_ and telling Satan to leave.

## **MY RESPONSE**

Because we have been credited with Christ's righteousness, we resist temptation by relying on the power of the One who overcame temptation in our place.

- **HEAD:** What encouragement do you find in the sinlessness of Jesus?
- **HEART:** What steps will you take to fight against temptation in your own life?
- **HANDS:** What will you do to grow in your knowledge of and love for the Word of God so that you may share it with others?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

### **VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY**

"His whole life and death were nothing else but perfect obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, and he was always fully occupied in that task. He teaches us that if we look to be children and co-heirs by adoption along with Christ of his Father's kingdom, we must also along with our Master and Lord yield ourselves up wholly to the will of our heavenly Father and always be occupied in his business."<sup>3</sup>

—Bernard Gilpin (c. 1517-1583)