

Notes for Connect Leaders
***The Testing of the Son of God* Matthew 3:16-4:11**

The Spirit leads Jesus into testing Every test is a temptation and every temptation is a test. God does not tempt us (James 1:13) but He does lead us into difficult situations where He can test what's in our hearts.

The Devil is real Two mistakes: obsessing about the devil and ignoring him completely. The devil works directly through demons but more typically indirectly through "the world" and "the flesh". He has two weapons: temptation and accusation.

The Echo of Israel Deut. 8:2 Israel as Son of God in the desert for 40 years to test what was "in their hearts"; Jesus as Son of God in the desert for 40 days to test Him. He was faithful where Israel was not.

The Temptation to Crave Comfort Essentially a temptation not to trust His Father for what He needed. To create bread was reasonable but a wrong response to His need. What He most needed was God's Word. We can seek comfort in the wrong ways. What we most need is God's Word to bring us the comfort we legitimately need.

The Temptation to Crave Certainty Exodus 17 In the desert the Israelites questioned God's dependability, reliability and competence. Is God for us? Jesus was tempted to prove His Father's goodness. We do the same. "If God is really good then He will..."

The Temptation to Crave Control Jesus was tempted to worship something other than His Father. "Satan's offer represents his own diabolical self-delusion." (RT France). It's the temptation to have things our way.

This last temptation is the ultimate test because it's about who or what we worship. The issue behind every temptation is worship: What do we look to, to provide what we most need? Where do we look to provide comfort, control, acceptance? Ultimately – where do we look? We will never see lasting change unless and until we change what we worship; until we change what our hearts cling to, run to, seek refuge in. We can cut up credit cards, only drink at weekends, install anti porn software on our pc and this will help us to some degree but IT WILL NOT CHANGE OUR HEARTS and this is what we most need. Our hearts will only change through the application of the gospel, the truth of all that Jesus is for us. We need the "expulsive power of a new affection."

Points to Ponder

- 1 Take any questions about the sermon. What stood out most for people? How have you been challenged/encouraged?
- 2 How do you feel about the fact that it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into this difficult situation? Can you think of other occurrences in the bible where God's people have been led through their obedience into difficulties? What is the purpose of trials and difficulties?
- 3 What does it mean to say that we need God's law and His promise (or the gospel)? Why are both needed?
- 4 What truths about the work of Christ for us can we bring to bear on situations of temptation? [Imagine a variety of everyday situations and imagine what truths about God would be particularly helpful to have applied by the Spirit to our hearts.]
- 5 Why is it a good start but not sufficient to simply put in guardrails to protect us from temptation? [E.g. to avoid getting cross in traffic we could leave an hour earlier; to avoid medicating on chocolate cake or alcohol we could ban it from our homes; to avoid sexually stimulating images we could avoid all computers. These are useful and important but we are not seeing our hearts change. Our hearts will still run to these idols for we believe that they will deliver what we need but they lie to us.] What will change our hearts?
- 6 What is the "expulsive power of a new affection"? How can a wrong object of worship (an idol) be displaced by another, greater love – the love of Christ? [E.g. imagine you love chocolate, you crave it and can't give it up, you just can't. The only way for this to be uprooted (according to the theological insights of the Reformers) is to have a love for something greater. The greater love could be a loved one who pleads with us to stop, or the love we have for a super fit body. We need a *greater* love to displace the wrong love. To get this we need to see Christ, we need to be overwhelmed with the gospel of grace.]