

Bible Studies for Life: May 7

*The Temptation to Place Something Else Before God •
Deuteronomy 6:10-15; Matthew 4:8-11*

By Laura Lee Leathers



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According to Merriam-Webster, the word shortcut means: "A route more direct than the one ordinarily taken." Another meaning is, "A method of means of doing something more directly and quickly than and often not so thoroughly as by ordinary procedure."

With the third temptation the devil offered Jesus a shortcut, a way to gain God's kingdom without following His plan. What was the shortcut?

We can be tempted to worship things other than God (Matthew 4:8-11, NKJV). Take a moment to read Isaiah 14:12-14. Verse 13 starts with, "For you have said in your heart...", and then note the "I will" statements. The final one is, "I will be like the Most High" (v. 14b). The devil has always wanted to be God. He wants to be worshipped.

The devil makes one more attempt to test Jesus in the wilderness. The devil takes Jesus "up on an exceedingly high mountain" (v. 8). Here, the devil shows Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (v. 8) and states, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (v. 9).

God had already promised Jesus the kingdom (Psalm 2:8). The kingdoms and their glory were not the devil's to give away. He did not create, establish, or control the world's kingdoms. God did and does. He is Sovereign!

Why was the devil tempting Jesus by offering Him the world's

kingdoms? The devil offered a shortcut, bypassing the suffering and death on the cross that was to come.

“There are no shortcuts to the will of God. If we want to share in the glory, we must also share in the suffering (1 Peter 5:10)” (Wiersbe, Be Loyal, Following the King of Kings Commentary).

How does Jesus respond to this temptation? With the command, “Away with you, Satan,” followed by Scripture.

Never forget that it is God who is at work in your life. (Deuteronomy 6:10-12). You may have noticed that we follow the historical order of Jesus’ quotes in Matthew 4:1-11.

We’re going back to Moses’ warning to be cautious regarding disobedience. The nation of Israel needed to remember that their inheritance came from a promise God had given Abraham. They had done nothing to earn or deserve it.

What was God giving to them? Cities they did not build, houses filled with things they did not fill, wells they did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees they did not plant. Then comes the warning: “...lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

It was God at work protecting, providing, and guiding. He is always at work (John 5:17) and like the Israelites, we need to remember everything we have comes from God. He is always at work, even if you and I can’t see it.

When we worship God and follow Him, we will do that which pleases Him and blesses us (Deuteronomy 6:13-15). In the Gospel of Matthew, notice the devil only uses the word, “worship,” but when Jesus replies He adds the word, “serve.”

Why? Because whatever we worship, we serve.

Moses warned the Israelites they were not to “go after other gods, the gods of the people who are all around you” (v. 14).

However, they did just that – repeatedly – and we are no different.

There would be no shortcuts; Satan was defeated. Jesus glorified His Father and set an example for us. As believers, we must remember that there are no shortcuts in our faith walk with Christ. It is day-by-day choosing to worship, obey, and follow Him.

In closing, I leave you with this statement: “The world lives with the expectation that we look out for ourselves first and foremost. This is more than just self-preservation and seeking to protect ourselves; we also want to make ourselves look good – and even better in front of others.

“Glory belongs to God alone, but we are often tempted to make more of ourselves than we should. We find our greatest joy, though, when we point to God and not ourselves” (LifeWay).

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