

Questions:

- Have you been baptized? What touches or strikes you about that experience?
- Do you hear the voice of God affirming that you are his beloved son or daughter? What gets in the way of you believing that is the core of your identity?

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Chapter 4 - Read verses 1-11 - On the heels of this exultant moment, Jesus is led into the wilderness. But did you catch who leads him there? It's not the devil. It's the Spirit who leads him there *to be tempted* by the devil. What? Why would the Spirit lead someone to the wilderness in order to be tempted? That seems like a setup.

The Greek word for tempt is *peirazō*. It means to test or examine, to prove what something is made of.

Jesus is being tested to *prove* that he is ready for the work ahead. This is not the first test in Scripture. In the Garden of Eden, the humans encountered a test: “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Did they pass? No. Abraham also endures several tests, including his call to sacrifice to Isaac. Israel is tested through their obedience to the Sabbath. This is a theme in Scripture. (For more on the test, check out [this video from the Bible Project](#).)

Wrestling with this biblical theme, testing can appear cruel. But isn’t it *more* cruel to send someone you love into battle, not knowing if they are prepared to face the enemy? (Think of the saying, “She who is faithful with little can be entrusted with much.” The “little” is a test to see if she can be granted more responsibility.)

Ponder this: *What if we faced the trials and temptations we experience as a test?* We might be much more eager to face them faithfully, believing that God is preparing us for some greater purpose on the other side.

What about you? *How would you face your trials and temptations if you believed God were allowing you to be tested—to see if you can be entrusted with more?*

So what *is* Jesus’s test?

Read 4:2–11 again slowly.

The First Test:

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

Did you catch that: ***If you are the Son of God?*** The very same words the Father spoke over Jesus at his baptism are being twisted by the tempter. That’s his technique: he tries to undermine Jesus’s core identity as God’s beloved Son and erode the trust Jesus has in his Father.

Jesus clings to Scripture as his defense: “*It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’*” (Jesus is referring to [Deuteronomy 8:2-10](#). Read this. It matters.)

The Second Test:

The devil tries again. ***“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written...”***

The tester quotes Psalm 91, enticing Jesus to believe that because he’s God’s son, he should be spared any pain or harm.

Jesus retorts: *“Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* (Jesus is referring to [Deuteronomy 6:16](#). Read this. It matters too.)

Jesus’ response reveals he is unwilling to use his sonship to test the Father or ask Him to perform tricks. He endures his circumstances, trusting God will be who He says He is.

The Third Test:

On his third try, the devil takes Jesus to a high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and says, *“All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”*

The devil offered Jesus a shortcut. Jesus is *already* the king. The kingdoms *will* belong to him, but he will not employ the ordinary means of conquest to take his throne. Before the crown comes a cross. *How many times have you stumbled into sin, trying to take the shortcut?*

His “no” is powerful and fast: “Be gone, Satan!” **You get out of here.** It’s a very emotional response. We see this response from Jesus one other time in Scripture in [Matthew 16:22–23](#). Peter suggests that Jesus *will NOT* be killed. Messiahs don’t die. Jesus turns and sharply says, “Get behind me, Satan!”

Jesus will be king, but he is going to be an utterly different kind of king than those we have seen rise and fall throughout history. The question remains: What kind of kingdom will he bring?

The tempter leaves. Jesus has passed the test. *This* is his victory over evil.

This exchange is so powerful. Here’s what it makes me think:

- The tempter approaches Jesus when he is weak, starving actually. In the same way, we are most at risk of sin when we are tired, hungry, lonely, burned out, or feeling sorry for ourselves. *How have you seen this in your own life? Are you currently in that “danger zone?”*
- The passage doesn’t require us to believe the devil appeared to Jesus in physical, bodily form. It’s possible these temptations presented themselves as voices or visions. *What voices do you hear that cause you to question your identity as God’s beloved?*

Jesus knew that if *he* faced the test, his followers would too. It’s in the prayer he taught us to pray that we repeat every Sunday in worship: *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* —Matthew 6:13

There's that word *peirazō*.

We ask God to spare us from the test, but when we *are* tested, we ask that He will give us victory over the evil one *in the same way* as Jesus.

Do you recognize the voice of the evil one when you hear it? Do you know what to do when the voice comes into your mind and heart? Say to the voice: **Get out of here.**

In his unbelievable sermon on this passage, Tim Mackie says this:

Who you are as a human being is first and foremost defined by what Jesus says about you. The voices that dehumanize and devalue you are evil, and they will destroy you if you listen to them. Tell them to leave. They are defeated by Jesus, and they have no right to speak into your life. (For the full sermon, [listen here](#). I urge you. It is so moving.)

Where Israel failed the test, Jesus passed. Where we have failed the test, Jesus passed. So we cling to his coattails in faith, trusting that his victory is ours.

Questions:

- The tempter comes when Jesus is weak. Where are you weak right now?
- How can you prepare to face testing in your moments of strength so that you are prepared to face the test when you are weak?
- Have you been tempted to take a shortcut? How did that play out?
- What voices do you hear that need to be silenced by the voice of Jesus? Name the lie, and spend time asking God to show you the truth.