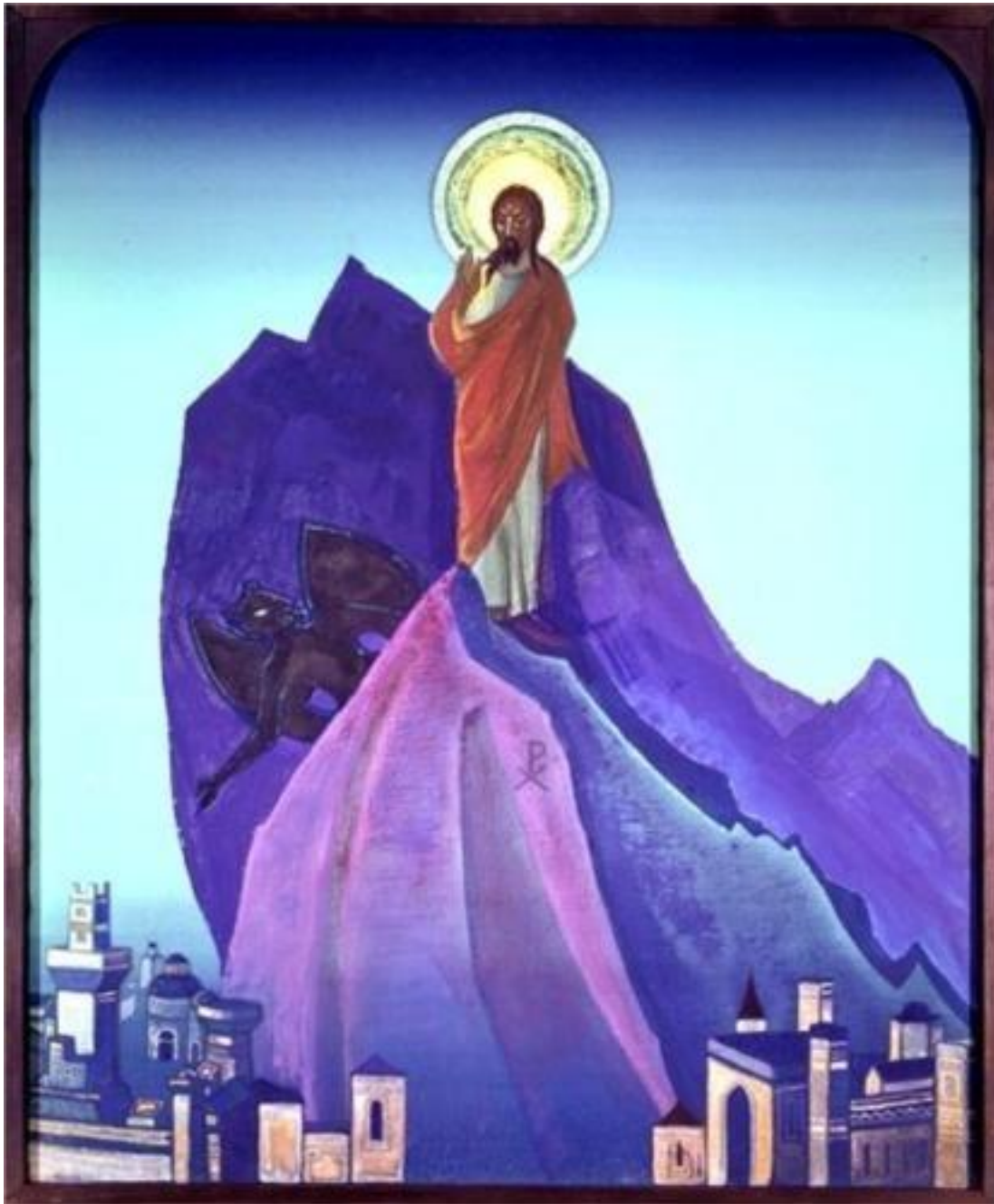


## Chapter 2

### Relationship with God, Self and Others: Identity, Integrity and Influence



Painting: Nicholas Roerich (Russian), *Temptation of Christ* [public domain]

Opening Question: How do people from your community/culture deal with temptation? Where does temptation come from?

## DEBRIEF

Have group members share how they did with last week's "Respond" step (Doing Justice) and consider what project the group might do together over the coming weeks) Also have them repeat the memory verse (Matthew 5:9) as they arrive.

## OPENING

Last week we saw that shalom includes right relationships with God, self, others and creation. This week we focus on how relationship with God impacts our relationships with self and others. When speaking about discipleship to a group of campus ministers in 2022, an international Christian leader highlighted identity, integrity, and influence. Integrity includes honesty and having the inside of us (our thoughts and attitudes) agree with what people see on the outside of us. Identity in Christ and integrity are essential if any Christian would influence or lead others. In this text from Matthew, we see how Jesus' awareness of his identity enabled him to withstand attacks on his integrity as the enemy tempted him to gain influence in an ungodly way. Jesus himself is our role model this week.

## HEAR THE WORD

The larger context of this story is the Old Testament. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve broke their close relationship with God by eating a fruit that the serpent told them would make them like God.

After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, they spent forty years in the wilderness, living on special food, manna, that he provided. They grumbled repeatedly, and Moses later told them that God had used the time to test them, humble them and teach them that people don't live only by food, but by every word that comes from God. (Deuteronomy 8:2-4)

We will focus on Matthew 3:13-4:12, but Matthew 3:1-12 provides the immediate context for what follows. In these verses, John the Baptist calls people to repent and baptizes them in water after they confess their sins. He predicts that someone is coming after him who will baptize with the God the Holy Spirit.

