


“THE DEVIL IN THE WILDERNESS”
SPEAKER: ALEX LESSLER
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Discussion Questions

These questions are designed to help lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message. They can help you understand and apply the teaching.

BIBLICAL TEXT(S) + MESSAGE SUMMARY:
Luke 4:1-13, 1 Cor. 10:13

Jesus' baptism is a crescendo of sorts, a crowning affirmation by Israel's greatest prophet at the time and Jesus' Father in heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased." One would expect that the Lord would ride that momentum into a triumphant public ministry, but he doesn't. Instead, the Holy Spirit leads him into a desolate wilderness to be tested by the Devil, not immediately but after 40 days of wandering and fasting. Only after he is famished and physically exhausted is the battle joined.

LEAN IN: *These are ice breakers and warm ups, mostly to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. What's your go-to food when you're so hungry you feel like you could eat anything?
2. Have you ever been really hungry and tired? What were the circumstances and what did you feel?
3. Have you ever spent any extended time in a wilderness, like a desert for example, and if so, what was that like?"
4. What's one thing about this message that made a big impression on you and why?
5. How did you put the past week's teaching into practice since our group last met?

LOOK DOWN: *These are questions about the Bible passage(s) and observations about what's been read. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.*

1. How does Luke describe Jesus' spiritual state at the outset of this story and why might that be important?
2. What do you notice about the three temptations, specifically what about Jesus' condition, spirituality, or relationship with his Father is under attack?
3. What do you notice about where the attacks take place; Are the locations significant and why or why not?
4. What do you notice about the use of Scripture during Jesus' exchange with the devil?
5. What does God promise us will accompany any and all temptation and why?

LOOK OUT: *These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.*

1. How do most people in our culture relate to the idea of evil, specifically a personal evil as in a creature like Satan?
2. Do you think most people who are not Christian believe they are tempted to do bad things and why or why not?

3. The average person likely would call some things evil, like child abuse for example, but what do you think they would see as its root cause and how to best address the problem?
4. How would you go about having a conversation with a person who isn't Christian about evil, and the reality of personal evil spirits?
5. Do you think Christians sometimes fall into the extremes Pastor Alex mentioned of either an unhealthy interest in evil or being too dismissive of it, and how did you come to hold your opinion?
6. What do you think we Christians must be doing to battle evil, both personally and corporately?

LOOK IN: *These are questions that help you consider how to engage the teaching personally. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.*

1. What inspires you as you contemplate the story of Jesus' Temptation? What discourages you?
2. What are some of the most effective strategies you employ to battle temptation?
3. Paul makes it clear in his letters that Christians have differing sensitivities when it comes to debatable issues, moderate use of alcohol at meals, for example, or certain fashion choices. How can, or should we support one another to "avoid temptation" and what limits are reasonable? Who determines those limits? Where's the line between reasonable, loving limits and abusive spiritual manipulation?
4. We can draw encouragement from Jesus' example, but we can also find strength in the stories of others. Consider sharing a story of a spiritual victory where God helped you overcome significant temptation, or a time of testing.
5. How would you like God to strengthen you right now, providing a "way out" as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10?

LIVE IT OUT: *These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life. Choose one prompt and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. Consider opening up to a trusted brother or sister about a regular temptation and asking them to pray with you regularly for God's strength and Presence so you may persevere faithfully.
2. Begin each day in the next week by asking God to fill you afresh with the Holy Spirit so that you may walk in his power. Commit to journaling each evening and examine the day to see if you are experiencing a greater sense of God's Presence. At the end of the week write a summary conclusion. If you conclude that you resisted temptation more successfully and were more aware of God's help in doing so, consider making the practice of inviting God's Presence daily something you do each morning as you wake up.