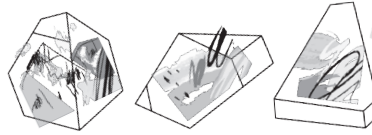


FEARLESS

CONQUERING THE FEAR THAT HOLDS YOU BACK

Session 1:
FEARLESS IN THE FACE
OF TEMPTATION



What We Want Students to Learn: That they can be fearless in the face of temptation, leaning on the power of the Spirit to help them persevere.

Main Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

Supporting Scripture: Romans 6:22, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7

Session Snapshot: Much of our spiritual fear is tied to our battle with our sin nature. We fear ourselves as much as anything. And there's a good reason for this. Much of the time we're our own worst enemies. But Jesus models for us what it looks like to be fearless in the face of temptation. Now, we know that Christ, though fully God and fully man, was ultimately sinless. This is something we can never say about ourselves. But, we can say that we have the power to choose NOT to sin. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 6:22. So, the purpose of this lesson is to encourage and remind your students that, if they have come to saving faith in Christ, they have been given the power to fearlessly choose righteousness in any given situation. And while none of us gets it right every time, we should never fear that our sin somehow disqualifies us from being used by God.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each Small Group Leader's Guide comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are simply short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your FEARLESS lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video, login to your account, navigate to your Small Group lesson 1, and click on the "Background" tab in your Lesson Manager. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video at the top of the Lesson Manager window.

THE DETAILS

WHO WROTE THIS BOOK?

Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE FOR ITS WRITING?

Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

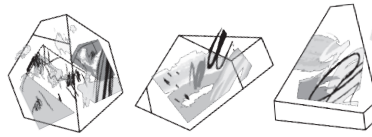
THE MAIN POINT

The main point here is to see how Jesus handled temptation. It's easy to dismiss Jesus' dealing with temptation as something that is outside our ability to relate to. After all, Jesus was God. Because this is true it makes His ability to remain sinless in the face of temptation seem almost unfair to us. And yet,

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Jesus was also fully human, and so we have to view His temptation through the lens of our own humanity. Obviously we are not Jesus. We will never know what it's like to be sinless. But we can all experience what it's like to be tempted and not give in to sin (which leads us to our takeaway).

THE TAKEAWAY

The takeaway from this passage is actually twofold. First, we want students to understand that it is entirely possible for them to experience temptation and not sin. One of the amazing truths about coming to saving faith in Christ is the transformation that takes place regarding our relationship with sin. As Paul writes in Romans 6, we are no longer slaves to sin. Jesus destroyed the power sin has over us. Through the help of the Spirit, we have the power to be able to resist temptation. And while we will never fully realize the power of a sinless life this side of heaven, we can know what it's like in certain circumstances to be tempted and not give in to sin.

The second takeaway is simply that your students would understand that the temptation and sin they experience doesn't disqualify God from using or loving them. They do not need to fear their own propensity to sin. While there is a case to be made that habitual sin in our lives may indeed keep us from being used by God as fully as He might desire, our sin-nature itself is not a barrier to living powerful lives on mission for God. Jesus came to deliver us from the consequences of sin. Our students can fearlessly pursue their role in God's mission knowing that they have been set free from the chains of sin.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called Getting Started; the Bible study section called Digging In; and an application-focused segment called Wrapping Up.

GETTING STARTED

- **Student Book Pages**
 - o This lesson will utilize pages 5-9 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
 - o This activity will use page 5-6.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - o Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, have a student read the Session 1 introduction on page 5. Then, lead students to look at page 6. Instruct them to look at the scale on the page. Explain to students that you are going to do an activity where they define their own "Fear Scale." Explain that the first thing you want them to do is define their extremes. Beside the blank text box at the bottom of the scale, have them write a "1." Then, instruct them to think of the absolute least scariest thing they can imagine. We're talking a "newborn babies dressed up like fluffy rabbits" level of scary. Give them a second to come up with their "least scary" and instruct them to write it in the text box beside the number 1. When they've done this, go around the group and let them share their "least scary."

