

Matthew *A New Perspective*

2. A New Possibility

Matthew 4.1-11

Aim of the Study: To examine Jesus' temptation in the desert and learn how to resist temptation in our own lives.

To Start With:

- People sometimes talk about a 'guilty pleasure' - something harmless they secretly enjoy but are a bit embarrassed by, like a favourite CD from their teenage years they still listen to in secret, or stealing their children's chocolate, or watching a TV programme they know is lame but secretly love. What would you say is a guilty pleasure for you?

Read Matthew 4:1-11

Facing Temptation

1. a) The previous study established that Matthew is very intentional in why he writes his gospel the way he does. Why do you think he chose to include this incident in his account of Jesus' life? What does it show us?

b) Sometimes people think that being tempted is a sin, but if Jesus was tempted that can't be the case. How would you differentiate between being tempted and sinning?
2. Split into three groups for 5-10 minutes taking verses 2-4, 5-7, and 8-10. For each try to summarise:
 - What are the devil's tactics?
 - What do you think he is playing on or trying to achieve? (ie. Why do you think *this* thing would have been tempting for Jesus?)
 - How tempting would you have found this suggestion?
 - What do you make of Jesus' response?

Now feedback a summary of that discussion to the whole group

3. a) How far do you think these temptations are common to all humans? Do you think there are common temptations or are we all tempted by different sorts of things?

b) How can we identify where our vulnerable spots are?

Resisting Temptation

4. a) Jesus uses his knowledge of scriptural truth to repel the devil here: why do you think it works? (eg. Is the Bible 'magic' in some way?) On a scale of 1 to 10, how good are you at doing this? When **have** you used scripture to resist temptation in some way? How did that work?

'Growing biblical illiteracy means that there is a generation of Christians dependant on their feelings for making decisions on moral issues. This is a recipe for spiritual disaster.'

- b) How far do you agree with this statement? Practically how might we use scripture wisely in our daily lives?
- c) What other ideas do people have, perhaps from personal experience, for resisting temptation?

To Finish:

- If the group are open enough, split into small groups to pray for specific temptations that people struggle with.
- If not, give people some time to draw or write personal prayers to God, responding to what they have learned.

