



10: THE WIZARD OF OZ KEEPS TEMPTING ME! (Luke 4:1-13)

All of us struggle with temptations...

When I was five years old, my best friend and next door neighbor David was my constant companion. We did everything together. We spent a lot of time together. We also got sick of each other often, and I was constantly tempted to physically fight with him, like he was with me. We tempted one another to beat each other up because we annoyed each other. I remember us slapping each other and screaming at each other, right in the middle of playing an Atari 2600 game back in 1986!

When I was ten years old I was fully inaugurated by my babysitter Lori and my parents into the world of over indulging in snacks. I made habits like;

- eating full bags of potato chips in one sitting,
- Eating lots of marshmallows, and
- Drinking three Dr. Peppers in a row

Sometimes all three happened right in a row within an hour! Dang my poor stomach!

I gained a lot of weight that year and didn't shed it until I was fourteen.

When I was ten I also got into mild pornography. By twelve it intensified, by sixteen it was a full blown, twice a day sort of addiction until I fully kicked at age nineteen. Praise God I've been porn free since then.

I've been tempted by and fully lured into lots of things. I was addicted to tobacco at age twelve, got into alcohol around the same time, got into marijuana at age fourteen, and heavier drugs by age sixteen.

I've lied. I've cheated. I've stolen. I've been violent. I've gotten arrested twice.

I am a man who has succumbed to many temptations.

At twenty I became a Jesus follower and thought all my temptations would be minimized. Really, I just struggled with new ones. I've fallen into theological arrogance. I've been judgemental. I've been cynical. I've struggled to be a life-giving, good Husband and Father. My struggle with anger and impatience has been fully brought out into the light and although prayer, therapy, scriptures, maturing, and practicing healthy disciplines and rhythms of life have made amazing changes in me, the Lord is still dealing with me. I could mention many more struggles. They don't go away, they just morph and change through time.

ENGAGE FOR A MOMENT... WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH TEMPTATIONS. WHAT TEMPTATION ARE YOU CURRENTLY STRUGGLING WITH? BE REAL AND BRING THAT BEFORE GOD IN PRAYER.

Jesus struggled with temptations just like we do. He just didn't give in to any of them. And I mean *any* of them. It's remarkable to wrap our heads around. (2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15)

And one of the most profound accounts of Jesus being tempted is depicted in Luke 4. Jesus literally gets tempted head on by none other than the devil himself! Check it out!

1 Then Jesus left the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, he was hungry. (Luke 4:1-2)

Jesus had just left the Jordan river after being dunked in baptism by his friend John. The Holy Spirit had descended out of heaven in the form of a dove, and God had

spoken from heaven to Jesus validating that Jesus was His One and Only Son! Jesus was full of the Spirit.

Notice then that the Spirit then led Jesus in the wilderness . . . to be tempted by the devil. Evidently, then, being under the influence of the Spirit does not mean uninterrupted peace and tranquility.¹

We have this whacked, transcendentalist idea of the Holy Spirit leading people into some perpetual chanting of kumbaya, or leading people to sit cross legged while levitating off of the ground, completely unbothered by anything and free of suffering. That would be more of an eastern mystic idea of being filled with spiritual power. Nope. That's not our Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit certainly fills us with joy, peace, patience, love, conviction, boldness, courage, and power, but all that amidst the storms of life! The Holy Spirit also guides us straight into trials. If He led Jesus there you can bet He'll lead us!

And Jesus wasn't led into Disneyland. He was led into the wilderness. Tony Evans rightly notes that Jesus was the "second man" or "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45, 47). The devil had tempted the first Adam and succeeded in having him kicked out of the garden into the wilderness (Gen 3:1-24). The first Adam was on defense and lost, but the last Adam played offense. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, he went into the wilderness to face the devil so that he might bring humanity back to the garden.²

Whatever mess we got ourselves into as human beings, Jesus cosmologically, practically went right into the middle of that mess to undo the damage!

And Jesus is going to step right into your mess! Your messed up relationship, your addiction, your sadness, your nervousness, your bad decisions, your lack of wisdom, and your struggle. He did it metanarratively by going right back into the wilderness, the place the serpent deceitfully tricked Adam and Eve into banishment from Eden! You can bet He's gonna step right into the mud of your life too!

Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days. As many of us know, forty was a significant number in the Bible (Gen 7:4; Lev. 12:1 - 4; Num. 14:33; Deut. 25:3; Ezek. 4:6)³

Jesus prepared for battle during these forty days by fasting. He was following the OT discipline in Ex. 34:28; Deut 9:9; and 1 Kings 19:8. He fasted forty days and forty nights

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before he went to war. To prepare himself, he pushed the physical into the background so that the spiritual was in the foreground.⁴

In a culture where we try to make things as easy on ourselves as we possibly can, we naturally don't view the spiritual discipline of fasting very seriously. There have been many seasons in my walk with Jesus where I haven't done it at all, though recently I've done some deeper reading on the practice, and realized that in other Church ages and cultures, fasting was quite literally a weekly rhythm for all Christ followers- where they'd sometimes fast one or two full days a week, and have seasons (like Lent) where they ate only one meal a day!

Fasting is spiritual training for spiritual battle. We deprive ourselves of physical food and it helps us to deprive ourselves of physical temptations- lust, pride, anger, selfishness, laziness, envy, jealousy, greed, and more!

Have you ever heard of "Hell Week"?

Hell Week is the defining event of Navy Seal training. It is held early on – in the 3rd week of First Phase – before the Navy makes an expensive investment in SEAL operational training. Hell Week consists of 5 & 1/2 days of cold, wet, brutally difficult operational training on fewer than four hours of sleep. Hell Week tests physical endurance, mental toughness, pain and cold tolerance, teamwork, attitude, and your ability to perform work under high physical and mental stress, and sleep deprivation. Above all, it tests determination and desire.

On average, only 25% of SEAL candidates make it through Hell Week, the toughest training in the U.S. Military. It is often the greatest achievement of their lives, and **with it comes the realization that they can do 20X more than they ever thought possible!** It is a defining moment that they reach back to when in combat. They know that they will never, ever quit, or let a teammate down.⁵

Fasting is physical, psychological, emotional, mental, and ultimately, spiritual training. Through the practice of fasting our reliance on the Holy Spirit can become more than we ever thought possible!

So Jesus was gearing up to do battle with the enemy of our souls... The devil was going to tempt Him in three areas. The first one was physical ***hunger***:

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⁵ <https://navyseals.com/nsw/hell-week-0>

3 *The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*
4 *But Jesus answered him, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone." (Luke 4:3-4)*

All of Jesus' quotations in response to the devil came from the same section of Deuteronomy.⁶ Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, in which Moses reminded the Israelites—who were in a wilderness—that they hadn't survived merely because they ate manna. They survived because of the source of the manna. Jesus refused to act independently of his Father; He trusted in his provision.⁷

Jesus could have turned stones into bread. Later on, He multiplied a few fish and loaves to feed five thousand people (Matt. 14:13-21). But in this instance Jesus was intentionally fasting to fulfill the scriptures and take on the devil. Satan tested Jesus about the most basic of needs, bread.

We sometimes desire to "feed ourselves" with things we feel are basic to life. But those "basic things" frequently involve a larger home, more stuff, the finest appliances, the best technological devices, the most expensive clothes, and a host of other material possessions to say that we have arrived. Yet life is not defined materially; rather, it is defined relationally and spiritually in terms of knowing God and serving him in the context of his will. Sometimes giving resources to the accomplishment of ministry may mean giving up personal material pleasures.⁸

We truly aren't meant to live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. As the nineties CCM song goes: *Hungry we come to Him for we know, He satisfies!* We are created to find our satisfaction in the Creator God first before finding satisfaction in anything else!

That's right y'all, God is more satisfying than sex, a nail biter football, basketball, baseball, soccer, or hockey game, traveling, time with a great friend, productivity, watching a movie, hugging your kid, a great hike or walk, a great meal, going to a spa or getting a massage, reading a great book, a killer concert or killer song,⁹ going on a great vacation, going on a great adventure, being drunk, being in love for the first time, being high, or making a million dollars. I'm telling you man He is better than all of it! Just taste and see! Jesus knew this and that's why He could confidently throw scripture in the devil's face to shut his mouth up.

