**4**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **2**where for forty days he was tempted[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25066a)] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

**3**The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

**4**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25068b)]”

**5**The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6**And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. **7**If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

**8**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25072c)]”

**9**The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. **10**For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you
    to guard you carefully;
**11**they will lift you up in their hands,
    so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25075d)]”

**12**Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25076e)]”

**13**When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

What can we learn from Jesus about recognising and resisting temptations; and living a faithful life?

This is a fascinating passage. Here there is a very real devil. A very human Jesus. Very real temptations and Jesus being very faithful.

The existence and presence devil is assumed. This can be hard for many modern people. We suspend our disbelief to watch horror movies (something I have no interest in), but we know deep down it’s not true.

But the Bible presents a very real personal evil who wants to:

1. Rule the world – described as the prince of this world
2. Deceive humans and lead them away from God just like he did with Adam and Eve.

Some years ago Michael Green wrote a book called “I believe in Satan’s Downfall.” Two important things I took from that book is that the devil is happy if….

1. We believe the Devil is powerful, preferably all powerful, or
2. We believe that he doesn’t exist at all.

Either position allows him to act with impunity.

The Bible takes no such position. The Bible presents him as a created being, an Elohim. He is some sort of rebellious spirit. The Bible doesn’t have a great deal of detail about his origins but has some detail about his character. (The story about Satan an alternative name for the Devil being a choir director in heaven comes from Greek mythology not the bible). Although there is a reference to music in Ezekiel and Revelation. Ezekiel gives you the most information in Ez 28 – Powerful, wise, perfect in beauty, adorned with jewels, highest of all angles, (or Elohim), Anointed Cherub, Rev 12:4 a third of the angels joined his rebellion. Isaiah tells us his sin was to try to ascend to God’s level such was his pride.

Hungry for power- ultimately that’s what his interaction with Adam and Eve are about. He is the usurper who claims power over this world when Adam and Eve give in to temptation. They had been given authority over this world.

Down throughout history he has been happy to use violence as his tool – he does so with Jesus at the cross though that doesn’t work out so well.

He is a crafty liar. Jesus calls him the father of lies.

He presents temptations to people down throughout history mostly some version of the same ones he presents to Jesus.

I am reminded of the Lord’s prayer: Lead US not into temptation. We all face temptation. And we all give in to temptation.

 One of the great things about AA is an acknowledgement that all present are weak alcoholics. All in this together.

So often in church world we can believe that admitting weakness is to somehow blaspheme God. That that shows God is somehow weak. And if I am sinning then that is super shameful and I must be the only one so what I need to do is appearance manage.

Jesus was tempted.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has come your way except what is common to all people.

Temptation 1: If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.

On several levels: Satisfaction of physical desires. The lust of the flesh. Jesus had been fasting 40 days. I have never done a 40 day fast. He must have been hungry.

The temptation to use your powers for your own benefit. Me, mine.

But there is something else going on here about where we get our sense of wellbeing; identity; acceptance, value and belonging.

Each of these temptations can be healthy desires. The desire to be liked or to do good or to belong. But when we are willing to lie of cheat or steal to have those desires met then there becomes a problem.

One place we go to meet the desire for acceptance, belonging and value is from what we do or achieve. If I can do something remarkable I could really feel good about myself. I sometimes hear older people lament that they didn’t do the big thing to change the world the way they hoped or they didn’t ever get to achieve that big thing for God.

How easy is it for us to believe that we need achievement to feel like we are OK with ourselves. As we get older it can be more difficult – they don’t give out participation trophies once you finish school.

“If you are the son of God” can be quite a taunt to the insecure mind. If you are a real Christian. If you were a good person. If you really loved me.

This is a kind of gaslighting. The devil was attempting to get Jesus to doubt who he was. Make him easier to manipulate.

Temptation 2: Show him the kingdoms of the world. The temptation here is the lust of the eyes.

Power and money and fame and the sense of achievement can all be powerful temptations.

The devil is saying to Jesus: all these good things you want to do with the kingdom stuff, I can help you, I’m the real hero of the story anyway.

The devil is saying the end justifies the means. The Devil is not opposed to a good kingdom. But he is proposing that he be the god of this kingdom. And where he is god then lies, power, violence, jalousies are always at play.

I think one of the temptations for a religious person is to use the validation of the religion or religious group as a permission discriminate, enslave, segregate, demean and or defraud. Any behaviour can be excused by saying we stand up for….put whatever you like in that space (family values or biblical womanhood). We hate evil they would say.

Again I am reminded of the US in the Lord’s Prayer. Lead US away from temptation.

