

Victory Over Temptation

Deut 6:13-16; Matt 4:1-11

SS Lesson for 05/04/2014

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 10:13

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews how Jesus had and provides for us **Victory Over Temptation**. The **study's aim** is to show that Scriptures are important for our spiritual strength during times of temptation, testing, and spiritual warfare. The **study's application** is to understand that when we are tempted and tested, we need to follow Jesus' example and rely on God and the Bible (From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator).

Key Verse: *Matt 4:4*

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

After being baptized, Jesus was led immediately by the Spirit of God into the desert (traditionally near Jericho) for a period of testing. This period of time was a necessary period under God's direction—a time in which the Son obeyed (Heb. 5:8). After fasting 40 days, when the Lord was hungry, the tests began. From God's standpoint the tests demonstrated the quality of the Lord. It was impossible for the divine Son to sin, and that fact actually heightened the tests. He could not give in to the tests and sin, but He had to endure until the tests were completed. The first test pertained to the matter of sonship. Satan assumed that if He were the Son, perhaps He could be persuaded to act independently of the Father. Satan's test was subtle for since He is the Son of God, He has the power to turn the stones all around Him into bread. But that was not the will of His Father for Him. The Father's will was for Him to be hungry in the desert with no food. To submit to Satan's suggestion and satisfy His hunger would have been contrary to God's will. Jesus therefore quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, which affirms that man does not live on bread alone, but by God's Word. It is better to obey God's Word than to satisfy human desires. The fact that Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy showed that He recognized the inerrant authority of that book, one often criticized by scholars. The second test by Satan appealed to personal display or popularity. This test built on the first, for if He is the Son of God and the Messiah, nothing could harm Him. Satan took Him to... the highest point of the temple. Whether this was actual or simply a vision cannot be determined dogmatically. Here Satan made a subtle suggestion to Jesus as the Messiah. In effect he was reminding Jesus of Malachi's prophecy (Mal. 3:1), which had led to a common belief among the Jews that Messiah would suddenly appear in the sky, coming down to His temple. Satan was saying, in essence, "Why don't You do what the people are expecting and make some marvelous display? After all, the Scripture says His angels will protect You and You won't even hurt a foot as You come down." Satan may have thought if Jesus could quote Scripture to him, he could quote it too. However, he purposely did not quote Psalm 91:11-12 accurately. He left out an important phrase, "in all Your ways." According to the psalmist, a person is protected only when he is following the Lord's will. For Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in some dramatic display to accommodate Himself to the people's thinking would not have been God's will. Jesus responded, again from Deuteronomy (6:16), that it would not be proper to test... God and expect Him to do something when one is out of His will. Satan's final test related to God's plan for Jesus. It was and is God's design that Jesus Christ rule the world. Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world with all their splendor. These kingdoms presently are Satan's, as he is "the god of this Age" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; cf. Eph. 2:2). He had the power to give all these kingdoms to Jesus at that time—if only Jesus would bow down and worship him. Satan was saying, "I can accomplish the will of God for You and You can have the kingdoms of this world right now." This of course would have meant Jesus would never have gone to the cross. He supposedly could have been the King of kings without the cross. However, this would have thwarted God's plan for salvation and would have meant Jesus was worshiping an inferior. His response, once again from Deuteronomy (6:13 and 10:20), was that God alone should be worshiped and served. Jesus resisted this temptation also. Interestingly Satan's temptations of Eve in the Garden of Eden correspond to those of Jesus in the desert. Satan appealed to the physical appetite (Gen. 3:1-3; Matt. 4:3), the desire for personal gain (Gen. 3:4-5; Matt. 4:6), and an easy path to power or glory (Gen. 3:5-6; Matt. 4:8-9). And in each case Satan altered God's Word (Gen. 3:4; Matt. 4:6). Satan's temptations of people today often fall into the same three categories (cf. 1 John 2:16). The One who had identified Himself with sinners by baptism and who would provide righteousness proved He is righteous, and revealed His approval by the Father. Satan then left Jesus. At that moment God sent angels to minister to His needs.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The outline of the lesson came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