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⁹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/how-do-life/201604/top-pleasures>

But then the devil tempted Jesus with a second thing, **power...**

5 So (the devil) took (Jesus) up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 The devil said to him, "I will give you their splendor and all this authority, because it has been given over to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. 7 If you, then, will worship me, all will be yours." 8 And Jesus answered him, "It is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." (Luke 4:5-8)

So the devil takes Jesus up and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. This ain't romantic like Aladdin taking Jasmine on a Steppenwolf magic carpet ride to "show her a whole new world", this is a deceitful and dastardly sort of move on the devil's part.

The devil proposes a pact with Jesus, that he has been given access to the splendor and authority of the kingdoms to give them to whomever he pleases.

So we have to ask, how did Satan obtain the authority he claimed (4:5-6)? Adam was called to rule the world on God's behalf (Gen 1:26, 28). By rebelling against God, he abdicated his role and handed it over to Satan, who is now the "god of this age" (2 Cor 4:4).¹⁰ The devil's claim to possess delegated authority over the world fits Jewish ideas prevalent in Jesus' day about the devil's rule over the wicked nations.¹¹

Paul summarized it in Eph. 6:12 when he wrote: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens." We're not battling politicians, abusive leaders, tyrants, dictators, autocrats, deceivers, and corrupted people. We're battling rulers (from the Greek word ἀρχή (archē) which in this context, means **supernatural powers**¹²), authorities (from the Greek word ἐξουσία (exousia) which in this context, also means **supernatural powers**¹³), cosmic powers of darkness, and evil spiritual forces in the heavens.

In MGM's 1939 film "The Wizard of Oz", Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion were on a quest, prompted by a culture of munchkins, to see "the wonderful wizard" himself. Myths about the Wizard permeated the land of Oz but

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¹² Swanson, J. (1997). [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹³ Swanson, J. (1997). [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

ultimately he was a mystery. These myths about the wizard were puffed up and exacerbated throughout the film while the quartet journeyed toward Oz.

Finally, they entered into the chamber where the Wizard of Oz resided and ruled. They were terrified by a large green head barking out pronouncements with great authority.



And most of us know, after that, Dorothy's little dog Toto pulled back a green curtain, and the Wizard, really a grey haired con-man, famously said "pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!"



Satan is the man behind the curtain of all evil, fear, and tyranny in the world. He is always saying "pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!" He has many people duped into thinking he's not behind the madness and orchestrating it all, but he is! And he literally offers this Wizardly, Oz-like power to Jesus, the Son of God. He has the audacity to say that the terms are that Jesus is to worship the devil, and then he'll have immediate access to all this authority.

Jesus, full of boldness and conviction as usual, rebukes the devil with scripture from Deut. 6. The context of Dt 6:13 prohibits idolatry (Dt 6:14), recognizing the one true God

(Dt 6:4 – 5,12).¹⁴ Importantly, the Father had already promised his Son all of earth's kingdoms (see Ps 2:8). But obtaining that would require the fulfillment of a mission that included perfect obedience to the Father and a sacrificial atoning death for sinners.¹⁵

The devil had no dang clue that this is what Jesus would do, and that Jesus would ultimately defeat him on the cross by dying and rising again. Talk about being duped! The devil would be a pouting loser in the end. The kingdom that Jesus will ultimately set up will be one that banishes the devil for good and sets up a sinless Eden once again! (Rev. 20)

But think about it. The devil's proposal is of an alliance between the Son and Satan. The temptation is not only to join Satan, but for Jesus to excuse himself from all that lies ahead in his ministry. He can leave behind the rejection and suffering for quick access to power.¹⁶

And I want us to imagine for a moment what our earth would be like if Jesus would have accepted satan's temptation and gone through with it. Imagine for a moment that the Messiah- the very Son of God, who took part in the creation of the Universe alongside the Father and person of the Holy Spirit, had decided to come to earth in human form and then willingly rebel against God the Father.

Could you imagine the chaos that would've ensued? Imagine the corruption the world would now be facing if Christ would have made allegiance to satan and rebelled against God. Maybe the earth would have become a truly satanic realm, akin to the rule of an antichrist sort of figure. But that term "antichrist" wouldn't have even existed! We would right now be in a "living hell"! Maybe none of us would even exist!

