

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we give You thanks that we have a Savior who has experienced the very same temptations we face every day, yet who was without sin. We pray for the strength of the Holy Spirit to help us to be victorious over whatever temptations come our way. We long to be the obedient children modeled for us by Jesus. It is in His name we pray, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

As we read throughout this week we are seeing where there are many times of temptation in the Bible. Just like us Jesus was tempted from time to time. Have a conversation amongst the family about temptation and how that can affect others. Discuss positive ways you can react to temptation and how you can turn away from the negativity of it.

MONDAY 11.23.20

Genesis 3:1-6

Our Sunday Scripture passage is the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, so it makes sense to go back to the beginning and start with the original story of temptation—Adam, Eve, and the serpent. There are several things you may not have noticed before in this very familiar story. Not only does serpent misrepresent God ("you must not eat from *any* tree in the garden"), but in her response, Eve corrects the serpent, but also exaggerates God's commandment ("and you must not touch it"). The serpent then moves from misrepresenting God to attempting to create envy of God ("eat, and you will be like God"). What Eve sees in the forbidden fruit covers the range of human desire—the sensual (it is "good for food"), the aesthetic (it is "pleasing to the eye"), and the intellectual (it is "desirable for gaining wisdom"). Don't miss the fact that then, in her disobedience, she "took some and ate" ... words that will become salvific in the words of Jesus at the Last Supper ("take, eat, for this is my body"). Not only does Jesus withstand the same temptations Eve, and then Adam, failed to withstand, but Jesus will also redeem the entire event!

- Which temptations are hardest for you to withstand—the sensual, the aesthetic, or the intellectual? Why?

TUESDAY 11.24.20 Deuteronomy 6:13-19; 8:1-3

The book of Deuteronomy contains the words of Moses to the people of Israel after they have wandered in the wilderness for forty years, just as they are about to enter into the Promised Land. In these chapters, Moses not only reminds the people of their history, but he also reminds them of the expectations God had given them through the Law at Mount Sinai. The words in these chapters of Deuteronomy were deeply engrained in the people of Israel, so it is no wonder Jesus drew upon them so deeply when He was tempted during His own time in the wilderness. The words "Man does not live on bread alone" helped Jesus to overcome the economic temptation to satisfy His own, and perhaps even the world's needs by exercising power. The words "fear the LORD your God and serve Him only" helped Jesus to overcome the political temptation to become the king of the world. And the words "do not test the LORD your God" helped Jesus to overcome the religious temptation to confuse trust in God with a test of God's ability to intervene miraculously. Jesus' grounding in Scripture helped Him to withstand it all.

- How has your own grounding in Scripture helped you to withstand temptation? Which temptation would be hardest for you to withstand—economic, political, or religious?

WEDNESDAY 11.25.20 Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15

A common response to the story of Jesus' temptation is this: "Of course Jesus could withstand temptation—He was God!" But the Christian understanding of the incarnation of God in Jesus is that Jesus truly was 100% human. The writer of Hebrews attempts to help us to understand that this was absolutely necessary if Jesus was to be able to make atonement with God for all humanity. "He had to be made like His brothers in every way." "He Himself suffered when He was tempted." He "has been tempted in every way, just as we are." Make no mistake—Jesus' temptations in the wilderness were as real as the temptations you and I face every day. Jesus *could* have succumbed to the temptation to use the Holy Spirit's power to satisfy His personal hunger, to become the political king the Jews so desperately wanted, or to take death-defying risks to prove who He was. The temptation to do so must have been enormous, because Jesus truly *had* that power. But instead, Jesus drew on that power to withstand the devil's advances, and follow God's plan for His life.

- Why do you think it's hard for people to accept that Jesus was tempted "just as we are"?
- How does the reality of Jesus' temptation inspire you?

