

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Discuss why something is tempting
- Highlight how Jesus is able to keep his mind focused on God and not the tempting tests
- Note what ministry looks like when a person is fully focused on God (as compared to, say, Jonah)

Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *Moneyball*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. Bibles for students to search through

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- **Here’s this week’s question:** What test did you most recently take that you think (or know) you did well on?

TRANSITION TO VIDEO CLIP

- In today’s scripture story, Jesus faces three temptations.
- We will talk about how the Greek word that gets used for “temptation” can also mean “test” and what that means in terms of understanding the story.
- But to start with, let’s think about why something is tempting and other things are not tempting.
- For instance, if I said “There are two choices for dessert tonight: Ice cream and dirt,” which one of those choices would *not* be tempting?
- Right, the dirt. Because none of us would like eating it. So something that is tempting is something that we might actually like.

- Now, that doesn't mean we initially want the tempting thing that is being offered, but we would *like* it.
- To help us think about how something can be tempting, but not necessarily what we want, let's watch the following video clip from the movie, *Moneyball*.
- In it, the general manager named Billy Beane (played by Brad Pitt) of the Oakland A's (that's a baseball team), is looking for a first baseman who can hit, but won't cost his team too much money when they hire him.
- Billy thinks they've found the right player, named Scott. The problem is, Scott (played by Chris Pratt) is a hurt catcher, not a first baseman.
- Let's see if he finds Billy Beane's proposal tempting.

WATCH Video clip

ASK

- Does it sound like lots of other teams are asking Scott to play for them? (No, they are not)
- Do you think Scott is worried about his future? (seems likely; the scene tries to portray that stress at the beginning of the clip where Scott's wife is doing bills at the kitchen table)
- Despite being worried about his future and having no job offers, is Scott very excited about Billy's offer to play first base? (nope, not at all)
- Is the scout who is with Billy excited about Scott playing first base? (nope, not at all)
- Does it sound like the fans would be excited about Scott playing first base? (not according to Scott or the scout)
- Despite his indecision and lack of excitement, and that he probably doesn't want to play first base, how tempted do you think Scott is about Billy's offer to play first base for the Oakland A's? (pretty tempted)

TELL

- Today's scripture story, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, happens directly after Jesus is baptized.
- In it, he is tempted to do three different things.
- After we read the story, we'll discuss why Jesus might've *liked* to do those three things (that is: why those things were tempting to Jesus), even if he ultimately didn't *want* or *choose* to do those things.
- As we read the story, I also want you to keep in mind that Greek word that is translated as "temptation" can also be translated as "test."
- Think of the story, then, as a test of temptations.
- Let's see what happens.

READ Luke 4:1-15 (recommendation: Have class read it aloud; one person per verse)

1Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" 5Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6And the devil said to him, "To you I will give

their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" 9Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you

will not dash your foot against a stone.” 12Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 13When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

14Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

ASK

- Verse 1 – who/what led Jesus into the wilderness? (the Holy Spirit)
- And what was in the wilderness? (challenging temptations/tests)
- Verse 2 -- How long was Jesus in the wilderness (40 days. Note: 40 is a symbolic number for the Hebrews that means “a complete amount.”)
- In verse 3, what’s the first test/temptation? (to turn stone into bread)
 - a) *Aside:* Is that something that often tempts you!? (just checking)
- In verse 4, when Jesus replies – “It is written” – any thoughts about what writing he is referring to? (yes, the Hebrew scripture – or what we call the Old Testament)
- In verse 7, what is the second test / temptation? (to worship the devil and then receive all sorts of glory and authority)
- In verse 8, when Jesus replies, “It is written,” any thoughts about what writing he is referring to? (that’s right – same answer! The Hebrew scripture – or what we call the Old Testament)
- In verse 9 and 10, what is the temptation? (there’s a number of them, depending on how you read it: There’s a challenge there for Jesus to prove he is the Son of God, there is the temptation to quit by way of death and then verse 10 is about tempting/testing God to rescue Jesus)
- In verse 12, when Jesus replies, “It is said,” any thoughts about where that saying might be? (that’s right – same answer! The Hebrew scripture – or what we call the Old Testament)
- In verse 13, what had the devil finished? (every test)
- But will the devil return? (yes, at an opportune time)
- So, do you think there will be more tests / challenges for Jesus? (yes)
- And when those temptations arise, based on how Jesus responded previously, how do you think Jesus will respond to those other temptations? (by saying no and most likely by replying with something from the Hebrew scripture)
- Verse 14 and 15, how well of a job does it sound like Jesus is doing in his ministry? (a pretty good one!)

TELL

- To repeat an earlier idea, the word “temptation” here also translates as “test.”
- And the tests appear to be about seeing what choices Jesus will make when tempting options are placed before him, options that are different than what he knows he should choose.
- **So, what are those options? Let’s look at the tests Jesus faces.**
 - a) Initially, the first test looks like it’s about hunger and survival – that Jesus should feed himself since he hasn’t eaten in a long amount of time. But Jesus’ response to the test lets us know that he’s clear that food/survival is not his most important priority (at least in that moment). Instead, what we’re learning about Jesus in this story is that paying attention to God is more important to him than even food.
 - b) The second test is Jesus being offered an easy way out. The, “Just do this one thing and you will get everything

that you want and need”

