

Lesson: Dedication in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)

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Bible Focus: Temptation of Christ; meaning and importance of Lent

Target Age Group: Older elementary/middle school students

Student application: Jesus suffered in order to prepare for His ministry; although we can never comprehend what He did for us, we celebrate that He overcame temptation and clung to God's Word in the face of it.

Lesson Opener: It is so tempting...start off the lesson with an example in the natural enticement of forbidden items...bring an unassuming box filled with donuts, and place in the center of the group. First, tell students to make sure that whatever they do, they must not look at the box. Don't think about it or talk about it. Begin to discuss Lent and the reasons we celebrate it. Throughout the discussion, glance back at the box or walk near it, but scold anyone looking towards it. Then at last, tell students they may look in it, but they cannot touch what is inside. Pass the box around, sniff deeply of the tempting sugary goodness, but do not pick up or eat the donuts. Suffer through the temptation a bit before allowing students a donut (or perhaps wait until the end of the lesson just to up the patience factor...). Explain that today's lesson is about the *temptation* of Jesus, which is essentially what we commemorate when we celebrate the practice of Lent.

Lesson and Verses: Throughout the church year, we honor and celebrate different times of the life of Jesus. At Christmas, we celebrate His birthday. Easter, of course, surrounds His resurrection. And as we prepare for Easter, we observe a time of reflection through the season of Lent. During Lent we can examine ourselves and consider what Christ did for us, how He suffered and sacrificed. We remember at this time the struggle and preparation our Lord endured...

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." -Matthew 4:1-3

Note that this passage states Jesus was LED to be tempted. It was no accident that He wandered into the desert. After His baptism, the Spirit led Him into a period of trial. This time was by no means easy for Jesus as a human, but it was further proof of His oneness with the Father and confirmation that He could withstand the Devil. It is certainly no joke that just as the Holy Spirit is present, Satan is a real force and will try his best to thwart God's plan. He does this in part by tempting God's people to sin. This he did it in the Garden

of Eden and succeeded. With Jesus, though, we have opportunity for a new story. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Adam and Eve had all they could possibly ask for and yet it somehow was not enough. They were created to be perfect but fell to the idea that they could somehow be God. They sinned and destroyed opportunity for complete communion. On the other hand, Jesus was also born perfect, blameless. He was, in fact, God, yet "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped" (Philippians 2:6) and came to earth in order to undo the effects of the fall. In the desert, we see Jesus lacking in everything a human needs for survival, yet successfully enduring and resisting Satan's attacks, on three distinct accounts.

The devil tried to prey upon Christ's humanity by first appealing to his natural physical needs. In some ways, verse two of this passage is almost laughable. After forty days of fasting he was hungry...DUH! What human wouldn't be? In fact Jesus could not have survived without being God. Satan first attacks His physical weakness, inviting Him to just eat something. Look at how Jesus responds in verse 4...

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Jesus uses Scripture, the words of His father, to stand up against the devil. He knows that food is not the only thing that sustains life and that it is more important for Him to be one with the Father. So Satan tries another approach...he uses a quote right back at the Messiah, asking Him to prove His God-hood:

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

*"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."^[c]*

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^[d]" Matthew 4:5-7

Once again, Jesus uses scripture to repel temptation, directly asserting that He is not going to provide tricks to show who He is. He knows He does not need to. So in one last effort, the devil tries to convince him to just give up and switch teams. He advises Him to take the easy way out. He doesn't have to go through with the horrible gruesome death awaiting Him; just bow to the devil...

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

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'^{tej}"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Satan is a trickster. Throughout the Bible we witness His ability to influence and infect people (Eve, Jezebel, Herod, Saul, Ananias and Sapphira, Judas...just to name a few). But he cannot overcome the power of God. Jesus, being Himself God, passed the test. He knew what He came to do and withstood Satan's schemes and lies. Now, since Christ took on flesh, this temptation (just as His violent crucifixion later) doubtless was no easy task. This makes it all the more significant. Jesus can comprehend our difficulty and aid us when tempted. We know He is reliable because He suffered, as well.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. -Hebrews 4:15

Ever have the feeling that teachers should do their own assignments so they understand the torture they put their students through? Well, Jesus did the ultimate assignment first. He has been there. He knows and understands and is ready when we need Him. And because Christ overcame temptation, we can take comfort even when we fail.

