

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, September 21 – Read Luke 4:9-13 In an interesting moment, a pastor revealed to me that his previous job had been in the United States military as a SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape) specialist. As I understand it, he prepared troops to survive if they were stranded in a harsh environment or captured by the enemy. They would try to psychologically press the trainee to the limits of their humanity to find their breaking point. He went on to explain that every human being has a limit to how much stress and duress they can physically and mentally endure, and once you push a person over that line they break. His job was to find that line and help military personnel push beyond their limits and move that line. The Bible is, in many regards, a battlefield report of a war that has been raging for all human history. According to the Bible, angels are spirit beings created by God to serve His purposes. However, one angel became proud, which is the root of many sins, and preferred to be his own god rather than worship and obey the real God (Isa. 14:11-23; Ezek. 28:12). Tragically one-third of the angels sided with Satan to declare war on God and become the army devoted to destroying God's kingdom (Isa. 14:12; Luke 10:18; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 9:1, 12:3-9). Their rebellion culminated in a great battle against God and His holy angels. Satan and his demons lost and were kicked out of heaven. The scene shifts to a new battlefield—earth. Tragically our first parents surrendered to Satan and sinned, and ever since everyone has suffered. Every one of us born since the fall has entered into a spiritual war between the kingdom of God and spiritual terrorists seeking only to kill, steal, and destroy. But God Himself foretold the coming of Jesus to crush Satan (Gen. 3:15). Many years later Jesus was born. Like Adam, He was not openly attacked by the evil one until there was a public ministry calling on His life. To walk with God is to walk into a war. Thankfully God gives us five weapons for spiritual war.

Tuesday, September 22 – Read Luke 4:1-4 Let's look at the first weapon Jesus used when He was tempted by the enemy. The story of Jesus' temptation begins in Luke 4:1-2, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry." Unlike God, Satan is not omnipresent. He cannot be in more than one place at a time. Satan himself went to war with Jesus, but for the rest of us, he sends someone else on his behalf. As is often the case with the demonic, no one invites it, but instead, it rudely shows up in a pushy and bossy way, demanding to be dealt with immediately. Like Moses (Exod. 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) Jesus spent forty days alone in the wilderness. By the time the dragon showed up for war, Jesus had reached the limits of His humanity. In this we learn when our enemy is likely to HIT—when we are *hungry, isolated, and tired*. Living out of His full humanity, the Lord Jesus was vulnerable. We are as well, anytime we find ourselves hungry, isolated, or tired. To make matters worse, Satan and demons do not share the limitations of our humanity. They do not get the flu, need a day off, or age. Our humanity has limits that spirit beings do not share. How can you as a human being with finite energy possibly win a battle against spirit beings who have the benefit of being able to war against you day and night without needing a meal, nap, glass of water, or day off? Your power is finite, but the Spirit's power is *infinite*! Where did Jesus' temptation occur? In a barren, lonely, desolate wilderness. Sometimes following the leading of the Holy Spirit means we, like Jesus, will find ourselves in poverty rather than prosperity, trouble instead of tranquility, and hardship instead of happiness. It just goes to show that the surest place to be is in God's will, even if it's in a wilderness. It is better to have the Spirit and nothing else than to have everything but the Spirit.

Wednesday, September 23 – Read Luke 4:2 You form your identity in one of two ways: you achieve it by yourself or you receive it from God. When you achieve your identity by yourself, there are numerous problems. If you wrap up your identity in your role (mother, wife, husband, father, winner, beauty queen, etc.), when your role changes, you fall into an identity crisis. When the kids move out, the marriage crumbles, you lose your job, or age comes to diminish your beauty, you become devastated. You no longer know who you are. When you receive your identity from God, you are able to remain healthy no matter what happens in your life. When you know that you are a loved child of God, you are free to stop living *for* your identity—something that is never secure—and start living *from* your identity, which is eternally secure. Who you think you are determines what you do. Because of this, when Satan attacks, he starts by undermining your sense of identity. In the first attack on humans Adam and Eve were told that if they did something (partake of the forbidden fruit), they would then achieve their identity by becoming "like God." That, however, was a

lie. God had already made them in His "likeness." They had already received an identity of being like God, but somehow got spiritual amnesia and forgot who they were. They wrongly believed the satanic lie that they could achieve an identity by their own efforts. Satan used this same tactic when he attacked Jesus. We read of the assault on Jesus' identity in Luke 4:3, "The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.'" Satan questioned Jesus' identity as the Son of God. God the Father spoke this very thing from heaven over Jesus at His baptism forty days prior saying, "this is My Son." Jesus did not need to do anything to achieve His identity as the Son of God. Unlike Adam, Jesus did not forget who He was. Sometimes negative self-talk and negative self-image are a demonic attack on you and your identity, as was the case with Jesus. Knowing who God says you are as a loved, forgiven saint with a Father who never fails is the key to your victory, just as it was to Jesus.