- c) Jesus’ response, though a little cryptic, reveals a clarity of mind that understands you have to own something before you can give it away. In other words, Jesus does not forget that God made everything and, therefore, what the devil is offering is not the devil’s to give, but for God to give.
- d) The third test I think is mostly about quitting and/or expecting God to take care of things.
- e) Ever had the temptation to give up and let someone else figure out what to do, should anyone else care to figure out what to do? That’s what this test seems to be about.
- **So, why test Jesus? To help us think about this, let’s look at who didn’t take any tests.**
 - a) I think the Jonah story lets us know how a lack of testing turns out.
 - b) When the going gets tough for Jonah, he runs away.
 - c) When running away doesn’t work, he doesn’t try very hard to do what God directed him to do: Offer Nineveh a change to ask for God’s forgiveness.
 - d) But what if he had had some testing beforehand? If he had had some practice of choosing God’s options when under stress?
 - e) Which makes me think that the reason for the testing is to help Jesus.
 - f) After all, Jesus is led to the time of testing by the Holy Spirit.
 - g) The testing then lets Jesus see that when the going gets tough, he is able to stay clear about why he is doing what he is doing.
 - h) In other words, the tests let him know that’s he ready for ministry.
- **So, how did Jesus pass these tests? Simply put, he knew his Bible**
 - a) Every time Jesus faces a challenge, he has a scripture passage that he uses to help him say no to the temptation.
 - b) And, one of the reasons that Jesus was able to use the scripture passages as a way to help him keep this thinking straight was because he knew the scripture passages well.
 - c) This same approach can be used by us, as well, which is one of the reasons why we read and discuss the scripture stories in every class, because I know that they are helpful to us in many ways, including helping us to to remember how to invite God into stressful situations that we might be experiencing.
- As an example of how this works, we're going to do some scripture passage remembering in the following activity.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- The way this will work is that I’m going to read (outloud) to the class a situation.
- And then, as a class, I want you to try and name a similar situation from one of the Bible stories that we’ve read this year (you are also welcome to refer to other Bible stories that come to mind, but the situations are specifically written to refer to stories from this year).
- You can either look up the story in the Bible or just reply by memory.
- Note: This isn’t a competition, but a group activity.

DO ACTIVITY

- **First situation**
 - *Situation:* Your class is given a challenge. You are to build a tower out of spaghetti noodles, tape, and 6 feet of string in 20 minutes. The class has been split into groups to see who can build the tallest building in those 20 minutes. 15 minutes have passed and the group you are in is not doing well. The tower won’t stay up, two classmates have stopped participating and the other students in the group are yelling at each other.

- **Question:** What Bible story have we read recently that is similar to this?
 - **Answer:** The tower of Babel story – where the people try to build the tallest building, but then end up experiencing a breakdown in communication
- **Question:** Now that you’ve identified the situation that you are in where there is a breakdown in communication, what story have we recently read where communication difficulties are overcome where many of the people spoke different languages, but they understood everything the disciples were saying?
 - **Answer:** Pentecost
- **Question:** And what were the disciples doing together before everyone could understand them?
 - **Answer:** Praying
- **Resolution:** Unless your class is a Sunday school class, asking your classmates to pray with you is not going to help the situation (most likely). However, that doesn’t mean *you* can’t pray. In your mind, ask God for understanding about the situation and what words you might be able to share with the group so that they can all work together again. Then be still in your mind and see what thoughts and observations come to mind. Then, like Peter did in the Pentecost story, share what comes to mind with the group.

- **Second situation**

- You are 23 years old. And the church you are attending is looking for some leaders to help with the middle and/or high school Sunday school classes / youth groups. Though you are thoroughly equipped and prepared to help out with a situation like this (because you’ve been a student in this class and know you can download and print all these same lessons from rfour.org), the timing of the class is inconvenient for you because you’d rather be doing something else during that time (a sports team meets then, you like to sleep in, etc). You choose to not help out.
- **Question:** What Bible story have we read recently that is similar to this?
 - **Answer:** Yep, Jonah going in the opposite direction that God asked Jonah to go in.
- **Question:** Now, it’s possible that God wasn’t calling you to teach the Sunday school class. Just because there’s an opportunity, doesn’t mean you have to do it. But the activity that you’ve been doing isn’t turning out so good for you. You got injured playing your sport of choice. You can’t sleep in because the dog needs to be walked and the neighbor cuts their grass on Sunday morning. And, the church you are attending has specifically asked you for help. You say yes. You learn leadership skills. The students are actually enjoying the class. Church members tell you their appreciation. There is much rejoicing. What Bible story have we read recently that is similar to this?
 - **Answer:** Either the second Jonah story or even today’s story. You understood that the initial things that seemed good weren’t actually the most important things that you could do. And, then, the results of helping out with the Sunday school class were impressive.
- **Resolution:** 10 years after you led the Sunday school class / youth group, a new group of 23 year olds face the same decision as you did. And because of you, they are equipped and ready to help lead their own church’s Sunday school classes / youth groups. Well done, future-yous!

- **Third situation**

- Due to inept politics, increase in population of over 150% in just 60 years (2.5bn to 7bn), increase in manufacturing, and unchanging habits of many people, is causing global weather temps to increase. Additionally, the polar caps are melting and the water levels are rising.
- **Question:** What Bible story have we read recently that has a similar ending as the just-mentioned situation?

- *Answer:* Yep, Noah and the flood -- where people were focused on all sorts of things, but not God, and subsequently, the water levels rose.
- **Question:** In both the Noah story and when Jesus calms the storm, what tool did we see the characters use that helps them to address the situation?
 - *Answer:* words!
- *Right!* In both situations, the person works with God, using what they've learned from God and what God has directed them to do in order to best respond to the situation.
- Even when the situation is overwhelming, because the people are paying attention to God first, then the situation is resolved, sometimes even in unexpected ways.
- **Resolution:** Remains to be seen

TELL

- Well done with your answering!
- When we learn about God and the faith stories and then apply those stories as reminders to put God first in our own lives, then, as we see with Jesus at the end of today's story, amazing things can happen.
- And that's the good news for today

CLOSING PRAYER