Verse	Phrase	Commentary
Deut 6:13	You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him	Victory Through The Law's Edict
Matt 4:4	It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God	Victory Through The Law's Application

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Churches are abandoning Sunday school at an alarming rate. Those who approve this trend are heard to say, "Young people and many adults sit behind desks all week. How can we expect them to sit for an hour on Sunday morning right before sitting through an hour of worship?" It is better, they propose, to simplify Sundays by eliminating Sunday school altogether. Children will receive instruction at youth group meetings, and adults have small-group programs during the week. An unfortunate consequence of canceling Sunday school is that many believers never receive comprehensive biblical instruction. Though youth and small-group curriculum may be Bible-based, it is often topical in nature. So unless preachers work through the books of the Bible comprehensively in sermons, the average believer might never receive instruction on certain sections of the Bible. Today's passages provide compelling reasons to take Bible instruction seriously. When facing important decisions about the shape of his life and ministry, it was Jesus' familiarity with God's Word that triumphed over the devil's temptations.

Two layers of context furnish the background of today's passages. Our first passage is from Deuteronomy. The reason we have this book is that God's people, Israel, did not remain faithful to him. After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, he gave them his law and then led them toward the promised land. Unfortunately, that generation got cold feet. After a preliminary inspection of the promised land, the people feared the land's inhabitants more than they trusted God's power (Numbers 13:26-14:4). So God refused that generation of Israelites entrance into the land and chose the next generation for that task instead. Deuteronomy is Moses' "sermon" to those of the second generation. In this sermon, Moses reminded the people of the failures of the first generation and instructed them on how to follow God's law faithfully. Deuteronomy 6:13-16 is a key part of that instruction. Our second passage comes at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. At about age 30 (Luke 3:23), he was baptized by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22), who received a sign of Jesus' identity when the Holy Spirit descended "from heaven as a dove" on Jesus (John 1:29-34). This set the stage for Jesus' extremely challenging ministry. But that ministry was preceded by a test of his faithfulness to be the kind of Messiah that God had called him to be.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Victory Through The Law's Edict (Deut 6:13-16)

13 You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.

14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you

15 (for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.

16 "You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah.

Fear of the Lord (13)

Wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord (Prov 3:7-8)

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. 8 This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

A productive life that is based on fear of the Lord (Ps 128:1-2)

128 Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. 2 You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.

Knowledge of God is found in the fear of the Lord (Prov 2:3-5)

3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Needs met through fear of the Lord (Ps 34:9)

9 Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.

Do not follow false gods (14-15)

Don't follow false gods because it is exchanging God's truth for a lie (Rom 1:25)

25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.

Don't follow false gods because it must be avoided (1 Cor 10:14)

14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

Don't follow false gods because it is participating with demons (1 Cor 10:18-22)

18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Don't follow false gods because God's anger is aroused because of it (Deut 4:25)

25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time — if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God and provoking him to anger,

Do not put the Lord to the test (16)

Don't put God to the test because it annoys Him (Ps 78:41)

41 Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel.

Don't put God to the test by hardening our hearts (Ps 95:8-9)

8 do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did.

Don't put God to the test by questioning Him (Mark 8:11-13)

11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 12 He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it." 13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

Don't put God to the test by rebelling against Him (Ps 78:56)

56 But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High; they did not keep his statutes.

Victory Through The Law's Application (Matt 4:1-11)

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

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, 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 shall give His angels charge over you,'

and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' "

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

The Process of Temptation - Overview (1-2)

Steps of the tempter (from the teaching of Charles Stanley)

- Compliments - to bring down defenses
- Suggestions - to slowly bring me around to the same thinking
- Sin - the actual act of disobedience

How to respond to the yielding to sin (from the teaching of Charles Stanley)

