

# Lead Us Not into Temptation

By Susan Searle



## Purpose

This middle school session teaches youth that temptation is a part of our daily lives, but it is how we respond to these temptations that really matters. Focusing on the Gospel story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, youth begin the session by playing a learning game about resisting the temptation to take something they really want. Following the learning game, participants break open the Scriptures and learn how to follow Jesus' example in standing up to and resisting temptations. The session closes with a group prayer.

**Component:** Faith Learning

## Session at a Glance

7:00 PM	Welcome
7:05 PM	Community Building: White Elephant Gift Exchange
7:25 PM	Large Group Discussion
7:35 PM	The Temptation of Jesus <i>Extend the Session: Today's Temptations (add 30 minutes)</i>
7:45 PM	Personal Reflection: Journal Time <i>Extend the Session: Encouraging Words (add 10 minutes)</i>
7:55 PM	Group Sharing
8:05 PM	Closing Prayer
8:15 PM	Good Night!

## Extend the Session: Reconciliation (45-60 minutes)

Provide a reconciliation service for the young people, using the Temptation in the Desert as the backdrop.

## Extend the Session: Today's Temptations (30 minutes)

Divide youth into small groups to prepare a skit about temptations young people their age face every day—and how to deal with them. After the skits are finished, ask the young people to name the skills needed or values they heard in the skits.

## Extend the Session: Encouraging Words (10 minutes)

Give the young people a lined 4x6 index card or half-sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. Invite them to write prayers to encourage each other to remain strong in the face of temptation. Compile all the prayers together and make a prayer book for each youth to keep and use or post on youth ministry website.

## Materials Needed

- Nametags and markers, optional
- Small stones, one per participant (smooth garden stones work best)
- “40 Days” by Matt Maher (*Spirit & Song*, OCP)
- “With All Our Hearts” by Jesse Manibusan (*Spirit & Song*, OCP)
- CD or MP3 player and speakers
- Video clip, “The struggle of Jesus,” download at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyeszbcWhFo>
- Television or projector and DVD player  
*Note to Leader:* Your audio/visual set up needs to be adequate for everyone to be able to hear/see the movie clips.
- Table, cloth, candles, picture of Jesus, matches or light stick

## Prepare in Advance

1. Prior to the session, let young people know they need to bring an inexpensive, generic (meaning either a boy or girl could use the item) **wrapped** gift. Ideas include: large candy bar, water bottle, etc. Tell the young people not to tell what they are bringing. Have a few extra gifts already wrapped in case some forget to bring one.
2. Have a wrapped gift for each adult leader or volunteer to play the game. The adult gifts should be something of slightly greater value to help make the game more competitive (i.e., a large bag of candy).
3. Prepare a small basket of slips of paper, each slip with a number on it. Participants will draw a number to play the community building game.
4. Set up your meeting space so that everyone can enjoy the movie clips. Cue the clip to the appropriate starting point.
5. Set up a prayer focus by covering the table with a cloth. Place the Bible and picture of Jesus on the table. Light the pillar candle.
6. Set up tables for sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with check-in sheet and nametags. **Hospitality is important!** As the leader, spend the arrival time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.

## Session Outline

### Greet and Welcome Youth! (5 minutes)

As youth arrive, have them place their pre-wrapped gift in a pile in the center of the room. Remind youth NOT to share with others what their surprise gift is. While youth are gathering, either you or another adult volunteer should make comments about the growing pile of gifts by saying, “Wow, I’m so tempted to open these gifts” or “I’m so

excited to see what is inside I can hardly wait!” Try to engage the youth into the conversation by asking them what they think is inside each package, perhaps even picking up a package or two and shaking them.

### **Community Building: White Elephant Gift Exchange (20 minutes)**

Once everyone has arrived, explain to the youth that they will be playing a game with the gift-wrapped items and that everyone will eventually end up with a surprise gift. Have each youth draw a number to determine the order of the game. Next, explain the rules of the game to the group:

1. The first person goes to the pile of gifts, chooses one, and then opens it for all to see.
2. The next person can either steal the first person's gift or go to the pile and open a new gift. If the person decides to steal the first person's gift, then the first person needs to draw and open a new gift from the pile.
3. The third person can either steal the first or the second person's gift or choose a new gift to open.
4. You may only steal a gift one time per person. For example, if you open a hundred dollars and somebody steals the hundred dollars, you may only steal it back once.
5. Play the game until the last person has a gift. Then announce to the group that the very first person to play the game has the option to steal anybody's gift or keep the one they already have. If they steal someone's gift, that person must take the first person's original gift.

*Note to Leader:* This game can take a long time to play. Encourage the participants to choose quickly to keep the game moving. If your group is larger than 20 participants, divide the youth into smaller groups to stay on time.

### **Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

After playing the game, ask the participants some or all of the following questions, as time allows. Feel free to add some of your own or expand on existing questions. Let the young people know that temptations are and will be a part of our daily lives. However, as people of faith, we need to become aware of how we react to those temptations and then learn to listen to the Holy Spirit working in our lives in order to make good choices.

