

## Does Failure Equal Sin?

Matthew 4:1-11

**Focal Outline:**     **Matthew 4: 1-2**  
                          **Matthew 4: 3-4**  
                          **Matthew 4: 5-7**  
                          **Matthew 4: 8-11**

**Isolation**  
**Prove Yourself**  
**Prove God**  
**Choices, Choices**

### **Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson thoughts.)

1. There are opportunities given to each of us that create temptation, failure and success.
2. Jesus understands temptation through personal experience. His story is applicable to ours.
3. Do not be tempted to prove God's promises by testing God and hoping for amazing signs.
4. The final test is a choice between ruling the kingdoms of the world or remaining faithful to God's mission.

### **Thought Thinks:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a "So What?")

1. What is the significance of relating Jesus to Moses, Elijah and the wandering people of Israel?
2. Why do people seek a god who performs hocus pocus rather than experiencing God's profound love?
3. How ridiculous (and unfaithful) is it to test the love or promises of a parent, spouse or close friend?
4. Are the factors that Christians use to make decisions always easy? How do they make life easier or difficult?

## Ha Ha's, Ooo Ah's and Aha's

[NOTE: These suggestions are to help your class be more interactive and discussion oriented. Using 3-5 different ideas will enhance your preferred teaching styles and involve class participants. Build excitement and intimacy in your learners.]

I must admit that choosing to answer the call of God to the Christian life changed many things about my life. While the choices I make because of it are often misunderstood or questioned by nonbelievers, I would never say that my life as a Christian has been made harder because of my faith. Often we tell people that being persons of integrity and truth makes life more difficult or that it makes us failures in the eyes of the world. Frankly, I see people daily who are very successful in the world's eyes, who have lived their lives by the ideals of their faith.

This lesson addresses the temptations of Christ from the perspective that by choosing to follow the ideals of his faith, Jesus was best able to exemplify the life lived with integrity and truth. Yes, ultimately his beliefs led him to a difficult end, but it is through that end that you and I find love, redemption and peace. Teach your students that life will throw many situations their way and their responses are critical to establishing who they are. Sometimes this will mean doing the right thing and being shunned, but more often it results in growing in the eyes of the way people see you and Christ in you.

**JUMP IN** (5-15 minutes) These are for you to begin discussion as the students arrive. These may help you focus on your early arrivers lesson and allow the ones who enter late to do so without missing the lesson. Some questions may require you to do your homework.

1. Have you ever snuck into a movie that was not the one you bought the ticket for? Why did (or would) you do it? (*Wanted to see two movies but not pay twice; not old enough to see the movie because of the rating*) Is this action wrong? Why or why not?
2. Which of the following actions best illustrates who God is?
  - A. Taking a mission trip
  - B. Changing water to wine
  - C. Talking to the new kid
  - D. Mass healings on TV shows
3. You are at the plate in the bottom of the ninth. Your team trails by 1 run and the bases are loaded with one out. All you have to do is hit the ball to the outfield and the game is tied. Instead you ground into a game ending double play. Are you a failure? Why or why not? Is failure a sin? Is failure final?

**DIVE IN** (20-25 minutes) (Choose two or three questions to examine the Scripture Text...)

1. **Matthew 4: 1-2**

**Isolation**

What is happening in these verses? How many days was Jesus in the wilderness? Do you recall any other stories where “40 days or years” were relevant? (*Moses, Elijah, Noah, Israel in the Wilderness*) What did the stories say about each of those individuals? Do you think the author’s choice of days was an accident or coincidence? Why or why not? What does Jesus have in common with the others? (Read Mt 17:1-9 for more study of the connection between Jesus, Moses and Elijah.)

**Matthew 4: 3-4**

**Prove Yourself**

What was the first temptation that Jesus faced? Why would he be tempted to change the rocks into bread? What had he been doing for the past forty days? How does Jesus respond to this test? His response is a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3. What does his response mean? Is food important? Is it all that you need? What does Jesus mean by living by the “word(s) from the mouth of God?” Why are the words of God as important as the bread that you eat?

**Matthew 4: 5-7**

**Prove God**

What was the second test that Jesus faced? How did he respond? Read 3:17 for why this temptation was relevant. The devil is quoting Ps. 91:11-12. Jesus’ response is quoted from Deut. 6:16. Was Jesus faithful to God? Did Jesus see a need to test God? Why do so many people today want “hocus pocus” proof of God?

**Matthew 4: 8-11**

**Choices, Choices**

What is the final test that Jesus faces? How does he respond to this test? His response is a quote from Deut. 6:13. What choice does Jesus face? Why does he reject the devil? Who does Jesus say to serve? Who attends to Jesus? (read 1 Kings 19:5-8 for another similarity between Jesus and Elijah’s stories)

**GROW FOR IT!** (10-15 minutes) (Choose one or two questions to apply the lesson truths to daily living.)

1. How did Jesus handle temptation? Do you think the offers made to him would have been difficult to resist? What temptations do you face? How do you respond to them? What scriptures could be of help to you?
2. What things in your life have been examples of the presence of God? Do you think you need “amazing signs” to solidify or share your faith? How is the consistent love of God shown through God’s people the most effective way for nonbelievers to enter the presence of God?
3. In the Jump In section you were asked if failure is a sin. How did you respond? Was Jesus a failure? Would the people who crucified him, call him a failure today? Is failing a sin? Is failure final? Why/why not?
4. Kyle Matthews says in one of his songs, “sometimes you have to fall to fly.” Close the class praying for the courage to fail and the wisdom to learn from our failures when we do!

**ONE LAST THOUGHT** (1-2 minutes) (Give students one last tidbit of truth to spur their thinking.)

Being a Christian does not assure you of failure (or success), just as choosing God’s way does not assure that life will be more difficult (or easier). It does mean adhering to a greater standard.

**People go where they know they’ve been prepared for and are cared for!**

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