

# Temptations That Jesus Overcame In His First Thirty Years

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, repeating important truths, distinguishing between temptation and sin, and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to reveal deeper truths about Jesus' life and how to overcome various challenges. It encourages believers to have a reverent fear of God, detest sin, and seek practical victory over sin in everyday situations.*

**Duration:** 26:37

**Scripture:** John 16:12, Psalms 25:12, James 1:14, Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 8:16, John 21:25, Matthew 11:28, Mark 9:24, Psalm 139:23, Proverbs 3:5

**Topics:** "Humility", "Overcoming Sin"

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## Description

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## Transcript

There's nothing wrong in repeating what somebody else said. There's an expression in English called stealing my thunder. I don't know whether you've heard of it.

It means somebody already spoke what I wanted to say, that was my thunder, but he got it. And if you're humble, it won't disturb you one bit. In fact, that's a test of our humility.

Can you say the same thing that somebody else said before you? If the Lord prompts you to say it, maybe people need to hear it twice. Do you know the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 men and many women and children with five loaves and two fish? It is one of the very few things, almost the only thing, that's repeated in all four Gospels. And I can imagine John wrote his Gospel long after the other three were written, and as he was writing it, he comes to this story.

And he says, why should I write it? I mean, three people have already written about it, but he's prompted by the Holy Spirit to write it. And if you read the Bible carefully, you know in John's Gospel, it's the only Gospel where he says the five loaves and two fish came from a little boy. All the other Gospels, it says

they found five loaves and two fish.

But think of the encouragement it comes to little children to hear that one little boy was the one who gave those five, that was his lunch, and that one boy gave up his lunch to the Lord in sacrifice, and the result was 5,000 men and many women and children, probably 10,000 people were blessed. I thank God that John was not disturbed, that he was repeating what somebody else said. It's like that, you know, many things in our life, there's so much of unconscious seeking of honor.

We want to be the first to say something, maybe some news about Ukraine, you want everybody to, you're the first person to say something. Yeah, well, let's die to this. There's so much of subtle, how do I know this? Because I found it in myself.

I'm tempted like you. I know all temptations you're tempted with. You know how? Because I have the same flesh.

So we have to be careful that we don't give in to that. Temptation is not sin. When it says Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, we have to believe that temptation is not sin because he never sinned.

Jesus was tempted to commit suicide. What a terrible thing that is. When the devil told him to jump from the top of the temple, what was that? That's suicide.

But he said, I won't do it. There are stairs. If there are stairs, why should I jump? It was common sense.

He refused to do it. He refused to tempt God by that. So there are many things like this where we need to recognize the difference between temptation and sin, that we don't condemn ourselves.

Oh, why did that thought come to me? That thought may have only been a temptation. You said no to it. You don't want it in your deep down your heart.

You haven't sinned. If you feel you did relish it a bit, okay, ask the Lord to forgive you. Next time you won't relish it at all.

You'll gradually come to the place where you resisted. But I feel, I know why I say this is, because in my early Christian life, nobody taught me very clearly to distinguish between temptation and sin. I can't remember in my younger days, anybody preaching a sermon, this is temptation and this is sin.

And it's only when I studied the letter of James, if you're not familiar with it, please look at it in James 1. It's good for you to know this. The difference between temptation and sin illustrated with an example that we can all understand. Temptation is, this is James 1, verse 14 and 15.

And it says here, verse 15, when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is finished, brings forth death. So, a woman cannot have a baby unless she yields herself to a man. Just because she has within her the eggs that can produce a baby, it doesn't mean the eggs we can use in illustration.

That's only temptation, it's there. I sometimes use this example of a girl walking down a road, a very pure girl. And she's a very, very handsome, rich man there, very well-behaved, courteous, but unconverted, calling her to himself.

And she's very much attracted to him. He's such a pleasant, well-meaning type of person, but she doesn't give herself to him. But she was attracted.

And if you ask her later, were you attracted to that guy? Oh, yes. Really, deep down, that's temptation. Does she produce a baby? No, because she said, no.

That's helped me a lot in my own life. The fact that I'm tremendously attracted to something, it's like that girl getting attracted to that boy. But she said, no, I will not give myself to him.

It's only when that lust conceives that sin is born. I say that in case any of you are having a problem with self-condemnation. I find so many believers who are, I mean, there are people out in other churches who are not even serious about victory over sin.

