

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



THE IDENTITY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Matthew 4:1-11 The temptations of Jesus

AIM: To know how Jesus was tempted

Just after Jesus heard a voice from Heaven telling him how much he was loved, he was taken off into the desert to be tempted. While Jesus was hungry and tired, the devil tried to tempt him to break a promise not to use his powers to take the easy option. But Jesus trusted in God and resisted temptation. In today's session we will explore this story and think about what it means for us and how our choices impact others.

Each child will need:

- Five slips of paper, pens/pencils
- Memory verse wristbands
- Art/collage materials including some child-friendly newspaper stories
- Prayer prompts (optional)

You will need:

- A container to hold the slips of paper
- To enlarge the memory verse poster, for display
- To select some child-friendly news articles – see Action It section

Start It

Give each child five slips of paper and ask them to write down on each slip one thing that they love. Encourage the children to avoid writing people or pets that they love, and instead stick to items, hobbies, places or activities. Once they have written the five things, ask them to fold up the slips of paper and place them in a container.

 **Say:** On Sunday 5 March, for The Salvation Army it is Self-Denial Sunday. At this time of year members of The Salvation Army think about what they can give up temporarily to help others. If you had to choose, I wonder which of your favourite things you would give up? To help us explore this we are going to play a running game.

 **Say:** For each round two slips of paper are chosen out of the container. (The leader or a child can choose.) For example: chocolate and football. You need to decide which one you could give up. If you choose chocolate, run to one side of the room. And if you choose to give up football, run to the other side. (Establish where the children can run to.)

After each round discuss the children's choices.

 **Say:** In our story today the devil tries to persuade Jesus to give in to temptation. Instead Jesus gave us the perfect example of how we can deny ourselves and follow God's plan for our lives.

Memory verse

 **Say:** Our memory verse for this month reminds us that we all play an important part in following God's plan for the world. Let's read the verse together.

'All of you together are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of that body.'

— (1 Corinthians 12:27 ICB)

Display a large copy of the memory verse in the room where you meet and give each child a memory verse wristband.

Ask:

- How does it make you feel that, as a Christian, you play an important part in the body of Christ?
- What do you think it means?

Sing It

Say: Our song for today reminds us of the amazing things Jesus did here on earth and the difference it makes to each one of us.

'Jesus Song' by Saddleback Kids (2 mins 45 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn84AYtFUSM

Tell It

Say: Today's Bible story took place after a very special event in the life of Jesus.

Read:

'At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He came to John [John the Baptist and his cousin] and wanted John to baptise him. But John tried to stop him. John said, "Why do you come to me to be baptised? I should be baptised by you!"

'Jesus answered, "Let it be this way for now. We should do all things that are right." So John agreed to baptise Jesus.

'Jesus was baptised and came up out of the water. Heaven opened, and he saw God's Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice spoke from Heaven. The voice said, "This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him."

— (Matthew 3:13-17 ICB)

Say: Jesus had just been baptised by John and heard a voice from Heaven telling him how much he was loved. He must have been feeling amazing. But then the Holy Spirit did what seemed like a very strange thing.

Read:

'Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Jesus ate nothing for 40 days and nights. After this, he was very hungry.'

— (Matthew 4:1-2 ICB)

Say: Straight after Jesus had felt God's love, he was tempted in the desert.

Ask: Sometimes, when we have had an amazing experience with God or have made special promises to him, the devil tempts us to do the wrong thing. Have you ever experienced that? If so, share it with the rest of the group.

Say: After Jesus had been 40 days and nights in the desert, the devil decided this was the best time to tempt Jesus in three different ways:

1. Break a promise
2. Use his power wrongly
3. Take the easy option

Temptation number one – break a promise

Read:

'The devil came to Jesus to tempt him. The devil said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these rocks to become bread."

'Jesus answered, "It is written in the Scriptures, 'A person does not live only by eating bread. But a person lives by everything the Lord says.'"

— (Matthew 4:3-4 ICB)

Ask: What was the first thing the devil used to test Jesus?

Say: Jesus was hungry as he hadn't eaten for days. He focused on fasting and praying because he knew that was what God wanted him to do. The devil tried to tempt Jesus to move away from what God wanted, but Jesus stayed strong and trusted God.

Ask: What kinds of things are you tempted to have, even though you know they are not good for you?

Say: We can often be tempted to eat foods that aren't good for us or desire items we don't really need. They may make us feel better in the short term but might not be the best for us in the long term.

Ask: Do you think this Bible reading tells us that bread isn't good for us? Explain your answer.

Say: When we are looking at a Bible story, we have to think carefully about what it means. There are lots of times in the Bible when Jesus eats bread, but on this occasion it was a temptation. Jesus was spending time fasting and had promised God that he would not eat bread. This is why the devil used the bread to tempt Jesus.

Temptation number two – use his power wrongly

Read:

'Then the devil led Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem. He put Jesus on a very high place of the Temple. The devil said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off. It is written in the Scriptures,

'He has put his angels in charge of you.

