



SESSION 6

BATTLE PLAN

► ***The Point***

We can follow Jesus' example in defeating spiritual attacks.

► ***The Passage***

Matthew 4:1-10

► ***The Bible Meets Life***

On October 8, 1871, a fire broke out in Chicago that killed an estimated 300 people, left 100,000 others homeless, and destroyed over 17,000 buildings. Over the years, Mrs. O'Leary's cow took the heat (no pun intended) for the Great Chicago Fire, but historians eventually removed the blame from this poor animal. One good thing came out of this tragedy: people became more aware of the need for fire safety. Since 1922, America has commemorated the date of the Great Chicago Fire by observing a National Fire Prevention Week. Schools perform fire drills with their students, and firefighters encourage families to identify ways to prevent fires and establish plans for what to do when a fire does occur.

We face the threat of fire in another way. Satan, our enemy, seeks to harm us with "the flaming darts of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). He continually seeks to tempt us and pull us away from God's gracious and loving desire for our lives. Satan may be crafty, but our Lord is greater, and He modeled for us a foolproof plan to avoid getting burned by spiritual attacks.

► ***The Setting***

After describing the events associated with Jesus' birth (see Matt. 1–2) and the ministry of John the Baptist (see 3:1-12), Matthew detailed how Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, during which God affirmed Jesus as His Son. (See vv. 13-17.) Jesus was then led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, where He was tempted three times by the devil. This episode in the life of Jesus is mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke (see Luke 4:1-13), and Mark (see Mark 1:12-13).

What does the Bible say?

The pinnacle of the temple (v. 5)—The pinnacle was a prominent place high on the temple in Jerusalem, from which a fall would have meant death.

Matthew 4:1-10

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

³ And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

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

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple

⁶ and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall 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 glory.

⁹ And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

Notes



LEADER PACK: Use Pack Item 1, “The Dark Side,” to review the sessions your group has explored throughout this study.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 53 of the PSG: **“Where do you turn when you need a fool-proof plan?”**

Note: If helpful, remind group members that they are free to move beyond “spiritual” answers to these and other questions. What are some places in

addition to God’s Word where they look for a fool-proof plan?

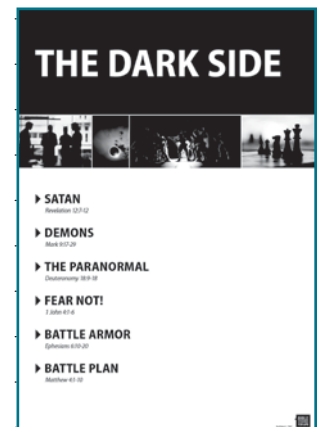
ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Bring a chess board and pieces to your group gathering as an object lesson of using strategy to defeat an enemy. Pass the pieces around to your group members while discussing Question #1, above.

Note: You could also consider asking for two volunteers to play an actual game of chess while you and your group members discussion Question #1. If you choose this route, either set a time limit for the game or simply allow those volunteers to continue playing while the group moves forward with the session.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 54 of the PSG. Introduce the threat of Satan’s attacks by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 54 of the PSG: **“We can follow Jesus’ example in defeating spiritual attacks.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by praying for fresh eyes on the part of yourself and your group members so that you can explore the story of Jesus’ temptation in a new light. Ask God to reveal to your group how each person can specifically follow Jesus’ example in fighting against evil.





STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Matthew 4:1-4

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

READ: Matthew 4:1-4 on page 55 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

GUIDE: Summarize the first two paragraphs from the Commentary section to make the point that God initiated this situation for His glory. God was in control of this event; not Satan.

RECAP: Ask a volunteer to read aloud the first two paragraphs after the Scripture text on page 55 of the PSG:

None of us is immune to temptation. For some of us, certain things continually tempt us. When we read of the temptations Jesus faced, we might be inclined to assume temptation wasn't a struggle for Him because, after all, He's God! Surely He didn't face the temptations we face today.

Think again. Jesus is God, but He's also fully man. And although He didn't face the exact same temptations we faced last week, He faced the same types of temptations. The writer of Hebrews had this to say about Jesus: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

When have you felt especially nourished by God's Word?

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 55 of the PSG: **"What are some ways we face temptation through our physical appetites?"**

TRANSITION: The devil's first temptation for Jesus' involved choosing physical needs over God. As we'll see in verses 5-7, the second temptation was more subtle.

Matthew 4:1-4 Commentary

Satan will tempt us through our physical appetites.

[Verse 1] The fact that the Spirit **led** Jesus into the wilderness reminds us that the devil is not the primary actor in this episode. Yes, the devil tempted Jesus, but God allowed the temptation to occur.

