

# SERMON | FIGHTING THE DEVIL

## SERIES | PRAYER & FASTING

STUDY GUIDE | DAVID STOCKTON | SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024

### SERMON SUMMARY

Read Luke 4:1-13 to see what happened during Jesus' time in the wilderness.

**VERSE 1 – Full of the Holy Spirit and Led by the Spirit into the Wilderness:** When you are in the wilderness you are not necessarily doing something wrong. When you are in a dry season spiritually, when you feel weak and exposed, it doesn't mean you are not in the right spot or that God has forsaken you. There are times when the Spirit of God leads us into the wilderness, the testing, **"the dark night of the soul"**, or as John of the Cross says it, **"the dark night of the senses"** and **"the dark night of the spirit"**. Or as Ronald Rolheiser's book Sacred Fire describes it, the movement from **"trying to get our lives together"** to **"trying to give our lives away"** to **"trying to give our deaths away."** Or as Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich call it, **"The Critical Journey"**. This is such an important part of our preparation and purgation, in our progression towards becoming like Christ.

**The Dark Night of the Soul:** What is the dark night of the soul spiritually? "The dark night of the soul is a stage of final and complete purification, and is marked by confusion, helplessness, stagnation of the will, and a sense of the withdrawal of God's presence. It is the period of final "unselfing" and the surrender to the hidden purposes of the divine will." (Wikipedia)

**MAIN MESSAGE: God's Spirit will lead you into hard things, because He wants you to grow and mature, so you can bear more good fruit.**

**VERSE 2 – And When They Were Ended:** When the 40 days were ended Jesus was hungry. The 40 days were not to weaken Jesus to make Him most vulnerable to the temptation of the devil. The 40 days of fasting and solitude were the Spirit's plan to strengthen Jesus for the tempting and testing. The practicing of fasting and solitude were how Jesus prepared for His battle with the devil. So, we need to take note that fasting, solitude, and the other spiritual practices of abstinence and engagement are very useful to prepare us and strengthen us for our battle with the devil. Jesus made it very clear that there is a devil. And He made it very clear the devil seeks to steal, kill, and destroy God's people. Paul the Apostle calls the devil the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). Peter calls the devil a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). And when we read about Jesus casting all the demons out of people, we should notice that when the light shows up, the darkness is revealed. The devil always comes to us with deceptive ideas knowing that we have disordered desires within us, and knowing the world around us is trying to normalize those ideas.

**MAIN MESSAGE: You are in a fight with the devil. Spiritual disciplines can prepare you for the fight and strengthen you in the fight.**

**VERSES 4, 8, 10, 12 – It Is Written:** The three responses Jesus gave are directly from the Bible. Bible study is very important. This is a spiritual practice of engagement. God's Word is our sword in the battle. God's Word is what keeps us from being deceived. God's Word is how the battle is won. God's Word is what Jesus will be wearing when He comes to do away with evil forevermore. And we can rest assured that God's Word is the Holy Bible. Jesus fought the devil with God's Word, and it was direct quotes from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:13, 6:16, 8:3). The Torah is the first five books of the Old Testament.

You can hear from God through a friend, teacher, therapist, parent, song, or His still small voice. But it is sometimes hard to be sure it is the Lord. The Bible on the other hand is entirely inspired by God, God breathed. You can be sure it will work against the devil and His deceptions. If you are

doing something that goes against what the Bible teaches, you already know the devil is influencing you and deceiving you into that path. He even twisted the Bible to try and trick Jesus. But Jesus knew the Scriptures and was able to not be fooled. **You have to read the Bible.**

**MAIN MESSAGE: Hearing from God is how you overcome the devil.**

**VERSE 13 – He Departed Until a More Opportune Time:** This is an unnerving verse. There are two intense dark nights of the soul we know Jesus went through, the temptation in the wilderness, and the betrayal in Gethsemane. After the first one, Jesus **lived** for us. After the second, Jesus **died** for us.

Revelation 12:11 says, they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself (1 John 5:10). The testimony is that God gave us eternal life through Jesus Christ, and whoever has the Son, has life (1 John 5:11-12). Hallelujah!

## SCRIPTURE READING

**READ THIS WEEK'S BIBLE PASSAGES: Lk. 4:1-13; Ps. 119:9-11, 19:7-11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rev. 12:11 (ESV)**

### The Temptation of Jesus

**4** And Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit** in the wilderness <sup>2</sup>for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And **when they were ended**, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered him, "**It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'**" <sup>5</sup>And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, <sup>6</sup>and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will." <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." <sup>8</sup>And Jesus answered him, "**It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'**" <sup>9</sup>And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for **it is written**, "He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you," <sup>11</sup>and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." <sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered him, "**It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'**" <sup>13</sup>And when the devil had ended every temptation, **he departed from him until an opportune time.** – Luke 4:1-13

<sup>9</sup> How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. <sup>10</sup> With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! <sup>11</sup> I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. – Psalm 119:9-11

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup> the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup> the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. <sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. <sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. – Psalm 19:7-11

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. – 1 Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>11</sup> And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. – Revelation 12:11

## BIBLE PASSAGE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you in these passages? Did the Lord highlight anything to you? What do these passages teach you about the character of God? What do these passages teach you about mankind? What do these passages teach you about how mankind should respond to God? What do these passages teach you about how to respond to others?

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Read these passages again (use a different translation if helpful). How did these passages help to convict, correct, or encourage you?

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## GROUP DISCUSSION

### DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP

1. Have you ever had a dark night of the soul? If so, what happened and where was God?
2. Do you sense God leading you into something hard?
3. Are you having trouble believing a hard situation is for your good and growth ultimately?
4. How have the Scriptures been your sword to fight the devil?
5. What have you learned about God, and your relationship with Him, after coming out of a spiritually dry season?

## PRAYER

Take some time for prayer requests and pray over one another before wrapping up.