*No **temptation** has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).*

Yes, God provides a way out but as fallen creatures we do not always take it. We still fall to temptation, but our Savior did not. His defeat of Satan is the reason we can take hope and relief in what He did.

Follow-up Questions:

- Why is it important that Jesus was tempted? *It is significant that Jesus was tempted because we see a reversal from the original story of the fall. He clung to God and overcame Satan, which solidified His role as Savior and ability to take our place and take on our sins. Jesus came to make right what humans mess up. He did not give in and can provide us a way out of bondage to temptation.*
- What kinds of things are tempting to us? *Pride, vanity, selfish ambition, worldly pleasures, success, distraction...just to start.*
- Is temptation a sin? When does it become one? *Temptation itself is not a sin, as we know that Jesus did not sin and yet was tempted. When we make the choice to act upon temptation and follow through with what we know is not in God's plan, temptation is realized and becomes sin.*

- When have you felt like you were in a “desert” period? How did God guide you through? *Answers may vary according to personal experience. Emphasis ought to point to God’s ability to uphold us as we trust in His unfailing love and power.*
- Is hardship necessary to Godly living? *Challenge and difficulty are part of living in a fallen world. We need not seek them out but neither can we avoid suffering. However, we “glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5)*

Weekly Challenge: Adding on. A lot of times, and especially in light of the wilderness temptation, we think of Lent as a time of sacrifice, which it can be. However, giving things up is not the only way to honor God and celebrate His actions. This week, instead of concentrating on what you want to give up, identify something (or some things) you can add to your spiritual life. Maybe you need to spend more time in prayer. Maybe you can add a few minutes to your Bible study. Perhaps you want to start a journal. Or you could sign up for a service activity. One meaningful discipline in particular involves reflecting on the Gospels. There is nothing wrong with giving up chocolate for forty days. But perhaps a more meaningful act would be reading through Christ’s life in order to notice new things. Keep track of things you may not have realized or recognized previously, as well as questions about His character. Pay special attention to how the life of Jesus ultimately points to the cross and facilitates our salvation.

For even more ideas, don’t miss these related lessons from our website:

