

Lenten Study - The Lord's Prayer
Session 5 – 4/6/2022
LEAD US, NOT INTO TEMPTATION

SESSION GOALS

Through this session's Bible readings, discussion, reflection, and prayer, participants will:

- Reflect privately on their own experiences of being tempted.
- Explore Scripture's "archetypal story of temptation" in Genesis 3, and Jesus' experience of temptation in Matthew 4.
- Discuss how the "armor of God" described in Ephesians 6 can help us withstand temptation.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Genesis 3:1-6

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" **2** The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; **3** but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" **4** But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; **5** for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." **6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Matthew 4:1-11

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. **3** The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

4 But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** saying 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, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; **9** and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

(NRSV)

Ephesians 6:11-17

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For our^a struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵ As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (NRSV)

OPENING THE SESSION

Welcome

Video

“Trust in Me” from *The Jungle Book*

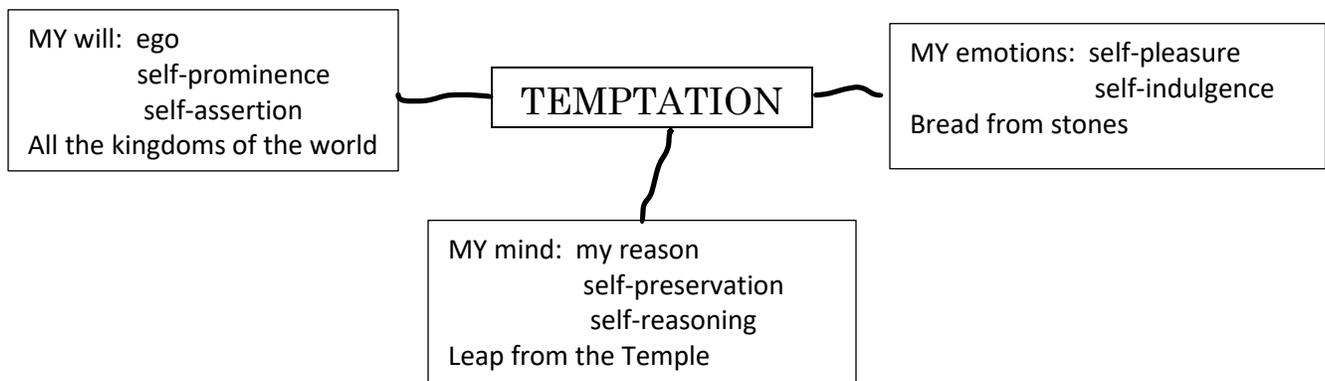
Discuss:

- “Hypnosis is an apt metaphor for temptation,” writes Hamilton; “it’s as if we fall under a spell and become susceptible to suggestion.” How helpful do you think *The Jungle Book* scene illustrates the experience of being tempted? Why?
- How well does our society as a whole resist temptation? Why?
- Has the petition that God “lead us into temptation” confused you? For what do you think we are asking God in this petition of the Lord’s Prayer?

According to Hamilton, “God does not tempt us to do what is wrong. God wants to encourage us to do what is right.”

James 1:13-15

¹³ No one, when tempted, should say, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; ¹⁵ then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. (NRSV)



TO BE HUMAN IS TO BE TEMPTED

Read together Genesis 3:1-6.

Discuss:

- What does the serpent tempt the woman to do? Why does the woman do it? Why do you think the story describes the woman's motives but not the serpent's?
- "The serpent," writes Hamilton, "was great at rationalizing and making arguments for doing the very thing God had told Adam and Eve not to do."
- God already delivers us from evil (the evil one) by:
 - God's constant presence and availability
 - God's gifts of spiritual common sense
 - The ability to "do battle" by the Holy Spirit
- In Genesis 3:11-13

¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." (NRSV)

What makes it so difficult to shoulder the blame for our failures to escape temptation?

- Later tradition identifies the serpent as Satan, but the story does not. What are some "serpents" in our world today that entice us to do what we shouldn't do?

TEMPTED AS WE ARE, BUT WITHOUT SIN

Read together Matthew 4:1-11.

Discuss:

- Does the Spirit lead Jesus into temptation (verse 1)? Why or why not?
- How tempting do you think Jesus found each of the devil's efforts, and why?
- How do you imagine that Jesus' experience of temptation informed what he taught his disciples to pray about temptation?

PUTTING ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

Read together Ephesians 6:11-17.

Discuss:

- How helpful or unhelpful do you find the idea of the devil as an explanation for temptation, and why?
- How does each item in the metaphorical "armor of God" help us withstand temptation?
- How does (or how ought) verse 12's insistence that our battle is not against human enemies shape the way we relate to others in our polarized society and polarized churches?
- What conclusions can we draw from the fact that the only offensive weapon in God's armor is "the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word" (verse 17)?

CLOSING THE SESSION

Close with *The Lord's Prayer*.

Closing Hymn

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"