- How did it feel to have the power to steal someone else's gift?
- Did anyone feel tempted by any of the gifts? Was there a gift that you really wanted?
- Did anyone feel guilty stealing a gift from another person?
- How did you feel when someone stole your gift?

Sum up the activity by saying something like the following:

This game is a good example of how easily we might be tempted by material things. It also illustrates how when we are tempted we might forget what is right or fair or may be hurtful to others. There will always be temptations in our lives. What are some temptations that people your age face?

Examples they give may include: cheating in school, drugs, lying to our parents, buying things we don't really need, talking behind other's backs, etc.

Let's take a look at a story of someone who was tempted ...

### **The Temptation of Jesus (10 minutes)**

Invite a participant to proclaim Matthew 4:1-11. Allow a few moments of quiet after the reading, then say:

We've heard this passage from Scripture a lot—especially at the beginning of Lent. Sometimes, it helps us to “see” the story told. We are going to watch a short video from a TV mini-series about Jesus. This clip uses some special effects to help us imagine what it might be like to be Jesus tempted by Satan in the desert.

Invite youth turn their attention to the screen to watch the video clip.

### **Personal Reflection: Journal Activity (10 minutes)**

Give each participant a copy of **Handout 1, Temptation Calling**, and a pen. Ask the youth to spread out and find plenty of personal space for their journal time. Invite them to spend a few minutes jotting down their responses to the reflection questions. Let them know this is for them alone and that it's not necessary to finish all the questions.

### **Group Sharing (10 minutes)**

When the group is ready to continue, ask them this question:

What can we learn from Jesus' temptation in the desert about how to be strong when we face temptations?

Get a few responses from the participants, then continue.

The Gospel indicated that Jesus was “led by the Spirit” into the desert in order to be tempted by the devil. Jesus was not alone in the desert—the Holy Spirit was with him to help him resist the temptations. If we can be like Jesus and remember that God is always with us and never abandons us, we will find the courage to face temptations.

Like Jesus, when we focus on our values, what is important to us, it is much easier to resist temptations. We must learn to trust our instincts of what is right and what is wrong. It is also important to recognize that Jesus responded to each of the devil's temptations, Jesus responded by quoting a passage from Scripture—specifically the Book of Deuteronomy—this illustrates for us how Jesus relied upon and adhered to the Word of God. Being firmly rooted in our faith is another tool to resisting temptations.

### **Closing Prayer (10 minutes)**

#### ***Gather***

As the youth move toward the prayer space, give each one a small stone to hold.

Prayer Leader:

Think of a time when you were tempted by something—or maybe a temptation that you are struggling with right now. Once you call that to mind, place your stone on the prayer table and silently say a prayer for God's help with that temptation.

Play the song “40 Days and 40 Nights” as youth place their rocks on the prayer table and take a seat.

Prayer Leader: *(begin with the Sign of the Cross)*

Kind and Merciful God,  
Temptations weight heavy on us. It is sometimes difficult for us to do the right thing. We struggle with the many temptations of our modern world. Teach us to have courage and resist that which will do us harm. Lead us not into temptation but into your grace. In your name we pray. **Amen.**

### *Listen*

Invite the reader to proclaim Matthew 26:41. Allow a moment of silence before continuing.

### *Respond*

Prayer Leader:

Let us pray a litany together for the many temptations we face. After each prayer, our response will be: **Lead us not into temptation.**

God, help us to not be tempted by money. **Lead us not into temptation.**

God, help us to not be tempted to cheat in school. **Lead us not into temptation.**

God, help us to not be tempted by the pressure to fit in or be like others. **Lead us not into temptation.**

God, help us to not be tempted to try and be someone we are not. **Lead us not into temptation.**

God, help us not to be tempted by illegal substances. **Lead us not into temptation.**

God, help us to not be tempted to do harm to ourselves and others. **Lead us not into temptation.**

God, help us to not be tempted by material possessions, power, or doubt. **Lead us not into temptation.**

At this time, I invite you to come up one by one and take a stone from the pile. Keep this stone as a reminder to be like Jesus and face temptations with courage.

*Send Forth*

Sing “With All Our Hearts.”

Thank the youth for their participation in tonight’s session. Make any needed announcements, and wish them a good night!

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## Temptation Calling!

Take a few minutes of personal quiet time to answer the following questions...

1. The definition of temptation is something that leads you to do something that would not necessarily be good for you. What or who are the things, people, objects, and desires that most tempt you?

2. From the Gospel, we see that Jesus had prayed and fasted for forty days in the desert when he was tempted by the Devil. Anyone after spending that much time in the desert would surely be weak, thirsty, and hunger and easily swayed by temptations. Can you remember a time when you felt weak and unable to stand-up to temptations?

3. Jesus was tempted three different times in the desert. The first was the temptation of food. What food that is not necessarily good for you, are you most tempted to over eat? How do you feel when you eat too much of this food?

4. The second temptation for Jesus was power. What would you do if you suddenly became the most powerful person on the planet? What would you be tempted to do with all that power?

5. Doubting God was the third temptation for Jesus. Have you ever doubted God's existence? What or who helped you to strengthen your belief in God? If you still have doubts and questions write your questions to God here...