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How2pray

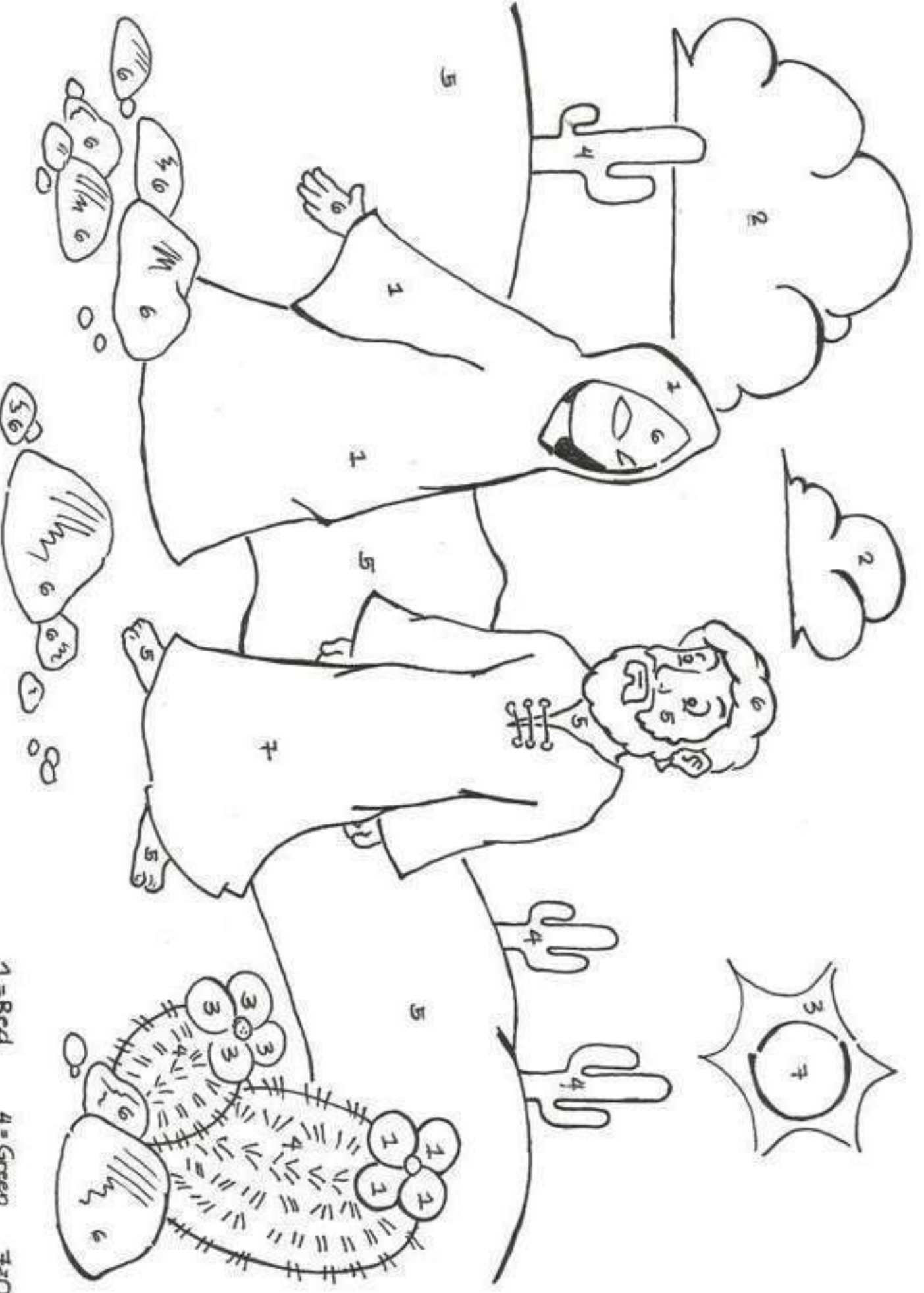


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