

Matthew040111-021311
Bridge of Hope
February 13, 2011

“Temptation”

Introduction: Good morning! I’m Kandy and I serve as one of the pastors here at Bridge of Hope. We are glad that you joined us for worship today. We are continuing in our series out of the Gospel of Matthew.

At the end of chapter 3, verse 17, we hear the voice from heaven declaring, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Wow! What a reference to have on your resume’: audible voice from heaven declaring that Jesus is God’s Son! Now in chapter 4, Matthew tells us what occurred after this supernatural encounter with God near the Jordan River. This special relationship between God the Father and Jesus, God’s Son, has just been publicly and authoritatively declared and is now undergoing a closer scrutiny and being put under the microscope.

Many times after great encounters with God we will find ourselves in a time of testing and temptation. I remember my Dad telling me, as a young teenager, to be careful after a great time of prayer, witnessing, worship, or a miraculous mountain-top experience with God. Our emotions are running high. We’re feeling spiritually invincible, and we don’t always think straight. It’s easy to put ourselves in a situation filled with temptation that is not healthy for us, but we think we can handle it!

While we’re celebrating this awesome God encounter, we sometimes start to take credit for it instead of humbly acknowledging God’s power working in our lives. When I prayed for that person, and she was healed, it was Jesus who healed her, not me. When I deliver a word of wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, or faith to an individual or group, it is God’s Spirit working through me. I’m just the willing servant delivering the message.

We need to be careful to not allow the devil to catch us off guard. Always give God the credit for every victory in your life over temptation and for every occasion where God has moved in and through you mightily. Keeping the focus on Jesus will keep pride from making you feel invincible and taking credit for something that is not yours to take.

On the flip side, Matthew tells us that “the Spirit” led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. So, even though the devil was doing the tempting, it was according to the purpose of God and under His omniscient, all-knowing, supervision. This was not a reckless, foolish decision by Jesus after His mountain-top experience; it was Jesus obeying the leading of the Spirit. This was Jesus staying humble and obedient to His Father, submitting Himself to be tested.

The Greek word, “peirasmos” is interpreted as temptation or testing, depending on the context. When the Bible talks about **testing**, it is referring to an experience under God’s supervision in which our motives, or what’s in our hearts, is exposed. It is proof of our obedience and faith in God or the lack thereof.

“Peirasmos” is interpreted as **temptation** when something or someone tries to induce us to act against the will of God. Unger’s Bible Dictionary says that temptation is “The enticement of a person to commit sin by some seeming advantage.”

Notice that God tests us, and the devil tempts us. Never accuse God of tempting you. He is doing the complete opposite. He is cheering for you, empowering you, and helping you to overcome temptation.

Let’s read our text for today and the weeks to follow:

Matthew 4:1-11 (ESV) **The Temptation of Jesus**

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written,

*'Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

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, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 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.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

- **THE FIRST TEMPTATION**

1. **Humility:** Jesus leaves this glorious scene at the Jordan River and goes into the wilderness to fast for 40 days and nights.

- You and I might have been tempted to stay at the Jordan River and bask in the spotlight of the supernatural event that had just taken place... give an interview to a news reporter, autograph someone’s sandal, sell T-shirts with beautiful sunlight streaming from heaven and a dove flying...
- Fast? For 40 days and nights? That doesn’t seem like much of a celebration after Jesus is now publicly declared to be God’s Son. You and I would want to have a big party with lots of food and fun!
- But Jesus, the Messiah, obeyed the leading of the Spirit. Jesus viewed His entire ministry on this earth as doing the will of His Father. So, fasting in the wilderness was in obedience to His Father in heaven.
- Jesus humbled himself and obeyed. It says in Philippians 2:8:

