



ROSE VISUAL
BIBLE STUDIES

6 SESSIONS

JOURNEY TO THE RESURRECTION

Bible Study



Contents



DUST AND ASHES

Confession

Page 7



IN THE WILDERNESS

Fasting

Page 21



BROKEN AND Poured OUT

Generosity

Page 35



POWER IN HUMILITY

Service

Page 49



VICTORIOUS FAILURE

Contemplation

Page 63



LIVING HOPE

Celebration

Page 79



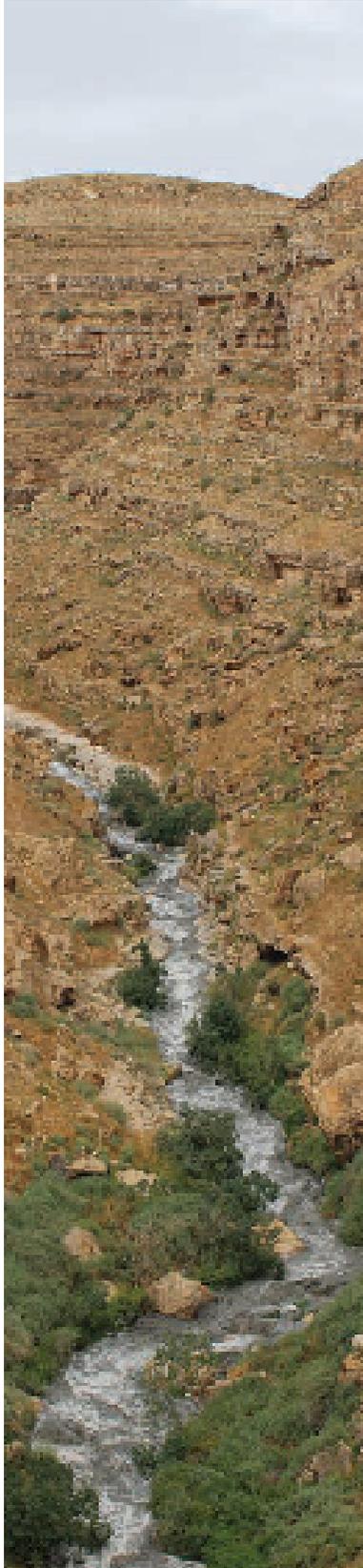
LEADER'S GUIDE

Page 97



Fasting

In the Wilderness



Just after Jesus was baptized to begin his public ministry, he experienced a private testing and temptation. Led by the Holy Spirit, he walked into the wilderness alone, stayed there for forty days and nights, fasted from eating food, and was challenged by the tempter, who tried to deceive, discourage, and defeat him. Jesus resisted the devil's attacks and rested in the truth of God's promise and in the security of his relationship with his Father.

The forty-day time period is significant and intentional. Jesus was following the example of Moses, who spent forty days on Mount Sinai receiving the old covenant from God (Exodus 24:18).

Jesus' forty days of testing also provides an example for us of facing and overcoming temptation. Like Jesus, we enter wilderness periods of life. Sometimes these seasons catch us by surprise. At other times, we know they are coming, but there is nothing we can do to avoid them. We may experience private times of trial and suffering, strong temptations and the results of our failure, or the challenges that come with the passing of time and stages of life. These seasons remind us of our weakness and limitations and our need to depend on the power and grace of our Savior.



Read It

Key Bible Passage

For this session, read the story of Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1–11.

Optional Reading

Read the story of the first temptation at the beginning of creation in Genesis 3:1–24.

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

MATTHEW 4:4





Know It

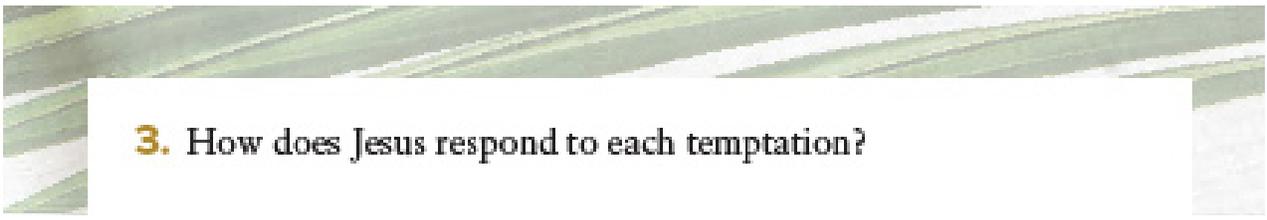
1. Jesus' wilderness time wasn't an accident. He intentionally confronted hunger and the devil. Why do you think Jesus chose to do this just after his baptism and before he began to preach publicly?

