

Opportune Bursts of Temptation: Luke 4:1-13

Big Idea: Satan will customize your temptations, but you can stand strong during his opportune bursts (as Jesus did).

Ice Breaker: Make two hand puppets (even if it's just two brown paper bags or tube socks that you've drawn on) - a little angel and a little demon. Introduce them to the group. Explain that you'll be using them to illustrate the confusing dialogue that goes on in our heads when faced with temptation. Give an example from your own recent struggle against temptation (for example, if faced with the temptation to eat some brownies when you happen to be on a diet, use each of the puppets to describe the debate that determined the final outcome of your decision). Humor helps break the ice.

Read the Passage

Textual Questions:

- Temptations are strong appeals to satisfy legitimate desires in wrong circumstances or by wrong means. What natural desire is the devil trying to get Jesus to satisfy in each appeal? *[Jesus had been led by the Spirit to the desert to focus on God and his purposes before he began his public ministry. The devil was there to sidetrack him. The first appeal to Jesus was to use his powers to satisfy his own physical desire for food rather than primarily to use them for helping people.]*
- How long was Jesus in the desert? For how long was He tempted by the devil? Do you think it was a constant state of temptation for forty days? Why or why not?
- What's the first temptation? Why is it timely? How is it custom made for the situation?
- If it were you being tempted in this situation, what would the two puppets say to you (that is, how would the demon rationalize the indulgence, and how would the angel bolster your resistance to it?) *[For example, the leader may help out on this one, by having the demon puppet say, "If you eat this bread, then you'll be stronger to resist the devil later." Then the angel might say, "Don't compromise and make deals with the devil!"]*. Pass the puppets to whomever wishes to participate with an answer.
- Side note: Jesus considers the act of turning stones to bread a sin because it will compromise his own experience in the flesh. He is meant to be able to sympathize completely with us in our flesh.
- What's the second temptation? Why is it timely? How is it a "custom" temptation for Jesus? *[The second appeal was to disobey God by avoiding the crucifixion and obey the devil by using wrong methods to regain God's lost world.]*
- If it were you being tempted in this situation, what would the puppets be saying? How would the demon puppet try to rationalize sin? *[Perhaps he would try to make a case for the ends justifying the means. That is, so much good could come from having authority over the nations that it would be worth it to just bend a knee to evil.]*
- How would the angel counter the demon's lies? *[He would counter lies with truth - from the Word of God, the Bible.]*
- Have you ever tried to use the excuse that the "end justifies the means?" How did you do that?
- Finally, what's the third temptation? How is it custom made for Jesus? Who'd like to play it out with the puppets debating over your shoulders?
- How does the devil try to persuade Jesus to test God? *[He uses Scriptures!] Why is that wrong? [The third appeal was to do something visible, cheap and sensational in his desire to have people follow him, instead of teaching and helping them to change their lives.]*
- How can the misuse of Scriptures lead to sin? Have you have mistakenly applied Scripture in such a way that it opened the door for sin?
- Why did the devil leave Jesus? When would he be back? How long does an "opportune time" last? How long do you think most moments of temptation last? How long did your last bout with temptation last?

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Concluding Questions

- How is faulty theology like faulty code in a computer program? What do you need to do to restore the program to working order? When does that faulty code usually appear?
- How do you find the the faulty code that opens the door to sin? When does that faulty reasoning/code expose itself? How do you rewrite the code? How do you know which Scriptures to use? How can you get help with this?
- Finally, how long does most temptation last? How does that give you hope?

Final Charge

- We learned about the nature of temptation and how to overcome it from Jesus.
 - Temptation attempts to tap into our legitimate desires - but in an illegitimate way (by sinning). Temptation succeeds when there is deceptive "faulty code." And temptation comes at 'opportune times' rather than over long durations of time.
 - Divine truth rewrites the lies that undermine our obedience to Christ. The Bible is our source for truth.
 - Identify the lies that have allowed you to accept rather than reject temptation
 - Study the Bible to overcome those lies with truth
 - Seek guidance
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- Take heart - temptation will not hang over you for long durations, only for a burst.

God Is Not Tempting You: James 1:12-15

Big Idea: Temptation begins not with God but with our own desires. These natural desires are twisted in our hearts.

