

A WAY OUT

Group Discussion Guide

Why do you give in to temptation? Why do you keep making decisions you regret, even when there's no one forcing you to? Temptation is the seductive little voice that twists what you want into what you need. It distorts your thoughts until you're trapped—trapped doing the very thing you don't want to do and feeling helpless to escape patterns and habits. No matter what you believe about God, you believe in temptation. You've experienced it. But what if there is a way out?

Throughout this series, we will focus on Matthew 4, and we're going to discover the connection between the three temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness and the temptations we experience every day.

In this series, we will discover what is going on when we are faced with temptation, and we will examine Jesus' response, which will prepare you for your moment of truth because we will see that in every temptation we face, there is a way out.

Scott Landry

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Landry', with a stylized, flowing script.

Session 1: M&M's

Leader: This series deals with the challenging subject matter of temptation and its subsequent fruit failure. As you go through this material with your groups, be mindful that not everyone will be comfortable sharing their answers to the more personal questions asked. Allow space and time (i.e. let the silence hang) for the group to process together and be gracious to those unwilling to share yet.

OPEN

What was a small act of kindness done to you that you will never forget?

Leader: While this is a casual icebreaker question, it is crucial to help people become comfortable talking in community.

READ

Read Matthew 4:1-10

Leader: For the first session, if you are a new group, it's best to read these passages aloud yourself or ask someone you know is a confident reader. Ask the others to listen carefully and follow along.

REFLECT

Leader: These general questions will be used in each session to help your group spend a few moments thinking about the passages. It is important to frame our discussions around what God is saying to us through the bible. This may be a new experience for some, so give people some time to answer and allow space for honesty, even if it may differ from what you believe.

What did you like about what we just read?
What didn't you like?
Was there anything you didn't understand?
What did you learn about God?

DISCUSS

How would you define temptation? Do you believe it is viewed positively or negatively in our society?

DEEPER - DEF of temptation. **In the Bible, the words used for temptation are *nasah* (Hebrew) and *peirazō* (Greek).** Both words carry a wide range of meaning that can be translated as either "temptation" or "testing." Temptation primarily denotes a trial in which man has a free choice of being faithful or unfaithful to God; only secondarily does it signify allurement or seduction to sin. When considering the theme of temptation, it is essential to understand that temptation itself is not sin.

Think of it as an invitation; you are standing on the threshold being invited to participate in something that will lead you away from God. James spoke of this when he wrote, "...when a person is carried away by desire (sic. tempted), lured by lust, and when desire becomes focus and takes control, **it gives birth to sin.**" (1:14-15a VOICE)

Why is it when we are tempted, we so often choose to do things that we don't want to do?

How does knowing that Jesus faced temptation impact your understanding of this topic?

Scott mentioned that in every temptation, there is:

More at stake than what we see.

A deeper question related to whether we believe God can be trusted.

Do you agree? Why or why not? Have you experienced this in your own life? If you feel comfortable, share your experience?

"Every temptation we face is linked to one that Jesus faced." Do you agree or disagree?

DEEPER – Each of these temptations speaks to the core longing of each and every human. Within each of us is an innate desire to know who we are (**identity**), to find where we belong (**community**)

and to discover what we are here for (**purpose**). Every temptation we face in life encompasses one of these three needs and seeks to fill these deep longings outside of a relationship with God.

LIVE IT

At least three times this week, take time to reread and consider Matthew 4:1-10. Wrestle with the question previously asked, "How does knowing that Jesus faced temptation impact your understanding of this topic?"

Take a few moments to write down your thoughts.

Leader: This is an important section so ensure that there is time at the end of your time to wrestle with how what you've talked about can be lived out. Use the questions here as a guide. If you, or someone in your group, think of other applications, feel free to use those instead. The important part is that there is an effort, collectively, to live out what was discussed.

PRAYER

Session 2: Wonder Bread

OPEN

Describe your perfect meal.

Leader: While this is a casual icebreaker question, it is crucial to help people become comfortable talking in community.

READ

Read Matthew 4:3-4; Deuteronomy 8:2-3

Leader: For the first session, if you are a new group, it's best to read these passages aloud yourself or ask someone you know is a confident reader. Ask the others to listen carefully and follow along.

REFLECT

What did you like about what we just read?

What didn't you like?

Was there anything you didn't understand?

What did you learn about God?

DISCUSS

"Temptation is always a test of your faith, not just your self-control." Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

In Matthew 4:3-4 Satan uses food to tempt Jesus. Why is this significant?

How does this passage reflect the sentiment that temptation tests faith? What was really being tested here?

DEEPER Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen." The Greek word for faith, *pistis*, is used 244 in the new testament and is one of the central themes regarding how we relate to God. As used in this verse, it communicates faith not as some sort of intangible hope (i.e. winning the lottery) but instead hope built upon the absolute foundation of the expectation of the reality and fulfillment of Jesus' promises.

The passage in Deuteronomy that Scott talked about ends by saying, "He (God] did this because He wanted you to understand that what makes you truly alive is not the bread you eat but following every word that comes from the mouth of the Eternal One" (8:3). How do you feel about this? Why do you think trusting God (faith) in this way is often so difficult?