Two points must be emphasized. First, God is in control, not the devil. Satan can do only that which God permits him to do. He is subject to God's sovereignty. Second, the Greek word rendered **tempted** can also mean "tested." God can and does test people, but God never tempts anyone. James 1:13 clearly states that God does not tempt anyone to sin.

[Verse 2] The context for Jesus' first temptation was His hunger. Jesus had fasted **forty days and forty nights**. The forty days and forty nights, as well as Jesus being led into the wilderness by the Spirit, recall the forty years the Israelites spent in the desert. (See Deut. 8:2.) In those incidents, the Israelites were tested and failed. In this moment, however, Jesus would be tested and succeed.

[Verse 3] The devil approached Jesus, apparently presuming His hunger had made Him vulnerable to a spiritual attack. The devil's intentions are indicated by the name he is given in this verse, **the tempter**. Satan prefaced his temptation with the phrase **"If you are the Son of God."** Many Bible students suggest that all three of these temptations involve the devil addressing Jesus' role as Messiah. Meaning, the devil was not questioning the true identity of Jesus as the Son of God. Rather, the question was how Jesus would act in His position as the Son of God. This first temptation began with Jesus' personal hunger as the point of contact, but it related to the way Jesus would fulfill His role as the Messiah.

The devil proposed that Jesus use the power He had as the Son of God to turn **stones** into **bread** so that Jesus could satisfy His own physical hunger. Of course, satisfying hunger is not wrong in and of itself. Later in His ministry, Jesus fed the hungry. (See Matt. 14:13-21.) The typical first-century Jew expected the Messiah to feed the hungry just as God had fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness. In addition, Jesus clarified that He Himself is the "bread of life," which is far better than the manna their ancestors ate in the wilderness. (See John 6:30-35.)

[Verse 4] Jesus responded to Satan by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. In that text, Moses reminded the Israelites that God had provided them manna, a miraculous kind of bread. But God primarily wanted them to learn to depend on Him and be obedient to Him. **Every word that comes from the mouth of God** is more important than physical bread. Our physical needs are important, but our spiritual needs are deeper and more significant.

So, Jesus could have satisfied His own hunger by turning rocks into bread, but Jesus came to do the will of God the Father. Jesus understood that His hunger was God's will for Him at that moment. Jesus kept His priorities straight and rejected the devil's temptation.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Matthew 4:5-7

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

READ: Matthew 5:5-7 on page 56 of the PSG.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): If you have time, ask a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 91:1-13 in order to see the full passage of Scripture Satan attempted to misuse in his temptation of Jesus.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 58 of the PSG: **"What are some ways we are tempted to test God?"**

Note: Another way to phrase this question would be: "What are some ways we often try to force or trick God into doing what we want instead of submitting to what He wants?"

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read the bullet list at the bottom of page 58 in the PSG, which offers guidelines on how to resist the temptation to test God.

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "Promises, Promises" on page 57 of the PSG. If time permits, ask volunteers to share their responses.

Use the space below to record promises we often encounter in our culture—promises from advertisements, from entertainment, from politicians, and so on. Add as many promises as you can think of in a few minutes.

What's one step you can take to get better at using Scripture to evaluate these promises?

TRANSITION: As we move to verses 8-10, we'll find the third and final temptation with which Satan attempted to throw Jesus off track.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

Why is it dangerous to put God to the test?

Matthew 4:5-7 Commentary

Satan will tempt us to question or test God.

[Verse 5] The second temptation of Jesus occurred in the holy city, Jerusalem. **The devil** had Jesus stand on the **pinnacle** of the temple. While various suggestions have been made as to the this location, the main point is that the devil chose a spot that was very high. The spot would have been visible to the many people in the temple area that day, and a fall from that height would have meant death.

[Verse 6] Satan once more prefaced the temptation with, **"If you are the Son of God."** Again, the devil did not doubt who Jesus was. Rather, he appealed to Jesus' special position as God's Son as the basis for his temptation. Then, just as Jesus had quoted Scripture, the devil quoted Psalm 91:11-12. Like Jesus, he prefaced his quote with the words, **"For it is written."** In its original context, Psalm 91:11-12 relates God's promise of protection for His people, those who have entrusted their lives to Him. The devil wanted Jesus to literally test God's promise of protection for Him as the Son of God. The psalm states that God would send His angels to protect Him. Satan suggested that if Jesus would do something spectacular and life-threatening, such as jumping from the pinnacle of the temple, God would protect Him!

[Verse 7] Jesus again responded to the devil by quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 6:16 says, "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah." When the Israelites were on the verge of entering the promised land, Moses warned the new generation of Israelites to be obedient to God and not to test the Lord as their forefathers had done at Massah. (See Deut. 6:10-19; Ex. 17:1-7.) While they were in the wilderness, the Israelites had often complained about food and water. When the Israelites camped at Massah, there was no source of water for them to drink, so they quarreled with Moses and demanded that he give them something to drink. (See Ex. 17:1-3.) In response, Moses said to the Israelites, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" (v. 2). In that instance, even though the Israelites were wrong to test God, God graciously provided them with water to drink.