2. What motivation does the tempter appeal to in each of the three temptations?

#1. (verse 3): _____

#2. (verses 5–6): _____

#3. (verses 8–9): _____



3. How does Jesus respond to each temptation?

#1. (verse 4): _____

#2. (verse 7): _____

#3. (verse 10): _____

What stands out to you or surprises you? What is similar or different about each response?



Explore It

Temptation is not in itself sinful, and it does not necessarily result in sinful actions. The New Testament Greek word most often used to describe temptation is *peirasmos*. This word can refer to temptation toward sin or evil, but it can also refer to a testing or time of trial. It's used in ancient Greek literature to describe the process of refining gold, where gold is mined from rock and then undergoes *peirasmos*. This testing or refining brings the precious metal out of the rock and also demonstrates that it really is gold.



Refining gold

We know that God does not tempt us with evil. He does not pull us toward sin. James writes about both testing and temptation and reminds us that we can never claim that God is tempting us:

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12–13)

However, life does bring us to times of testing, seasons that put our character and our faith to the test, times when we're thrown into the fire. It is in those moments of life that the tempter comes to try to ruin our character and steal away our trust and confidence in God our Father. It is in those moments that evil is present, waiting to snatch us up.

Darrell Johnson, writing about this dynamic, observed, "There are events or experiences in life through which the Father intends to prove and improve our character and faith, but the evil one sneaks in and intends to destroy our character and faith."

Times of trial—when we feel intense pressure or face unexpected circumstances—normally include temptations toward evil: harmful attitudes, wrong actions, unhealthy thoughts, uncaring words. We are at a weak point when we are under stress. Our enemy knows this and tries to take advantage. When we face times of testing, we do not want or need to fall toward evil. This is why Jesus taught us to pray:

Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
*And do not lead us into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

MATTHEW 6:9–13 NASB (*emphasis added*)

“Temptation is to the alienation of our souls. . . .
Lord, when I have the inclination to sin, keep me from
the opportunity; and when I have the opportunity,
keep me from the inclination.”

—HADDON ROBINSON



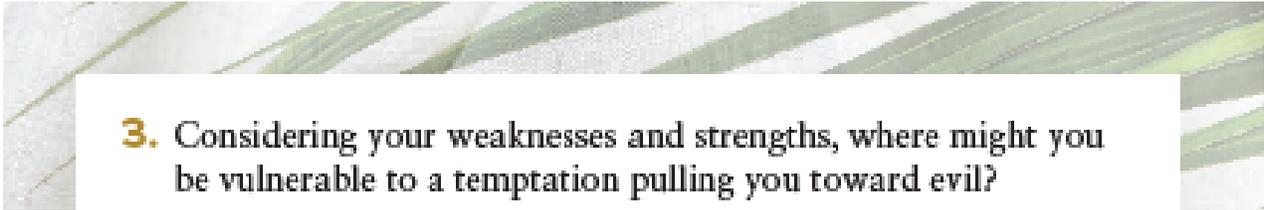
Live It

The tempter approaches us at our weakest point. He came to Jesus when Jesus was tired, hungry, and isolated. We should expect to face temptation when we are feeling weak. The strategies that our enemy employs are not new. He repeats the same patterns over and over because he has often found them to be successful.

Periods of temptation are an effort from the evil one to ruin our lives, reputation, and character. But they are also an opportunity for the Lord to step in and snatch away the victory that the devil thinks he has over us. God can use trials to improve our character and faith and demonstrate the quality of our relationship with him.

