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<sup>1</sup> And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness <sup>2</sup> for forty days, being tempted by the devil...

<sup>12</sup> And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>13</sup> And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. Luke 4:1-2a, 12-13 (ESV)

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One of the great challenges many people face in life is dealing with an addiction. You may know someone who has had to deal with an addiction, or you may have dealt (or still be dealing) with an addiction. An addiction is a physical or psychological need to do, take or use something, to the point where it could be harmful to you. Addiction is a complex condition characterised by persistent or problematic behaviours, despite knowledge of the negative consequences.

Addiction is most commonly associated with gambling, drugs — both illicit and prescription — alcohol and nicotine, but it's possible to be addicted to anything. Although substance use may be the activity most commonly associated with addiction, a person is capable of developing an addiction to certain behaviours, such as gambling, as well. The following is a list of behaviours that have been noted to be addictive: Food (eating); Sex; Pornography (attaining, viewing); Using computers / the internet; Playing video games; Working; Exercising; Spiritual obsession (as opposed to religious devotion); Pain (seeking); Cutting; Shopping

There are many reasons why addictions begin. In the case of drugs, alcohol and nicotine, these substances affect the way you feel, both physically and mentally. These feelings can be enjoyable and create a powerful urge to use the substances again. Gambling may result in a similar mental 'high' after a win, followed by a strong urge to try again and re-create that feeling. This can develop into a habit that becomes very hard to stop.

Being addicted to something means that not having it causes withdrawal symptoms or a 'come down'. Because this can be unpleasant, it's easier to carry on having or doing what you crave, and so the cycle continues.

Addiction changes the brain, first by subverting the way it registers pleasure and then by corrupting other normal drives such as learning and motivation. And addiction affects the 'voice in our head'.

The reality is we all have a 'voice in our head'. Most of us are familiar with the experience of silently talking to ourselves in our head. Perhaps you're at the supermarket and realise that you've forgotten to pick up something you needed. "Milk!" you might say to yourself. Or maybe you've got an important meeting with your boss day, and you're simulating – silently in your head – how you think the conversation might go, possibly hearing both your own voice and your boss's voice responding.

People who engage in drug or alcohol abuse, who have an eating disorder, or who struggle with any addiction are acting according to the prescriptions of a destructive thought process known as the critical inner voice. For example, if you struggle with an alcohol dependency, this internal enemy will try to tempt you with a seductive, seeming friendly thought (or “voice”) saying, “You’ve had a rough week. Have a drink. You really need to relax.” If you’re overcoming a food addiction, it might lure you with rewards, “Have a piece of cake. You did well on your diet all week.” However, after indulging, this deceptive inner voice transforms into a cruel enemy. The voice punishes you for indulging in the very behaviour it had encouraged. “You weak-willed jerk. You said you weren’t going to drink anymore!” “You’ve ruined everything. You’ll always be fat.”

Have you ever known anyone who has felt trapped? Do you feel stuck? Have you ever felt you cannot approach God or cannot go to church until you first clean yourself up, get yourself together, quit some bad behaviours, and make progress back towards holiness? That’s not what Jesus modelled in His life here on earth. He approached people right where they were – in shame, in disbelief, in addiction, in fear, in sickness – and He was a Friend of sinners.

As we come to the account of the Temptation of Christ, we have something quite fascinating here. At one level, the account of the Temptation of Christ has been seen in the light of the trials and temptations we all face. And the account of the Temptation of Jesus is often seen as a ‘model’ or a ‘reference point’ for ‘dealing with temptation.

There are many aspects to the Temptation of Christ. But one of the important things it is good to remember is that Jesus was alone in the wilderness – without His disciples. And yet the disciples were later to write this down. So, how could they do this? The simple, and most obvious answer, is that Jesus (when teaching His disciples, perhaps about the temptations they would face) spoke to them about His experiences in the desert.

Temptation is a universal human experience. Had Jesus not been tempted, he would not really have been human. ... The wonder is not that Jesus was incapable of sinning but that he was able to avoid sinning although he was tempted. Along with the birth narrative, therefore, the temptations make an important statement: Jesus was fully human and knew what it meant to be tempted.

There were three tests or temptations in the accounts by Matthew and Luke: stone into bread; a miraculous rescue if Jesus would throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple; Jesus enticed to pursue glory and authority through political power. These temptations are still common to the human race.

(1) People still want free food when hungry. Bread is symbolic of food and money; (2) People still want God to do “magical miracles” and rescue us from our foolish decisions; (3) People still want the glory, recognition, and authority of political power. Jesus answered those temptations with a quotation from the Old Testament. We need resources to fight the testings and temptations in our lives.

But we are also to remember that Jesus had come to be the Saviour of the world and this meant He had to do battle with God's enemy, "the ruler of this world." The temptation of Jesus is the first engagement in a battle that will reach its climax on Calvary when Satan will seemingly defeat God's Messiah on the cross. In this battle no quarter is given for it is a battle for the Lordship of the whole of God's creation. So it is that Jesus is "led by the Spirit" into the wilderness to face Satan's test.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He was tempted of the devil during forty days, during the whole of which period He was still led by the Spirit. The Spirit took Him to the place of temptation, and was with Him through the process of temptation. Here is the Divine plan and purpose. Jesus, led by the Spirit – or as Mark in his own characteristic and forceful way expresses it, driven by the Spirit – passes down into the wilderness, and compels the adversary to stand out clear from all secondary causes, and to enter into direct combat.

In His temptation, is Jesus really offering an example how we can personally resist the temptation of the devil? Is this a tutorial for daily living? Of course not! A "how to" on resisting temptation is a secondary application. Here Jesus is not telling us to do anything. He's actually doing it for us. There is something much greater under way in this moment.

What we are witnessing here has little to do with us except as it involves Jesus' willingness to take on the burden of humanity to save us. What we are beholding is our Lord – the second Adam – obeying where the first Adam failed to obey (Romans 5:17). We see Him bowing His will to the Father's, taking the suffering of the cross upon Himself and redeem us from our bondage. Jesus isn't offering a lesson on how to resist temptation. He is actually resisting temptation on a scale we can barely fathom.

Too often we underestimate the importance of Christ's Temptation. Is it not written, "'The first man, Adam, became a living soul.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" [1 Corinthians 15:45]? And again it is said of Him, "For as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." [Romans 5:19].

Christ takes what was Adam's and flips it upside down. The first Adam was given life; but the second Adam gave life. The first Adam fell through disobedience the second through obedience was glorified and brought many sons to glory [Hebrews 2:10]. At the Fall a new kingdom was created, one of failure, at the moment of the temptation, Christ demonstrated that through the power of the Holy Spirit a man could overcome the evil one [Matthew 4:1], that is why He begins His ministry after His temptation [Matthew 4:11-17], in parallel to Adam He begins building a new kingdom of mankind once He leaves the "Garden" [Matthew 4:1], which is the wilderness we inherit from Adam.

The Apostle Paul has said this, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it

out.” (Romans 7:18). No one gets to start in the middle — we’re all beginners in one area of our lives or another. But for many of us, what we need is more like a new beginning, a fresh start, a walking journey from chaos to wholeness. We have the grace from our Heavenly Father to take the necessary steps to leave behind the burden of addiction or damaging behaviour.

“Those who go to God Most High for safety will be protected by the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, “You are my place of safety and protection. You are my God and I trust you.” (Psalm 91:1-2). For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’.” (Romans 10:13). He looks down on us, His precious children, and asks us to turn all those things that are worrying us over to Him. He loves us, and He’s much more capable of handling those things than we are. Amen.