Thursday, September 24 - Read Luke 4:5-8 The key to catching fish is knowing what kind of bait they like. Once you get the right bait on the hook, the rest is pretty easy. You drop it in front of the fish, they swim up, bite the bait, and overlook the hook. You would think that at some point the fish would catch on to this ploy. Nope. The fish never learn, and the same old bait-and-hook method works every time. People are a lot like fish. The devil and his demons figure out what bait we like and dangle it in front of us. Like a fisherman, the devil couldn't care less what bait we prefer. He will gladly give us sex, money, power, success, comfort, drugs, alcohol—pick a preference. Like fish, we continually swim right on up and take the bait, forget about the hook. In tempting Jesus, Satan loaded every cultural bait on the hook at the same time. We read in Luke 4:5-7, "And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 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. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'" I believe that when Satan showed Jesus every temptation in every nation and culture, in an instant, He felt the combined level of temptation that everyone on the earth was facing at that moment. Can you imagine how you would fare under the same circumstances? Jesus Christ didn't even nibble. Why? Because He had perspective. Jesus was offered two options in that instant: Option 1 was the temptation to have no pain and all pleasure in exchange for losing His relationship with God the Father and God the Spirit. Option 2 was the invitation to have all pain and no pleasure in exchange for keeping His relationship with God the Father and God the Spirit. Jesus valued His relationship with God the Father and God the Spirit more than literally anything else. When tempted, you need to keep the perspective of Jesus and remember that your most valuable treasure is your relationship with God.

Friday, September 25 - Luke 4:9-11 In college Grace and I had an eccentric professor. Disheveled with a wild-eyed look, unkempt beard, and a large knife in his belt holster, he was quite a character. His lectures were electric. He had a razor-sharp mind, quick wit, and larger-than-life personality. He also liked to quote Bible verses—a lot. He would sprinkle in random scriptures from memory, including entire chapters of the Bible. One time after class we asked him if he was a Christian. He laughed loudly and said something like, "Of course not. I don't believe any of that foolishness about Jesus!" Shocked, we asked why he knew so much Bible if he hated Christ and Christianity. He went on to explain to us that his brother was a pastor, and he memorized the Bible so he could mock his brother and win Bible arguments with him even though he was an atheist. I learned an important lesson that day: just because you know the Bible that does not mean you know the Lord. In fact, Satan and demons know the Bible very well. The Bible is a spiritual sword. Like any weapon, you'd better know how to use it so that when you are attacked, you can defend yourself. In this battle with the devil Jesus repeatedly quotes from memory the Book of Deuteronomy. Jesus models a vital principle: we must combat sinful temptation with biblical meditation. In every age there are people who want to say yes to sin and temptation, so they search for what sounds like a biblical justification for inexcusable behavior. Many times this is in relation to sexual sin with demonically empowered arguments supporting such behavior, often with a philosophically compelling case. Why? Because when new cultural norms disagree with the Bible, they tell us it's OK to change the Bible rather than change our behavior. That's demonic. As a general rule, when anyone's interpretation of the Bible concludes with them getting naked with someone other than their spouse of the opposite gender, you know that they studied at Satan's seminary. Most theological debates are just fancy ways for people not to exercise dominion over their drawers. Jesus modeled for us how to combat sinful temptation with biblical meditation. He so filled His mind with the Scriptures that when tempted He could quote the exact Scripture correctly. This allowed Him, and allows us, to defeat the enemy.

Saturday, September 26 - 1 John 4:4-6 The essence of faith is trusting God. Trusting God is always important, but never more important than when we find ourselves tempted. In those moments the Holy Spirit wants to help us as He helped Jesus continue to trust in God and not succumb to the temptation to test God. This kind of faith surrenders the outcome of events to God and accepts whatever future God determines is best. For Jesus, this kind of trust meant that He would face a very difficult future. He would have to trust the Father and the Spirit for His life of poverty, ongoing vocal public opposition, betrayal by Judas, shameful arrest, and brutal execution. You must understand that being tempted does not mean you are ungodly, unspiritual, or unloved by God. Jesus experienced temptation, and you will too. Jesus overcame demonic temptation by living in the continual presence of God, the Holy Spirit. To defeat a spiritual enemy, you need the energy of the Spirit of God. In 1 John 4:4 it says precisely this: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." In context John means that the same Holy Spirit who dwells in the believer and dwelt in Jesus is more powerful than any and every demon, including Satan himself. For this reason, if you maintain a humble spirit, then you allow an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to give you a power you do not have to defeat an enemy that you cannot otherwise defeat—by saying no to temptation and yes to triumph. Christians should not act surprised when trouble comes into their lives. In this life there's a war between King Jesus and Satan. While the Bible promises us that King Jesus is victorious, we're on a pilgrimage to get to Jesus' eternal kingdom. Along the way, preaching the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit in hopes of setting some war captives free from their bondage to Satan, sin, and death. Christians seeking to serve their King Jesus and His kingdom need to know that an eternal vacation is coming, but only after the long war. Our goal cannot be to become spiritual. Our goal must be to become Spirit-filled.

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