Invite one or two volunteers to read the text aloud.

Matthew 3:13-4:12 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. <sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup> "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down.

For it is written: "'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.'"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

### OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Are there any words or ideas you don't understand? Visualize the story in your mind. Who are the characters in this text, both human and non-human?
2. What does each do and say?
3. Context: When do these events happen in Jesus' life? Where do they happen?
4. Note repeated words and phrases. How does the enemy tempt or test Jesus? How does Jesus resist?

### INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

5. Put yourself in Jesus' mind. What would his experience of hearing the Father's voice have been like?
6. The Spirit immediately led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested by the enemy. Given the Old Testament context, why would the Spirit do that? How would this experience prepare Jesus to influence those who would follow him?
7. Even though the devil uses the word "If," he knows that Jesus is God's Son. In verse 6, he actually uses God's word to tempt Jesus. What is he trying to do in each temptation?
8. How is Jesus equipped (prepared) to answer the devil's temptations?

### APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

9. The words that the Father said of Jesus at his baptism are true of every follower of Jesus before we do anything for him, as they were for Jesus.

Q. How can internalizing your identity as a well-loved child of the Father strengthen you for tests of integrity and for influencing others in godly ways?



## RESPOND

Practice: Jesus clearly had memorized the verses from Deuteronomy he quoted to the enemy, and surely he was certainly meditating on his Father's word to him and several Deuteronomy texts during the forty days. Memorizing and meditating on Scripture is a powerful way for us to internalize God's truth. This week, begin or continue the practice of Scripture memory, and as you memorize the week's verse, meditate (think slowly and deeply) about it and its implications for your life.

How to Memorize:

1. Study the verse and apply it to your life. Ask God to write it on your heart as you memorize it. Neuroscience research shows that we best remember verses associated with memorable incidents.
2. Get an index card and write on it the reference, the verse and the reference again. Speak aloud the verse as you are writing it. Both the writing and the speaking will help you remember better. Place the card in a visible place where you will be reminded to review it.
3. Review your verse(s) daily, speaking it aloud and thinking about it as you speak.
4. If you are musical, make up a tune and sing the verse. If you're artistic, draw some cartoons or a picture to help you remember.
5. Find a friend in the group and text the verse back and forth with your friend during the week until you've memorized it.

## Memory Verse: Matthew 3:17

*And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

Memorize the memory verse in your heart language and English this week.

## CLOSING

Close with group thanksgiving for our being well-loved children of the Father and pray that for each other to be deeply rooted and grounded in Christ's love (Ephesians 3:16-19).

For some paintings of the scene in the wilderness from all over the world, go [here](#).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. Milka Hanook, a Pakistani InterVarsity campus minister in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, commented on the study.

## Facilitator's Notes

### Objectives of the Study

- To help students grasp and begin to internalize their identities as well-loved children of the Father
- To help students recognize possible tests of integrity they might face and consider how to meet them
- To help them understand that identity in Christ and integrity are necessary for Christians wanting to influence or lead others

### Notes on the Text

Question 1: If anyone wonders what Jesus meant when he said "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15), here are some thoughts. Adam's (and Eve's) original righteousness (their being right with God) was in their complete submission to God. In humbling himself to submit to baptism, Jesus was identifying himself with Adam and Eve and doing the opposite of what they did when they turned from God. He was also showing approval of John's ministry and providing a model for his followers.

Question 4: The enemy distorts God's Word and goodness; Jesus' relies on the truth and goodness of God's Word found in Deuteronomy

Question 6: Context: Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness, learning to rely on God's goodness and his word even though they were suffering. So Jesus spends 40 days experiencing suffering and relying on God's goodness and Word. Hebrews tells us Jesus was tempted in every way we were, except without sin (4:15) and, amazingly, that he learned obedience from what he suffered (5:8).

Question 7: Some have seen the three temptations of Jesus in 1 Jn 2:16 – "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" which "come from the world." Since the wilderness temptation occurs before Jesus begins his public ministry, the temptations can be seen as wrong ways he could live life and do ministry. By turning stones into bread, he would use his power as Son of God to serve himself. By surviving a fall from the temple, he would attract attention, but not to his Father. By worshiping the devil, he would break relationship with his Father and obtain what was intended for him-authority over the entire world- with an ungodly shortcut. He was likely also to have been thinking of Israel's desert experience and the texts from Deuteronomy he cites when answering the devil.

Question 8: Jesus fasts, prays, is alone, and meditates on God's word. He responds to the enemy with Scripture, quoting from Deuteronomy. He has memorized God's Word. These are spiritual practices we need in our struggle with temptation as well.

Question 9: The words Jesus had just heard from the Father about being a beloved Son are core to Jesus' identity. Identity is our sense of self, of who we are in our deepest selves, the true me. In some cultures, identity comes more from family and community, in other cultures, each person is encouraged to craft their own identity. For Christians, however, identity is given by God. And as with Jesus, this identity is that we are each a daughter or son of God, who God loves, and in whom God is well pleased. The diagram shows that identity in Christ is our foundation, that integrity is built on this through character and suffering and maturity, and that influence is given to us by God when we are rooted in our identity and practicing integrity.