

6 Things to Know When Facing Temptation

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him” (Mark 1:12-13).

Mark gives us the *Reader's Digest* condensed version of Jesus' temptation. It tells us all the essential elements we need to know when facing our own temptations.

1. How are we tempted in the first place? Three forces are always at work in the process of temptation: (1) our personal tendency to desire what is opposite of the Spirit, (2) the activity of the enemy, and (3) the prodding of the Spirit that directs us into engagement with the devil. For Jesus, it was the third one—but for us, it can be any or all of these three.

2. The place of temptation is the wilderness, at least symbolically. The wilderness represents the barren and dry place. When you find yourself relationally, emotionally, and spiritually empty, you are far more vulnerable to temptation. When everything is going well—in your life, your family, your marriage, your finances, your health, and your walk with the Lord—you are far less likely to fall into sin. But the desert represents the places where you don't have many resources to fall back on and you are most likely to give an ear to the Devil's pitch.

3. The time of temptation is always for a period. It isn't forever—at least, in its intensity. For Jesus, the period of time lasted forty days, and then the devil left Him for a season (Luke 4:13). Your temptation, likewise, will not last forever. It will come at you thick and furious, but when you steadfastly resist the devil he will flee from you (James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9).

4. The agent of temptation is your adversary, Satan. For Jesus, no intermediate agent of testing was used—just the devil himself. For you, the temptation may come through the world or the sinful human nature. But never forget, no matter how temptation comes to you, the devil stands behind the curtain. He is the puppeteer, pulling the strings. Your contest is with him (Ephesians 6:12).

5. The atmosphere of temptation may involve frightful dimensions. Mark is the only gospel writer to note the presence of wild animals. When the devil came to Jesus with the three temptations (as recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4), he seems to have donned a rather civil appearance, as he often does when he wants to beguile. But temptation may also involve a nightmarish time of danger. Jesus experienced in the wilderness things similar to what Daniel experienced in the lion's den. What "wild beasts" are present in your own time of temptation?

6. God will protect you in the place of temptation as you put your trust in Him. Arrayed against the wild beasts are the angels of God. The angels didn't assist Jesus in saying no to the devil, but they protected Him from the other ravages of the wilderness. Likewise, the Lord will protect you from whatever seeks to tear you apart. He has promised to provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

A Prayer: *Strong Lord, help me to understand that I will never be tempted by what is unattractive or by that for which I do not have an appetite. Help me to say yes to You and no to everything that harms my relationship with You.*

Excerpted from Dr. Wood's book, Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything, available from Vital Resources.

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