

Matthew 4:5-7

- The (second) temptation of Christ -

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Introduction

- ❖ “Why does God allow temptation? That is a question Christians often ask. Well, he allowed it for Jesus. And after a high spiritual experience, such as the baptism undoubtedly was for Jesus, temptation frequently comes, and properly comes. It sorts out the emotional ‘high’ from the reality of spiritual conquest and growth. We are not meant to live on spiritual highs. We are meant to live on the bread that comes from God alone, even if it is bread in the desert. God deliberately allows temptation. Its arrival does not mean that God’s blessing has evaporated. It simply allows the ephemeral and the emotional to be separated from the lasting. Temptation builds spiritual muscle.”¹
- ❖ The temptation of Christ reveals his true humanity as the Son of God. The devil reveals what is on a man’s mind.
- ❖ Christ was led by the Spirit and showed his wisdom and of understanding, his counsel and power, his knowledge and fear of the Lord (Isa 11:2).
- ❖ The full understanding of the temptation of Christ requires a deep understanding of the Scriptures.
- ❖ The Lord’s prayer is the opposite of the temptation of Christ and addresses the same needs, food, the will of God, the kingdom of God, in reversed order. The Lord’s prayer is the true worship of God.

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Matthew, and it is part of a series “The temptation of Christ.” This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

¹ Green, M. (2001, p. 82).

Context

- ❖ The temptation of Christ in the desert takes place immediately after his baptism:
 - The baptism of Jesus (Mt. 3:13-17):
 - Before Jesus was baptised by John, he said: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this **to fulfil all righteousness.**”
 - And after: “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”
- ❖ After he has defeated the tempter, Jesus started to preach in the synagogues of Galilee:
 - Matthew summarized these sermons as follows:
 - “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt. 4:17).
 - Jesus continued and took over the ministry of John the Baptist:
 - “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt. 3:1–2).
 - And later on, when Jesus sent out his twelve disciples:
 - “As you go, preach this message: ‘**The kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt. 10:7).
 - These two aspects, repentance and the kingdom, are prominent in the Sermon on the Mount.
- ❖ There are three main themes in the temptation of Jesus:
 - Are you the son of God?
 - How do you fulfil all righteousness?
 - And finally, to whom belongs this world, the kingdom?

Form and structure

- ❖ The temptation of Christ can be divided in a setting, three scenes, and one conclusion:

<i>Purpose:</i>	Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.
<i>First temptation: (verse 2-4)</i>	After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"
<i>Second temptation: (verse 5-7)</i>	Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
<i>Third temptation: (verse 8-10)</i>	Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"
<i>Result</i>	Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Jesus and Moses

- ❖ A Comparison between Moses and Jesus

Moses		Jesus	
Exodus 1:22	The killing of all the Hebrew boys in Egypt.	Matthew 2:16	The killing of all the boys in Bethlehem.

Exodus 4:22-23 and Hosea 11:1	This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." (See also remark below.)	Matthew 2:15	And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."
Exodus 14 1 Corinthians 10:3	They (Israel) were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.	Matthew 3:14-17	The baptism of Jesus by John.
Exodus 15:22	Moses and the people of Israel were led into the desert	Matthew 4:1	Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.
Exodus 15:26	I am the LORD, who heals you.	Matthew 4:23	Jesus healed every disease and sickness among the people.
Exodus 19:20	The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up.	Matthew 5:1	He went up on a mountainside.
Exodus 20:1-17	The law (Ten Commandments)	Matthew 5:17	"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Israel and Jesus

- ❖ Compare (1) Exodus 4:23 and 7:16 with Matthew 4:2 and 4:10.

Exodus 4:23	"Let my son go, so he may worship me."
Exodus 7:16	"Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert."

Matthew 4:2	“If you are the Son of God. ”
Matthew 4:10	Jesus said to him (...): “ Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”

- ❖ Compare (2) Deuteronomy 8:2-3 with Matthew 4:1-2. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, but the full context must be taken into account. See explanation.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3	Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.
Matthew 4:1-4	Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘ Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. ’”

- In each temptation Jesus will quote from Deuteronomy (Dt 8:3 > 4:4; Dt 6:16 > 4:7; Dt 6:13 > 4:10.)

Word study

- ❖ Verse 1:

- To be tempted = “πειράζω”:
 - **2. to endeavor to discover the nature or character of something or somebody by testing, try, make trial of, put to the test.**²
 - **4. to entice to improper behavior, tempt.**³
 - The temptation of Christ shows both aspects. The devil wants to entice improper behaviour. Jesus will show his true nature and character.

² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 792).

³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 793).