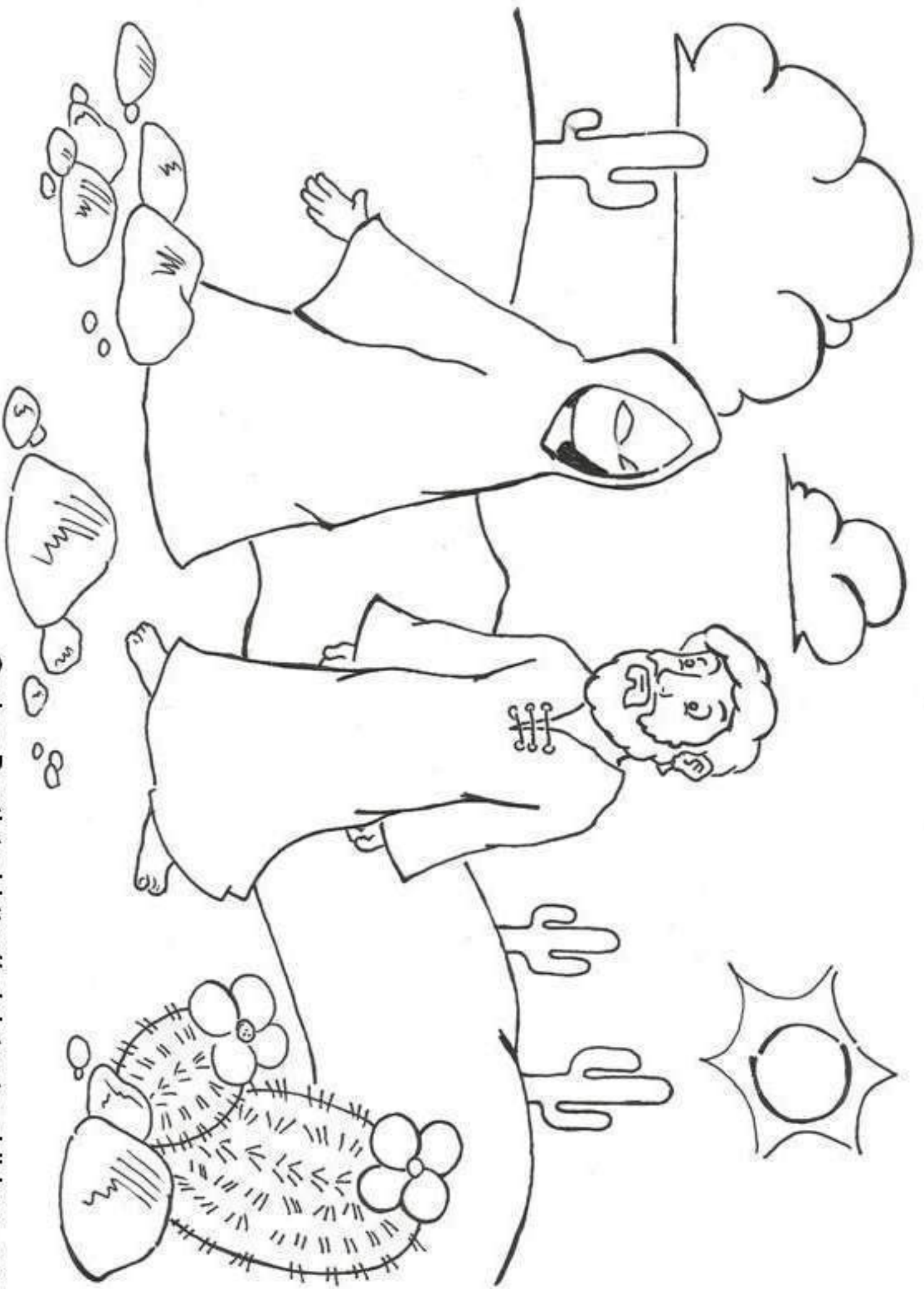
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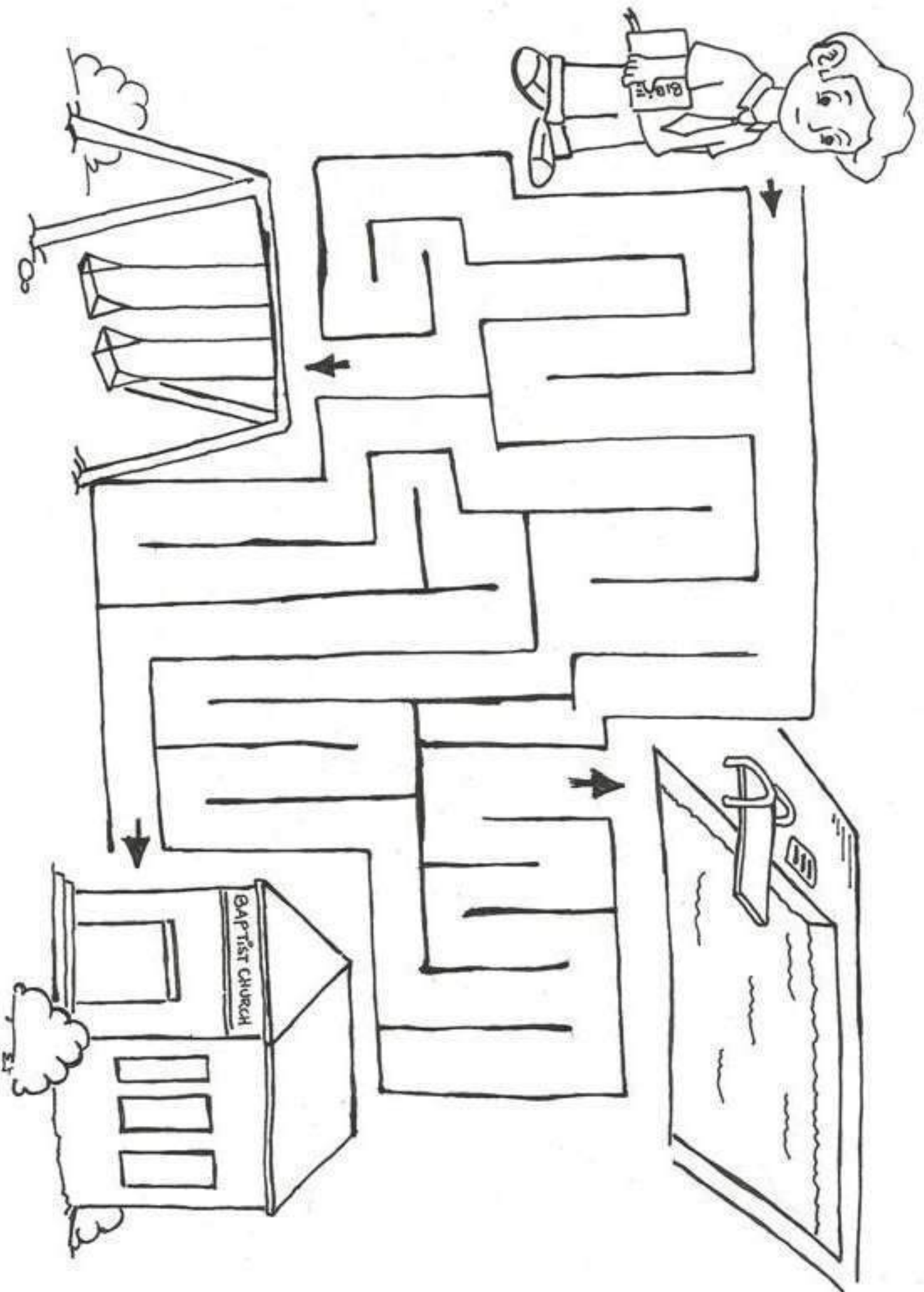


