



Devotional Guide for the Season of Lent 2017

As we journey together through the season of Lent, this devotional guide is meant to serve as weekly preparation for the Sunday to come. Email subscribers will receive each week's devotion early in the week prior, giving them several days to study the Scripture passage for the week and meditate on the questions, hymns, and prayers provided.

You are encouraged to spend the days leading up to each Sunday in prayer and meditation with the Scripture, opening your hearts to hear what message God may have for you. We hope that this guide will be a blessing to you, and that your season of Lent may be a time in which you are renewed and refreshed.

We suggest that you use this guide in this manner:

Day One: Read the Scripture and commentary. Circle words and underline phrases that speak to you. Reflect on them.

Day Two: Read the Scripture again and focus on one of the questions.

Day Three: Read the Scripture again and focus on another of the questions.

Day Four: Read through the hymn lyrics, and sing them if you so desire. How does the hymn deepen the message of the Scripture?

Conclude each day by praying the prayer.

March 5th, 2017 - First Sunday of Lent

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying 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, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

This week, we're looking at the Gospel of Matthew account of the temptation of Jesus by the devil in the wilderness. The common placement of this story in Jesus' ministry narrative is immediately after his baptism by John, but before his ministry begins in earnest.

Being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted almost seems to serve as a sign that this was a test of Jesus' own spirit and will prior to his going among the people, proclaiming a new way of living and following God. He of course "passed the test" with flying colors, but not before the devil provided him with some very enticing alternatives.

Questions to Consider

- 1) What are some of the "enticing alternatives" we are given in life? Do we ever consider giving into them instead of persisting in our walk with Christ?
- 2) In what ways do we ourselves sometimes act as the tempter? Do we ever do or say things that might be seen as putting God to the test?
- 3) In a world where consumerism and possessions have become a sort of deity unto themselves, what in our lives sometimes consumes our attention? Is it possible that this becomes the focus of our "worship", leaving God behind?

Hymn for the Week - "How Firm a Foundation"

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!
What more can be said than to you God has said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?
The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

Prayer for the Week

Most holy God, we confess that there are times that we turn our eyes away from you. We ask that you give us strength to face the temptations of each day, that we might not fall down before the things of this world, but worship you alone. May we remember to not put you to the test, but to always follow in your paths. These things we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ, AMEN.