**HOW DO WE FIGHT TEMPTATION?**

**Matthew 4:1-11**

**By Pastor Steven Edelman**

**{SLIDE 1}** Good morning everyone, my name is pastor Steven Edelman and we are currently working through a series called, ‘What’s wrong with the world?’ Last week Pastor Barton talked about ‘The Beautiful Lie’ and today we want to go even deeper by focusing on how we battle variations of that lie in a world full of temptation. We have been looking at Gen 3 and seen how Adam and Eve gave into temptation and the resulting brokenness that entered into our world. Today’s sermon is a response to the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 as part of the series. Where Adam and Eve failed in temptation, how can we have victory?

What is a temptation? **{SLIDE 2}** Is it just a red button as seen in this Family Guy picture? The picture reads, **“Temptation, do you really want to spend the rest of your life wondering?”** We can easily laugh about it, but there is a part of ourselves that longs to push the button.

**{SLIDE 3}** Rock star Mick Jagger says, **“It’s all right letting yourself go, as long as you can get yourself back.”** That sounds so playful and appealing! Temptation in our culture has become a motto for selling chocolate and personal hygiene products. Some of the slogans include, “Can you resist?” “Do you dare?” and “Forever, share the fantasy!” It looks good at first. But, it promises something it can’t deliver.

The problem is not temptation… the problem is taking the bait and buying into an immediate, pleasurable urge and/or impulse that fractures an individual’s relationship with God. The problem is sin and what it does to us. An enticement in itself isn’t wrong, but when we engage in sin there is damage.

In contrast to Mick Jagger’s thoughts on temptation, **{SLIDE 4}** John Owen offers his own thoughts and they are much more accurate, **“**[**Temptation is like a knife, that may either cut the meat or the throat of a man; it may be his food or his poison, his exercise or his destruction.**](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/johnowen193471.html?src=t_temptation)**”**

In the book Marriage Under Cover is a story of the subtlety of temptation. “Bob and Audrey Meisner were known for their 100 Huntley Street TV ministry. They had it all: a fruitful ministry, three beautiful children, and a “picture-perfect” marriage. It all came crashing down when Audrey unexpectedly started having an affair. Audrey writes, “My confidence in my own “immunity” is the very thing that left me completely vulnerable to infection. My pride in having an “exceptional” marriage blinded my perception. It all began so gradually. Once the crack opened and the “hook” was in, sin drew me slowly but surely off the true path and onto a false trail of lies and self-deception.

In my secret world, I was so busy staring at the billboard that screamed pleasure and freedom that I ignored the warning signs and never saw the deadly traps in my way until it was too late.

Eventually and inevitably, the unimaginable happened. Almost before I knew what I was doing, I committed the sin of adultery. I thought I knew my enemy until suddenly I was overtaken, brought down, and beaten to the core.

Self-deception really messes with the mind. During all this time, my love for my husband Bob and my commitment to our marriage never wavered. Disaster was rapidly approaching. Could I turn back? Could I get to the shore and find my way back to the true path. I was caught in the current! The water was getting deeper and the undertow kept pulling me down. It was hard to keep my head above water. Unless I could escape soon, I would drown.

When the affair was exposed Audrey received probing questions that she said tore at her heart like a thousand knives. She describes the fall-out of her situation this way: “I felt naked, shamed and beaten down. Only the barest spark of life still burned in me. Slowly, I opened my eyes to evaluate the damage only to discover that I could not see clearly. I needed something or someone to restore my will to live. So did my husband Bob. We were like two people drowning in a lake, both needing rescue and neither able to help the other. In our pain, terror, and despair, our hearts cried for our help.” What all started as a playful yes ended with deep wounds. It not only wounded Audrey, but also her husband and three kids.

Temptation is always seductive, and so we can never have too many reminders of Satan's purpose in it.

