



**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”**

~Luke 4:1-4

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## **Move to the Center – 10 Minutes**

*Note: Times are just suggestions to help structure your time. Feel free to adjust to suit your situation best.*

*Take time to center yourselves. Check in with each other to see how the past week has been and what you all are hoping for in the week to come. Write down any prayer requests that are lifted up. Then, pray your own prayer, inviting God to be present with you during this time of study and conversation (including any prayer requests that were surfaced) or use the following prayer:*

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today. May our hearts be open to your movement in our lives and world. Thank you for sending Jesus to us, and for showing us that he has experienced the fullness of humanity. Help us trust in you, especially when we find ourselves in the desert. Amen.

## **Move into the Text – 20 Minutes**

*Read the Luke 4:1-13. If you have a favorite translation, feel free to read from that one instead of from the bulletin. Once the passage has been read out loud, take 2 or 3 minutes to re-read it silently, and/or take time to ponder, letting the Spirit guide your brief meditation. Then, use the following questions to guide your conversation. Feel free to ask other questions about the reading, too.*

- What do you find most surprising about this reading?
- Does anything in the reading bring you a particular hope?
- Does anything in the reading trouble you, or make you uncomfortable?

This is the first thing Luke tells us about Jesus after his baptism. Indeed, outside of a brief moment during his childhood, we haven't heard directly from Jesus yet.

- Why do you think his first act after being baptized was to go into the desert for 40 days?
- What do you make of the three temptations Jesus faces? Which one do you think was most difficult for him, and why?
- Did you notice the devil knows Scripture? What do you make of this?
- Pay attention to the movement in the story. Note each physical movement (starting with Jesus returning from the Jordan, until the devil departed.) What stands out to you?

## **Move into Today – 20 Minutes**

Take time to think about how the reading intersects with the world we live in today, as well as how it connects to your own life.

By this point in his life, it is clear that Jesus has at least some inkling that he is the Messiah, God's chosen. And, he probably knows he has some supernatural abilities. He could have easily accomplished the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> temptations without the devil's prompting if he so chose. And, given his identity as God's son, the Messiah, he could have acted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> temptation without worshiping the devil. He chose not to do any of those things, likely because part of the purpose of his time in the desert was to experience the fullness of the human experience. For example, we humans are often lacking something we want or need and would like to simply make it appear with something like magic.

Certainly, as well, quest for power and glory is also a part of our experience. The bigger point could be, however: Jesus intended to show us he is willing to go to extreme lengths in order to meet us where we are.

- Solitude can be quite refreshing and even healing. If ever you've felt isolated or alone, you've experienced the exact opposite. Loneliness is painful. Do you think Jesus felt lonely during his 40 days? If so, do you feel like he might understand you better when you are alone?
- Much of the "temptation" part of this story is an attempt to get Jesus to turn his back on his relationship with the Father. Nourishment, power and security are all questioned. Which one of these would be hardest for you to resist?
- How will your *perception* of "desert" trials and struggles in the coming weeks or months change in light of recognizing that Jesus has already been in the desert ... and he'll again move to the desert to be with you?
- Do you know anyone who is going through a "desert time" of their own? Is there a way you can be the Body of Christ for that person, by simply showing up? What else might you do for them?

## **Move into the Future – 5 Minutes**

Think about how you might keep this passage in mind throughout the rest of the week. Can you develop a mantra reminding you that God is with you in your own struggles? What things in your daily life might remind you that God will provide? (For example, when you are eating a meal, or when you see a mountain in the distance, might that remind you that God provides for all you need?) Feel free to come up with your own ideas.

## **Move to Adieu – 5 minutes**

Spend some time reflecting on your conversation before leaving. You can ask yourselves these or similar questions:

- What went well? What could have gone better? What was your "Top Take Home Idea"?