Ice Breaker: Put a tray of desserts out for all to see and smell. We do what we most desire. How has a good and natural desire been perverted into a lurid and destructive desire by temptation? We do what we most desire, so what did you most desire if you ate the brownie? What did you most desire if you didn't eat the brownie?

Read the Passage

Textual Questions:

- Temptations are strong appeals to satisfy legitimate desires in wrong circumstances or by wrong means.
- If God is not the one who tempts us, then who is?
- What natural desire is the devil trying to get you to satisfy in a wrong appeal?
- List some of your natural desires, cravings, appetites, and passions?
- Since these desires were originally given to by a righteous God, how were those desires intended for noble purposes?
- Why is it a good thing to have an appetite for food?
- Why is it a good thing to have a desire to succeed?
- Why is it a good thing to have a desire to make a match with a mate?
- What are some of our desires that we have turned into lurid desires in the face of Satan's temptations? [curiosity, success, find a husband or wife, etc.]
- How have you channelled those desires toward a more lurid purpose, making them sinful lusts instead of purposeful desires? [curiosity becomes playing with fire on the internet or tv, success becomes pride or selfishness or cheating or greed, seeking a mate becomes impurity or immorality or lust, etc]
- How did those desires become so twisted?
- Why do you think the passage describes our sinning as being "dragged away and enticed" by our desires? [This denotes an unwillingness on our part to give in... so we must desire righteousness despite the fact that we give in to sin. Thus righteousness is a desire - it is just not the desire that wins out in times of falling into sin.]
- Desire is said to "conceive"... someone doesn't get pregnant alone - it takes two. What couples with desire to produce this conception? [Temptation and desire combine to conceive... and the baby will be Sin.]
- What does sin do to our relationship with God?
- What type of death is in view when James tells us that sin gives birth to death?
- What are the long term consequences, therefore, of allowing our desires to give in to temptation?
- How do we keep our desires from mating with temptation?
- How can we better channel our natural desires?
- Since we usually do what we most desire, how can we strengthen our desires for righteousness?

Concluding Questions

- How can we better honor the natural desires that God has given us?
- How can we avoid the temptations that twist and entice our natural desires?
- How can we strengthen our desire to pursue Godliness rather than sinfulness?

Final Charge God has made us and equipped us with strong passions and desires. We need to unmask the ways that Satan has twisted those desires by coupling them with lurid temptations. You can do this by studying the bible to see God's will for your passions and desires. And you can become more aware and wary of what it is channeling your desire.

You Can Stand Up Under Temptation: 1st Corinthians 10:6-13

Big Idea: God won't let you be tempted beyond what you can bear; thus, you can endure all temptation.

Ice Breaker: Pretend to be a Flight Attendant and begin the pre-flight safety briefing - be sure to include exit strategies for emergency landings. How often have you heard this briefing? How carefully did you listen the first time you flew on a plane by yourself? How carefully did you listen the last time you flew on a plane? Why the difference?

Humorous (and actual) PreFlight Safety Speech:

Before takeoff...

"Hello, and welcome to Flight 438 to Portland. If you're going to Portland, you're in the right place. If you're not going to Portland, you're about to have a really long evening."

"We'd like to tell you now about some important safety features of this aircraft. The most important safety feature we have aboard this plane is...The Flight Attendants. Please look at one now."

"There are 5 exits aboard this plane: 2 at the front, 2 over the wings, and one out the plane's rear end. If you're seated in one of the exit rows, please do not store your bags by your feet. That would be a really bad idea. Please take a moment and look around and find the nearest exit. Count the rows of seats between you and the exit. In the event that the need arises to find one, trust me, you'll be glad you did."

"We have pretty blinking lights on the floor that will blink in the direction of the exits. White ones along the normal rows, and pretty red ones at the exit rows."

"In the event of a loss of cabin pressure these baggy things will drop down over your head. You stick it over your nose and mouth like the flight attendant is doing now. The bag won't inflate, but there's oxygen there, promise. If you are sitting next to a small child, or someone who is acting like a small child, please do us all a favor and put on your mask first. If you are traveling with two or more children, please take a moment now to decide which one is your favorite. Help that one first, and then work your way down."