1. Repent before God
 - Complete repentance:
 - Confess guilt to God
 - Recognize sin is against God
 - Assume full responsibility for sin
 - Be totally open and honest with God about sin
 - When repentance comes quickly, punishment/discipline is less or reduced (Stanley's interpretation)
2. Accept the forgiveness of God
3. Make restitution
4. Accept God's discipline willingly
 - 2 Sam 12:10 (God's discipline on David)
(2 Samuel 12:10) Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'
5. Learn from failures
 - A. Humility - Put God first
 - B. Purity - God cleanses
 - C. Instruction - God teaches us how not to repeat
6. If we continue to struggle with a particular temptation, seek Godly instruction/counsel
7. Share WISELY God's Grace and God's Power in our temptation experiences (Ps 51:13)
(Psalm 51:13) Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

How to Respond to Temptation (James 1:12-21)

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. 16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. 19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

1. See the benefits of resisting temptation (vs 12)
2. Take responsibility for our actions (vs 13-15)
3. Acknowledge God's goodness (vs 17)
4. See ourselves as the recipient of God's Grace (vs 17)
5. Exercise patience (vs 19)
6. Listen submissively to God (vs 21)
7. Put off all moral filth and evil (vs 21)

The Three ways Satan Tempts (1 John 2:15-16)

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the boastful **pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Lust of the flesh

The phrase, "the lust of the flesh," here denotes that which pampers the appetites, or all that is connected with the indulgence of the mere animal propensities. (from Barnes' Notes)

Satan's first temptation focused on Jesus' physical weakness and hunger. The devil knew that after forty days of fasting, Jesus would have a strong desire for food as well as a genuine need for nourishment. He also knew that when an enticing opportunity (temptation) matches a person's inner desires, the conditions are right for sin to occur (James 1:14, 15). Our own experience with sin bears out this truth, for we can recall occasions when our moral judgment and good intentions were set aside because we felt overwhelmed by the desires of our flesh. (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Is driven by our sinful nature (Romans 7:18)

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

We must not yield to our sinful nature because we are children of God (Romans 8:12-14)

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. [13] For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, [14] because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Instead of yielding to our sinful nature, we must live to please the Holy Spirit (Galatians 6:8)

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Lust of the eye

That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly clothes, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc. The object is to refer to the frivolous vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life. It does not, of course, mean that the eye is never to be gratified, or that we can find as much pleasure in an ugly as in a handsome object, or that it is sinful to find pleasure in beholding objects of real beauty--for the world, as formed by its Creator, is full of such things, and he could not but have intended that pleasure should enter the soul through the

eye, or that the beauties which he has shed so lavishly over his works should contribute to the happiness of his creatures; but the apostle refers to this when it is the great and leading object of life-when it is sought without any connection with religion or reference to the world to come (from Barnes' Notes)

We must be careful what we see because the eye is the lamp of our soul (Luke 11:34-36)

Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. [35] See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. [36] Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."

We must never let the desires of our eyes cause us to sin (Matthew 5:28-29)

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Pride of life

The phrase means, properly, ostentation or boasting, and then arrogance or pride.-Robinson. It refers to whatever there is that tends to promote pride, or that is an index of pride, such as the ostentatious display of dress, equipage, furniture, etc (from Barnes' Notes)

Pride causes destruction (Prov 16:18)

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride keeps me from thinking of God (Ps 10:4)

In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Pride brings disgrace (Prov 11:2)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Be careful of interpretation of God's Word (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Showing his versatility in crafting temptations, Satan "fought fire with fire." Jesus had rebuffed the first temptation with a Scripture quotation; the tempter responded with his own text of Scripture. His quotation of Psalm 91:11, 12 was accurate, but, as we would expect, his application of it was misleading. Psalm 91 is not really a messianic prophecy. It is the testimony of a man who remained faithful to God under difficult circumstances and thus received God's protection because of his unfailing trust. Satan was suggesting that the promise of divine protection should apply to the Messiah most of all. After all, the Messiah is the faithful servant par excellence, and thus should be entitled to the help of angels if ever needed. Once again, Satan was encouraging Jesus to exploit his relationship as the Son of God and obligate the Father to intervene and rescue his Son. Perhaps the temptation here was to follow a different course of ministry from the one laid out for him, which included service and the submission to death. Instead, Satan suggested that Jesus make a grandstand show to attract the crowds. Then Jesus could begin his messianic ministry with a great following.