temptation



- 1 = Red
- 2 = Blue
- 3 = Yellow
- 4 = Green
- 5 = Brown
- 6 = Grey
- 7 = Orange





Name: _____

JESUS' TEMPTATION TO SIN

ACTIVITY PAGE

BRAINSTORM...

What does the word temptation mean? (You may look it up in a dictionary, but use your own words.)

Write down five things that can be a temptation:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

From your list, circle the temptation that's hardest for you. What can you do to battle your hardest temptation?

BIBLE STUDY

The following verses comfort us and/or tell us how we can beat temptation. Look up each verse and write out the words:

1. 1 Corinthians 10:13 –

2. Matthew 26:41 –

3. Hebrews 4:15 –

Which of these verses give you the most comfort in dealing with temptation?

Challenge yourself and see if you can memorize that verse this week!

Craft Ideas on the Temptation of Christ

Faith Focus First...and Always! Positive Reminders to Dwell on
Craft Ideas for the Temptation of Christ

Young children might not easily understand the concept of temptation...they don't always have the same temptations as adults, but certainly still sometimes fall sway to doing what they shouldn't. The focus, then, is to communicate to kids how important it is to focus on positive things. These crafts aim to do just that. One is a "target practice" dart game, meant to distract young minds from negative elements and re-direct attention to things of God. The other craft is a simple vehicle for holding and keeping Bible verses, to remember that God's Word is the true "bread" of our lives.

More Help for Teaching on the Temptation of Christ

- [Jesus is Tempted \(Matthew 4:1-11\) Sunday School Lesson](#)
- [Lesson: Jesus Battles The Devil and Temptation \(Matthew 4:1-11\)](#)
- [Jesus is Tempted Preschool Bible Lesson - Ministry-To-Children](#)
- [Children's Sermon on the Temptation of Jesus](#)

Bible Verses or Craft Captions to Consider...

But (Jesus) answered, "It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." -Matthew 4:4

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. -John 6:35

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

"Not by Bread Alone"

"Loaf of Love... verses to encourage"

"Fight Temptation with a positive target!"