NEXT, have them do the opposite. Have them write a "10" out beside the box at the top of the scale. Then, instruct them to come up with the absolute scariest thing they can possibly imagine. Have them write this in the box at the top of the scale. When they have finished, allow students to share what they came up with.

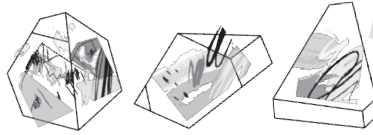
THEN, explain that you're going to play a short game. Explain that you're going to read off a list of scenarios and they are to rank them on their Fear Scale by calling out a number between 1 and 10. As you share the following list, make time to call on volunteers and ask why they responded the way they did. We've suggested the following scenarios but feel free to add your own:

- **Singing a solo at a school assembly**
- **Having your mom run your Instagram account for a day**

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- **Walking through the lunch room with toilet paper hanging out of the back of your pants**
- **Going to school looking exactly like you look the second you get out of bed**
- **Having your dad tag along with you the next time you go out with your friends**

FINALLY, explain that these were a fun group of scenarios, but you could have included some serious ones. There are real things in life that are scary. You could have said, “Your parents getting a divorce” or “Losing a loved one to an accident or a disease” and so on. Those would probably register pretty high on the Fear Scale, wouldn’t they? Say something like:

- **There are things in life we fear. Some of these are rational, and some not so much. Some of these are more personal than others. And if we’re honest, a lot of times we can be pretty fearful when it comes to our faith. This study is going to give us a chance to talk about this. But more than that, we’re going to learn that we don’t have to be this way. Let’s take a look at what the Bible has to show us about living boldly.**

Then, transition to the Digging In portion of the lesson plan.

DIGGING IN

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 7 and 8 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You’ll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to pages 7 and 8. Before getting started, have students take 60 seconds to look at the three questions at the top of page 7 under the header “Think About This . . .” The questions are printed below for your convenience:

- **Do you think experiencing temptation to sin is the same as sinning?**
- **How aware are you of being tempted? Do you realize it when it’s happening?**
- **Do you ever feel feelings of shame or guilt over your sin? Does it ever feel like your sin disqualifies you from being someone God could use?**

Allow them time to think about the questions. Then, allow them to share their thoughts. Keep this super loose. You’re not really looking to correct any of their assumptions. This is a way to set the stage for what you’re about to study. Engage them as much as the discussion calls for.

THEN, transition into your time of Bible study. Explain that you’re going to start by looking at a passage from Matthew 4. Have students turn to Matthew 4:1-11. While students are finding it in their Bibles or on their devices, provide some background for the book by referencing the Bible Background section of this lesson. Then, read or have a student read the entire passage. When you’re done, explain that you’re going to pick the passage apart piece-by-piece and see what you can learn from Jesus’ example.

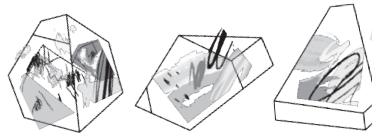
NEXT, direct students’ attention to verses 1-4. Lead them in a brief discussion. (The questions are in the Student Book to allow students to be able to process their responses a little better.) Ask:

- **Summarize what’s happening in this passage. What’s going on?**
 - Answer: Satan is tempting Jesus.
- **In these verses, what was Satan tempting Jesus with?**
 - Answer: Jesus, like any of us, was extremely hungry after fasting for 40 days.
- **What would have been the big deal if Jesus had just turned rocks into bread? After all, we know that Jesus is God. Jesus was a part of creation. Jesus made rocks. Couldn’t He just turn them into food?**
 - Answer: Yes, Jesus could have. But to do so would have been to go against God’s plan. It would have been to make the trial easier. This would mean that Jesus would have sinned.
- **How did Jesus respond to the devil and what can we learn from it?**
 - Answer: Jesus responded by quoting Scripture. He was implying that His physical needs, while real, weren’t as important as the spiritual picture. He was in a sense saying that God’s plan was more important than His momentary needs. This is a great reminder for us as we engage with temptation.

