

date: **3/12/17****Bible Passage: Matthew 3:13–17; 4:1–11**  
(Temptation in the Wilderness)

## God Leads

**REMEMBER VERSE**

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

## Inspire

*Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

For the first four years after I became a Christian, I don't think I ever heard about the Holy Spirit. Not surprising, because most of the first year of my walk with Christ I found myself utterly disgusted with who I was and continued to struggle to perfect myself. On my own, I was just not strong enough.

A friend sent me a podcast of a Francis Chan sermon, and he encouraged me to listen. The message was about our neglect of the Holy Spirit—the member of the Godhead who gives us power and direction.

This message was so powerful that I could not hold back tears. I realized for the very first time that God had never intended for me to fight this battle on my own. He sent the Counselor for a reason—to lead me and guide me. Right then I prayed fervently for God to send the Holy Spirit. And for nearly two weeks straight, sin was not an issue in my life. Seriously. It was like every temptation, every struggle I'd ever had, was nonexistent. I was completely dependent upon the Spirit.

Since then, I have had a few very moments when I've completely yielded myself over to the Holy Spirit and trusted Him to guide me. But if I'm honest, I usually find myself believing that "I've got it now." That's always when I find myself stumbling and begging God to help me once again. And in these moments the Spirit of God meets me with great power.

*Erika Abdelatif*  
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## Equip

*Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

Because there is no direct reference to baptism in the Old Testament, we often falsely believe that baptism is solely a Christian practice. However, in Jesus' day, baptism was seen as nothing unusual. According to Jewish tradition, baptism was one of many ceremonial purification rites. Known as *mikvah* in Hebrew, ritual immersion was performed to purify an individual after being defiled—for instance, being in contact with the dead or an outcast or after giving birth. Without undergoing this custom, individuals would be considered “unclean” and therefore not allowed to enter the temple.

Unlike some Christian customs, in which individuals may be baptized only once, those in Jewish society might be baptized many times depending on the circumstances. In addition, *mikvah* was performed by those converting to Judaism. This baptism ensured that new converts were purified, restored to God, and made fit for participation within the Jewish community.

The baptisms John performed were somewhat unique. Jewish baptism is a self-immersion, an unassisted tradition, while in many Christian traditions, someone assists the person in and out of the water, as John did. This makes some sense when we consider that an “unclean” or “defiled” individual could not be touched without making the other person unclean as well.

Aside from simply baptizing those who required outward purification, John invited those who needed baptism for inward purification. In Matthew 3:11, John proclaimed, “I baptize you with water for repentance.” He asked his audience to repent, turn from their sins, and be baptized. This led the way to a wholly new baptism, one that symbolized dying to one's old life and being born again.

## Support

*Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

After Jesus was baptized, the Bible says the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness. During His 40-day-and-40-night sojourn, He spent time fasting, praying, and communing with the Father.

Often, our day-to-day lives become so full and hectic that we don't make time for ourselves to commune with the Father. This week, schedule time to fast and pray. Perhaps you will fast from food, the Internet, your cell phone, or television. It can be anything from one meal to an entire week's worth.

Identify one place of weakness or temptation in your life that you simply cannot battle on your own, and spend time with God to ask Him for help. Invite the Holy Spirit in; ask for His strength and power to overcome this struggle. Ask Him to show you freedom and, ultimately, peace. Keep a journal of your experience; log when you feel freedom or relief from the struggle. Take note of where you see God at work in your life. Keep that with you as a testament to and reminder of the Holy Spirit's transformation in your life.

## EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.*

In today's portion of The Big God Story, Satan tempts Jesus three times. Each time he asks Jesus to sin, and Jesus answers with Scripture. This EXPLORE will get your children thinking about asking and answering questions.

## I'm Thinking of Something ...

### SUPPLIES

- None

### RELATE

**People ask questions all the time. Sometimes when people ask us questions, they're difficult to answer. Sometimes people even ask us to do what we know is wrong. Today we'll hear about the time Satan asked Jesus three times to do what was wrong. Each time, Jesus responded in faith and obeyed God.**

Have children sit in a circle either on the floor or around a table. One at a time, ask each child to choose an item in the room but not tell anybody what that item is. Invite that child to share three short clues about the item he selected. For example, if he chose a fan, he might say, "It's white, has blades, and spins." Then allow the rest of the kids to ask three questions about the object. These questions don't have to be yes-or-no questions.

Once the child who chose the object answers all three questions, have the kids guess the object. Then repeat the activity by giving each child a chance to choose an object and let the others ask her questions.

## LARGE GROUP SECTION

## DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

*Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.*

## Traditions and Remember Verse

### SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse animation (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

### RELATE



Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

**Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**  
**Hebrews 4:16**

## Connect

### Question

**What's the longest you've ever gone without eating?**

## The Big God Story

**Bible Passage: Matthew 3:13–17; 4:1–11**

**Storytelling Technique: Boxing Rounds**

**God Leads**

### SUPPLIES

- Optional: **Storytelling video** (see Resources)
- **Timeline image** (see Resources)
- **Timeline animation** (see Resources)
- **Audio: Matthew 3:17, Boxing Ring Bell** (see Resources)
- **Images: Dove, Round One, Round Two, Cityscape, Round Three** (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Water (about 2 gal.)
- Clear, plastic bin (big enough to hold the water)
- Small river rocks (3–4)
- Chair or step stool (no more than 3' tall)

### SET UP

Set out the rocks and the chair at the front of the room. Pour water into the bin, and set it at the front of the room.

### RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. **The last time we were together we heard how God used a man named John to help the people get ready to meet Jesus. What was John's message?** Pause for responses. **Right: John told them to repent. He also baptized people with water.** Kneel down, place hands in the water, and move them around to create a small current or wave.

**One day, Jesus came to John to be baptized.** Invite children to open their Bibles to Matthew 3:14 and

follow along. **John was shocked! He said, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”** (Matthew 3:14). **But Jesus insisted that John baptize Him, even though Jesus never sinned, which meant that He didn’t need to repent or be baptized. As John baptized Jesus** (keep running fingers through water), **in verses 16–17, the Bible says Jesus came up from the water and (look up) “at that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him”** (*Tech: Cue Dove image*). **The voice of God said** (*Tech: Cue Matthew 3:17 audio*). **Wow! Set water bin aside. Everyone who was gathered in that place heard God’s voice and saw the Holy Spirit come down upon Jesus.**

**The Holy Spirit then led Jesus into the wilderness, and for 40 days and 40 nights Jesus fasted. That means Jesus didn’t eat anything. At the end of the 40 days, He was hungry—but He didn’t get to eat anything because Satan came to tempt Him. Who is Satan? Pause for responses. He is the enemy of God. Before the creation of the world, there was an angel named Lucifer who wanted to be as powerful as God. So God threw him out of heaven, and, ever since, this enemy, Satan, has been working to “steal and kill and destroy”** (John 10:10) **God’s creation and people.**

Show the kids the rocks. Then invite them to turn to Matthew 4:3 and follow along. **The enemy said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread”** (Matthew 4:3). **Satan tempted Jesus to use His power to meet His needs instead of trusting God the Father to provide for Him. But the Holy Spirit gave Jesus power to obey the Father. In verse 4, Jesus replied, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’”** (v. 4). **Jesus responded with a Bible verse from the Old Testament!**

**In boxing, a bell rings after a round ends. *Tech: Cue Boxing Ring Bell audio and Round One image.* Round one goes to Jesus!**

**The enemy tried again. He took Jesus to the top of the temple in Jerusalem** (stand on chair or step stool; pretend it’s a very high place) **and dared Jesus to jump off the temple, telling Jesus that the angels would catch Him. Satan even quoted a passage from the psalms: “He will command his angels. concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone”** (v. 6).

**Did you catch that? Satan tried to use Scripture to trick Jesus into sinning! Jesus quoted Scripture back. Jesus said, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’”** (v. 7). **Step down from chair or stool. Jesus didn’t need to prove Himself to Satan or anyone else. *Cue Boxing Ring Bell audio and Round Two image.* Round two goes to Jesus!**

**This deceiver, Satan, tried a third time to get Jesus to sin. He brought Jesus up to a high mountain and told Him to look around at all the land and kingdoms. Encourage children to go to verse 9. Satan said, “All this I will give you ... if you will bow down and worship me”** (v. 9). **But Jesus refused—the whole world already belonged to God! *Tech: Cue Cityscape image.* Jesus said, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’”** (v. 10). ***Tech: Cue Boxing Ring Bell audio and Round Three image.* Round three goes to Jesus! After that, the enemy of God left, and angels came to take care of Jesus.**

**Jesus knew He was responsible for His life, gifts, and resources and for making sure He used them to please God. So He relied on the power of God’s Spirit to resist all of the temptation the devil threw at Him. Satan tempts us too because he wants to destroy us and our relationship with God. But we too can resist the devil. How do we do this? Invite responses. **Right! We can trust the Holy Spirit to leads us****

and gives us power. When we trust and obey Jesus, God sends us His Holy Spirit to live in us and guide us.

The Bible says, “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). God always provides a way out of our temptation, but you and I are responsible for choosing to take the way out. With the Holy Spirit inside us, we have all the power we need to keep from sinning. Share an age-appropriate story of a time when God’s Spirit led you and helped you choose not to give into temptation.

## SMALL GROUP

SECTION

# RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.*

## Reflect: God Leads

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

### Questions for Younger Kids

- **What happened when Jesus was baptized?** Matthew 3:16–17
- **What would you have done if you’d been there to see that happen?**
- **Why did Jesus go out into the wilderness?** Matthew 4:1
- **In what ways did Satan tempt Jesus?** Matthew 4:3, 5–6, 8–9
- **How did Jesus respond?** Matthew 4:4, 7, 10
- **Who leads us and gives us power to resist temptation?** John 14:16

### Questions for Older Kids

- **How did John react when Jesus asked to be baptized?** Matthew 3:14
- **What happened when Jesus was baptized?** Matthew 3:16–17
- **Why did Jesus go out into the wilderness?** Matthew 4:1
- **What does it mean to be tempted?**
- **In what ways did Satan tempt Jesus?** Matthew 4:3, 5–6, 8–9
- **How did Jesus respond?** Matthew 4:4, 7, 10
- **What role does the Holy Spirit play in our lives?** John 14:16–17; 16:7–15

# BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.*

## SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

## RELATE

As you bless your kids, tell them they have the opportunity to also be a blessing to others. Encourage them to freely share the joy and love they have received from God.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read 1 Corinthians 10:13:

**No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**

Ask the children to stand in two rows facing each other and hold up their arms to form a tunnel. One at a time, invite each child to pass through the tunnel as you pronounce the following blessing over him: (Child's name), **may you have victory over temptation.** After the child has been blessed, have him return to the tunnel, and the next child will go through the tunnel to receive the blessing.

Finally, bless the entire group with these words:

**May God fill you with the power of the Holy Spirit. May God's Spirit lead you each day.**