"In the seat pocket in front of you is a pamphlet about the safety features of this plane. I usually use it as a fan when I'm having my own personal summer. It makes a very good fan. It also has pretty pictures. Please take it out and play with it now."

"Please take a moment now to make sure your seat belts are fastened low and tight about your waist. To fasten the belt, insert the metal tab into the buckle. To release, it's a pulley thing -- not a pushy thing like your car because you're in an airplane -- HELLOOO!!"

"There is no smoking in the cabin on this flight. There is also no smoking in the lavatories. If we see smoke coming from the lavatories, we will assume you are on fire and put you out. This is a free service we provide. There are two smoking sections on this flight, one outside each wing exit."

"We do have a movie in the smoking sections tonight...hold on, let me check what it is...Oh here it is; the movie tonight is 'Gone with the Wind.' "

"In a moment we will be turning off the cabin lights, and it's going to get really dark, really fast. If you're afraid of the dark, now would be a good time to reach up and press the yellow button. The yellow button turns on your reading light. Please don't press the orange button unless you absolutely have to. The orange button is your seat ejection button."

"We're glad to have you with us on board this flight. Thank you for choosing Alaska Air, and giving us your business

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and your money. If there's anything we can do to make you more comfortable, please don't hesitate to ask."

"If you all weren't strapped down you would have given me! a standing ovation, wouldn't you?"

After landing...

"Welcome to the Portland International Airport. Sorry about the bumpy landing. It's not the captain's fault. It's not the copilot's fault. It's the asphalt."

"Please remain seated until the plane is parked at the gate. At no time in history has a passenger beaten a plane to the gate. So please don't even try. Please be careful opening the overhead bins because 'shift happens'."

Read the Passage

Textual Questions:

- Our passage begins with "These things occurred as examples." What are "these things" referencing? *[If no one is able to tell the story of the Israelites' transgressions, then recap it yourself. The recap of temptations: idolatry, fornication, test God's forgiveness too far, and grumbling.]*
- What happens to people who refuse to study history? *[They are doomed to repeat it.]* What were their transgressions? [idolatry, immorality, testing Christ, and complaining] What should we learn from the Israelites' example?
- Are our temptations unique to us? How can we learn to overcome them if they are **not** unique to us? So... What can we learn from the Israelites' travels in the desert?
- How have you learned something to avoid by witnessing a bad example?
- How can the presumption of standing firm make one more vulnerable to temptation? Have you ever been blindsided by failure at a time when you thought you were doing great? Tell us about it.
- How can we maintain a sober assessment of our walk in Christ?
- God limits the amount of temptation that comes our way... does that encourage you? Has He been accurate in His assessment of your ability to resist temptation?
- God provides us with a way from temptation. Can you see the exit sign if you're not looking for it? What would keep you from looking for it? Are you more likely to look for the exit signs when you think you're OK or when you think that you need more help? [Tie all this back into the Flight Attendant's Safety Speech used in the Ice Breaker]

Concluding Questions

- What's the single best thing you can do to stay alert to God's "way out" in times of temptation?
- What's the absolute worst thing you can do to potentially overlook God's "way out" in times of temptation?

Final Charge Since Humility is a key to avoiding temptation, train yourself in the practice of Humility! And how can you train yourself to be more humble - - Ask someone for help today with the temptations that seize you.

The First Temptation Genesis 3

Big Idea: To see how sin initially entered the world and to learn something about the way we can be tempted to disobey God.

If God is good and powerful, why does he allow so much evil and pain? Although the Bible doesn't answer this question directly, it shows how sin and its consequences entered the world.

The second chapter of Genesis left Adam and Eve in Eden at peace with God, themselves and the natural world over which they had been given stewardship. They had the freedom to fulfill this responsibility and eat any fruit in the garden, with one exception. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil would be the test of their obedience to the Creator. In this study we see how they met this test and what lessons we can learn from their experience.