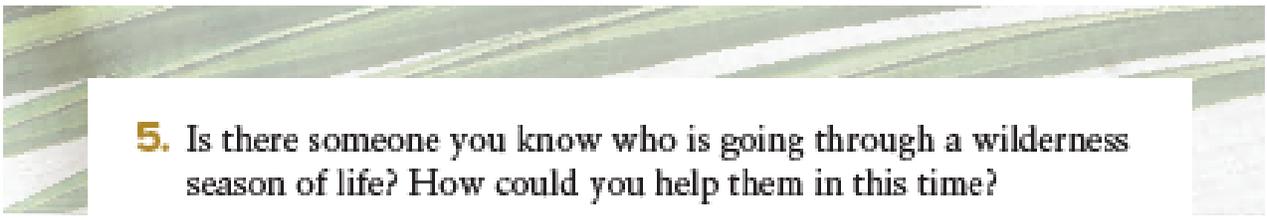


Fresco of Temptation of Jesus



3. Considering your weaknesses and strengths, where might you be vulnerable to a temptation pulling you toward evil?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 10:12–13 and 1 Peter 5:8–10. How do these Bible passages guide and encourage us to resist temptation?



5. Is there someone you know who is going through a wilderness season of life? How could you help them in this time?

6. When you face a testing that is likely to include temptation, plan in advance the best way to respond. What are three actions you could take or principles you could follow?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Spiritual Discipline: Fasting

When Jesus entered the wilderness, he stopped eating food. In the Bible, fasting means setting aside a period of time to abstain from food needed for our physical life in order to concentrate on our spiritual life. No biblical command dictates that Christians must fast in order to please God. However, Jesus fasted and indicated in Matthew 9:15 that his followers would also fast in the future.

Fasting is not practiced for health benefits, to manipulate God into giving us what we want, or to earn any blessing or special standing with God. Fasting helps us turn our attention away from ourselves and toward God. It helps us become more aware of our dependence on him.

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- 1.** Before beginning your fast (especially a long fast), consult with your doctor to discuss any potential health risks or ongoing health conditions. Your doctor can be a key component in helping you find a good strategy for fasting.
- 2.** Start by fasting from one meal a day for one or more days. You could spend that mealtime instead in prayer and meditation on God's Word. You could also donate the money you'd normally spend on food to a worthy cause.
- 3.** Next, fast for a twenty-four-hour period from lunchtime to lunchtime. Skip three meals (lunch, dinner, breakfast) spread over two days. Drink plenty of water and perhaps fruit juices during the fast.
- 4.** Do this once a week for two or three weeks before attempting to fast for a longer period of time such as thirty-six to seventy-two hours.
- 5.** Use your hunger as an opportunity to remember your weakness and express your dependence on God. Jesus himself said that we don't live on bread alone.

Prayer

Lord, I am weak, but you are strong. Give me the courage and wisdom to find your strength in my moments of weakness. Help me depend on the power that you provide instead of my own efforts. Thank you for giving me everything I need, including a way to escape my temptations. Amen.

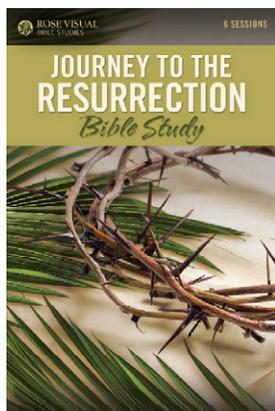
Fasting

The *Didache* is an early instruction booklet for Christians from around AD 300. It provides insight into the habits of early Christians. Drawing a contrast with Jewish patterns of fasting, this book instructs Jesus-followers, "You should fast on Wednesday and Friday." For many early Christians, fasting was part of their regular, weekly routine of spiritual life.

Today, many Christians observe Lent, a forty-day period, as a reminder of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. They fast from eating meat on Fridays during Lent and on special days like Ash Wednesday.

Notes



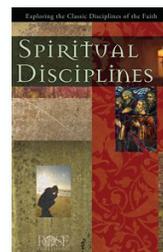


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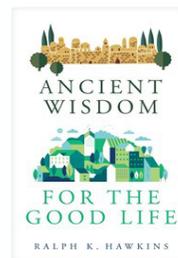


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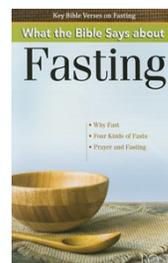


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