The tragic end of temptation (Judges 16:20-30)

(Judg 16:20-30) 20 Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had left him. 21 Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison. 22 But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. 23 Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands." 24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain." 25 While they were in high spirits, they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, 26 Samson said to the servant who held his hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them." 27 Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. 28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." 29 Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing

himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, 30 Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

- Loss of purity
- Cloud of Guilt
- Sense of Separation
- Sometimes abused

Live by God's Word (3-4)

Live by God's Word through being a doer of the word of God (James 1:22)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Live by God's Word through not neglecting God's word (Ps 119:16)

16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Live by God's Word through putting God's word into practice in our life (Ezek 33:31-32)

31 My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. 32 Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

Live by God's Word through remaining in God (John 15:4)

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Trust in the Lord (5-7)

Trust God because God never forsakes those who seek Him (Ps 9:10)

10 Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Trust God because He is our God (Ps 31:14-15)

14 But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." 15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.

Trust God so that God will make us righteous and just (Ps 37:5-6)

5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: 6 He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

Trust God so that we will not be afraid (Ps 56:4)

4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

Trust God because He guides us in the straight ways (Prov 3:5-6)

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Worship the Lord only (8-10)

Worship God because He is due it (Ps 29:2)

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

Worship God because He is the creator (Ps 95:6-7)

6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; 7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice,

Worship God joyfully and with thanksgiving (Ps 100:2-5)

2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Worship God through offering ourselves as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

Worship God because of His eternal kingdom (Heb 12:28)

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

Experience the Lord's victory (11)

Victory because God is greater than all (1 John 4:4)

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Victory through God's love (Rom 8:37)

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Victory through being born again (1 John 5:4)

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Victory through Jesus (1 Cor 15:57)

57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Victory through deliverance (Prov 21:31)

31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts From Allen Ross

From the series: An Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew

So we have here a great drama between Satan and Christ. It ends with Christ's victory over the tempter because of His knowledge and use of the word of God. The attack of Satan was made against every vulnerable point--hunger, trust, and responsibility--and when these were held firmly, there was no other area the devil could attack. He struck at the material or physical need of food, but he found one who knew the spiritual was more important than the physical; he struck at the spirit's confidence in God, but found one whose trust in the Father did not need testing; and he struck at the carrying out of the divine commission, but found one who was determined to carry out that plan in a divine way. Thus was Satan defeated.

What did this mean for Christ's mission? It was a foretaste of the victory at the cross. Here Jesus defeated the tempter who tried to ruin His mission. But here Christ demonstrated that He would not be deterred from His mission. It was a very significant spiritual victory over the devil. And it would have given Jesus a tremendous boost (if we can say that

reverently); He would know that the anointing of the Spirit gave Him the power to resist the evil one and to fulfill His mission.

On the theological level you might want to get off on an aside and think about what was going on here theologically. It makes a good little discussion. People often wonder whether or not Christ could have sinned, and if not, was it a real temptation? We would probably say that as Jesus He could be tempted, but as the divine Son He could not sin (and so it is bound up in the mystery of the two natures). But we would also say that at the moment of the temptation Jesus may not have known this--it was a real temptation and He worked through it. But Heaven knew He would not sin. In His time in this world there were times when Jesus had that greater knowledge and insight, and there were other times that He did not seem to have it or use it. And when and how this works is hard for us to know. But this was a true temptation. Satan thought he could win. Jesus fought back with His knowledge and obedience of Scripture. And Heaven was not surprised that He defeated Satan. And I do not think Satan was all that surprised either.