But it was not this way, Christ, knowing all His eternal power, submitted Himself fully to the Father's will!

Jesus didn't go for a satanic power grab, and neither should we. We need to trust God's long haul, ultimate plan.

We have a tendency to grab for power that is not ours or to take power in a way it is not intended to be received. Satan tempts us to slip into idolatry as directly as he did here with Jesus, using subtle substitutes. Perhaps we worship our work, our status, our possessions, our family, or other unsuitable items that stand in the way of knowing God.

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Maybe he asks us to take the easy path of “growth” without suffering or facing rejection in our stand for Jesus or for divine values. Sometimes opting for comfort means selling our soul to the prince of this world. Of course, God desires to give us rich blessing, even to share in the benefits of his authority, but to worship Satan and to take his path to get there is to lose whatever access to blessing we may possess.¹⁷

By the power of Christ we can cease to worship our work, reputation, pleasure, power, influence, and relationships! Instead we can allow Him to be King and His Kingdom to reign in our minds and hearts!

So the devil gives it one more shot and tempts Jesus a third and final time with the temptation of **sensationalism...**

9 So (the devil) took (Jesus) to Jerusalem, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: He will give his angels orders concerning you, to protect you, 11 and they will support you with their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” 12 And Jesus answered him, “It is said: Do not test the Lord your God.” (Luke 4:9-12)

Jesus is taken to the temple in Jerusalem — probably on the Royal Porch on the temple’s southeast corner, which looms over a cliff and the Kidron Valley some 450 feet below. Josephus mentions that just looking over the edge made people dizzy (Antiquities 15.11.5 §§ 411 - 12).¹⁸ In the midst of that freaky scenario the devil tells Jesus to prove that He’s the Son of God by throwing Himself off the temple.

I’m not certain of this, but I wonder if this was the exact same temple in Jerusalem that Satan would later inspire the religious leaders to throw Jesus’ brother James off of!¹⁹

Satan added to his enticement of Jesus by quoting Scripture himself, citing Psalm 91:11 - 12, a text that promised God’s protection for his own. The premise was, “If God protects his own and you are his Son, then you can jump and not worry; you can run over the edge and not be crushed.” He suggested such wonder-working protection would enhance Jesus’ unique dependence on God as he flung himself into his caring arms. Furthermore, surely God would not let his own suffer pain.²⁰

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¹⁹Read the account of James’ martyrdom at: <https://www.christian-history.org/death-of-james.html>

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Following Satan's temptation would have proven to be a spectacular, supernatural way to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. It would've resulted in a safe landing. No suffering required. And no cross.²¹

And we too should never back God into a corner. We should not intentionally create the need for a miracle. God will create miracle opportunities on His own.²² Christ in us leads us to trust God to do the miraculous whenever He is going to do it, and to not do the miraculous when it's not the right time or circumstances to do so.

I have seen God move miraculously many times. I have seen demons driven out of people and then those individuals put back into their right minds. I've seen lives be saved for eternity, and families and relationships restored by the power of Christ's gospel. I've seen and personally experienced miraculous physical healings. I've seen God, empowered by prayers of His people, change weather patterns in the clouds and thought and behavior patterns in the lives of people! I sometimes find myself praying in tongues and can't help it. I'm certainly one to say that the miraculous is still functional today by the power of the Holy Spirit!

But that doesn't mean I'm going to decide to put on a wig and start waving the Holy Spirit around like a magic wand, declaring that through me, He can heal whomever He wants to heal whenever I ask Him to! That would lead me into becoming a weirdo charlatan. I'm certainly not going to hire a camera crew to follow me around while I perform miracles for everyone I encounter, and then charge people money to back up a lavish lifestyle. I'm certainly not going to build a big church building and social media presence to get as many people to flock to see miracles as I possibly can.

And especially those of us who have experienced the miraculous power of God first hand need to submit all the more to God's will in the miraculous. God is not some genie that we can boss around, as Satan tried to convince Jesus that He was. And no doubt, I would even guess that God would, in fact, have supernaturally protected Jesus' safety if He had decided to do something as sensationalistic as throwing Himself off the temple to prove that He was the Son of God. Maybe Jesus would've ended up levitating and appearing to be like some sort of Superman comic book hero before the public. Imagine how much different we would think of Christ if that were the case!