To test God means to challenge God in a very disrespectful way. In the same way the Israelites demanded that God provide a miraculous provision for their need of water at Massah, the devil was telling Jesus to demand God provide miraculous protection for Him. However, unlike at Massah where there was a genuine need for water, in this instance the devil was telling Jesus to purposefully put Himself in danger so God would have to act to protect Him.

If Jesus would have acted on the devil's words, He would have been reversing the roles of God the Father and Himself, making God the Father do His [Jesus'] will instead of Him serving the Father. However, Jesus rejected the devil's temptation to manipulate God, choosing instead to trust in God's dependability without having to put Him to the test.



15 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Matthew 4:8-10

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

READ: Matthew 4:8-10 on page 59 of the PSG.

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 59 of the PSG:

1. "Finally, Satan offered his boldest temptation. He took Jesus 'to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.'"
2. "One thing made Satan's offer attractive. Jesus also knew the plan of His Father—that the road He was about to travel would include pain, suffering, and death. Jesus could avoid all that if He accepted Satan's offer."
3. "We face the same type of temptation today. We want success, pleasure, possessions—things that are not wrong in and of themselves, but are wrong when we take shortcuts to achieve them."

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 59 of the PSG: **"What are we often tempted to worship in place of God?"**

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 59 of the PSG: **"What can we learn from Jesus' example about overcoming spiritual attacks?"**

LEADER PACK: Use Pack Item 6, "Our Battle Plan," to help group members think through a practical strategy for following Christ. Emphasize the Objective as our goal, the Axis as our plan for achieving that goal, and each Rally Point as a specific step in that plan.

GUIDE: Refer back to "The Point" for this session: **"We can follow Jesus' example in defeating spiritual attacks."** If time permits, encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts or questions.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How can we prepare ourselves for the temptations that will come our way?

OUR BATTLE PLAN



Matthew 4:8-10 Commentary

Satan will tempt us to worship something other than God.

[Verse 8] Now the tempter took Jesus to a **very high mountain**. From that vantage point, the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. Some readers will wonder how anyone could see all the nations from any one place on our round earth. One suggestion is that Jesus had a kind of supernatural vision similar to those experienced by some Old Testament prophets. (See, for example, Ezek. 8:3.) The phrasing **all the kingdoms of the world and their glory** indicates that the devil was offering Jesus dominion over all the kingdoms.

[Verses 9-10] With this third temptation, the devil challenged Jesus' allegiance to God. Therefore, he did not begin this temptation as he had the previous two, "If you are the Son of God" (vv. 3,6). Instead, the devil called for Jesus to reject His position as the Son of God in exchange for what the devil offered: all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would **fall down and worship** him. He offered Jesus a kingdom without the cross.

Jesus knew that His mission was to be the suffering Messiah, not a mere political leader of nations. Jesus refused to follow the devil's sinister suggestion. He would follow the path of the suffering Messiah in obedience to His Father.

Satan is a limited, finite being. He is an angel created by God who rebelled against God. Here on earth, the devil exercises his limited power, but he does not have final authority over the nations and kingdoms of the world. God is sovereign. Ultimately, it's Jesus who has the claim to all authority in both heaven and earth (see Matt. 28:18), and that authority came through His atoning sacrifice on the cross. Jesus refused the power offered by Satan, but He eventually received even greater power (all authority in both heaven and earth) through His obedience to God the Father's will. Jesus is the true "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16) who will be acknowledged by all people at the end of time. (See Phil. 2:10-11.)

For the first time in the passage, Jesus addressed the devil as **Satan**. The term means "adversary." He responded to the devil, saying, **"Be gone, Satan!"** Jesus was done with these temptations. He wanted nothing to do with the devil's offer or with the devil himself. Again, Jesus rejected Satan's temptation with Scripture, citing a passage from the Book of Deuteronomy for the third time. He quoted Deuteronomy 6:13, which is partially repeated in Deuteronomy 10:20: "You shall worship the LORD your God and him only shall you serve." The Lord is the only one to whom worship is due.

After Jesus successfully resisted the three temptations, Satan departed. (See Matt. 4:11.) But this would not be the last time Jesus had to deal with Satan, as Luke noted in his account of the temptations that the devil "departed from him [Jesus] until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). Then God sent angels to serve Jesus. Having refused the temptations of Satan and remained obedient to God, Jesus now received divine provision through the ministry of angels in accordance with God's will at the appointed time.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 60 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider these steps for defeating any enemy attacks that come their way this week:



- ▶ **Look to Jesus.** Be intentional about keeping your focus on Christ. Lean on Him for strength to stand, knowing He understands. “For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb. 2:18).
- ▶ **Stay clear.** If you know of people, places, or circumstances that fuel your vulnerability to temptation and spiritual attack, resolve to avoid those things. For best results, talk to someone else about your decision.
- ▶ **Memorize Scripture.** Make Scripture memory a weekly discipline and habit. Begin with memorizing verses that address areas where you often feel tempted or under attack.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 60 of the PSG:

Expect opposition when you step forward in faith. Spiritual attacks will come. But we can follow Jesus’ example to stand against those attacks and remain victorious.