When we give in to temptation, what we are doing/saying is: "God, I don't trust that you will be able to meet my needs in this situation, and therefore I must take things into my own hands." How can this understanding help us as we face temptation going forward?

LIVE

Take some time this week and read through Matthew 6:24-34. Afterwards, consider ways or areas in your life where you are struggling to trust God and spend some time in prayer.

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PRAYER

Session 3: Prove It

OPEN

Have you ever been asked to prove something in your life? Describe that experience.

Leader: While this is a casual icebreaker question, it is crucial to help people become comfortable talking in community.

READ

Read Matthew 4:5-7; Psalm 91:11-12

REFLECT

What did you like about what we just read?
What didn't you like?
Was there anything you didn't understand?
What did you learn about God?

DISCUSS

Scott mentioned that, "...temptation is irrational...". What did he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Regardless of our justifications, the fruit of temptation, sin, always leads to brokenness (c.f. James 1:15). But sin is not the guaranteed outcome of temptation. How can temptation, if we allow it, lead us to God?

What did Scott mean when he talked about the assumptions, we make related to God's grace? How is this perspective a distortion of scripture?

DEEPER - Paul, in Romans 6:1, asks the following rhetorical question, "How should we respond to all of this? Is it good to persist in a life of sin so that grace may multiply even more?" (VOICE). He is speaking about the truth of our position with God, as discussed in the previous chapter (c.f. 5:1). He highlights, in 5:21, that through Jesus where sin once reigned, grace now stands. "No matter how much sin crept in, there was always more grace" (5:20). And so the hypothetical argument was, "If the more I sin, the more grace exists, why not keep sinning so that there is more grace?" Paul's resounding answer is, "Absolutely not" (6:2).

Scott mentions that isolating scripture can lead to false assumptions about who God is and who we are. Have you experienced this in your life? How? Can you give an example of how taking scripture out of context can lead to misinterpretation?

"Context is King." It is incredibly essential when reading or studying the bible to understand the context of the particular verse, passage, chapter, and book you are reading. It is helpful to ask yourself the following questions when studying something for the first time:

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

Who was it written to?

In what style (historical, storytelling, law, poetic, wisdom, prophetic) was it written?

Why was it written?

[\[Source\]](#)

How should this impact the way we read the bible going forward? How could this be helpful for us as we face temptation?

LIVE

At some point this week, choose one of the shorter New Testament books and look at it through the lens of the five questions listed above. Share what you at your next discussion.

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PRAYER

Session 4: King of the Hill

OPEN

What was your favorite group game as a kid?

Leader: While this is a casual icebreaker question, it is crucial to help people become comfortable talking in community.

READ

Read Matthew 4:8-11; Matthew 28:18

REFLECT

What did you like about what we just read?
What didn't you like?
Was there anything you didn't understand?
What did you learn about God?

DISCUSS

Elon Musk famously said, "...nobody ever changed the world on 40 hours a week." At the core of this ideology is the belief that you cannot be successful without disproportionate surrender and sacrifice. Without this, you will never succeed; it seems to be saying.

How do you feel about this mindset? Do you see evidence of this in our culture? In your own life? How does this relate to the message this week?

Scott mentioned that a specific temptation related to the pursuit of progress is to take shortcuts; shortcuts that invariably lead us to compromise what would generally be vital to us (i.e. ethics, morality, conscience, values or even faith). Have you experienced this temptation in your life? Have you ever been tempted to cut corners? How?

In Matthew 4, Satan offers Jesus a 'shortcut' to 'power'; it was an offer that would have seen Jesus avoid the path and pain of the cross. How does knowing Jesus faced this particular temptation encourage you in the temptations you face?

DEEPER Understanding that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness is critical to our understanding of who Jesus is. In the Old Testament, the High Priest was the only individual allowed to enter into the presence of God, effectively making them the mediator between God and the Jewish people. The Book of Hebrews explores the theme of Jesus being the High Priest. In 4:15, it says, "...Jesus is not some high priest who has no sympathy for our weaknesses *and flaws*. He has already been tested in every way that we are tested, but **He emerged victorious**, without failing God." The reality is that Jesus KNOWS and can EMPATHIZE with every temptation we face. The key is that he did not sin and, as a result, demonstrates a better way.

As we conclude this series, it is important to reemphasize that facing temptation is not wrong. We all face

temptation, including Jesus. But the critical thing to understand is that in every temptation, there is a way out.

Ultimately, when we face temptation, regardless of what, we are answering the question, “Can I trust God?”

We would like to leave you with this final verse:

“*You are my little children, so I am writing these things to help you avoid sin. If, however, any believer does sin, we have a high-powered defence lawyer—Jesus the Anointed, the righteous—arguing on our behalf before the Father*” (1 John 2:1).

How has this series challenged, changed or encouraged you in your faith journey?

LIVE

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Take some time as a group to consider the role temptation plays in your life. Are there specific areas you’d like to share? Commit to pray for one another as

you navigate the challenges you each face. We are better together.

PRAYER