**{SLIDE 5}** **How do we fight temptation?** Today we will be focusing on a well-known passage found in Matthew 4 that is titled in most bibles, “The temptation of Jesus.” **{SLIDE 6}** The context of this passage is:

1. **John baptized Jesus. (Mt 3:13-17)**
2. **Jesus receives the Holy Spirit. (Mt 3:13-17)**
3. **Jesus was about to start his ministry. (Mt 4:12:17)**

**{SLIDE 7}** Let’s take a moment to turn in your bibles to Matthew 4:1. Matthew 4:1 says, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” This is the same Spirit that descended upon Him in the form of a dove when Jesus was baptized. [**Mt 3:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%203.16)**;** [**Lk 3:22**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Lk%203.22)**.** The word wilderness in the text refers to an uninhabited desert and remote area with difficult living conditions. It was a place of wandering for the Israelites as God tested them. It was also a place of solitude for Jesus as he went there to pray and prepare. It’s where Jesus fasted and was tempted for forty days - [**Mt 4:2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%204.2) a. His fasting is reminiscent of Moses and Elijah - [**Exo 34:28**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exo%2034.28)**;** [**1Ki 19:8**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Ki%2019.8) b. Luke reveals that temptations occurred over the period of forty days - [**Lk 4:2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Lk%204.2)**.**

The Greek word for “tempted” is better translated as “tested.” The Spirit led Jesus to the desert to be tested so that His true character and identity would be seen. A person’s true character comes out when they face temptation and are being tested. Is Jesus really who he says he is? Can we follow his example? Can we trust him? We reveal those answers about ourselves when facing temptation. How you respond to pressures and desires says a lot about you! It reveals your character.

The bible talks about great men and woman who were tested. Sometimes they fell because of temptation. Abraham and Sarah didn’t trust God and took matters into their own hands. As we know Abraham slept with his maid to get her pregnant and the problems followed. Later on, God tested Abraham to prove his faith and to strengthen his hope in God’s promises. Abraham obeyed willingly even when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise. When the Israelites were sorely tested in Egypt for more than 400 years, they did not forget God. They kept God's word and remembered his promise to bring them freedom from their enemies. In this passage, Jesus is being tested so he can be revealed as the Messiah who can overcome sin and temptation.

One of my friends, when training to be a police officer, mentioned that he had to pass a physical and mental test. This process was in place to prove that he was qualified for the position in the police force. No surprise there. However, one of the tests that needed to be passed was getting sprayed in the face with mace. Mace is a tear gas carried in an aerosol can that when used immobilizes or deters. This was done to see if the trainee could handle the agony of the chemical burning. It also helps the Police Officer understand what others will be going through when sprayed. God allowed Jesus to face a harsh test that was unleashed by Satan to show us who Jesus really was and understands temptation.

Let’s take a look and see how Jesus battled temptation and won. The first thing we need to recognize when fighting temptation is that Jesus is following the Spirit’s lead. When fighting temptation recognize your dependence on the spirit for victory.

**{SLIDE 8}**

**1. Recognize your dependence on the spirit.**

Can Satan make us sin? No, he cannot. Satan will find a weakness and tempt us, but he cannot make us sin. Remember that Jesus was not alone when he encountered the tempter. The Spirit’s leading can be easily overlooked in the passage. The Spirit is leading at both bookends of the story and throughout. The story starts with the spirit leading in and gives Jesus the direction that he needs. The Spirit of God is with Jesus all the way through the test.

The beautiful truth is that those who belong to Christ have the Spirit (Romans 8:9.) Paul says it perfectly in Galatians 5:16, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” What does it mean to walk by the spirit? To walk by the spirit means to listen and act according to the instructions given so we may not fall.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to find and chose instrumentalists for different bands and worship teams. I wasn’t just looking for skill, but I was looking for how they worked with a leader and their team. When a skilled dynamic leader who understands music leads a team that is in sync with every note, rhythm, and melody, it really works. It can be an incredible experience. When you have someone on the team that is constantly doing his or her own thing it sounds more like noise and is no longer effective. I discovered who couldn’t listen and act in relation to the leader. Talented players would get cut because of their listening and team skills. When we no longer follow the spirit’s lead we create noise that hinders his voice.

In spiritual warfare, we must rely on the Spirit to guide us through the obstacles and dangers we face. When we have so much noise in our life, we can’t draw on the Spirit of God, the same power Jesus drew upon, and we are not able to resist temptation. Satan wants to confuse you and think that God has abandoned you in the noise of life and when you face temptation. The noise drowns out the voice that we need to listen to. **{SLIDE 9}**

1. **Satan wants us to think that God has abandoned us.**

Nowhere in the text does it say the Spirit left Jesus alone. Satan wants us to think that we can handle temptation on our own. Satan is like a predator who goes for a child when they have wondered from their parents. In reliance on yourself rather than the spirit, he seduces you. This is one of his strategies to defeat you!