- *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!* Philippians 2:8 NIV
- As we take a closer look, we will see how Satan tried to lure Jesus from this perfect path of obedience to God's will.
- 2. **Testing of your heart:** Many theologians believe there is a direct link between Jesus' 40 days of fasting and His temptations to Israel's 40 years in the wilderness.
 - Deuteronomy records Moses' final instructions, advice, and warnings to Israel. In chapter 8, verses 2-5 it says:
 - *2And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. 3And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. 5Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.*
 - Just as God had tested the Israelites in the wilderness, He was testing His one and only Son. God the Father had publicly declared that Jesus is His Son. Now, as a loving father, God is allowing Jesus to be tested.
 - Will Jesus obey His Heavenly Father? Will He submit?
 - Verse 2 says that God was testing them to know what was in their heart, whether they would keep His commandments or not.
 - Both Israel and Jesus experienced hunger. Both had to rely on God's strength and provision. Both had to learn to trust and obey God's leading and His commands.
 - Disclaimer: And by the way, don't try this at home! Jesus was able to fast for 40 days because the Spirit of God was leading Him to do so. Don't try to do this on your own!
- 3. **Remember who you are:** Matthew records in verse 4 that Jesus was hungry.
 - Jesus the Messiah was fully God and fully man. His physical body was hungry and weak from the intense fasting. Jesus was at the pinnacle of physical exhaustion. We too often think of Jesus as never having experienced some of our trials, pain, and suffering. This is just 1 good example we find in Scripture that Jesus understands us better than we realize.
 - The devil, recognizing that Jesus was hungry, decided to tempt Jesus to obey His stomach instead of His Father.
 - *3And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."*
 - Now in verse 3 we see the real focus of the devil's agenda: **If you are the Son of God ...**
 - You claim to be the Son of God. Now prove it!
 - Notice how Satan didn't say, "You're not the Messiah. You're not the Son of God." He just threw in that oh-so-subtle word, "If."
 - Satan does not always use a frontal attack... especially with disciples of Jesus. He knows we are doing our best to Love God, Love People, and Serve Others. No, he will find a way to try to plant seeds of doubt in us. When we forget who we are in Christ Jesus, we are more apt to believe the lie and fall prey to temptation. Remember who you are... who you belong to!

- Jesus did not doubt His relationship with His Heavenly Father, and neither should we.
- 4. **Quote God's Word:** Jesus quotes God's Word to answer the devil's challenge.
 - Jesus quotes from The Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the Bible, in Deuteronomy 8:3:
 - *"It is written,
'Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* Matthew 4:4 ESV
 - One of the lessons the Israelites should have learned by the time Moses spoke these words to them was to trust and obey God. They are not to depend on bread alone but rather on God's word.
 - God promised to care for them, and He did.
 - God sent manna from heaven every day but the Sabbath to feed their bodies, and He caused the extra manna collected on the 6th day to not spoil until they could eat it on the Sabbath. He thinks of everything!
 - So, rather than trusting in our wealth, our status, or what we can do by ourselves with our own hands, we must trust in God's Word and His promises.
 - If Jesus the Messiah needed to trust in His Heavenly Father, how much more do we need to trust Him?
 - If Jesus quoted God's Word to the devil, then we better get acquainted with God's Word. We can't use the Bible as a weapon of resistance against the devil's attacks if we don't know the Bible. Read it. Meditate upon it. Memorize it. In a metaphorical sense, "Eat it!"

Conclusion: There is a time of testing for all of us. James says in chapter 1, verse 2:
*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.*
 (James 1:2 NIV)

Do you really want to grow in what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus? Well, if Jesus, our Master, was tested, then know that we will be tested. How do you prepare for a test in school? You listen, read, learn, and study. How do you prepare for a driver's license test? You read, listen to an expert instructor, learn by actually doing it with an instructor there beside you, and then you take the test. You allow yourself to be scrutinized and critiqued.

The same is true in our spiritual walk with Jesus. Don't resist the testing. Submit yourself to it so that you can grow in your faith. Read the Bible. Study it. Live it. Spend time with the expert instructor, the Holy Spirit. Ask Him for guidance as you pray and as you meditate upon God's written word. Then in the time of testing in your life you will be prepared and ready for the test.

Today, if you have a trial or testing that you are going through. Know that God is on your side, and He's placed you in this family at Bridge of Hope so that you don't have to walk through these trials and temptations alone. Would the prayer partners please come to the front now? We are going to continue worshiping around the altar and in this room. If you would like someone to come alongside of you and pray with you concerning a test or temptation you are going through, please come forward and stand at the front. If you just want to spend some

quality time with God before you go out these doors and back to your daily routine, please feel free to find a place of prayer on your knees or at your seat .

We want to remind our guests that we have a gift we would love to share with you. After you finish your time of worship take a moment to stop by the Guest Table in the Connection Center and you can pick up your gift there.

May God go with all of you this week as we endeavor to follow and obey our Heavenly Father's will for each one of us!