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- **Here's a bigger question: Could Jesus have sinned? Was He capable of it?**
 - Answer: This is essential for students to grasp. Jesus was fully God. But He was also fully human. He 100% had the capability to sin. But He didn't. He resisted Satan's temptation to feed Himself.
- **Why is it essential that Jesus lived a sinless life?**
 - Answer: Because Jesus died in order to satisfy the payment for the sin of all human-kind. To do so, He had to be a perfect sacrifice. If He had sinned, God's plan would have been thwarted.

Make sure students understand how serious the situation was and what a bold thing Jesus did. Say something like:

- **Because He was fully human, Jesus had the same needs we have. He was devastatingly hungry after His fast. And yet, He trusted in God's plan and resisted Satan's schemes. Jesus didn't let temptation lead to sin. He didn't fear His own human desire to gratify His needs.**

THEN, instruct students to look back at verses 5-7. Ask questions similar to the following:

- **Satan wasn't finished! What did the devil tempt Jesus with in these verses?**
 - Answer: He took Jesus to the top of the Temple in Jerusalem. He challenged Jesus to throw Himself off to force God to save His life.
- **Can you guess why this might have been tempting to Jesus? (Here's a hint: There would have been a lot of people around to witness this.)**
 - Answer: It would have been a miraculous event witnessed by hundreds if not thousands of people. It would have been a way for Jesus to identify Himself as the Messiah, potentially fast-tracking His ministry. But this wasn't God's plan.
- **What was Jesus' response?**
 - Answer: Jesus again quoted Scripture. Jesus knew better than to put God to the test. He had confidence in God's plan.

Explain to students that as much as anything, this shows Satan's relentlessness. Say something like:

- **Jesus had already resisted the devil. But he didn't leave Jesus alone. He continued to come at Him. As we'll see, he did it one more time.**

NEXT, instruct students to look at verses 8-11. Ask:

- **What did Satan do this time? And what was Jesus' response?**
 - Answer: Satan wanted Jesus to take a shortcut. Satan tried to get Jesus to believe he could give Jesus the worship of all nations (Satan didn't have that power. It was a lie.) By doing this, he was trying to tempt Jesus to forego the trial of His arrest and crucifixion. Jesus' response was once again quoting Scripture, reminding Himself and the devil where His allegiance was.
- **What can we learn from Jesus' example here?**
 - Answers will vary. But lead students to see that trusting in God and His plan is always the right response. This is what Jesus modeled for us.

Explain that Satan wasn't done tempting Jesus, but he did leave for the moment. Say:

- **In his account of the temptation, Luke said that the devil "departed from [Jesus] until an opportune time" (Lk. 4:13). This implies that Jesus wasn't through facing temptation. Which, as we know, would be in line with what we know to be true about the human condition. We face temptation to sin all the time. As He was fully God and fully human, Jesus would face the same temptation we face. But His response was different. And that's what I want to focus on for the next few minutes.**

THEN, transition into a general discussion about sin and temptation. Ask:

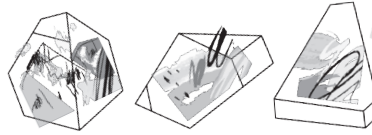
- **It's tempting for us to see Jesus resisting sin and say to ourselves, "Well, that's Jesus. He had a little bit of an advantage over us in the resisting sin department, what with Him being the Son of God and all." Here's a question: Is it possible for you to resist temptation?**
 - Answer: Allow students to think through this. But help them see that if they have been saved by faith in Christ, they have been freed from sin's power over them. Paul says in Romans 6:22 that we "have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God" instead.

Session 1: LESSON PLAN

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- **So, if we have a choice not to sin, why do we sin?**
 - o Answers will vary. Help students see that though we have the power to resist sin, we will never be able to overcome our sin-nature. Until Jesus returns and we're all reunited with God again, we'll struggle with sin.
- **How does your sin make you feel? Does it make you feel defeated?**
 - o Answers will vary. Allow this discussion to lead you into the final section of Bible study.