**{SLIDE 10}**

Charles Swindoll says, **“The Lord never hides His will from us. The difficulty will lie in keeping other concerns and (enticements) from diverting your attention.”**

**{SLIDE 11}** What has your attention?

Have you ever seen a really intelligent man get stupid in the presence of a beautiful woman? It’s like he abandoned his brain and starts acting on his sexual desires that make him look like a complete moron. Satan draws your attention to the fleshly desires that lure you into his trap and he gets a stronghold in your life. The moment we act on temptation, we disconnect from God and start acting differently. We stop navigating our lives with the direction of the spirit.

Sometimes we can be so arrogant and so consumed with our self that we stop listening to His voice. Does your ego get in the way of what God is saying to you? Before we fall, we may be tripping over ourselves right into the jaws of Satan and feel abandoned. You will feel the distance in your relationship when you stop listening to His voice. But just to be clear… you were the one who abandoned the guidance of God…YOU created that distance. He didn’t move. There have been a number of times in my life that I have been navigating in places like Vancouver or Seattle and Megan says, “Just look it up.” I have neglected to listen and have gotten completely lost and frustrated, adding greatly to our travel time. I missed important turns and promptings that would have easily been corrected by a good navigation system.

When Satan can get you to think that God has abandoned you and amuses your attention, you will stop listening to the Spirit of God for guidance as you face temptation. How do you stop letting Satan make you feel alone and defeated? By learning to be dependent on the Spirit for our livelihood. Jesus was completely dependent on the power of the Spirit as he faced temptation.

**{SLIDE 13}**

1. **Jesus was dependent on the power of the spirit.**

He didn’t face temptation in his own strength. Again, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was led by the Spirit in 4:1 into the desert to be tempted. He listened and acted. If you have given your life to Jesus you have the same the same guide that Jesus had. As you mature in Christ and learn to depend on the Holy Spirit’s guidance, you will become more and more aware of the times temptation is before you.

**{SLIDE 13}**

**How do we become dependent on the power of the spirit?**

**{SLIDE 14}**

**i) LISTEN AND KNOW**

Know and listen to the Spirit’s leading. John 10:27 says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

**Illustration:** **When we were first dating I would call Megan on the phone daily. When her sister Emily picked up the phone she sounded just like Megan and I had trouble knowing who was who. As I came to know the person of Megan through spending time with her and talking with her, I was able to distinguish the nuances of her voice. I grew to know her and her voice so well that I knew the difference.**

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit empowers us to resist temptation is by helping us to be attentive to it ahead of time! As you spend time with God in prayer ask Him to reveal the weakness of your heart. That way you can prepare to battle temptation when it comes. Do you know where you are weak? Have you spent time talking to God about it or do you just give in?

**{SLIDE 15}**

**ii) TRUST**

Barton mentioned in one of his previous sermons, “we fall for the lie because we don’t believe God is really good.” Another underlying reason that we give into temptation is we don’t really trust God. We don’t trust that where he leads us is what is best for us. We don’t trust that his plan is perfect. We don’t trust that He has something better for us than what Satan is offering. When His trust is being called into question we stop listening to the spirit’s leading and take the bait. Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”

**{SLIDE 16}**

**iii) ACT**

As we depend on the Spirit he will nude you to act. The Holy Spirit helps us recognize when we’re being tempted to do something that we know isn’t right, and give it over to God. As we claim the same power that Jesus drew upon through the Spirit, we are able to resist the devil, who will flee from us (James 4:7)

The temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. You may be struggling with…

**{SLIDE 17}** 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, **“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”** What can you do to help remind yourself that God is going to provide a “way out” for you?

If you are involved in a battle over temptation, sin, or addiction to a substance or lifestyle, the power of the Holy Spirit is able to lift you out and give you total victory. Choose to trust Him! Focus your attention on your relationship with God, who He is, what He is doing in your life!

The Holy Spirit convicts us to push back, to say no, and to do what is pleasing to God. When we reject the Spirit, our hearts become hardened and we stop responding to His voice. As Jesus faced all three temptations he responded with the guidance and dependence of the Spirit. To defeat temptation, we also need to live as the beloved sons and daughters of God.

**{SLIDE 18}**

**2) Live as the beloved sons and daughters of God.**

Remember that the fall of humanity is brought through the temptation of Satan. Let’s look back in our Bibles at Satan’s tactic. Looking at Matthew 4:3 **“**And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” Satan goes for Jesus fleshly weakness and wraps the lure with an identity question: “If you are the Son of God…” We see this again in verse 5: **“**Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple **6**and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written...” The truth we need to recognize, as Jesus did, is that your identity is not based on performance.

