

Bible Studies for Life: April 30

The Temptation to Test God • Deuteronomy 6:16-25; Matthew 4:5-7

By Laura Lee Leathers



Leathers

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Sometimes the way ahead can be so challenging that we'll look for another way around our circumstances – even if that means twisting the truth to get there. We might even justify our

path by thinking it leads to the same place anyway, even asking God to bless it. That's testing God and it's not God's way. Often God's plan is for us to take the difficult path, but it's during those journeys that we are molded and shaped to be more like Christ (Lifeway).

Building upon last week's lesson, we return this week to what is commonly called, "The Temptation of Jesus." The second temptation's location is the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem.

We can be tempted to test God for our own purposes (Matthew 4:5-7). The devil takes Jesus to the holy city, to the top of the temple's highest point – about 500 feet above the Kidron Valley.

The devil often uses the word, "if." For you and me, using the word usually brings doubt to our minds. The word introduces a conditional clause.

Was the devil trying to cast doubt in the mind of Jesus? He knew who Jesus was. When you remove the word, "if," from the statement, "If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down," you have, "*You are the Son of God.*"

Next, note what the devil wants Jesus to do – "throw yourself down." Satan quotes Psalm 91:11-12, pointing out that God will provide His angels to protect Jesus. Note the omittance of, "to keep you in all your ways." We should not let ourselves be deceived by the evil one. The devil knows Scripture; he will twist it and use it in his ploys.

Jesus replied, "It is written again." This is the second time for Jesus to remind the devil.

"We must never divorce one part of Scripture from another, but we must always 'compare spiritual things with spiritual' (1 Cor. 2:13). We can prove almost anything by the Bible, 'if' we isolate texts from context and turn it into pretexts"

(Wiersbe, *Be Loyal Following the King of Kings*, Commentary on Matthew).

Jesus finishes His admonishment to the devil with, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:16). Wiersbe continues, "We tempt God when we put ourselves into circumstances that force Him to work miracles on our behalf... We tempt God when we try to force Him to contradict His own Word. It is important for us as believers to read *all* Scripture, and study *all* God had to say, for *al*lof it is profitable for daily life (2 Tim. 3:16-17)."

We have no reason to test God when we trust and obey His Word (Deuteronomy 6:16-19). Moses warned the Israelites not to tempt God as the previous generation had done at Massah (Exodus 17:1-7). They should have learned from the nation's prior lack of trust – their unfaithfulness.

They tested God by "accusing the Lord of not properly taking care of them" (Women's Study Bible, editors Patterson and Kelley). They didn't believe in God's ability to supply water at their desperate hour. How often do you and I doubt God's ability to provide?

The Israelites were admonished to keep God's commandments diligently and do what was right and good. Things would go well with them when they chose to listen and follow God's way. God was on their side. Their part was to trust and obey Him.

"We tempt the Lord when we openly and unbelievably question His ability or defy His authority by what we say or do" (Wiersbe).

We experience God's goodness and faithfulness as we obey His Word (Deuteronomy 6:20-25). There could come a time when a future generation will ask, "What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you" (v. 20)?

The parents were to be prepared to share how God had moved them out of Egypt, relate the signs and wonders that God performed, and how He brought them to the Promised Land.

That conversation in our time should point to God's presence, provision, love, goodness, and faithfulness. The people of that day were to fear (respect) the Lord and pursue righteousness, as we must today.

"One of the best protections against tempting the Lord is a grateful heart" (Wiersbe). We are to be thankful in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Remember, God fulfills all His promises.

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