



It's Tempting!

Goal: To learn that we can put our trust in God even when we are tested.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 4:1-13

The account of Jesus' temptations shows us that all people will be tempted to turn away from God's will and follow our own wills. This was at the center of what Jesus experienced. He was being lured toward doing things that would be contrary to God's will. Those actions would draw him away from obeying God fully.

Jesus' response to the temptations presented to him was to quote Scripture. In his time of testing, Jesus trusted that God's Word expressed in the Scriptures would give him guidance. God's Word would help him withstand the attractiveness of what was being proposed to turn him against obeying God's will.

In our own temptations, we can trust God to be with us. The Scriptures can be a resource for helping us withstand the desire to do our own will, instead of God's will. The Scriptures are a gift of God's grace to guide us and sustain us. God's Spirit is our constant companion to lead us in God's ways and away from ways of life that can deceive and destroy us.

Temptations come to everyone—even to Jesus! However, we can be grateful for resources God gives to help us resist temptation.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Being tempted or tested is a universal human condition. Today's story provides a great way into that conversation. The word temptation may be beyond the children's understanding, but they can relate to making choices and the consequences that come with those choices. Your children are constantly working on appropriate boundaries and learning how to interact kindly with one another.

As you read today's story and invite your children to experience it, they may ask about Satan. Older children may understand that Satan is not real but represents things we do that do not embody God's love and grace. Younger children may need help in understanding it. The image of a voice might help: the bad voice inside of us says, "Take that or say that—it doesn't matter"; the good voice inside us says, "Do the other—it shows God's love."

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

We hear how strong Jesus was in saying no to the temptations Satan offered him. It's not always that easy for us to say no. As you have conversations with the children, listen to their experiences of being tested by someone or being tempted to want to do something or say something that they know is not a good idea. Listen for how they resolved the temptation. A way to help them connect today's story with their lives is to suggest some simple ways of pausing, thinking, and praying to God before responding with words or actions: "God of my life, help me know the right thing to do when I am faced with a decision. Amen."

*Holy God, when I succumb to the tempter's voice, call me to repent
in the assurance that I am forgiven in your love and grace. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 8a, 8b, 15, 21, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

green cloth

candle

medium-size bowl

pitcher of water

Responding

Claiming

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Celebrating

soft ball or beanbag for
each child

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing



Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace be with you, beloved child of God.” Prompt them to say the same words.

Invite the children to set up a worship space using their creativity. Provide a Bible, the medium-size bowl, a candle, and a green cloth.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Talk with children about tests. Ask them to tell you what tests are and to talk about the kinds of tests they have in school. Broaden the discussion to include tests of character (for example, opportunities to cheat, steal, or lie).

Show children the stop sign on **SCM 8a**. Suggest that when we have a life test or are making a tough decision, a good plan might be to stop, think, and pray about the choice. Give children art supplies to make stop signs as reminders to stop, think, and pray before they make choices.

Singing

Invite the children to gather at the worship space with their stop signs. Admire their efforts to create them.

Play “You Are My Own Dear Son”—**SCM 21**—to remember that Jesus is God’s son. Remind the children that the Bible story they heard last week about Jesus’ baptism included those words. Encourage the children to sing along.

Praying



Pour the water into the bowl (you will turn on the candle during the prayer). Demonstrate how to scoop the water with two fingers and let it fall back into the bowl. All together, encourage children to put two fingers into the bowl as you lead them in an echo prayer:

Dear God, /
we are like this bowl. / (*all scoop water*)
Fill us with your Spirit. / (*all scoop water*)
Fill us with your light, / (*turn on the light*)
Jesus Christ, our Lord. / (*all raise hands above head*)
Amen. /



- T Provide nonverbal and verbal cues before transitions. Point to the visual schedule with the arrow and note, "It's 3 minutes until story time."

Preparing to Hear the Story

C L

Begin a discussion about wilderness or desert. Wonder what the children imagine when they think of such a place. Some may live in or have visited a desert environment. Consider what may be different about a wilderness. Show **SCM 8b**. Ask the children what they think they would need if they took a long trip, forty days, into a wilderness.

Tell that today's story is about what happened to Jesus after his baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on him and God called him beloved son. Explain that sometimes the word "tested" and sometimes the word "tempted" is used to describe what happened to Jesus in the wilderness. Being tempted or tested meant to go against God's way.

Hearing the Story

M L

Invite a child to find Luke 4 in the Bible and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 8** or use the story audio. If you read, express the emotions of the story with your voice, expressions, and gestures. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Say that Jesus was faced with three choices. Encourage the children to raise their stop signs when they hear the choices Jesus must make as you read the story again or use the story audio.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C

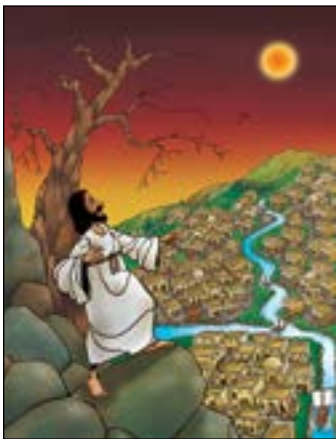
Ask the children what they think it means that Jesus was tested or tempted. Review the three tests and the choices Jesus made. Ask them to identify what Jesus did each time he responded. (*He remembered God's Word in Scripture.*) Jesus was faithful and followed God's way.