They are not bothered. This message is not for them, because they don't feel any self-condemnation. When they fall into sin, oh, yeah, the blood of Jesus will cleanse me.

Blood of Jesus is like tap water to them. Why is it we are not as disturbed when our hands get dirty as when we get cancer? Because cancer, we can't get rid of so easily, but our hands get dirty. 10 times a day, I can go and wash.

Water is so cheap. And if I sin 10 times a day and I say, oh, it doesn't matter, it's because I've treated the blood of Christ like tap water. I don't treat it as, like Peter says, more than all the silver and gold in the world.

So, people who are treated like that, I have no message for them. But those of us in this church who are so serious and really seeking to live a life of victory can be so condemned in our hearts sometimes just because we are attracted to something which we know is wrong. So, I want to deliver you from that.

I believe we should resist it. We should not allow the thought to remain in our mind, but I want to say the fact that you're attracted does not mean that you are sinning. So, like I've often said, self-condemnation is a no-entry road.

Never enter it. I used to enter it in the early days because nobody ever told me those who preached never preached about self-condemnation as a no-entry road. I preach it all the time now.

The other no-entry road is discouragement. It is not God's will for us to be discouraged. Whatever may happen, we must believe that God has some way to take us through it.

And of course, the secret to the entire Christian life is looking under Jesus. And when we see Jesus was tempted in all points exactly as we are. One of the temptations we get is when we are sick.

And that's another thing I wondered. Lord, I've got sick sometimes. Were you ever sick in your life? I said, okay, let me study the scriptures.

For some people, it's blasphemy to believe that Jesus ever became sick because they think sickness means you must be a sinner. Jesus was not a sinner. Did he sleep? Was he tired? Was he exhausted? Did he perspire? In fact, he perspired so much that his perspiration was like blood in Gethsemane.

He was very, very human. Remember this. He was very, very human.

And it says in Isaiah 53 about Jesus, he was in verse 3, he was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. And if you have a margin in your Bible, in the margin, very often they put what the original Hebrew says, which the translators did not have the courage to put down. And here it

says the actual word is sickness.

He was acquainted with sickness. That means he was very familiar with sickness in his life. And the translators of the King James Version, they said, no, that can't be.

It can't be. Jesus is getting sick. That's sin.

So they translated it as griefs. And that word comes again. Verse 4, surely our griefs he himself bore.

What did he bear? Okay. It's a wonderful advantage of comparing scripture to scripture. Do you know that verse, Isaiah 53, 4, see what it says? Our griefs, he carried our griefs.

He bore our griefs. That is quoted in Matthew chapter 8 by Matthew, who did not listen to the King James translators when he wrote the gospel. He wrote it 2000 years ago.

And he quotes that same verse as when Jesus healed the sick. It says here in Matthew 8, 16, in the evening, many came who were demon-possessed, and he cast out the spirits and healed all those who were ill. Matthew 8, 16.

This was to fulfill what Isaiah the prophet said way back in Isaiah 53, 4, that he took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. And that is, what did he take away? Their sickness. And that is quoted in Isaiah 53, 4, as he carried away our griefs.

In the margin there also, it says sickness. So the word grief in verse 3, Isaiah 53, 3, is sickness. He was acquainted with sickness.

That's a tremendous encouragement to me when I'm sick. I remember once when our children were very small, and I was way back, more than 50 years ago, or sometime then. I had a headache, a very severe headache, ordinary headaches we get sometimes.

This is pretty severe. And I said, Lord, did you ever have a headache? And then I realized he did. How did he react to it? I mean, if Jesus never had a headache, you know how temptation becomes more intense when you have a headache.

And I said, Lord, why this headache? And it's very interesting, the answer the Lord gave me way back there about 45 years ago. He said, I want to train you to be an overcomer. When your children irritate you, and you overcome that, that's good.

Now you've passed that test. Now I'm taking you to a higher class where your children will irritate you when you have a headache. That's great too.

And you overcome irritation there, you've passed a higher test. I said, praise the Lord for the headache. I hope I passed.

Anyway, I discovered that even little things like that, and it's a tremendous comfort to me to know Jesus had headaches, and he had sicknesses, and he did not grumble. He got something through it. And, you know, like we heard earlier that when I go through something, I can sympathize more with other people who have it.