But we'll never know, because Jesus didn't take Satan's bait. He replied with Deuteronomy 6:16, a text that rebuked Israel for testing God in places like Massah (Ex. 17:1 - 7). Jesus would not test God or characterize his ministry with a flashy display

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engaged in for selfish purposes. Jesus' messianic ministry would not be a traveling road show of the miraculous.²³

And we are not meant to ever exploit any of the miraculous or practical things of God for our own benefit! The worst manipulators of the gospel are ones who have called themselves spiritual and paraded the beautiful wonders of God in order to gain money, popularity, and power, and ultimately exploit and oppress people, using God's name in vain. As we can see, this kind of stuff is straight up from the devil- birthed in the pit of hell.

A less obvious way that we follow suit with the devil in this sense is to try to force God to act on our behalf. In the test we often set up, we want to see if he is for us or against us. This type of spiritual wagering does not involve leaping from tall buildings, but walking into events where we say in effect, "If you care for me God, then this situation will turn out this way." In effect, we test the "emergency broadcast system" of God's presence and presume on how he should react. This kind of testing is an attempt to control God, not follow his lead. We are setting ourselves up for disappointment, since it may be in our best interest for events to go in a different direction than we desire.²⁴

Leading up to when my wife Sarah and I were dating, I had undergone a two year period of celibacy. Many things of my mind that were in the gutter before that period were certainly cleaned up during that time.

However, I still carried into our dating life my lack of trust for women I was in a relationship with. This came from multiple girlfriends I had in the past who had cheated on me and lied to me about it.

I found that, after a full year of dating, Sarah was way different than the other women I had known. She always seemed to be brutally honest about everything, even when it wasn't to her advantage. She would even tell me when she found other guys attractive, but that she was committed to being with me. I just wouldn't believe her because of my mistrust. She caught me eavesdropping on her emails. Other guys tried to get dates with her and I would get up in their faces and tell them off.

I had bought a ring, wanting to marry this amazing girl. I had the ring in a drawer, and a plan to propose to her in a beautiful setting. But one day I fell back into my mistrust and jealousy, using reverse psychology to try and find out if she was dating other guys. She picked up on my game and burst into tears, exclaiming to me "I love you Ben!!!! Stop

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trying to test my love!!!” I, in my typically impulsive fashion, exclaimed back, “Ok, **fine!**” I ran to the drawer where the ring was in my apartment and rushed towards Sarah. “**Marry me** then!” Her tears turned into tears of joy and I cried with her too. She was 19 and I was 22 at the time. We had a lot of growing to do! And man, if I could re do the proposal I sure would!

You might not think you can trust God with your future, your health, your family, your marriage, your job, your eternity, your salvation, your resurrection, your sanctification, your sin, your mental health issues, your addictions, or your peace.

But go ahead and put that ring on God’s finger! (figuratively!) Take that plunge. He can be trusted! You can give your entire life and existence 100% to Him! He will carry you through trials, suffering, highs, lows, valleys, mountains, tears, fears, and pains to bring about His plan in your life!!! Trust Him with it all! Jesus will work in you to birth His trust for the Father in you!

God likes baseball: three strikes and you’re out! Satan spoke three temptations; Jesus quoted three passages of Scripture. When the devil couldn’t take it anymore, he left.²⁵

13 After the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from (Jesus) for a time. (Luke 4:13)

Having failed three times, Satan departed for a while. His departure was not a long one, since confrontation with demons resurfaced in Luke 4:31 - 44.²⁶

And this ain’t great news for any of us by any means. But satan sure ain’t done tempting us. He’ll throw every trick he has in the book at us! He’ll come at us when we least expect it. He’ll use our weaknesses, our tiredness, our stress, our depressions and more to try and drive a wedge between us and God. “We must be sober-minded, we must be alert. Our adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

It sure is a good thing that we have a Savior like Jesus, who stood firm in the Word, shut the devil up, shut the devil down, and ultimately gave His life, was buried, rose again, and ascended to heaven! One day Jesus will return to wipe out the devil for good and we will live forever in His perfect, beautiful Kingdom! Hallelujah! Lord, come soon!

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