Ice Breaker: Have the members volunteer for the roles of narrator, God, Adam, Eve and the serpent, then read the chapter aloud like a drama (encourage drama... if the volunteers are too stale, get a volunteer to be the Director... he or she then reshoots the scene with the extra drama that he or she directs into the scene) Note how devious and concerted the serpent's strategy is. He begins by asking questions intended to obscure God's command (v. 1). Next, he flatly contradicts God's warning about eating from the tree (v. 4). Then he misrepresents God's motive (v. 5). This strategy encourages Eve to make her own decision, about the value of obeying God.

Textual Questions:

- The serpent is described as "more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made" (v. 1). How does the serpent's question to the woman, especially its wording, illustrate his craftiness?
- How does Eve's answer misrepresent God's command (vv. 2–3)? What could this reveal about her attitude toward this prohibition? What lesson does it teach us about knowing the words of God?
- In what ways do we tend to make God's commands more restrictive than he intends them to be? How does this affect our view of his requirements?
- The serpent now becomes more direct (vv. 4–5). What statements does he make about the purpose and results of the command?
- In what ways does Satan try to deceive us today about the consequences and benefits of sin?
- How have the serpent's words distorted Eve's thinking (v. 6)? What pros and cons does she face in the decision which now confronts her? How can you keep Satan from distorting your thinking?
- How did Adam and Eve's sin immediately affect their attitude toward themselves, each other and God (vv. 7–13)? [Adam and Eve's response to their nakedness has nothing to do with sexual guilt or shame. The Bible has a high view of sex, despite certain church teachings throughout the centuries. Just as their nakedness was a sign of innocence and lack of self-consciousness, it now becomes a symbol of guilt to be covered up so they can still appear presentable.]
- Adam and Eve made several mistakes: they listened to a creature instead of the Creator, followed their own impressions against his instructions, doubted God's concern for their best interests and made self-fulfillment their goal. In what situations have any of these led you to disobey a command of God?
- What judgments does the Lord God pronounce on the serpent (vv. 14–15), the woman (v. 16) and the man (vv. 17–19)? (Describe them in your own words.) **[If your time is running short, skip over this question and go on to the last two.]**
- What actions does God finally take to end this era in Eden (vv. 21–24)?

Concluding Question: What one lesson have you learned from this study that can help you recognize and resist a temptation you are facing?

Final Charge: Satan is crafty. He can and will distort your thinking about sin and righteousness and God. Stay alert and aware of his schemes. Listen to the Creator rather than to creatures. The best way to know that you are doing exactly that is to study, learn, and live out God's Word.

Pray So That You Will Not Fall Into Temptation: Matthew 6:13/26:36-42

Big Idea: Watch and pray so that you will not fall for temptation!

Ice Breaker: Ask for a volunteer (to be a “persuader”) to try to persuade someone else in the group to pull the fire alarm. Secretly instruct another volunteer (the “persuadee”) to meet each of the “persuader’s” advances with vehement prayer. Tell both the persuader and persuadee to not give up too easily – unless the situation really seems hopeless. See who gives up first. Ask the other party how much longer he or she would have persisted before giving up. Also ask why they gave up. Ask the persuadee if praying made a difference in his or her resolve to resist temptation. [By the way, in case the persuadee gives up – make sure that the fire alarm remains in place.]

Read the Passage Matthew 26:36-46

Textual Questions:

- Why did Jesus go to the garden of Gethsemane - what was His purpose for being there?
- Have you ever made special arrangements to pray when facing a great temptation?
- Jesus exhorts his disciples to "watch and pray that you might not enter into temptation." What temptations were they about to face?
- What temptation is Jesus facing?
- What does it mean to be "watchful" in the face of temptation? How does Jesus provide us with a model of being "watchful?"
- How does Jesus provide us with a model of being "prayerful?"
- In what ways were the disciples not "watchful?" Why were they not watchful? What would motivate them to be more watchful? What was the result of the disciples' complacency? (see v. 56 and 57) What would motivate you to be more watchful?
- How many times does Jesus need to pray in the face of this temptation? What's the lesson for us?
- Can you think of time that your "spirit was willing but your flesh was weak?" What happened?
- How does being "watchful" strengthen you? How does prayer strengthen you?

Concluding Questions

- Jesus prepares for the temptation hours before He ever faces it. When and how should you prepare to overcome temptation? What else have learned from Jesus' example about overcoming temptation?