PRAY: Conclude by praising Jesus for His example in defeating spiritual attacks. Pray that His Spirit would empower each of you and guide you to do the same.



Free additional ideas for your group are available at
BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra



5 THINGS NEW GROUP LEADERS NEED TO KNOW

BY CHRIS SURRATT

Fall is the perfect time to launch new small groups in your church. The most successful group campaigns will take place when people are settling back into their normal routines after the chaos of summer schedules. They are now ready to reconnect with the church and their community. This means that you will need to recruit new leaders now to be prepared for the growth coming in September.

As you start the process of interviewing and training those potential group leaders, here are five things they will need to know to be successful.

1. They are not alone.

It's scary stepping out as a leader. Will anyone show up? Am I qualified to lead? What if someone asks a tough question? Cheese tray or fruit plate?

The first thing they need to know is that the church leadership will walk alongside them all the way. A solid coaching system can help a new leader feel more secure and better cared for.



2. All they have to be is one step ahead.

One of the biggest worries for potential leaders is not being worthy of leading other people. How can they spiritually lead others when they're still trying to figure out how to lead themselves? The truth is, in most cases they don't have to be fully mature believers. They just need to be striving to become more like Christ and be willing to take a few people along for the journey.

3. They don't have to be everyone's BFF.

Most leaders will not be able to connect on a deep level to every person in their group. Nor should they try to do so. Their role is to help facilitate opportunities for people in the group to connect with other group members. And that usually happens best outside of the group meetings.

If leaders feel like they have to give every group member the same level of care, they will eventually feel like a failure. Because it's not possible to do so.

4. They don't have to have all of the answers.

It's okay to not know the common translation of the name "Zephaniah" ("Yahweh has hidden"... in case it comes up). They can let the group know that they will come back next week with an answer. People will respect a leader who is transparent more than they respect one who seems to have all of the answers.

5. They should pray weekly for group members.

A leader that prays is a leader that can be followed. Don't underestimate the power of praying for each group member by name. To better model this, your next question to the new leader should be, "How can I pray for you this week?"

—Chris Surratt is a ministry consultant and coach with over 20 years of experience serving the local church. Chris manages *SmallGroup.com* for LifeWay Christian Resources. Chris's first book, *Small Groups For The Rest Of Us: How to Design Your Small Groups System to Reach the Fringes*, was just released by Thomas Nelson. You can follow his blog at chrissurratt.com or follow him on Twitter @chrissurratt.

LAY OUT THE WELCOME MAT

BY KEN BRADDY

Help your group members get in the regular mindset of intentionally inviting guests to your Bible study group. Here are six easy-to-do steps you and your group can take for your guests.

1. Stop what you're doing and speak with them.

I was setting up my classroom just a few weeks ago when one of our church staff leaders brought a guest to my room. The guest and his wife showed up right when I was completing my setup of the room for the group's Bible study.

I immediately stopped what I was doing and introduced myself, engaging in conversation with them for a few minutes before helping them meet a couple from the group. I did this because they were more important than my plans and routines.

2. Call them by name.

Once I'd been introduced to the visiting couple, I wrote their names down at the top of my Leader Guide. I was able to introduce them to the group by name, but more importantly I was able to call them by name during the Bible study.

It's been said that "nothing is as sweet to a person as the sound of their own name."

3. Invite them to come back.

You might think this would happen by itself, but it doesn't! Make sure that you extend an invitation for your guests to return the next time your group meets for Bible study.

4. Sit with them in worship.

If your church's schedule allows for it, invite your guests to sit with you and your family during the worship service. My wife and I did this with a guest couple recently, and we had a delightful conversation with them.

5. Invite them to lunch.

Everyone's going to eat somewhere. Why not invite your guests to join you for lunch? Even if they cannot accept your invitation, they'll be thankful that you took the time to ask.

6. Send them a thank-you note.

Call, email, or write to your guest and thank them for visiting your group. Offer to answer any questions they have, and by all means encourage them to return and visit again.

Of course, in order to take this step, it's necessary for you to collect some basic contact information from your guests during their visit.

—Ken Braddy blogs weekly with great ideas for becoming a better Bible study leader. Follow his blog at kenbraddy.com. Ken is the manager of Adult Ongoing Bible Studies at LifeWay Christian Resources.