I've seen in families, for example, sometimes I've, you know, I've come across so many families with sicknesses in our churches. And I see a family with a permanently retarded mentally or physically challenged, let's call it challenged, they don't use the word retarded now, physically mentally challenged child. For many years, I've noticed something in that family, that all the other children there become very tender, and sensitive, and compassionate, and considerate because they're growing up with a brother or a sister who is challenged and handicapped every day.

Their character improves because they've got one handicapped child in that family. And very different from some family where everybody's brilliant and accomplished everything great. But I'm not saying that they cannot be tender and compassionate as well, but it's a greater battle.

We all need to be tender and compassionate. But I say it's amazing to see how God, and I'll tell you one of these things, one day when we stand before the Lord, we'll be surprised at how God used all these things. I remember I was speaking at a conference full of Mennonites many years ago in somewhere in South Carolina or somewhere.

And I asked the people there, I said, don't you believe that, first of all, I asked them, they had a number of children there who were, who had Down syndrome. Many of them had many, many children, and some of the youngest children were Down syndrome children. There were a number of them in that congregation there.

I saw a number of them and I really felt a compassion for them. So I said, do you believe that these children with Down syndrome are all going to heaven? I believe it. They've never committed a conscious sin in their life.

Jesus died for them and all those children with Down syndrome are all going to heaven, without a doubt. So I see them as part of the body of Christ today. I mean, they don't know the Bible or any such thing.

They can't read or write, but they are part of the body of Christ. And then I asked them, do you believe that every person of the body of Christ can bless you in some way? I believe that. It's like every man, I've always understood that the body of Christ is like my human body, and there's no part of my body which has no function.

Smallest little thing has a function. And so I said that we are meant to bless one another. Have any of you been blessed by these Down syndrome children in any way? They can't give you an exaltation like some powerful prophet can.

But I said, I've been so blessed moving around with these Down syndrome children, because when I try to talk to them, I feel such a compassion in my heart, and I'm basically such a hard person being a child of Adam, that I'm very thankful when something brings compassion into my heart, softens me up. So these Down syndrome children just keep softening me up all the time. Every time I see one of them, I say, I can feel more soft, praise the Lord.

They are blessing me without knowing it, without opening their mouth. Do you know that you can bless people without even opening your mouth? Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. And one of the things I have asked the Lord to show me is, Lord, in those 30 years of your life, what are the things you were tempted with? I mean, the remaining three and a half years of the life, I know all the external things you did, and it's great, very great encouragement reading the Gospels.

But I read in John chapter 21, this amazing verse, John 21 is the last verse of the Gospels, the four Gospels. And on the four Gospels, here's the last verse, after having described the entire life of Jesus in four Gospels, it finally says in verse 25 of John 21, there are many other things which Jesus did. Now, please remember that the Holy Spirit does not believe in exaggeration.

You've got to believe that before you get to this verse. And John says through the Holy Spirit, if all those things were written in detail, I think even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written. How many books is that? How many books could the world contain? I mean, he says, I suppose he's just giving his expression to his own thoughts, but he can't be talking about two or three books.

He must be talking about, let's say, at least a thousand books or a hundred thousand books. A large number, that's the point. What are those things written in detail? Was it more miracles that he did? Was it more demons that he cast out? No, there are plenty described in the Gospel where it says everybody was healed.

There are at least two or three places where it says that everybody was healed. What's greater than that? Every single demon he met, the demon was cast out. You know the things which are written in detail? If it were written in detail, which are not written in detail, what Jesus did in the first 30 years of his life, how did he submit to Joseph and Mary? That's what we've got to teach our children.

It's not written, just one verse which says he listened to them. Or how did he react when his four younger brothers and two younger sisters irritated him day and night? You know how children get irritated with a good boy who doesn't seem to get angry? They all get worked up. We got to irritate him.

We got to irritate him. They do that in school. They do that in a home because they are upset that this boy, this brother of ours doesn't get irritated.

Let's try it. They all gang up to irritate him. And they've tried that on Jesus, not for one day, one year, two years, 30 years, at least 20 years after some of them were there.

With those things are written in detail, how they irritated him. He never sinned. He never reacted by finally getting fed up.

I've had enough of you fellas. No, this has been my example. How did I learn it? I'll tell you.

John 16. It says here in John 16, verse 12, somewhat similar words. I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear or you cannot understand them now.