This is why I think a philosophy like White Christian Nationalism is so dangerous. The group confirms the bias permissing bad attitudes and behaviour.

Essentially the temptation Jesus faced was to go down a path of state enforced dictatorship of good. Of having a Christian world.

Jesus saw through it.

Temptation 3: Throw yourself down the angels are sure to catch you.

This time the temptation can be described as the pride of life.

Do something special. Do something that will have everyone talking about you.

These things to do something special; have something of my own for my own comfort, entertainment or safety; and, have people talk well of you; are so powerful.

The Devil uses and missuses scripture. Just because people quote scripture doesn’t mean they are speaking truth.

The Devil knows scripture but uses it to try to get his own way; deceive; and as a club to punish people. Proof texting – using an individual scripture to support a point; taking scriptures out of context; making the scriptures say things that punish, abuse or against the nature of God (revealed to us in Jesus) are sure signs of this sort of power play. When you see it beware!

Jesus sees through all this. He calls all these seemingly important and powerful temptations LIES!

The temptation below all of these is to do or be or find fulfillment in anything other than God himself. To resist God. To resist his invitation.

It is nicer when you are part of achieving something special. It is nicer when you have property and money and security. It is nicer when people say nice things about you rather than criticise. And the reality is that we tend as people to be sensitive to the negative. I’ve never laid awake at night worrying about the 100 people who like me only the 1 who doesn’t.

But Jesus says: I don’t need those things to be OK. To think so is a LIE! Relying on them for my wellbeing makes me unstable and controlled by others.

Jesus answer and his ability to resist is based on three things.

1. Truth – Every time the Devil missuses Scripture Jesus is schooled well enough, immersed and internalised the scriptures He could respond to the lie.
2. And he understood the nature of the world, the universe and God. Jesus has a real grasp on reality. So, when presented a lie. Is like eew!
3. He knew his identity. Only a few weeks before he was baptised and a voice from heaven spoke and proclaimed “You are my son in whom I am well pleased.”

Our identity. Who we believe we are at our core makes a huge difference. Do I believe that I am really a beloved Child of God?

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.
-1 John 3:1a (ESV)

“The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” [Zephaniah 3:17](https://www.biblestudytools.com/zephaniah/3-17.html)

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” [Jeremiah 31:3](https://www.biblestudytools.com/jeremiah/31-3.html)

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” [Romans 5:6-8](https://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/passage/?q=romans+5:6-8)

 “You are children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.” [1 Thessalonians 5:5](https://www.biblestudytools.com/1-thessalonians/5-5.html)

7. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.” [John 15:9](https://www.biblestudytools.com/john/15-9.html)

8. “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name. You are mine.” [Isaiah 43:1](https://www.biblestudytools.com/isaiah/43-1.html)b

God is love and God loves us his children.

Now this makes a big difference. Have you ever sat and watched a bird. Why does the butcher bird behave the way it does? We have some wonderfully friendly butcher birds here. If you dig a hole in the ground there they are chasing worms and grubs. They take the worm and wack it on the ground or branch. Then they hop, hop hop back in close to see if there is something else.

Why does it behave that way? Because it is a butcher bird!

Why did Jesus behave the way he did? Because he is Jesus.

Why does a Christian act in Christ like ways? Because they know they are a beloved child of God. Because they know their true identity.

A follower of Jesus has to know, not just in their head, but deep in every part of themselves, “I am a beloved Child of God.” And when they do they start to live that way. When they do they realise that this is the source of their wellbeing, the sense of belonging, value, acceptance.

When that happens the temptations of doing, having and being liked become resources to us not overwhelming temptations to cheat, lie, fight, my way to the top.

When you are young in youth group it is easy to think all temptation is drugs, sex and rock and roll. But ultimately they are just surface behaviours for deeper needs.

Joke about sin.

Anger, unforgiveness, reactivity, wanting to control, anxiety, hardening my heart, failing to show empathy, not responding in love….resisting God, his direction or His love.

Finally, angels come and strengthen Jesus.

I want to encourage you that the Holy Spirit will comfort and strengthen you in your time of need. 1 Cor 10:13 goes on to say that you will not be tempted beyond what you can bear and God will always give you a way out.

But I think the Holy Spirit has another purpose. Temptations may reveal deeper or hidden needs and desires. See quote.

True faith should lead to deep self-examination, love, and justice, rather than serving as a club to bash others. Does our faith cultivate humility and transformation?

Am I confident in God’s love for me?
What struggle surface in my life presently?
Where have I resisted God this week? What scriptures do I lean on in a time of temptation?