They will catch you with their hands.

And you will not hit your foot on a rock.'" [Psalm 91:11-12]

'Jesus answered him, "It also says in the Scriptures, 'Do not test the Lord your God.'"

— (Matthew 4:5-7 ICB)

Ask: This one is a little trickier to understand, but how was the devil trying to tempt Jesus this time?

Say: The devil was trying to fill Jesus with pride by reminding him of his identity. He was saying, 'If you really are who you say you are, then prove it.' The devil was even more crafty, as he used words from the Old Testament to back up his point.

Ask: Why do you think that was particularly sneaky?

Say: The devil was trying to use the Bible to say something that it didn't really say. But Jesus could see straight through the trick. He wasn't willing to use his power in any way that went against God's will.

Temptation number three – take the easy option

Read:

'Then the devil led Jesus to the top of a very high mountain. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and all the great things that are in those kingdoms. The devil said, "If you will bow down and worship me, I will give you all these things."

'Jesus said to the devil, "Go away from me, Satan! It is written in the Scriptures, 'You must worship the Lord your God. Serve only him!'"

'So the devil left Jesus. And then some angels came to Jesus and helped him.'

— (Matthew 4:8-11 ICB)

Ask: How did the devil try and tempt Jesus this time?

Say: Jesus is the Son of God. In this encounter with the devil, Jesus already had everything he could possibly have hoped for. The devil tried to make Jesus feel like he was missing out on something.

Ask:

→ In what ways can we be tempted by what we don't have?

→ What kinds of things are we tempted by, and how do they show themselves?

Say: Jesus declared that God was the only one worthy of worship, not possessions, popstars, or hobbies – only God.

Ask: What did Jesus have to do to get 'all the kingdoms of the world'?

Say: Sometimes the devil tries to tempt us by encouraging us to take the easy option or go for the quick fix. We might be waiting for God to answer a prayer or we might be struggling with a problem. We can sometimes be tempted to take what seems like the easy option instead of trusting God with the situation. Jesus' third temptation reminds us to keep our eyes fixed on God and not on finding a quick fix.

Ask: In what three ways did Jesus tempt the devil?

Say: The devil tried to tempt Jesus to break a promise he had made to God, to use his power for his own benefit, and to take the easy option rather than following God's plan. These are all ways that the devil tempts us today, but we can always choose God's way instead.

Action It

Share some child-friendly news stories for the children to look at with the aim for the children to discover how giving in to temptation can impact other people. Through this activity the children should be able to discuss how many of the difficulties people face in the world are linked to poor choices by others.

→ BBC Newsround: www.bbc.co.uk/newsround

→ First News: www.firstnews.co.uk

→ Self-Denial resources: www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/key-dates/self-denial-2023

→ Find your local newspaper: www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/directory/dailynewspapers

Say: As human beings we often face the same temptations that Jesus faced. Jesus provides the perfect example of how we can make the right choices and resist doing wrong.

Say: A lot of the suffering we see in the world is caused by people breaking promises they have made to God, by using their power selfishly or by cutting corners to take the easy option.

Artwork/collage

Ask the children to create a piece of artwork or a collage that shows how giving into temptation impacts others. They can use newspaper articles or stories to discover:

→ How giving into temptation impacts other people

→ How people can make different choices so that we are looking out for the needs of others.

The discussion and outcome will depend on the stories chosen by the children, but this activity will hopefully encourage them to consider how the choices we make impact the lives of others.

Pray It

Ask the children to place their artwork/collage on the floor or on a large table so that they can all see what has been created. Discuss some of the stories they have highlighted. As they look at the stories, encourage the children to think about how a Jesus-led choice might have changed that situation.

Encourage the children to share a prayer out loud in response to what they have discovered today. You may want to display the following prayer prompts to help the children share their prayers.

Prayer prompts

- Lord, please look after ...
- Jesus, forgive me when I ...
- Please help those that I love, especially ...
- Please bless ...
- Jesus, I ask you to ...
- Jesus, help me to follow your example ...
- When I am tempted to make a choice that hurts others, help me to ...

Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

MARCH
SESSION 01

THE IDENTITY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

 **Matthew 4:1-11 The temptations of Jesus**

© **AIM: To know how Jesus was tempted**

FOR ME

TOGETHER



Pray

Explore the *BBC Newsround* website.

www.bbc.co.uk/newsround

Look at some of the stories featured on their site.

- ➡ Who could you pray for?
- ➡ How could you help?



Share

In this week's session you looked at lots of news stories where people were impacted by the actions of others. Discuss your discoveries with the people at home and think about how you could help others this week.



Song for the week

'Jesus Song' by Saddleback Kids

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn84AYtFUSM



Memory verse

'All of you together are the body of Christ.
Each one of you is a part of that body.'

— (1 Corinthians 12:27 ICB)

KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

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