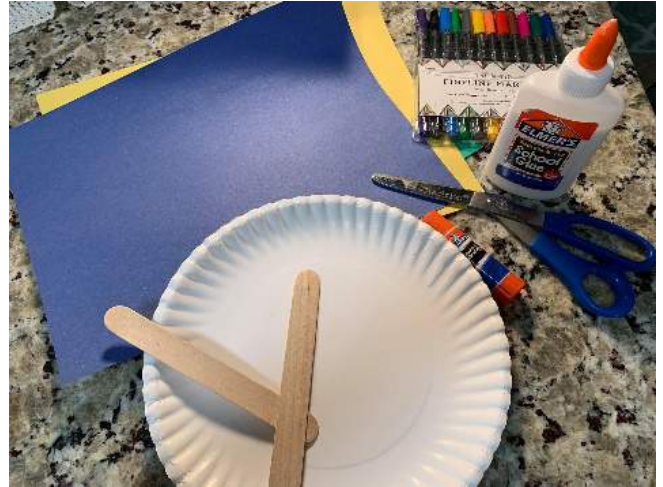


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Craft one: “Temptation Target”

You will need:

- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Paper plates
- Markers or decorating materials
- Glue and/or tape
- Popsicle sticks



Procedure:

1. Decorate the paper plate to look like a target. Draw several circles, one inside the other.
2. In each circle, write positive things to occupy time and attention. Decorate with color or stickers as desired.
3. Glue a popsicle stick cross in the “bullseye” section, to remind students to keep Christ first and foremost.
4. If you would like to hang the craft, attach a string or pipe cleaner to the back side.
5. Using construction paper, write down things that might be tricky or tempting. Crumple the paper and use as “ammunition” to throw at the target. Plan on doing one of the positive options that the target offers, according to where the “dart” hits!



Craft Two: "Scripture Slices"

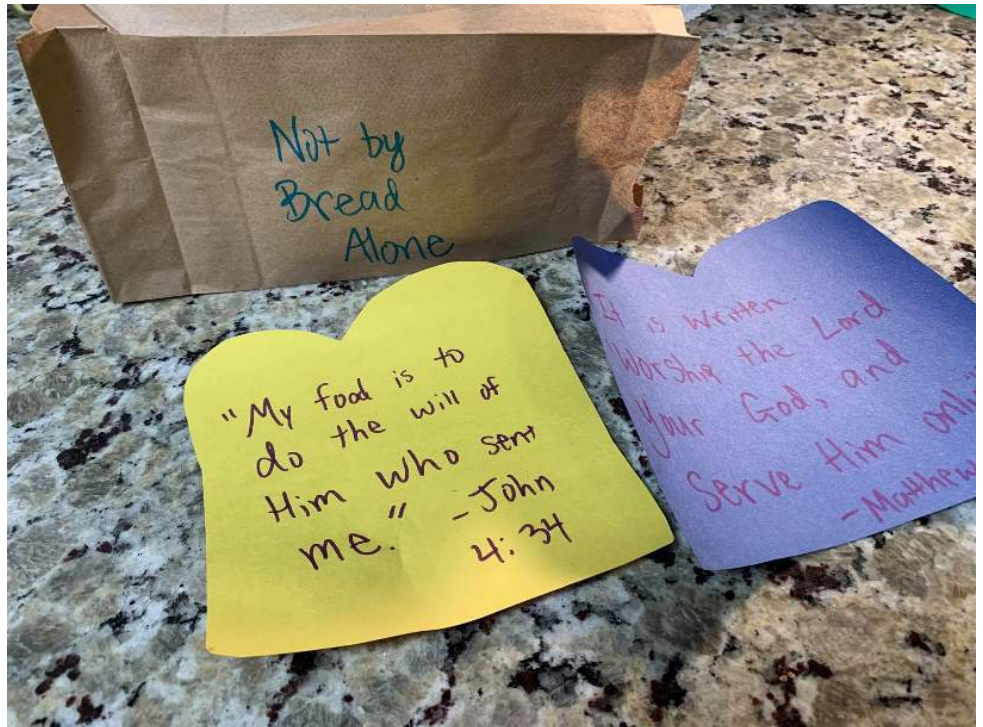
You will need:

- Paper bags
- Scissors
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue and/or tape
- Decorative materials (markers, crayons, stickers)



Procedure:

1. Decorate the paper bag to make a "loaf" reminiscent of a bread loaf. Add a caption (written or printed) and additional décor as desired.
2. Cut the construction paper or cardstock to look like slices of bread.
3. Write or cut and paste Bible verses on each "slice" of paper.
4. Carefully place the verse "slices" inside the loaf bag.
5. Partially seal the bag, but allow it to be opened for browsing and reading verses.



