

## Things to do during the week/at Life group

1. Consider what is my identity? Am I truly a child of God
2. Spend time in prayer, waiting on God, overcoming temptation
3. Read Matthew 5 in preparation for next Sunday's teaching

## Questions for discussion

1. Was Jesus 'tempted' or 'tested' in the wilderness? The Greek word that is used here can be translated either way. What would the different emphases be in using either word?
2. Have you ever felt tested by God? Did you come through the experience stronger as a Christian?
3. How do you know when God is allowing you to be tested?
4. How can this account of Jesus defeating the devil help us to overcome temptation in our lives? Does this story give you an explanation and meaning in your time of testing?
5. Do you think that the devil appeared to Jesus in a bodily form, or in the form of a mental and inner struggle?
6. How does Jesus overcome and defeat the devil each time? Therefore, what is the importance for us of reading our Bible daily?
7. What would have happened if Jesus had fallen in his test or temptation before the devil? Is it if he had turned stones into bread, if he had jumped from the Temple, if he had worshipped the devil?
8. When did you first become a follower of Jesus Christ? Did Christ call you to 'follow me'? How did you know his call upon your life?
9. Do you feel called to be a 'fisher of men and women'? How do you go about fishing in this way?
10. How can we encourage each other as followers of Christ today in our testing times, in our calling to follow Christ and be faithful to him, and in our ministry of being 'fishers of men and women'?

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# Sermon Notes

## Matt 4—The Identity of Jesus

Matthew, one of the 12 apostles, was the author of the Gospel. Matthew was a Tax Collector who left his work to follow Jesus (Matthew 9:9-13). In Mark and Luke he is known by his other name of Levi.

The Jewish nature of Matthew's Gospel suggests that it was written in Palestine, although some think it was written in Syrian Antioch. In the Early Church it was commonly held that Matthew wrote his Gospel first, which is why it comes first in the New Testament, but this is largely not held to be the case and that he copied much of Mark's Gospel. Therefore, if he copied Mark who was writing (we believe) in the early 50s, then Matthew had to be writing his Gospel in the late 50s or early 60s AD.

Matthew's Gospel was written in Greek, so therefore he was writing to a Greek speaking audience. They were also Jews. Matthew's Gospel, more than any other, has a keen focus on tracing Jesus' ancestry to Abraham, he has more quotations from the Old Testament than any other New Testament author and he fails to provide any explanation of Jewish customs. He emphasises Jesus as the 'Son of David', he speaks of the 'Son of Man', rather than 'Son of God', 'Kingdom of Heaven' rather than 'Kingdom of God' which would have been offensive to a Jewish audience who would never utter God's name. However, Matthew is the only Gospel to include the Magi at Jesus' birth, an indication that he is concerned that the Gospel is given to the Gentiles, and that Jesus is for all people.

Matthew's main purpose is to prove to Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing that Jesus' life and ministry is a fulfilment of the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies.

life in all its fullness

John 10:10

Who am I?

Today this passage is all about the identity of Jesus, who he is and actually Jesus was wrestling with his identity, and his identity as God's Son and Messiah is seen most clearly here.

Matthew 4

The Greek word 'peirazein' is translated here as 'tempt', but actually is would be better to be translated as 'test'.

We often think of temptation as something that is bad, being tempted into sin, but it would be better to think of this as a testing time.

Remember that Abraham was tested by God – it is the same word and principle here.

The wilderness is believed to be an area between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, an area of 35 miles by 15 miles called Jeshimon, or 'The Devastation'. There is nothing there except crumbling limestone, bare and jagged rocks.

Jesus goes to be alone with God.

Jesus was immediately led out into the wilderness after his baptism.

How often have we been at a spiritual high, but then come crashing to a spiritual low?

It seems to be a law of life that just after our resistance power has been at its highest, that it nosedives to its very lowest.

First Temptation – turn stones into bread

Small round stones might look like loaves of bread. The temptation is for Jesus to use his powers for himself. Look after yourself, give up on your fast, eat and be full.

Matt 4:4 'It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Deut 8:3

Second Temptation – highest point of the Temple

The Devil took Jesus to the highest point of the Temple – to the corner over the Kedron Valley, there was a sheer drop of 450 feet below.

Why not jump off the Temple and amaze everyone into following you?

After all, the angels will catch you – Psalm 91:11-12

But Jesus is not a sideshow or interested in sensationalism:

'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' Deut 6:16

Third Temptation – fall down and worship me

Jesus came to save the world. The Tempter says 'fall down and worship me and I will give you all the kingdoms of this world.'

The tempter was saying 'Compromise, come to terms with me, give in to evil just a little bit and the world will come to you in hoards.

Jesus Returns to Preach

Directly after defeating the devil, Jesus is now ready for his public ministry.

Vs15-16 – Matthew quotes from and uses Isaiah 9:1-2 as a prophecy that has been fulfilled in Jesus. Matthew, more than any other New Testament book, quotes from the Old Testament.

V17 – from that time on, Jesus began to preach 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.'

To preach is to proclaim with certainty a word from the King.

Following Jesus

How did you first become a follower of Jesus?

And he called them to become fishers of men and women – to bring people to Christ.

Fishermen have to be patient

Have to persevere

Must have courage to go where many of us are not prepared to go  
They have to know where to fish

They need to know which bait to use

And the wise fisherman will keep out of sight – point people to Christ.