❖ Verse 5:

- Devil = “ὁ διάβολος”: **one who engages in slander, the adversary/devil**, already current in the Greek Translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint) as a translation of שָׂטָן, satan (Job 2:1).⁴

❖ Verse 8:

- Glory = “δόξα”: 2. **a state of being magnificent, greatness, splendor**, anything that catches the eye: fine clothing of a king (Mt 6:29; Lk 12:27); of royal *splendor* (Mt 4:8; Lk 4:6; Rv 21:24, 26). Generally of human splendor of any sort (1 Pt 1:24; Is 40:6).⁵

❖ Verse 10:

- To worship = “προσκυνέω”: (κυνέω ‘to kiss’) is used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground, etc.; **to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully.** (...) The risen Lord is especially the object of worship.⁶
- To serve “λατρεύω”: The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: “They (= the godless and wicked men) exchanged the truth of God for a lie, **and worshipped and served** created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Final remark

- ❖ Barclay comments: “No one can ever read this story without remembering that its source must have been Jesus himself. In the wilderness, he was alone. No one was with him when this struggle was being fought out. And we know about it only because Jesus himself must have told his disciples about it. **It is Jesus telling us his own spiritual autobiography.**”⁷

Exposition

Verse 1-4 The purpose:

- ❖ Immediately after his baptism is Jesus led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 226).

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 257).

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 882-883).

⁷ Barclay, W. (2001, p. 76).

- “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “**This is my Son**, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Mt 3:16, 17).
 - These words spoken by the voice from heaven (the voice of God) are important for the understanding of the temptation in the desert:
 - “This is my Son” (the voice from heaven) < “if you are the Son of God” (the devil) > verse 6!
 - “Son of God” has a double connotation:
 - It refers to the true divinity of Christ.
 - It refers to the true humanity of Christ.
- “In the same way that God put his son Israel to the test during the days of Moses, so now his son Jesus is put to the test in the wilderness.”⁸
 - **God wants to show what is in the heart of Jesus!** (Compare Genesis 22:12.)
- Christ received the Spirit (Mt 3:16): “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord— and he will delight in the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2).
 - Christ will need the wisdom and understanding, counsel and power, to resist the temptation.
- ❖ There are three “names” used: “tempter” (8:2), “devil” (8:1, 5, 8, 11) and “Satan” (8:10).
 - The devil is not an impersonal evil force, but a powerful spiritual personality.
 - Satan in the Old Testament: 1 Ch 21:1; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Zec 3:1–2.
 - In the Revelation of John, these names are combined in one great sign: “The great dragon, —that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan” (Rev 12:9; Rev 20:2).
 - Mathew 16:23 is illuminating: “Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, **Satan!** You are a stumbling block to me; **you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.**’ The Devil has the things of men, of us, in mind. Satan, the Devil knows who Jesus is! The demon-possessed from the region of the Gerasenes knew the true identity of Jesus when he shouted: ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’” (Lk 8:27, 28).
- ❖ “Jesus answered, ‘It is written:’

⁸ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 78).

- Jesus refers to the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God. “Jesus does not respond by murmuring against God. Instead, he takes up ‘the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God’ (Eph 6:17).”⁹
- “**Man** does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
 - Jesus identifies himself with the individual human being and with mankind in general. “For Jesus to be Son of God does not deny his humanity, but it does mean ‘that he can hear and obey God totally, leaving everything up to him.’”¹⁰
Jesus affirms his true humanity.
 - Newman and Stine comment: “**to live really means more than physical existence here.** “Man’s life does not depend only on food” or “Man’s existence does not depend only on having food.” **Rather, for man to have real life,** he must have *every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*, that is, “what God speaks” or “what God commands.”¹¹
- What is meant by “**every word that comes from the mouth of God.**” It is interesting to note that there is a double reference to the authority of God:
 - 1. “It is written.”
 - 2. “Every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Verse 5-7 The second temptation:

- ❖ Jesus referred to the scriptures: “**It is written.**” This will be the focus in the second temptation.
- ❖ “**Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.**”
 - “**Holy city**” = Jerusalem (Lk 4:9).
 - “**Highest point of the temple**”
 - Newman and Stine comment: “The precise meaning of the word translated *pinnacle* (ESV, or NIV “**highest point**”) is in dispute. It literally means ‘little wing,’ and the only other time it is used in the New Testament is in the Lukan parallel (4:9). The word may possibly mean ‘little tower’ or ‘parapet,’ and at least one scholar tentatively identifies it with “an eminence on the royal cloister on the south side of the temple enclosure, which consisted of four rows of Corinthian columns.”

⁹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 362).

¹⁰ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 81).

¹¹ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 81).