**{SLIDE 19}**

**a. Our identity is not based on our performance.**

Notice the performance clause in both temptations! What is the act that makes you temporarily feel good about yourself? We all fall for it when our identity is wrapped up in our performance. When we base our identity on our performance we embrace the same lie. I am only valuable based on how beautiful I am? How your body parts look? How many sports do I play? How many instruments? Success? Is based on how you perform in the workplace? How you retain knowledge? Whether you are married or not? Compare marriages? Whether you have kids? How many ministries we’re involved in, how many friends? We see evidence of a performance based value system in the media all the time. Last week it was who had the best performance at the Super Bowl? Don’t answer that… Who made the most money last year? Who owns the most valuable company? When we measure our identity by the same standards of the world we start to question and wonder. By questioning our identity, we fall into temptation because we go to a fleeting, false value system that leaves you empty and always questioning. **{SLIDE 20}** **When you neglect your identity in Christ, the enemy can frame another identity for you.** Notice Jesus doesn’t waver. The flip side is that your identity in Christ births strength and resolve.

**{SLIDE 21}**

**b. Our identity in Christ births strength and resolve.**

In Matthew 3:17 “a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” God reminds Jesus of His identity. When tempted he doesn’t waver on who He is and doesn’t perform for Satan.

His identity as the Son of God gave him strength and clarity.

John 1:12 says, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

**{SLIDE 22}** **Henri Nouwen says,** **“This is your permanent and unshakable identity: You are God's beloved.** How’s that for a Valentine? Matthew 3:17 - "We are the beloved sons and daughters of God just as Jesus is the Beloved Son"

You are loved. Valued. You belong. You are secure.

**Illustration – What if you were to draw a diagram of your life and what makes up your identity. In pencil draw all the items that are temporary and in pen draw what God has said about you so that it’s permanent. Then erase all the temporary items.**

We can’t look to the temporary things for value and love. As we have seen, when we live out our identity in Christ we can defeat temptation because we are no longer wavering in who we are. Our identity in Christ gives us strength, security and power because we belong to the king! The final way Jesus defeated temptation was with the use of scripture as an offensive weapon.

**{SLIDE 23}**

**3) Use scripture as an offensive weapon.**

What would happen if you were to go into battle with no weapon? The answer is obvious and defeat would come quickly. Jesus knew the Words of his Father so well he could use them as a weapon against the lies of the devil.

**{SLIDE 24}**

**a. Jesus overcame all three temptations with the Word of God.**

Let’s look at Matthew 4:3-4 and we will see how Jesus uses the Word of God to fight temptation.

**{SLIDE 25}**

**i) The first temptation (Fleshly desire) is found in** [**Mt 4:3-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%204.3-4)**.** Satan is appealing to the lust of the flesh. Having fasted for forty days, Jesus was naturally hungry and Satan plays to His hunger: **"command that these stones become bread"** and Jesus responds with Scripture.

 Jesus quotes [**Deut 8:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut%208.3)**, "Man shall not live by bread alone..."**

 Eating bread is a necessity for life, but creating bread by yielding to Satan’s request would have been a sin for him. Satan loves to use our fleshly desires to get a stronghold in our life. He finds something to entice what the flesh wants! Let me illustrate it this way:

**Object Lesson – Gummy worms and money on a fishing line.**

He will find a weakness and use it to get you to take the bait. He will use everything He can to entice you out of your relationship with God. Temptations are always going to be dangled in front of us.

The “flesh” is the earthly part of humanity with its lusts and desires. We all are assaulted daily by images and desires that are outside the will of God. This includes temptations such as sex outside of marriage, gossip, anger, addictions, jealousy and coveting, idolizing people’s opinions of you, believing you are a failure and living that out and other destructive behavior.  **When we ignore the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are certain to live in the flesh and will make ourselves miserable.**How can you guard against temptations in the area of “fleshly desires”?

