

STUDY 1 / LENT 1: TEMPTATION OF JESUS LUKE 4:1-13

Jesus went to the desert full of, and led by, the Holy Spirit. It was the power of the Holy Spirit that sustained him during the temptations. He was led, empowered and full of the Holy Spirit during the forty days of prayer and fasting. When he came out of the wilderness, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. We also need the power of the Holy Spirit to empower us to overcome temptation.

Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert for forty days. The devil never gives up in tempting us through many tactics. Fasting traditionally presaged a great spiritual struggle. Elijah and Moses in the Old Testament fasted 40 days and nights, and so Jesus doing the same invites comparison to these events. At the time, 40 was a special number, full number, complete number and more a general expression for any large figure. Prayer and fasting are very important in our Christian lives. Prayer releases conviction, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. Prayer unlocks the doors of revival. Prayer releases healing and deliverance and breakthrough. Fasting is equally important as a Christian discipline. In the book of Jonah even animals fasted with the people. God changed his mind and forgave the city. So if animals fasted why not human beings, the sons of Adam?

1. Stones to bread

The temptation of making bread out of stones occurs in the same desert setting where Jesus fasted. The desert was seen as outside the bounds of society and as the home of demons such as Azazel (Lev 16:12). The temptation of food is a huge problem today. People idolise food. People spend their time, treasures and talents on food and drink to satisfy their appetites and cravings. Shopping malls/centres are now the Cathedrals where you find many people on Sunday. Corruption and other evils connected to food and drink that are rampant today. These are grieving the Holy Spirit. Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone' but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. The Lord Jesus defeated the devil by quoting scriptures. We should be men and women of the word and use scriptures to defeat the enemy.

2. Pinnacle of the temple

After the first temptation was rejected, the devil took Jesus to a high pinnacle of the holy city. Most Christians consider that holy city refers unquestionably to Jerusalem and the temple to which the pinnacle belongs is the Temple in Jerusalem. This temptation is about the misuse of power. There are so many people who are misusing their power and authority to prove that they are powerful and that they can do miracles. Once more, Jesus maintained his integrity and responded by quoting scripture, saying, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test' (Deuteronomy 6:16). There are many times when we put ourselves in situations that can lead us to compromise when we should have avoided them. We think we are Christians and we cannot be tempted beyond our control. Our over confidence sometimes leads us into traps that are very difficult to get out and if God does not help we find ourselves blaming God and angry at God. We should not put God to the test by avoiding things and places which can dilute our testimony or lead us to compromise our faith.

3. The Mountain.

Luke says it was explicitly a very high mountain, where *all the kingdoms of the world* can be seen. Satan said to Jesus: "All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me. This temptation is about idolatry. Jesus replied, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'"(Deuteronomy 10:20). Many people today worship many things. Materialism, consumerism and self-centredness are very huge problems today. God wants us to worship him and him alone. Give him our time talents, treasure and our very lives.



We have so many mountains in our lives where the devil puts us and tells us that we do not need God. That we have everything and are self-sufficient and so God is irrelevant to us. We should never take the glory of God and never think that we can do without him. Many people have wealth but they are miserable, empty, depressed without significance. We must understand that God is the only and sure source of our security, self-worth and significance.

The devil left him: When the devil had finished all these temptations, he left him until an opportune time. This indicated that the devil cannot tempt you permanently. He lives you and waits for an opportune time. We need to resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7). Do not give him an opportune time. Keep resisting through prayer and fasting and reading God's word.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit: Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. Prayer and fasting empowers us for ministry. You come out of it full of power. Temptations are very hard to endure but if you persevere you will come out of it full of and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

- 1. How would you describe your experience of prayer in just 3 words? Have you tried fasting, and if so, what happened?***
- 2. Can you think of "Corruption and other evils connected to food and drink that are rampant today"?***
- 3. How do we defeat the enemy by using scriptures? Can you give an example from your own life?***
- 4. Have you ever misused power or experienced those "above" you misusing power? How should we handle the power and authority God gives us as Christians?***
- 5. How might over confidence lead us into traps? In Uganda, Christians would avoid bars and gathering places for people drinking home brew banana beer, because it would dilute their testimony and compromise their faith. Do we have equivalent cultural norms over certain places or behaviours? How do we square that with the way Jesus ate and drank with sinners?***
- 6. What does it mean to truly worship God?***
- 7. What are the beneficial results of persevering through the desert times of testing, according to the Scriptures? How does our experience match up?***