The applications or lessons that can be drawn from this passage are many--and you may think up others as well.

One very clear one would be the necessity of knowing Scripture, knowing what God's will is (not for a career for your life, but the day in and day out spiritual life of devotion and obedience to God). This involves both understanding and being able to use the word of God in making choices between what is good and what is evil.

Another application would be the inspiration that can be drawn from the fact that Jesus as perfect man defeated Satan. Therefore, because he was tempted and because he was victorious, he understands us and stands ready to help. So prayer to him for victory would be a good lesson.

Other lessons can then be drawn from the individual temptations (and these have been discussed above so I will not go into detail here). The first had to do with knowing what is most important in life--obeying the word of God--and not living only to satisfy the flesh, or making a living, or using spiritual resources just to meet physical needs. Living by obedience to God has fallen on hard times today when so many are only interested in security of life through investments and entitlements, or indulging themselves in the good things of life. Seeking the good life can truly crowd out the spiritual things.

The second temptation had to do with trusting God. Those who truly know God and experience the reality of their faith daily do not need to find something spectacular to convince themselves and others. Today there is a growing pre-occupation with miraculous signs. Now God will do miraculous things--when He chooses to do them. But if people seek the spectacular in order to believe, or to convince themselves of the faith, it betrays a weak faith. Remember how in the vision of the rich man and the poor man Lazarus in their rewards, and the rich man asked Abraham for Lazarus to be sent to his family to warn them, thinking that they would believe if one came back from the dead? The answer was, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets [Scripture], they will not be convinced even if one rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

The third temptation had to do with fulfilling the commission or plan of God with a shortcut, not doing God's way. This is the common temptation to avoid the means to get to the ends, or as is said, the end justifies the means. But with God there is a way to accomplish His plan for your life, and it calls for absolute devotion and obedience to Him. But Satan always offers shortcuts, that if looked at carefully, will ruin your life.

So there are a number of very useful lessons that can be drawn from this account. These should start your thinking. You can probably meditate on these for a while and find other examples of how the temptations would work in life, and how knowing what God wants would prevent them. The bottom line is that Jesus demonstrated for us how to achieve victory over temptation. In other words, we do not have to sin. There are ways to spiritual success, if we are willing to take them.

One thing that the rabbis taught on temptation is helpful. You work the issues and temptations and choices out like a business person, with a profit-loss ledger. If you make this choice and do this, what are the benefits, and what will the cost be? In many cases the cost, including fallout afterward, is just too high. A wise decision will count the cost.

If Christ had followed any one of these temptations, the immediate result might not have seemed so great, but the overall results would have been disastrous--He would have been a sinner, another fallen human like us, unable to redeem anyone, and the mission would have been ruined by the devil. But that was not going to happen, for the Father sent the Son into the world to redeem us, and by doing that He had to conquer Satan.

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that our struggle is "not against flesh and blood, but against ... the powers of this dark world." The equipment that Paul urges us to wear in this struggle is largely defensive in nature (vv. 13-16). The only offensive weapon we possess is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (v. 17). Jesus used that weapon effectively to counterattack in the face of temptation. We must do the same. But to be able to use it, we have to know it. The Spirit will guide us to use God's Word at the appropriate time, but we must take the time to learn it first. Sunday school is a good place to accomplish this, but it is not the only place or even the best place. Personal study is crucial in order that one might be "to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). To know God's Word, we must read it, meditate on it, and internalize it. Then when we need it most, it will be there for us.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Focusing on God alone keeps us from being distracted by what might be spiritually harmful (Deut. 6:13-15)
2. When we "test," or defy, God, we are saying that we know better than He does (vs. 16)
3. Contentment with the divine food of God's Word means we will be spiritually satisfied with nothing else (Matt. 4:4)
4. We cannot expect God to conform His superior plans to our human ideas (vss. 5-7)
5. Successful service for God comes when we see His Word as more real than anything else (vss. 8-10)
6. God always sustains us in whatever circumstances we serve Him (vs. 11)