Fill your mind and arm yourself with God's Word and use it when you are battling the temptations of the flesh. Psalm 119:11 says, **"Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." After failing, Satan tries a second time to get Jesus to give in.**

**{SLIDE 26}**

**ii) In the second temptation (Power)** is found in [**Mt 4:5-7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%204.5-7). Satan is manipulating and twisting scripture (truth) to get Jesus to misuse his authority to show his status and power. A partial truth is very dangerous. Satan sets Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple, tells Him to **"throw Yourself down"** and let the angels save you. Satan tries to stroke Jesus’ ego (I know you are a man faith and power, prove it!) to get his way and tries to manipulate him by quoting Psalm 91:11,12. He was doing this chameleon act to try to end the life of Jesus so Jesus would take the easy way out. **Think of Lance Armstrong who was stripped of all his titles for taking performance drugs. Many Olympic winners have lost their gold metals because they took a shortcut.** Some scholars are suggesting that Satan was also offering a shortcut for Jesus out of suffering. Particularly, Satan wanted to stop what Jesus was going to do on the cross. How often do we give in to the easy thing? Would you take the short cut to so we can accomplish your ambitions and have status or power by cheating? Do you easily get pulled off the course that God has for you? Jesus responds with Scripture. [**Deut 6:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut%206.16)**, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."**

**{SLIDE 27}**

**iii) The third temptation (Wealth)** is found [**Mt 4:8-10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mt%204.8-10). Satan appeals to **our desire for materialism and riches.** Satantakes Jesus to a High Mountain and shows Him the kingdoms of the world. Offering to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He will worship Satan. Jesus responds with Scripture [**Deut 6:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut%206.13)**, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."** Though offered a shortcut to receiving power over the nations, Jesus does not take the easy path.

Jesus uses the Word of God as an offensive weapon. Ephesians 6:17says, "Take…the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." When the Lord Jesus was tempted, He used this weapon to defeat Satan. Three times Satan tempted the Lord Jesus, and three times Jesus answered him with the Word of God. When we use truth to fight Satan, we defeat him.

**{SLIDE 28}**

**b. The tempter leaves when defeated with the truth.**

Satan throws everything he has at Jesus and he is defeated with the truth. Take a look at verse 10, “Matthew 4:10 “Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” This is the moment of victory! Jesus was proven and tested. We can follow in his foot steps.

The more we learn to use resources, the more we will grow in our ability to resist the temptations that come and then stand with the help of the Spirit. A sword is an offensive weapon that soldiers used to expand their territory. We can use the Word of God to fight temptation and defeat it. To take back what Satan has taken from us. Truth in action is how you invade Satan’s territory. Satan is afraid of God’s Word! The Lord Jesus defeated Satan because He knew the Word of God, and He knew how to use it.

Do you have truth committed to memory so you can use it when faced with temptation? Do the words swim in your head as much as the lyrics to our favourite song?

**Conclusion and invite worship team.**

We will all struggle with temptation, but we are not alone. You may wander away from Him but his Love will remain. He has given us the tools to overcome temptation. Stop living a life of compromise and wake up to He has given you!

**{SLIDE 29}**

**1. Recognize your dependence on the spirit by listening, trusting and acting.**

**2. Live as beloved sons and daughters of God. Your permanent and unshakable identity.**

**3. Use scripture as an offensive weapon and the tempter will leave!**

What are the situations or circumstances in which you know you will be tempted? What is your plan when encountering those situations? Are you listening to the Spirit of God? Are you living out your identity as the valued beloved son or daughter of Christ? Are you ready with scripture so that you can fight with truth?

**{SLIDE 30}**

When we give into temptation we add to “What’s Wrong With The World” as we have been talking about in this series. Jesus succeeded under similar temptations where Adam and Eve failed. Do you recognize your need for Jesus this morning? He is the one who rescues us from drowning in our sin. Do you see where you have been defeated and your need for Jesus? If you want to have the strength of Jesus in your life, we would love to pray with you after the service. (Song)

**{SLIDE 32}**

**Will you choose a path of victory? Choose Jesus and defeat the evil that wants to destroy you. We can learn how to draw on all of God’s resources and be victorious.**

**{SLIDE 33}**

[Lucius Seneca](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/l/lucius_annaeus_seneca.html) said, **“**[**We should every night call ourselves to an account: What weakness have I mastered today? What passions opposed? What temptation resisted? What virtue acquired? Our vices will abate of themselves if they are brought every day to repentance.**](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/l/luciusanna121046.html?src=t_temptation)**”**

The Christian life is one of ongoing transformation as God shapes and molds us to become more like Jesus. Some things will change quickly, others will be a lifelong process of obedience, perseverance, and repentance. Until Jesus returns, we will battle temptation and sin. But we can have victory!

Jude 1:[**24**](http://biblehub.com/jude/1-24.htm) “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, [**25**](http://biblehub.com/jude/1-25.htm)To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”