Final Charge Think through (be watchful) all the temptations that you will face in your day. Pray about each and every temptation! Don't leave your knees until you are resolved about doing God's will rather than give in to temptation.

FAR from Temptation

Big Idea: : Temptation is not a time to prove how "macho" you can be. It's a time to get scared and run... run F.A.R.! (FAR will stand for "Flee" "Avoid" and "Remove") **(THIS WORKS AS EITHER ONE OR THREE BTs)**

Ice Breaker: Make a couple of "wet paint: do not touch" signs (try to make them look "official") and tape them to the wall near your Bible Talk setting (without anyone knowing that you posted them). Have an extended time of fellowship prior to the opening of the Bible Talk discussion. Observe the participants' interaction with the sign and the wall - especially as they drew closer to the wall. Does the group dynamic encourage "curiosity" or "avoidance"? Share your own observations to begin the discussion. Solicit observations from the group. Ask "Why would someone post a real sign that warned about wet paint?" "What are the reasons they would not want you to touch a freshly painted area?" "Why did you disobey the sign?" "Did curiosity get the better of you?" **"What happens when you get closer to the wall?"** "Did you touch it lightly or press your entire hand against the wall?" Why?"

Textual Questions:

- We're going to cover 3 related strategies for overcoming temptation during today's discussion: **'Flee** From it!" **Avoid** it!" **Remove** it!"... Flee Avoid Remove ... that is **FAR**, which is where we need to keep temptation if we are to overcome it.
- **FLEE.... Genesis 39:6-12** (as an aside you can quote **1Cor 6:18** - "Flee sexual immorality!")
 - Joseph encountered repeated and unavoidable temptations to have sex with Potipher's wife; how did he reject these temptations? What can we learn from his example? How will you personally put that into practice?
 - After being cornered by temptation, what did Joseph do? How do you think Joseph looked to the rest of the house staff as he ran out of the house without a cloak? Did Joseph care about how he looked to his staff? What did he most care about?
 - From what should you have fled this week? Why didn't you flee? Why should you flee? What reasons would Joseph help you to see are reasons for you to flee?
- **AVOID... Proverbs 7:6-27**
 - v. 6-9. What separated the simpleton from the rest of the young men? Why does "going down the street near her corner" indicate that he "lacked judgment"? Why does the proverb set the scene at "twilight, as the day was fading, as dark set in"? If we didn't read any farther, could you guess what was about to happen?
 - How do you flirt with temptation? How do you flirt with temptation on the internet? ... on campus? ... over the phone? ... in the mall? ... while watching television? Have you ever invited temptation? How? What happened? How could you have avoided all that mess? Have you ever pretended to be naive so that you could walk into temptation with a clear conscience? Does that make you less guilty?
 - v. 14. How does the temptress use religion to begin her seduction of the young man? Have you ever talked about God in the process of flirting?
 - v. 21-23. Have you ever been persuaded to do or buy or think something by smooth talk? What happened? Did you regret it? How could you have avoided it? What is the consequence for this young man's naive judgment? ["it will cost him his life"] What is the consequence for your flirtation with temptation?
 - v. 24-27. Many have fallen before you on the path to temptation, how can they be useful examples for you?
- **REMOVE... Matthew 5:27-30**
 - What is something that is causing you to sin that you should remove from your life?
 - Why should you remove it? What if it is really woven into your life? How can you remove a complicated relationship? How can you remove something that you depend on for everyday living?
 - What is the choice you make by not radically removing it?
 - How serious is Jesus about overcoming temptation? How much more serious should you become

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about it? What will you remove from you life today?

Concluding Question: What one lesson have you learned from this study that can help you recognize and resist a temptation you are facing?

Final Charge: Sometimes temptation will fall upon us... when it does... **FLEE** (the brave thing to do is run away!). Sometimes temptation will be waiting in our path... when it does... **AVOID** it! Alter your path no matter what it takes! And sometimes, temptation is already woven into the fabric of your life... when it is... **REMOVE** it! It's not worth the consequence of keeping it. Let's get serious about overcoming temptation. Let's get more serious about supporting one another as we overcome temptation together.