

WILDERNESS

THE ONLY WAY AROUND IS THROUGH

Wilderness Series

Part 1 - "Resistance Builds Strength"

Small Group Material

May 6th, 2018

Leader Guide

Bottom Line: *The heart of temptation is trust.*

Study Verses: *Luke 4:1-12*

Define The Win: *Participants would reflect on how Jesus responded to temptation and what insight this provides when facing their own struggles. They would recognize how temptation forces them to question their identity and God's goodness. Group members would pinpoint where they find themselves in the wilderness and how they can respond to temptation differently in this situation.*

Key Points

- *Every temptation questions our identity as well as His goodness.*
- *The wilderness feels God forsaken, but the wilderness is God ordained.*
- *If you are different around different people, there's a temptation problem in your life going unaddressed.*
- *Temptation always works to disintegrate.*
- *Resistance builds strength.*
- *Sin breaks trust.*
- *Self-control is a lost art in our culture.*
- *Temptation is a byproduct of love because love requires the option for it to be rejected.*

- *With every temptation, there is always more at stake than we think.*
- *Temptation has us questioning God's goodness by putting us in the center.*
- *Obedience comes through testing.*

ENCOUNTER

- **What emotions and thoughts are you bringing with you as we begin a 4-week journey exploring how to deal with temptation?**
- **What does it mean that temptation is a byproduct of love? How does testing reveal what we value and whom we trust?**
- **In what ways does temptation work to disintegrate? How does it tear our heart apart?**
- **God is a God who tests. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?**

FORMATION

- **Read Luke 4:1-4. What did the devil want Jesus to focus on during this first temptation? What happens to our legacy when our cares are focused solely on our immediate needs?**
- **Read Luke 4:5-8. What is at the heart of this second temptation? How dangerous is it to live a life of shortcuts?**
- **Read Luke 4: 9-12. How did the enemy utilize Scripture to attempt to confuse and entice Jesus? How did Jesus respond to every temptation He faced? What insight should that provide us in a tool we can use to resist the enemy?**

EXPRESSION

- **While in the wilderness, Jesus faced three temptations: (1) Seeking God's provision in His strength (2) Placing His image above God's image (3) Using God for personal gain. Of these three temptations, which one do you struggle with the most and why?**
- **Think of where you are facing temptation. How is this struggle causing you to question your identity and God's goodness?**
- **Where do you feel like wandering? How did you arrive in this place of wilderness? What is the thing you want or need the most?**
- **What are some tangible ways you can trust God's purpose and provision?**

LEADER INSIGHT: *Everybody encounters temptation. Yes, everyone. No one is immune, including Jesus. If He was tested, then so can we. At the core of every temptation, we come face-to-face with a question that exposes our heart: Can God be trusted? The heart of temptation is trust. Whether we realize it or not, our ability to withstand temptation hinges on our confidence in God. It might sound odd, but temptation is a byproduct of love because love requires the option for it to be rejected.*

Unfortunately, in the midst of the trial, we fix our eyes on ourselves, and as a result, our wants trump everything else. Every temptation forces us to question our identity as well as His goodness. It works to disintegrate the wholeness we desperately want to experience. Temptation has us questioning God's goodness by putting us in the center.

When we give in to temptation, we stop believing God cares and is sovereign, so we resort to taking matters into our own hands, which always leads to trouble. Sin breaks trust. We get swept up in the moment and foolishly believe that the only thing at stake is our needs, our wants, and our desires.

However, with every temptation, there is always more at stake than we think. We know numerous individuals who destroyed their reputation, legacy, and integrity by giving into temptation. It's easy for us to see someone else's future being at stake when they're wrestling or making bad choices, yet, when we're in the thick of it, we can't see beyond "the now."

Some of us have been scared, hurt or influenced by another individual's inability to deal with temptation. Maybe it was a parent, family member, friend or co-worker. Their choices had ramifications on us, which means our decisions do as well. They create a ripple effect and touch others, especially those in our sphere of influence.

Most importantly, our faith hangs in the balance during those moments of temptation. Even though we can't lose our salvation, every time we sin, we weaken our relationship with God, we damage our accountability with God, and we hurt our emotional connection with God.

What was at stake when Jesus faced temptation? WE WERE. Our hope, freedom, and life hung in the balance. If He gave into the immediate, our eternity would forever be changed. Everybody faces temptation. And on some level, everybody has fallen to it. Everybody but Jesus.

During this series, we want to invite people to take a behind the scene look into how Jesus handled and dealt with temptation. Why? Because one of the three temptations Jesus faced lie in the background of every single temptation we face. Sometimes we are enticed to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. Other times we try to leverage and use God for our own ends. Then there are the moments when we're tempted to take a shortcut and try to do the right thing in the wrong way.

When Jesus came to die for our sins, He didn't just come to pay for it; He came to free us from the power of sin. He not only broke the power of sin over us for eternity, but also right here, and right now. The temptations won't go away, but when we understand what is lying below the surface in these testings, we will find the power to pause and stand strong in Him. The wilderness feels God forsaken, but the wilderness is God ordained. It's in these moments where we face resistance and resistance builds strength.