

Discipleship Questions

If God cannot be tempted, how was Jesus tempted?

What is temptation?

How was Jesus tempted compared to how you are tempted?

What is the difference between temptation and sin?

What were some specific ways Jesus was tempted?

What are some specific things Jesus did to overcome temptations?

How can Satan use other people to tempt?

What does Jesus's example teach you about overcoming temptations?



Those who desire to be Jesus's disciples must endeavor to learn Jesus's teachings and ways and imitate Him by walking as He walked (1 John 2:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:1). One aspect of Jesus's life that must be imitated is the way Jesus overcame temptation. Therefore, we must consider the Scriptures that give us insight into the way Jesus overcame temptation so we can learn how to walk in His footsteps in the way that we face temptation.

Hebrews 2:17-18

Jesus was God living as a Man (Matthew 1:23; Colossians 2:9). While God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13), Jesus possessed a fleshly nature that could be tempted. To be "tempted" refers to one's faith being tested to prove whether it is genuine or not, specifically by deceptive enticements to sin against God (James 1:14-15). In God's plan, Jesus needed to experience temptation according to His fleshly desires. In fact, Jesus had the same kinds of fleshly desires all people naturally have (Matthew 4:2; John 19:28; 4:6; 11:35). The devil (tempter) tried to use Jesus's physical desires to pull Jesus away from doing the Father's will. Therefore, we must never think Jesus was insulated from fleshly desires and immune to temptation. Instead, we must look to Jesus's example in facing temptation and dealing with fleshly desires.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Not only was Jesus tempted as One who had fleshly desires on this earth, but Jesus was tempted in all the same ways we are tempted. Although times have certainly changed (around 2,000 years later), the essence of temptation

remains the same. People are still tempted by the lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, and the pride in the things of this life (1 John 2:15-17)! Jesus faced those same things that get repackaged and used to entice people to sin today. Yet, this passage demonstrates that being tempted does not make you guilty of sin (James 1:14-15). Although Jesus faced temptations, He never sinned (violated God's will)! In this, Jesus has demonstrated the possibility of overcoming temptation and has left the blueprint for doing so.

Matthew 4:1-11

Although Jesus may have been tempted throughout the 40 days He spent fasting in the wilderness (Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2), Matthew (as well as Luke, Luke 4:1-13) records three specific ways Jesus was tempted at the end of this time. Notice that Jesus is said to have faced the tempter (Satan, the devil, 1 Peter 5:8-9), who lies, deceives, and manipulates. First, Jesus was tempted to prove His Deity (as the Son of God) by working a miracle to satisfy His own physical hunger (v. 3). Perhaps Jesus's fast (40 days) had been commanded by God and it would have been rebellion for Jesus to use His power as God's Son to satisfy Himself rather than depending on His Father. In response, Jesus quoted Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3) that demonstrated the Father's will required trust in Him and His words, being assured that God would provide what is needed. Second, Jesus was tempted to prove His Deity by throwing Himself from the pinnacle of the temple and putting God in a position of rescuing Him. The devil even quoted Psalm 91:11-12 in this temptation, challenging Jesus to put God's care for Him to the test. Yet, Jesus recognized the perverted use of Scripture and answered that it was against God's will for people to put Him to the test (Deuteronomy 6:16). Third, the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, offering to give it all to Him on the condition that Jesus would fall down and worship him. In essence, this appears to offer Jesus (who had come to be King over a spiritual kingdom obtained through His suffering) the opportunity to be King in a different way without suffering. To this, Jesus rebuked Satan, telling him to go away, and answered with Scripture that only God is to be worshiped and served (Deuteronomy 6:13). There are many lessons we can learn from how Jesus overcame these temptations. First, He was completely committed to righteousness and doing what pleased the Father. Second, Jesus knew what was right. Third, Jesus would not sacrifice the promises and hope before Him for the temporary satisfactions of this earthly life. Fourth, Jesus used God's word to directly answer and defeat every temptation. Fifth, when Jesus resisted Satan, Satan eventually left Him for a time. Following this

blueprint continues to provide the path forward to overcoming temptation today (Psalm 119:9-11; Ephesians 6:10-18; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9)!

Matthew 16:21-23

Being God in the flesh, Jesus knew the future, including how He was going to die and why. He lived with this tremendous weight throughout His life (Isaiah 53; John 1:29; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22:41-44). When He foretold what He would suffer to His disciples, Peter rebuked Him. Peter knew Jesus did not have to die (having witnessed many powerful things Jesus did). Jesus, of course, knew it too! He knew He never had to come to this earth and suffer for the sins other people committed (2 Corinthians 8:9). He knew He could call on His Father to destroy the world and set Him free (Matthew 26:52-54). Therefore, reminders of such things (e.g. Matthew 27:38-44) were temptations for Jesus to avoid the pain and suffering rather than submitting to the Father's will. Yet, Jesus answered this temptation (which involved Satan using one of Jesus's closest followers) by rebuking Satan and refocusing the situation on the will of God (Romans 8:5-8)!

1 Peter 2:21-24

Jesus lived a sinless life, despite being tempted. However, this was not because His temptations were easier than ours or because His supernatural powers and abilities made them easier. In fact, if anything, I believe Jesus's temptations were even greater than the temptations we experience – because He could have done whatever He desired! Furthermore, Jesus faced greater sufferings and challenges in His life due to injustice than anyone experiences today. Yet, He was committed to the will of the Father (John 4:34). Therefore, He disciplined Himself to resist whatever the devil offered and obey the will of the Father! Jesus's perfect example is then able to provide the perfect blueprint for overcoming temptation in our lives!

Conclusion

Imitating Jesus requires that you overcome temptation like Jesus overcame temptation. Although there is much more that could be discussed, we have seen Jesus's commitment to doing what is right above satisfying His fleshly desires. Ultimately, He knew God's will and used God's will to determine the course of His life on earth. Therefore, disciples of Jesus must put the will of God above all their fleshly desires and resist temptation!

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