

Lenten Field Guide // Week 2: The Devil's Toolbox

The story of the devil tempting Jesus in the wilderness as Jesus is fasting and praying is an interesting one. It calls to mind tools that evil uses to tempt us into living into what it hopes for us: disconnection, insatiable greed, selfishness, deviousness, and rampant individualism. These tools tempt us to hoard our power and privilege and use those in service to ourselves to get ahead. Just as the devil tempted Jesus to make bread from stones, so too are we tempted to eat of unholy means. But Jesus knew that you become what you consume. He did not want to consume bread made from unholy power. He wanted bread that was made of love; bread that lifted up the lowly and brought down the unjust mighty from their thrones. He wanted the good stuff.

One of the most successful tricks that the devil plays on us is going after our identities. In this story, the devil says to Jesus: "since you are... then do this." It was tempting for Jesus to display all of his might, but he would have been doing this at the bequest of evil. And... he refused to cooperate with evil. Gandhi taught this based upon Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount: *be noncooperative with evil.*

Based on the unholy structures that have created a stratified system in society, if you are white, you have more privilege than people of color. If you are in a straight relationship, you have more privilege than one that is gay or lesbian. If you identify as cis-gender, you have more privilege than someone who identifies as trans*gender. If you live far above the poverty line, you have more privilege than people who live below or near it. How will you deal with this privilege and the power it brings? Will you eat bread made from stones of greed, selfishness, and evil, or will you eat bread made from love?

Scripture to consider: Matthew 4:1-11

Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. ²After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving. ³The tempter came to him and said, "Since you are God's Son, command these stones to become bread."⁴Jesus replied, "It's written, *People won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God.*"⁵After that the devil brought him into the holy city and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, ⁶"Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down; for it is written, *I will command my angels concerning you, and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone.*"⁷Jesus replied, "Again it's written, *Don't test the Lord your God.*"⁸Then the devil brought him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹He said, "I'll give you all these if you bow down and worship me."¹⁰Jesus responded, "Go away, Satan, because it's written, *You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.*" ¹¹The devil left him, and angels came and took care of him.

Journeying through Lent with Children:

For children, Lent can be a time to practice our disciple skills as we get ready for Easter! Because Lent can go on and on and on from a child's perspective, it is easier for them to commit to practicing a skill for one week rather than for six weeks. What if each week in your home, you practice one skill with your child?

Accepting God's forgiveness and forgiving myself and others – at the end of each day recall all the ways you messed up today, then remind yourself, “God forgives me, so I can forgive myself.” Then recall people who have hurt you or made you angry or frustrated you today, and remind yourself, “God forgives them, so can I.” Maybe you could pray the line from the Lord's Prayer “God, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Acts of Worship: Make a point to join us for our Midweek dinner (Wednesday @ 5:15pm) and program (6-7pm). Also, continue to attend Sunday worship services either at 8:15am or 10:30am.

Acts of Devotion and Spirituality: In addition to Pastor Heather leading a group centered on *Simplifying the Soul: Lenten Practices to Renew Your Spirit* beginning February 26th at 10am and continuing on Wednesday mornings through Lent, she will also be leading a group on *Dreams: A Way to listen to God* which will meet on Tuesdays at 4pm (March 10, 17, 24, & 31). We hope you can attend one of these and do communal spirituality this Lent!

Acts of Justice and Resistance: Consider work that Belmont is connected to and if you are feeling called to get involved: [Justice for our Neighbors \(JFON\)](#).

Acts of Mercy: Consider work that Belmont is connected to and if you are feeling called to get involved: [Belmont's Welcoming Ministry](#), [Belmont's ESL Program](#), and the [Nashville Freedom School](#).

[Check out the sermon at this link \(posted on Monday\)!](#)