“In the following verse Psalm 91:11–12 is quoted, and one commentator notes that in the Septuagint of Psalm 91:4 there appears the word ‘wings,’ which sounds very similar to the word used in this account. It is therefore quite possible that the word in Psalm 91:4 has influenced the usage here, especially since this psalm was used in the Temple worship and occasionally linked with Israel’s wilderness wandering. Whatever exact part of the temple is being referred to by *pinnacle* or ‘parapet,’ it is clear that it is a very high place.¹²

❖ “‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down. For it is written:’ ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

○ **“If you are the Son of God.”**

▪ Newman and Stine comment: “The Devil is probably not wondering whether or not Jesus is God’s Son. He assumes he is. The word *If* here is better translated ‘Since you are God’s Son,’ ‘In that you are God’s Son,’ or ‘You are God’s Son, and therefore ...’ However, it is also possible to understand him to be saying ‘If you are God’s Son, prove it by ...’¹³

▪ What is at stake? Several questions can be asked.

• Are you the Son of God?

○ Do you fear death?

• Do angels exist and serve you?

• Is the temple really a place of shelter?

• Does God really reside at the temple?

• Is the word of God trustworthy?

○ Remember that the devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God. He knows that angels will come and serve Jesus. He knows that the temple is the house of the Lord. He knows that the word of God is trustworthy.

○ **“For it is written.”** Compare Matthew 4:4 where Jesus referred to the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God. Now the Devil uses or better, abuses the word of God.

○ The Devil quoted Psalm 91:10 (part of), 11. But to understand the full impact of this quotation, it is necessary to have a look at the Psalm 91 as a whole:

¹² Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 82).

¹³ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 80).

Short summary	Psalm 91	Matthew 4:7-9
<i>Statement of faith: (verse 1)</i>	He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.	The devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple .
<i>I will say to the Lord (verse 2)</i>	I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."	
<i>"Others" assure you (verse 3-8)</i>	Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.	
<i>Continuation. Note the word "if" (verse 9-13)</i>	If you make the Most High your dwelling— even the LORD, who is my refuge— then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.	"If you are the Son of God," "throw yourself down." For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, (...) and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."
<i>The Lord answers the prayer (verse 2) and underscores the</i>	"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will	= <i>the Son of God</i>

<i>declaration of faith (verse 1, 3-13)</i>	call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.”	
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- Newman and Stine comment: *On their hands they will bear you up* expresses the idea that the angels would actually hold Jesus on his way down, as in “They will hold you (in their hands) on your way down” or “They will hold you safe as you fall.” They will do that *lest you strike your foot against a stone*, that is, “so that you won’t be hurt at all, you won’t even hurt your foot on the stones,” or simply “so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.” TEV (Today’s English Version) does only slight restructuring: “so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.” Although the text mentions the foot, here the foot probably represents the whole body, and the idea is that he will escape all injury. But translators should try to retain the image of the foot, so that this quotation will be close to an eventual translation of the psalm.¹⁴

❖ **Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”**

- Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16: “Do not test the Lord your God (as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you.” It is interesting to read the original passage, Exodus 17:1-7. Verse 7 reads: “And he (Moses) called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’” (See also Psalm 95:7-9.)

Verse 8-10 *The third temptation:*

- ❖ The third temptation is dealing with “the kingdoms of this world.” Satan deceives this world by showing its splendour. The splendour and power of this world are often established by oppression, the subtle oppression of the poor by the rich. The devil claims that the world as it is, is his possession and that he can give it into the hands of Jesus.
- ❖ Jesus knows that most people are impressed and deceived by power and splendour. He came to save the sinner, not the powerful, to restore the poor and the sick. His kingdom is from another place (Jn 18:36).

Verse 11

- ❖ Satan left Jesus and at the same time angels came and attended him.
 - Attended him means: they served him with food!
 - “Angels came.” Indeed, Psalm 91 is trustworthy!

¹⁴ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 84).

- They serve him. He is the Son of God, the son of David, the heir of the throne.
- ❖ The victory of 4:1–11 will have been just as much a ‘fulfilling of all righteousness’ as the submission to John’s baptism in chapter 3.¹⁵

Application

Verse 5-7

- ❖ Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for:
 - His obedience to his God and Father.
 - His profound knowledge of the Scriptures.
 - His wisdom.
 - His identification with us.
 - “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18; 4:15).
 - “Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phillip 2:7).
- ❖ The authority of scripture:
 - It is a common mistake that we can quote scripture at random.
 - Quote scripture in accordance with its context.
 - Quote scripture in accordance with its purpose.
 - “God’s rescuing power is not something to be played and experimented with; it is something to be quietly trusted in everyday life.”¹⁶
- ❖ Angels will serve the believers (Heb 1:14).