NEXT, direct students' attention to the bottom of page 8 to the verses listed there. Have a student read 1 Corinthians 10:13. When he or she is finished, explain that we can feel so beaten down by temptation. We can feel like we are constantly under fire and that we don't match up to who God wants us to be. Ask them the following question:

- **What does this verse say to you about the kind of temptation you face?**
 - o Answer: Even when it feels like you're overmatched, you're not. What you're facing is not unique. You're not alone. And even better, God provides a way out. God will help you, through the power of His Spirit, to persevere.

THEN, have a student read James 4:7. Ask:

- **What does this verse have to say about how we are to deal with temptation?**
 - o Answer: This is a promise from Scripture that if we stand firm and put up a fight, temptation will leave us just like it did for Jesus.
- **Does this mean that we won't face temptation again in the future?**
 - o Answer: Of course not! But it does give us hope we can resist and stay strong in the face of temptation.

FINALLY, begin wrapping up your time of Bible study by saying something like the following:

- **As we seek to live a life where our faith is front and center, we can allow our temptation, and ultimately our sin, to shame us to the point where we shrink from God's mission. We can allow the devil to make us feel like we're disqualified from being used by God. While we will always struggle with sin, we have to know that temptation and sin don't keep God from using us. Jesus literally came to save us from the consequences of sin. While we must all strive to live as God commands us, we don't have to let our sinfulness make us timid or fearful. We can be bold, trusting in the Spirit to guide us and in Jesus to save us.**

If there are no questions or additional thoughts, transition to the Wrapping Up portion of your session.

WRAPPING UP

- **Student Book Pages**
 - o This activity will utilize page 9 in the FEARLESS Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - o Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to close with a simple activity that helps visualize the struggle we can sometimes feel. Direct students' attention to the three statements on page 9. Have a volunteer read the first statement, "Temptation is something I am not strong enough to overcome." Then, ask a question similar to the following:

- **As we've learned from our Bible study today, this statement is false. And yet, it can sometimes feel true, can't it? In the space below this statement, you've got some room to write. If you were to rewrite this statement to make it true about you, what would it say?**
 - o Answers will vary. Encourage students to actually take the time to write their responses. There's something powerful that happens when they have to process the words and actually write them on the page.

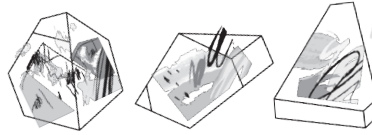
When they have finished, allow a volunteer to share his or her response. Then say something like:

- **If you have come to a saving faith in Christ, sin's power over you has been broken. You have**

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the power to resist temptation. You have the Holy Spirit within you helping you. We'll never be sinless. But sin has no mastery over you. You don't have to fear it.

THEN, do the same thing with the next statement. Explain that this, too, is a false statement. Have students re-write this statement to be true about themselves. (This one may be a bit trickier for some students.) Ask for a volunteer to read his or her response. (The correct answer should be something like, "There is sin in my life. God will (or God can still, or something similar) use me to impact the world.") When a couple of volunteers have shared, say something like:

- **The Bible is clear. We should strive to live holy lives. Our goal should be to imitate Jesus. Sin is never OK. BUT, we will never be fully free from our sin-nature this side of heaven. Jesus dies to free us from sin's consequences. Just because you will struggle with sin doesn't mean that God will not use you powerfully to impact the world for His sake. Strive to imitate Jesus. But trust in Jesus' ability to make you holy in God's eyes. And be bold in your faith.**

FINALLY, look at the last statement, "I am fearful in the face of sin and temptation." Say something like:

- **This sentence is a little different. It may be true about you. But here's the truth: it doesn't have to be. Whether this is true about you today or not, re-write this sentence to have it reflect what should be the goal for each of us.**

Students' responses will differ. But it should be adjusted to say something like, "I am not fearful in the face of sin and temptation," or "I am bold in the face of sin and temptation." Allow students to share their responses. They say something like:

- **I hope you are thoroughly convinced that sin and temptation isn't something you have to be afraid of. I hope you know by now that you can be bold in the face of temptation. My prayer for you is that you will not let your shortcomings define you, but that, through the power of the Gospel, you will overcome them to live your life powerfully on mission for God.**

Ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the devotions located on pages 35-41 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them. (The first devotion is on page 35.)

If there are no more questions, close in prayer for your group.