THURSDAY 11.26.20

Ephesians 2:1-10

In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, he refers to succumbing to temptation as "gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts." He also refers to this as the work of the "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" or, in the newer CEB translation, "the rule of a destructive spiritual power." This was a common way to refer to Satan in Paul's time. Consistent with the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, Paul insists that *all* humans must battle the evil powers in the world that seek to draw their wills away from God, and away from doing what is right. The good news of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is that those who put their faith in Christ are saved from this former way of living, and can successfully resist Satan's influence just as Jesus did, living a life of obedience to God. This does not mean temptation never happens—it just means that we have the spiritual resources to stand up to it. Though our previous failings may have resulted in sin and judgment, in God's mercy and grace, we have now been "saved, through faith"!

- Which "cravings of the sinful nature" has your faith in Christ enabled you to overcome?
- How would you explain your experience of being "saved by grace, through faith" to someone else?

FRIDAY 11.27.20

Titus 3:1-8

Paul repeats some of the same themes from his letter to the Ephesians in this personal letter to his close friend, and protégé, Titus. Notice, though that now Paul uses somewhat stronger language—it is not merely that we are succumbing to the evil desires Satan sends our way, but that we are actually *enslaved* by them! The language of enslavement implies that we have limited ability to actually resist these “passions and pleasures” that tempt us to be foolish, disobedient, envious, and hateful. The good news of salvation in Jesus Christ is that we need no longer be enslaved by these desires—we have the ability to choose to live Godly lives. Take notice of Paul’s language of salvation here—“God our Savior” has saved us, through the renewal of “the Holy Spirit,” who has been poured out upon us through “Jesus Christ our Savior.” All three persons of the Trinity are active in our salvation—not only forgiving us of our past sins, but empowering us every day to break the chains that make us think we have to give in to temptation!

- Do you ever actually feel enslaved by passions and pleasures that lead to ungodly behaviors?
- Do Paul’s words give you the hope of overcoming this?

SATURDAY 11.28.20

Luke 22:1-6

Of course, one of the saddest stories of giving in to temptation is the story of Judas, one of Jesus’ twelve close disciples, agreeing to betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities. In Luke’s telling of the story, the betrayal is the direct work of Satan, who “entered Judas,” leading to the betrayal of Jesus. We should not miss the fact that it is this same devil, who had come to Jesus in the wilderness and failed, who now comes to Judas and succeeds. The language is not meant to give Judas an excuse, as in “Judas didn’t do it, Satan did.” Rather, the language of Satan entering into Judas is picture language to describe Judas’ decision to collude with the forces of evil. He succumbed to evil, and it overtook him completely. Whatever motivations led Judas to this decision, whether they were financial, political, or personal, they were aligned not with God, but with God’s enemy, who was seeking to destroy God’s work now, just as he was trying to three years earlier in the wilderness. Satan targeted Judas, because Judas had opened himself up to the possibility of being successfully tempted.

- Are there parts of your life where Satan could easily target you?
- Reading about temptation all week leads to the final question—“Who are you when no one’s watching?”



Daily Study Guide

November 22-28, 2020

Sermon Series: Being Jesus

Week Four: “Jesus @ Home Alone” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, November 22: Luke 4:1-12

“Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There He was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterward Jesus was starving. The devil said to Him, ‘Since you are God’s Son, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ Jesus replied, ‘It’s written, *People won’t live only by bread.*’ Next the devil led Him to a high place and showed Him in a single instant all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said, ‘I will give you this whole domain and the glory of all these kingdoms. It’s been entrusted to me and I can give it to anyone I want. Therefore, if you worship me, it will all be yours.’ Jesus answered, ‘It’s written, *You will worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.*’ The devil brought Him into Jerusalem and stood Him at the highest point of the temple. He said to Him, ‘Since you are God’s Son, throw yourself down from here; for it’s written: *He will command His angels concerning you, to protect you and they will take you up in their hands so that you won’t hit your foot on a stone.*’ Jesus answered, ‘It’s been said, *Don’t test the Lord your God.*’ After finishing every temptation, the devil departed from Him until the next opportunity.” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Joyce Rasbach
- Annette Brown
- Debra Fisher
- Amy Cordeal
- Kathy Westhoff
- Debbie Thibault
- The Miller Family
- Julie Johnson
- Bettina Esser
- Charlotte Ottley
- Delaney Digman
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Peggy Cruse
- Bill Cruse
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Everyone affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org