The Lord’s Prayer and the Temptation of Jesus

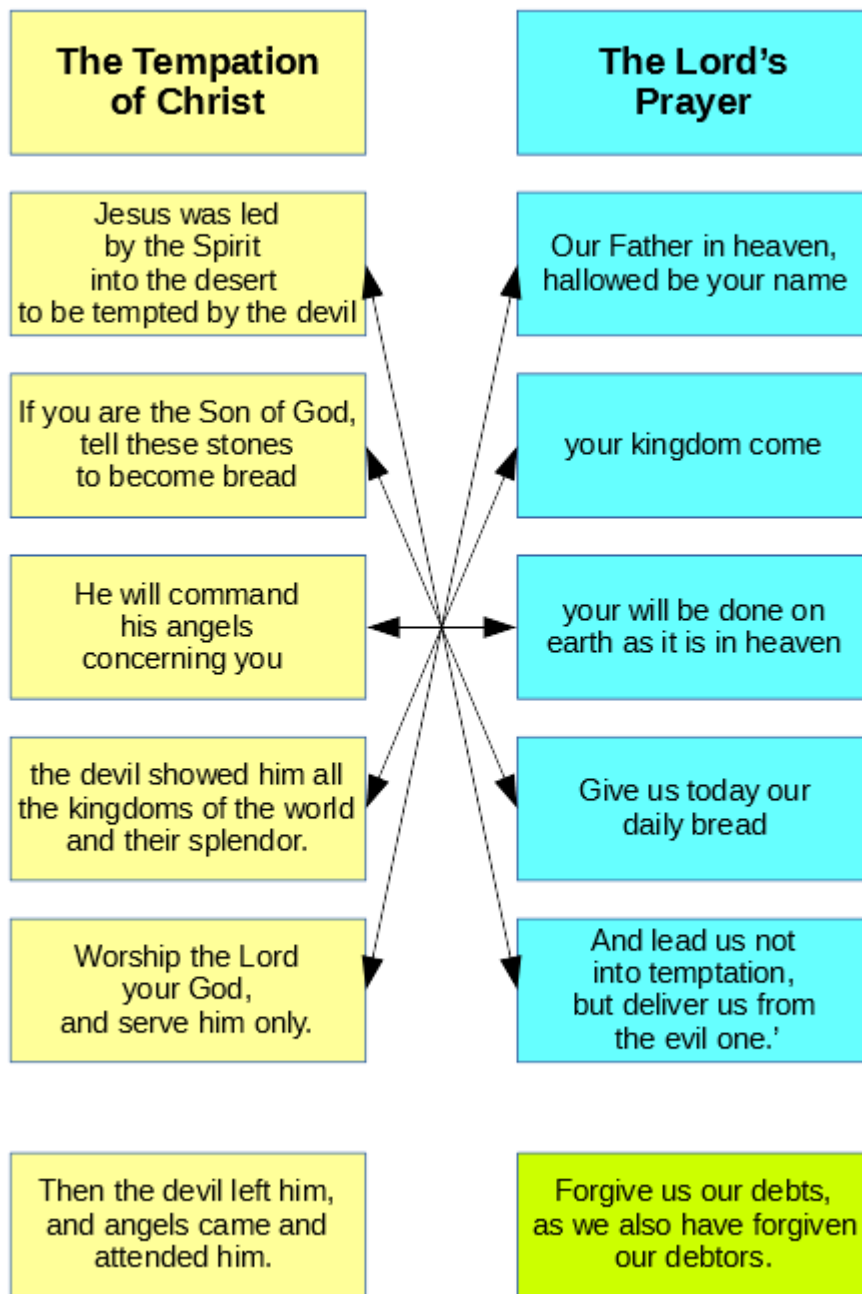
- ❖ There is a very interesting parallel between the Lord’s Prayer and the temptation of Jesus:

The temptation of Jesus	The Lord’s Prayer
Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil .	‘And lead us not into temptation , but deliver us from the evil one .’

¹⁵ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 1, p. 354).

¹⁶ Barclay, W. (2001, p. 80).

<p>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."</p> <p>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"</p>	<p>'Give us today our daily bread.'</p>
<p>Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: (...)"</p> <p>Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"</p>	<p>'your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'</p>
<p>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.</p>	<p>'your kingdom come.'</p>
<p>"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."</p> <p>Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"</p> <p>Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.</p>	<p>'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name'</p>



Quotes¹⁷

- ❖ “Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity, and power can indeed present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us

¹⁷ Quotes About Temptation (338 quotes). (n.d.). Retrieved January 12, 2018, from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag?utf8=%E2%9C%93&id=temptation>

worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. The real trap, however, is self-rejection. As soon as someone accuses me or criticizes me, as soon as I am rejected, left alone, or abandoned, I find myself thinking, "Well, that proves once again that I am a nobody." ... [My dark side says,] I am no good... I deserve to be pushed aside, forgotten, rejected, and abandoned. Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "Beloved." Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence." — Henri J.M. Nouwen

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