“Not by Bread Alone”

Children’s Sermon Object Lesson on the
Temptation of Christ in Matthew 4:1-11



Children’s Message: Not by Bread Alone

The Temptation of Jesus

Main Objective: Young children might not be tempted by some of the same things that adults experience, but they can certainly understand the difficulty in doing what they should. The focus of this message is to briefly describe the concept of temptation, and to offer kids positive things on which to focus.

Law/Gospel Theme: Jesus lived a life free from sin, but He was still tempted by Satan. Wanting to do wrong is not always bad, as long as we don’t fall sway to the temptation. Because Jesus went through temptation and overcame it, He is able to sympathize with our struggles and help in times of trouble.

Optional Materials: Some kind of treat or “tempting” item (edible or otherwise); list of rules (optional).

Bible Passage: Matthew 4:1-11

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Message Note: As with most messages, the details of how you choose to communicate this are adaptable and should cater to timing as well as to your audience and student needs. Your “temptation” could be a treat, or it could be as simple as holding up a shiny object and telling kids NOT to look at it. Use your judgment and ideas to best serve students.



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Children’s Sermon “The Temptation of Christ” Object Lesson

Greet the children, holding a bag of something fun and exciting, and likely edible.

Hello, children of God! How are you?

I would like you to help me with something today... I have this bag of homemade chocolate chip cookies (*again, this could be another treat, or a toy or other item*). Would you like one?

Well, I am going to give each of you a cookie to hold...but DON’T eat it! You can touch it, you can feel it, but don’t eat it. Why don’t you smell it? Does it smell tasty? Do you think you would like to eat it? Don’t eat it, though! Is your mouth watering yet? You might be getting tempted to take a bite...

Have you ever heard of the word “temptation”? Do you know what it means? Being tempted means you want to do something you are not supposed to do. Right now, you might be tempted to take a bite of that cookie. Well, eating cookies is not necessarily wrong, but if I specifically told you not to do it, then you should probably not be doing it, right?

Sometimes it’s tempting to disobey, or to not listen well to our parents. What are some rules you might have at home? (*Allow kids to share examples of rules. Optional: hold up list of rules or procedures for something.*)

Now, you might be tempted to skip some of those rules, or to do something other than what you should be doing. Maybe one of the rules doesn’t sound fun, and you’d like to do something else. It can be hard to be obedient. In fact, on our own power, it’s downright near impossible! But guess what? We don’t have to obey everything perfectly on our own power. Jesus took care of that, and we can rely on HIS power!

Did you know that Jesus faced temptation? It was in our Gospel lesson today, as a matter of fact! He went out into the desert, and for a long time He didn’t have anything to eat. Well, that made Him pretty hungry, and Satan picked that time to try to make Him do things He knew He was not supposed to do. These were things that might not have been bad if God instructed it, but Jesus knew He couldn’t listen to Satan for directions. Being tempted is not a sin, but giving in to temptation is. Jesus did not give in, though.



Do you know what He used to get rid of the Devil? He used Bible verses! He told Satan that He was not just going to rely on His physical body, but on the Word of God. He threw out Scripture like arrows, and it hit those temptations and eventually made Satan run away!

Now, it can be hard to do the right thing. But we know that Jesus lived a perfect life, and died for us so that we can live. Jesus faced temptation, so He knows what it's like when we are having a tough time trying to obey. What do you think we can do when we are tempted to do the wrong thing? (*Take suggestions.*)

Yes! We can pray to God for help, and we can read our Bibles. And we can also focus on positive things in our lives. The best way to fight off a negative temptation is to focus on something wonderful instead. Why don't we pray for help with that right now? Oh, and afterwards, you may eat your cookies...

(Optional: after prayer, let kids enjoy their treats.)

Children's Prayer Moment

(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for sending Jesus to live a perfect life

Thank you that He can help us when we are tempted

Help us to do the right thing

To love, serve, and obey you

Thank you for the love of Jesus

We love you, God!

In Jesus's name, Amen!



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Matthew 4:1-11 New International Version (NIV) Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

⁴ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
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⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also 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 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.



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