I'd like to tell you about all the ways, Jesus says, in which I was tempted in the first 30 years of my life. And you won't understand them now. I mean, you guys are sitting here and after three and a half years with you, disciples, you're still arguing about who's going to be the leader, who's going to be the greatest.

Where are you going to understand the deeper things of the Christian life? It's useless talking to kindergarten students about higher mathematics or physics or science. They're learning CAT is cat and BAT is bat. That's the way the disciples were because they were still arguing about who's the greatest.

I mean, a lot of junior Christians in our churches don't seek for that. They were so low in that, one reason, they didn't have the Holy Spirit. So he says, you cannot bear all these things.

But one day when the Holy Spirit has come, verse 13, John 16, 13, ah, then you'll be completely free from seeking to be the greatest. You will be. I believe that's one mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

You will never seek to be the greatest in the church. If you are still seeking to be the greatest or to be known in the church, my brother, I have one advice for you. Seek to be genuinely filled with the Holy Spirit.

You are not. Let me tell you to your face, you are not. You're like those disciples before the day of Pentecost.

You're still seeking to be great in the church. You've got a long way to go, but you'll reach there quickly if you're filled with the Holy Spirit. I believe many Christians sitting in our churches, even in CFC churches, they do not, they are not daily filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's their fundamental problem. They don't need more messages. They don't need to go to YouTube and listen to more messages.

They need to be filled with the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit will guide you into all the truth. And it says one of the things he will do, listen to this, this is the verse I was coming to, the last part of verse 14. He will take of the things of mine and reveal it to you.

These are not the things written down in the Gospels. I mean that you don't need the Holy Spirit. Even an unbeliever can read the Gospels and know that Jesus healed the sick and Jesus cast out demons and Jesus fed the multitude and Jesus filled the waters and walked on the water.

You don't need to even be converted to know that. What is it that the Holy Spirit will disclose to you when he comes? What Jesus did in 30 years. How he handled money as a carpenter.

How he did his business in dealing with people. He had to buy and sell. He had to go and buy wood in the market and he had to make tables and chairs and deliver them.

And what was his attitude to money? He was dealing with money all the time, at least from the age of 18 to 30. Joseph had died. How did he take the responsibility of taking care of the needs of a family with eight people? His mother plus six younger siblings and himself.

He had an eight-member family. How many of you have an eight-member family that you are seeking to take care of? Jesus was tempted in all points as you are. You get so disturbed if you have two children and say, oh what a headache.

Jesus was tempted in every single point that you are. And more than that, the Holy Spirit will disclose to you how to be an overcomer in every situation, in your home, in your business, in handling money, in paying taxes. He gave even that when somebody came and said, does your master pay taxes? He took care of it.

Every single thing. And more than that, those inner things, the inner attitudes towards people when provoked. Like I said, in sickness.

What was his attitude in different situations? Do you think Jesus was ever hard up for money? Do you think Jesus ever had a shortage of money when he was trying to take care of an eight-member family and he was a poor carpenter? I really believe he did. How did he handle it? I'll tell you. Ask the Holy Spirit to fulfill John 16 14 in your life.

To disclose to you. Disclose is a sort of a, it's like whispering a secret in your ear. Why haven't you written it down, Lord? I'll tell you.

Because I'll show you a verse in Psalm 25. That's why it's not all written down. It says in Psalm 25, why the hidden life of Jesus is not mentioned.

Psalm 25. And it says here, verse 12, who is the man who has a reverence for God and detests sin? The Lord will instruct him in the way he should choose because, verse 14, the secret of the Lord is revealed to those who fear him. In other words, the Lord has certain secrets, but he doesn't tell that to everybody.

He whispers it in the ear of those who reverence him. And one mark of reverence for him is a tremendous hatred for sin. Lord, I never want to get irritated with people.

Lord, I never want to get irritated with my husband or with my wife or with my children. I want to overcome. I may be tempted, but I'm going to be an overcomer.

If it takes me one year to battle and overcome it, I'm getting into that battle, and I'm going to overcome. I never want to speak a rude word or an angry word to people. I never want to have a hard attitude towards people.

I want to forgive anyone who's done any wrong to me. Help me, Lord. The Holy Spirit will disclose.

If you fear God like that and hate sin, I tell you, you learn things that no preacher can tell you. I tell you honestly, I've had some amazing revelations from the Lord that have helped me to overcome my life, not to fill my knowledge, my head knowledge, but to overcome sin in practical situations. God bless you.

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