



DEVOTIONAL FOR MATTHEW 4; LUKE 4-5; JOHN 2-4

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How to resist temptation has been a real struggle in the lives of a few of my family members lately. When I was reminded of how Jesus responded when tempted by Satan in the wilderness, I remembered that His way always works, even in our struggles today.

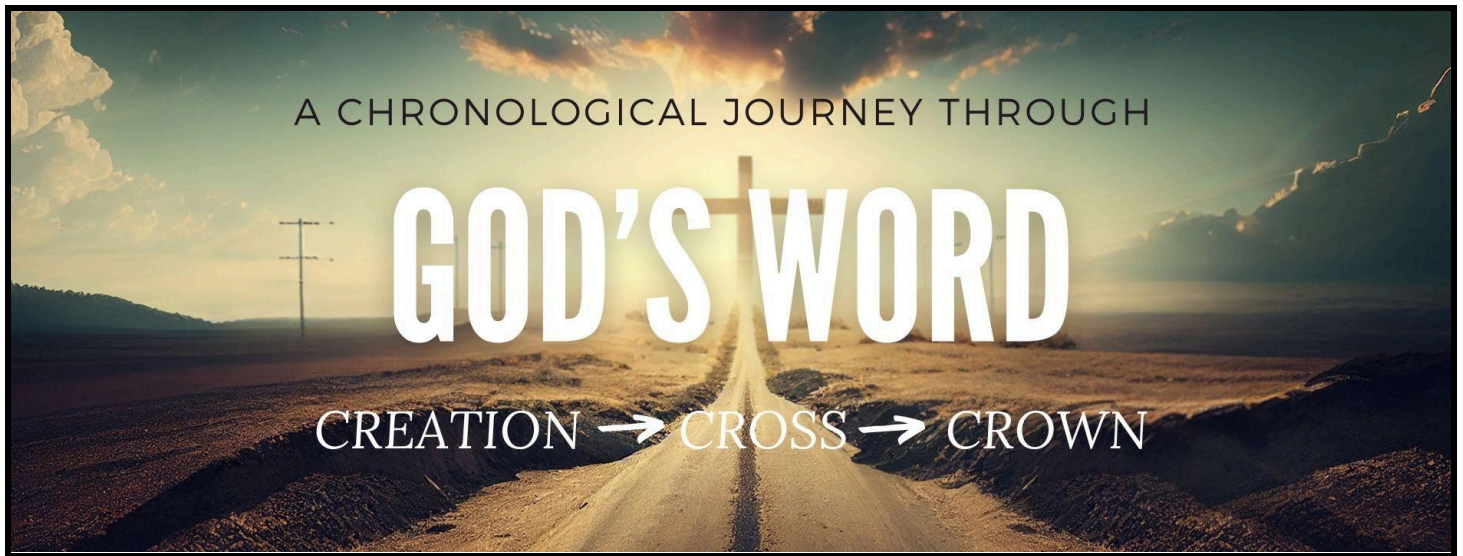
After Jesus was baptized in Jordan, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness for 40 days with no food or water, to be tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2; Matthew 4:1-2.) My initial response would be to ask why. Why did Jesus do that? What was the purpose of this 40 day total fast in the wilderness? I definitely know I would never be able to do that. And therein lies one possible reason-- to fulfill what the people of Israel could not do, and likewise what we cannot do, that is, fight the powers of darkness on our own.

No other details are given in scripture and none appear to be prophetic concerning that period of time. It was a voluntary deprivation in which Jesus made Himself completely vulnerable to temptations that would later try to deter His ministry. He needed to be prepared for what was to come. Fasting was also a way to control mastery over His human nature and live every moment solely directed by the power of the Spirit.

The number 40 is significant in the Bible. Christians' religious observance of Lent for 40 days commemorates the 40 days of Jesus' fast. I think the most fascinating part of Jesus' trek through the wilderness, however, is how He resisted Satan and how we can use that same method today in our everyday lives. I've heard it said many times by different pastors that God loves for His children to speak His words back to Him in their prayers. We can also use His words to fight temptation, just as Jesus did.

Satan saw that Jesus was hungry and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" (Matthew 4:3; Luke 4:3). "But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Luke 4:4; Matthew 4:4)". Quoting directly from Deuteronomy 8:3, even though He could've easily turned the stones to bread at any time.

Again, Satan tempted Jesus by taking Him to a "the pinnacle of the temple 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" (Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:9-11), quoting also from God's Word, Psalm



91:11-12. Jesus responded, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test' (Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12)," quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16.

Finally, Satan tempted Him one last time by taking Him to a high mountain and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world. He told Jesus if He would bow down and worship him, he would give all these kingdoms to Him. Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, "It is written, 'You shall Worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'" (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8).

How might we respond to Satan's temptations in like manner? Here are just a few examples that will help when you or someone you love are faced with temptation. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul told the church at Corinth, "...God is faithful; and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

And always remember that God wants to help His children. "For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

"For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit of joints and of marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)." We have the most powerful weapon that we are encouraged to use against the enemy! The more we are familiar with this weapon, the stronger we will be in fighting any temptation that comes our way.

Questions:

1. What temptations to sin do you face in your life? Do you have an arsenal of scriptures you can use against those temptations?
2. How much time do you spend in God's Word? Do you memorize scriptures or do you have some key verses that you can pull from quickly in emergency situations?
3. Can you think of specific times in your life when God has stepped into your circumstances immediately after you have prayed His Word back to Him?