



Date: 9th & 16th March 2025

Theme: Lent –

The Opening Drama According to Luke

Bible Reading: Luke 4:1-13

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please remember to contact each member of your group beforehand to remind them of the date, time and venue of the meeting, and make yourself familiar with all the material and Bible passages. Hold in prayer each member during the week before the session.

You will need *Singing the Faith* hymnbooks, or copies of the hymn mentioned overleaf.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

The important season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (5th March this year). In the Christian tradition it is a time of prayer, self-denial and charitable giving. On the first Sunday we hear the dramatic story of Jesus' encounter with the devil in the wilderness, following a forty-day fast. At a time of bodily weakness, he faced severe testing.

Read Luke's account and consider those temptations ([Luke 4:1-13](#)). *Why were they such a severe challenge to Jesus? In what way was the Spirit of God involved? Are these temptations ones we face today?*

Will you be doing anything special to get closer to God during this season of Lent?

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

God of truth, wisdom and compassion,
you have given us this season of Lent to travel more deeply into the truth about ourselves,
leaving behind impatience and distraction.

You have given us these weeks to discover a stronger wisdom in what we share together.

You have given us your compassionate Son
who was led by the Spirit into the desert to face the severest testing.

Grant us the assurance of his triumph over the lure of evil
as we journey with him on the path of Christian faith. **Amen.**

FINDING OUR ROOTS

All together as a single group, or in sub-groups of two or three, discuss with each other:

- *What are the desires you bring at this moment for your walk with God, or your growth in faith?*
- *What are your reactions to the story of Jesus's temptations?*
- *What are the connections between the experience of Jesus and what you are experiencing in your own life?*
- *When tempted by what is false and destructive, how may you be helped to choose what is true and life-giving?*

READING THE SCRIPTURES - with background information

Read together the Bible passage: [Luke 4:1-13](#)

In the Old Testament Israel is led into the wilderness as a people freed from slavery in Egypt. But, what happened next? We are told that the Lord humbled them, causing them to hunger, to face starvation before manna was supplied from heaven. The purpose was to teach Israel complete dependence on God ([Deuteronomy 8:3](#)). Yet, through persistent rebellion against God, they failed ([Deuteronomy 9:7](#)). Challenged to serve God alone by refusing to compromise with heathen idolatry, they failed again ([Judges 3:5-7](#)). Doubting God's power to supply water in a parched land they put God to the test, compelling Moses to force the Lord's hand ([Exodus 17:1-7](#)). As a result, Moses and Aaron are told that they will lose the leadership of the community ([Numbers 20:12](#)). After the death of Aaron, Moses is told that he will be refused the opportunity to enter the promised land ([Deuteronomy 32:48-52](#)). In [Psalm 95](#), Israel's failure to live as God's people is recalled in a psalm acclaiming God as the great king above all gods.

In the New Testament accounts of Jesus 'in the desert' we are presented with a picture of God's true Son. In his steadfast response to the devil, the divine purpose is opened up, as he offers to God the obedience and trust Israel failed to give. Paul, writing to the Christians in Corinth, sees the Church as the 'true Israel', but solemnly warns this community against complacency, recalling in graphic terms the fate of the wilderness generation ([1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#)).

DIGGING DEEPER

Returning to the discussion we started as we were 'finding our roots', further questions arise:

When have you faced your greatest test so far? And, how did you respond to the test? Did you feel alone? Or were you supported? (Only share if you feel comfortable doing so.)

If the test was caused by the clamour of some evil influence, how did Jesus help? How can he help?

At the end of our study text, Luke tells us that the devil departed from Jesus, but only 'until an opportune time' ([Luke 4:13](#)). In other words, the whole of Jesus' earthly life was shadowed by the presence of the 'tempter', seeking to bring down his friends (see [Luke 22:3](#) and [22:31](#)), and to undermine his own mission ([Luke 22:53](#)). *What do you make of this? Do you find this a helpful way of thinking?*

*How can Jesus help us **now**, in our temptations? (Note what he said to Simon Peter in [Luke 22:32](#).)*

The Letter of James assures us that God himself cannot be tempted by evil, 'Nor does he tempt anyone' ([James 1:13-16](#)). James goes on to say, 'each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.' *Is there more to say? Does temptation come from within?*

The story of Jesus' temptations tells us that evil is also an external reality, but the story gives us one sure ground for hope in our own lives. **The Letter to the Hebrews** spells it out: 'We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and *find grace to help us in our time of need.*' ([Hebrews 4:15-16](#)) *Have you found this helpful in your own faith journey or battles with temptation?*

The command in **Peter's First Letter** is blunt and uncompromising: 'Resist the devil, standing firm in the faith' ([1 Peter 5:9](#)). *Have you found this sort of advice works in your own experience?*

PRAYING TOGETHER

Use a time of quiet prayer to lift up before God anyone known to you who is facing powerful temptations they want to resist. In the silence, pray for yourself, remembering one piece of encouragement you have received during this session.

You might like to say or sing together '[Christ our Redeemer knew temptation's hour](#)' by Timothy Dudley-Smith, a prolific and much-loved hymn writer who died last August. (*Singing the Faith* 235).

Conclude by saying **The Lord's Prayer** together.