Suggest that we face tough decisions. Our decisions may not seem big in comparison to the decisions Jesus faced, but they are big to us. Invite the children to share times that they had to make a tough decision. Some suggestions might be wanting to have something that isn't theirs, wanting to be popular at the expense of being kind to others, wanting to go somewhere they shouldn't go. Ask them how the stop sign actions (stop, think, and pray) could help them respond to a tough decision that is before them.

Singing

Sing "God Is with Me" to thank God for God's love and grace. As you sing, point out the words on **SCM 15** so the children can follow along. Use repetition. Turn off the candle.

Seeing where the story is found in the Bible reinforces the importance of this book for the church.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace



Remind the children that Jesus was tempted or tested in the wilderness. He was presented with tough decisions. Jesus stopped, thought, and prayed about what God would want him to do. Tell the children that they are going to act out scenes that may happen in their lives and present them with tough decisions.

Form three groups and give each group one of the pictures from GN 1, or as a group, act out one or more of the scenes. Prompt the children with the following questions and assist groups as needed:

- What does the picture show?
- What is the tough decision the child must make?
- Act this out. Then “Stop, Think, and Pray.”
- What happens next?

After the skits, affirm the children and the decisions they offered. Encourage them to “Stop, Think, and Pray” when they are faced with tough decisions.

- M** *Some children need to move more than others, which makes sitting still a difficult task. Set clear expectations with boundaries for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*



Celebrating God's Grace



Celebrate the Word of God with the children. Ask the children what Jesus did each time he responded to a test. (He remembered and said Scripture.) Tell the children that they will play a few games to memorize a Scripture verse that may help them when they have to make a tough decision or are tempted to do the wrong thing.

Explain that the verse they will learn is Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Jesus who strengthens me.” Ask the children what they think that verse means. Suggest, if necessary, that it helps us remember that Jesus gives us strength to face difficult times.

Game 1

Have the children sit in a circle on the floor. Tell the children that they will pass a ball/beanbag around the circle. The first time the ball is passed, you will say a word (in order) of the verse as each child receives the ball. Use the verse and citation: “I can do all things through Jesus who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.” The second time around, invite each child to repeat after you. The third time around, have each child say a word of the verse on their own, assisting as needed.



Game 2

Repeat Game 1 and then reverse the direction of passing the ball/beanbag. Each time the group gets to the end of the citation, reverse the direction. Play several times.

Game 3

Form pairs. Give each pair a ball/beanbag and invite them to alternate saying the words from the verse and the citation as they pass the ball/beanbag back and forth. They can sit on the floor and roll it or gently toss it, or they can stand and toss the ball/beanbag between them.

Game 4

Give each child a ball/beanbag and invite them to gently toss the ball in the air or from hand to hand as they recite the verse and citation on their own.

B *Activities involving more than one child speaking at the same time may escalate into a volume competition. Remind children to respect others and be polite.*

Praying God's Grace

M

Ask the children why they think Jesus went off into the wilderness. Suggest that it was a time to be alone, be with God, and prepare himself for ministry. Wonder together what Jesus might have done while he was alone and spending time with God.

Invite the children to spend some time alone with God. Suggest different activities they may choose to do:

- ▼ pray
- ▼ read a Bible story
- ▼ write a prayer
- ▼ sit quietly and listen
- ▼ trace the path of a labyrinth with a pencil or finger.

Encourage the children to find a space to themselves in the room. Choose an appropriate length of time and let the children know how long they will spend time with God.



Extra Activity L

Tell the children that working a maze can be a way to pray silently. Provide each child a copy of **GN 2**. No pencils are needed as the children will simply work through the maze with their finger. Read aloud the three signs along the path. Invite the children to repeat these words. Remind the children that these are the steps for making a good decision.

Ask the children to think of a situation where they may need to make a decision. They don't need to say it aloud. Suggest that the signs along the path can be used when they face a decision.

Demonstrate how to trace the path with a finger, beginning at the opening on the top of the page. When they reach the first sign, they stop before reacting and think about the situation. When they reach the second sign, they can think of options for dealing with the situation, and at the final sign, suggest that a prayer can be said. Challenge the children to use the finger maze to stop, think, and pray about situations that come up each day.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Sing "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"—**SCM 22**.

Invite the children to gather around the bowl. Pour water into the bowl.

Choose one child to begin. After the child has spoken his or her name while doing the chosen action, the rest of the group repeats the name and action and then says in unison: "You are God's beloved child!" Continue until each child has had a turn.

As you did at the beginning of the session, scoop water with two fingers and say:

We leave today in the name of the Father, *(all scoop water)*
and the Son, *(all scoop water)*
and the Holy Spirit. *(all scoop water)*
Help us grow as your beloved children, O God. Amen.
(all raise hands above head)

Give each child a blessing. Say to each one: "*(Name)*, you are growing in God's grace every day. Remember and be grateful."



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

