

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

by Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

Jesus answered him "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

Luke 4:8

FAITH STORY:

Luke 4:1-13

FAITH FOCUS:

Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, where he did not eat for 40 days. During this time, the devil tempts him, asking him first to turn the stones into bread, then to become ruler of all the kingdoms of the world, then to throw himself down from the temple to test the power of God. Jesus has an answer for every temptation and stood strong against the devil's lures.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students understand what Jesus' temptations symbolized.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- Know the three temptations of Jesus and their symbolism for him as the Messiah.
- Think about what kind of Messiah Jesus is for us today.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Bring several loaves of sliced bread to class (it needs to be sliced).
- 2 Bring a symbol of the military—anything that your students will identify with the military.
- 3 Bring something connected to Superman or another hero that can conquer anything.
- 4 Bibles
- 5 Items to create a design or illustration on the bread—peanut butter, jam, sprinkles, candy, chocolate syrup, food coloring dyes, etc—anything that can be used to "paint" the bread.
- 6 Christian music for background if using this option in Respond.
- 7 Make copies of the Sending Blessing so each student has one.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5 minutes)

Have the bread, military and superman/hero items on display when students come in. Ask students to list everything that comes to mind when they see these items, both in terms of what the items symbolize but also other thoughts that come to mind. For example, bread symbolizes food of all kinds; the military symbolizes power; and superman symbolizes superhuman abilities. (Don't give these hints to the students—let them come up with as many as possible.)

CONNECT: (5–7 minutes)

Say: *We are going to study a Bible story today that involves these three elements. Can you guess which story it is?*

Give students time to find out which story it is. If they need a hint, tell them the story is in the New Testament. If they need another hint, say it's found in the early chapters of three of the gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke. Final hint: it happened before Jesus began his ministry.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15 minutes)

Ask for 3 volunteers to pick up the items you brought (one student takes one loaf of bread, one the military symbol, one the superman/hero symbol), and then ask for one more volunteer to be a narrator. Ask the class to turn to Luke 4:1-13. Read the passage as follows:

Verses 1-2a—narrator

Verse 2a (begins with "He ate nothing...") through verse 4—the student with the bread.

Verses 5-8—the student with the military symbol.

Verses 9-12—the student with the superman/hero symbol.

Verse 13—narrator

Lead a discussion with students regarding the connections between their symbols and what happened to Jesus. Cover the following points:

- Each of these temptations involved giving Jesus power.
- The first temptation was for Jesus to be a Bread/Economic Messiah. He would be able to provide people with their physical needs. He would be loved and followed because of this.
- The second temptation was for Jesus to be a Military Messiah. He would be able to conquer the world and all its kingdoms.
- The third temptation was to be a religious Superman who could do anything for anyone.

When Jesus said no to these temptations, he was saying he would not be a Messiah based on worldly power. He wanted people to follow him because they loved him, not because he could give them everything they wanted or had all the power in the world. He was also saying that he will be a servant Messiah—one who suffers and dies. When Jesus said no to these temptations, he was saying yes to the cross.

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)**Discuss the following questions:**

- The church is the Body of Christ. So, how do you think the church is bringing in the kingdom of God?
- When does the church use power? When is that good? When is it bad?
- When does the church use economics to minister to people? When is that good? When is it bad?
- When does the church seem more interested in being “Superman” than in being a Servant? Can you think of examples?
- A “military Messiah” could be seen as someone who forces others to follow him. Does Jesus force people to follow him?
- Should the church force people to follow the values and standards it believes in? How does this apply to laws? Can we legislate morality? Is it okay for the government to enforce Christian ideas and morality?
- How do you feel about laws that legislate morality—laws like whether beer can be sold in a certain county, whether there should be prayer in schools, whether abortion is lawful or not.
- Which statement do you agree with more? 1. We should work harder on changing people’s hearts than on legislating moral values. 2. We should work harder on making laws fit our Christian values than on trying to change people’s hearts.

Say: *The 3 temptations that the devil presented to Jesus were intended to get him distracted from his mission—to make him give up the mission he had from God and be a different kind of spiritual leader. What do you think are the biggest temptations that the church faces today? What are the things that keep us from being the kind of spiritual people that God wants us to be? Think of this in terms of church congregations, and also in terms of your own life.*

Ask students to use a slice of bread to make a symbol of something that is a temptation for the church today. Then use another slice to make a symbol of what tempts them away from being the kind of spiritual person God wants you to be. They can tear the bread or put a design on it, or any other method of using the bread to create a symbol.

Share the bread symbols with the class. Eat the bread if you dare!

RESPOND: (10 minutes)

Send students out for their own short “wilderness moments.” Give them Bibles and ask them to meditate on Deuteronomy 6:13-14, thinking about what other gods they may have in their lives, and what it means for them to serve God and God alone. Depending on your location and the weather, they may go outside or to other parts of the church building. Another option is to spread them out in your classroom, play some background music, and have a silent time in the room.

When students return to the classroom, hand out the Sending Blessing and read it together.

SENDING BLESSING:

God, be in my head and in my understanding.

God, be in my eyes and in my seeing,

God, be in my ears and in my hearing.

God, be in my mouth and in my speaking.

God, be in my hands and in my holding.

God, be in my soul and in my believing.

Amen.

Encourage students to take the Sending Blessing home and repeat it every day.