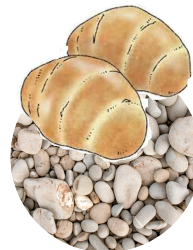
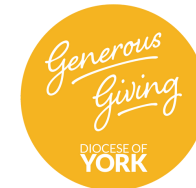


Jesus answered every attack by quoting Scripture written during the times when the Israelites were in the desert on their way to the Promised Land.



Bible Study for Lent



SCRIPTURE SENTENCE AND SUMMARISE

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:19 NIV

Instilling verses of the Bible to memory can help us to be more resilient to the temptations to become fearful, self-centred and cynical. When we have become dry and hard like the desert, we can find the water of Jesus' life to replenish us.

God has given each of us diverse spiritual gifts, which are expressions of His grace, that reveal His love to a watching world. Christians are walking, talking, living, breathing expressions of our generous God to our communities around us. As our lives become more rooted in God, may we grow and flourish to overflow with generous hearts overflowing with gratitude to a watching world.

CLOSING PRAYER

In a time of silence, let us pray that we may draw closer to the One who has created all things. Silence is kept for a short while.

**God of grace, ever creating and restoring,
You breathe life into all things and embrace
us with an everlasting love; help us to grow in
wonder and awe, to embody a spirit of gratitude,
and to dream generous dreams; that, in being
thankful for what we have, we may graciously
offer ourselves to accomplish what You will,
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**



“I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.”

Isaiah 43:19b (ESVUK)



OPENING PRAYER

Let everything be said and done in
the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.
Let us bring our gifts to the Lord
that they may be used for His glory.
May the Spirit of God fill our hearts
as we come to meet Him in this place. Amen

[Silence is kept.]

**“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes
from the mouth of God.”**

Matthew 4:4

*[Please note: make Bibles and a copy of this leaflet available for all in the group.
Timings are a guide.]*

INTRODUCTION

During this time together, we are exploring the story of Lent and how we might cultivate our discipleship by standing strong in God's word and live gratefully and faithfully in all areas of our lives. We are also reflecting on how generous living may be challenging, as we are called to step away from our natural yearning for independence and put our trust more fully in God.

Paired chat - with an opportunity to share with the group

As human beings, we often take pride in our self-reliance. We like to hold on tightly to what is ours and make us afraid of letting go. This can distract us from faithful giving and trusting God to provide. The American author and financial counsellor, Larry Burkett, said, "My greatest fear in life is standing before the Lord and hearing Him say, 'I had so much more for you, but you held on too tightly.'"

Share when you have committed a gift to God - in time, money or skill. Did it require an element of sacrifice? How did it feel? (5 mins)

FIRST READING Matthew 4:1-11

Here is the story of Jesus being tempted in the desert and what we term Lent.

Reflection, with group leader reading the further Bible verses

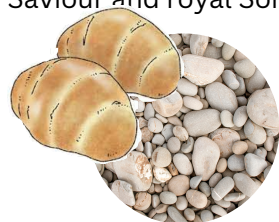
Now let us take time to hear the other Gospels together. Interestingly, Luke 4:1-13 also has a similar account, but Mark has only two verses (1:12, 13) and John has no verses dedicated to the devil tempting Jesus. Discuss what you notice about each reading. (10 mins)

Now, let's explore Jesus' temptations one by one.

SECOND READING Matthew 4:1-4

- Physical desires/needs: The devil tempted Jesus with food

After Jesus was baptised, He had to decide the direction of His ministry, so He went to the desert for forty days; an interesting parallel to the Israelites wandering (Deut 8:2). The devil tested Jesus as to what kind of Saviour and royal Son He was going to be.



Paired chat, leading to group discussion

Why do you think Jesus didn't use his powers to make food, despite feeling weak and hungry after His fasting? How did Jesus fight back the devil's tempting? (10 mins)

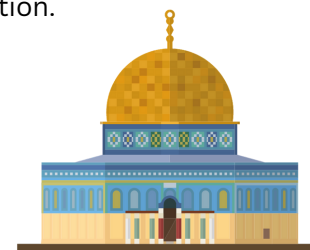
THIRD READING Matthew 4:5-7

- Power/Superiority: The devil tempted Jesus with His own kingdom

For the devil's next attempt, he transported Jesus to the highest point of the temple (about 450 feet high) and he started his test of Jesus again with, "If You are the Son of God..." and then quoted two verses from Scripture about God's protection.

Paired chat, leading to group discussion

What do you think was the purpose of the devil starting the temptation in such a way and quoting verses from Psalm 91:11,12? (10 mins)



Individual Reflection and feedback to the group

This highlights that the devil knows the Bible and is skilled in twisting its meaning, but he is not creative or imaginative, as he still uses the same temptations as he did 2,000 years ago. How might we fall into a trap of testing God? What can we do to recognise it quickly? (10 mins)

FORTH BIBLE READING Matthew 4:8-11

- Identity/proving ourselves: The devil endeavoured to tempt Jesus into proving Himself as the Son of God

Knowing Jesus had a heart for the whole of humanity, the devil said he would give over his authority on earth to Him if Jesus would worship him. This would have included the vast Roman Empire to the west, the sprawling Parthian Empire to the east and even the Han Dynasty ruling throughout China and central Asia. Plus, the devil could legitimately make this offer because at that time he had dominion over this earth.



Paired chat, leading to group discussion

How can we protect ourselves from our egos becoming self-centred and greedy? (10 mins)