

First Sunday in Lent

Then Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be with God.—Matthew 4:1 IV

Explore

Involvement

“This day’s worship is intended to be an opportunity for youth of your congregation to share their giftedness and ministry. Prepare the elements of the service that are provided or adapt them to the needs of your congregation. If you have been charged with this task, use part of this time to prepare, practice, and/or pray for the worship service. Worship is a large part of our finding God in the wilderness. Encourage all ages in their search.

Extract

Into the Wilderness

Today’s scripture takes us on the journey with Jesus into the wilderness. We are observers of the story, yet the setting and the conflicting elements remind us of our own visits to the wilderness and the temptations we meet in life. Early Christians approached the wilderness with fear and danger as they thought evil spirits resided there. In this scripture passage, Matthew depicts Jesus being tempted by Satan. Jesus had just completed a forty-day fast, and Satan attempted to take advantage of his post-hunger weakness by tempting him to test God. Read Matthew 4:1–11. Then ask for volunteers to read the part of Jesus and Satan. Act it out.

In tempting the hungry Jesus to turn stones into bread, Satan was attempting to diminish the nature of Jesus’ call, to satisfy only his personal hunger. When challenging Jesus to test God’s promises, Satan was questioning Jesus’ faith. For Jesus to test God would have been an expression of doubt and questioning God’s power. The third temptation, to fall down and worship Satan in return for “all the kingdoms of the world,” would have eliminated the struggle, the sacrificial journey, the process by which Jesus gave his life for us. Jesus resisted and demonstrated his obedience to God.

Take Christ
with you on
your journey.

Bible, flip chart,
markers

Matthew 4:1–11
Mark 1:12–13
Luke 4:1–13

Compare the information given about Jesus’ temptation in Matthew 4:1–11 with the information recorded in Mark 1:12–13 and Luke 4:1–13. On the flip chart list where the scriptures overlap and what information the scriptures have in common. We know that we are all children of God and all struggle with the situations that tempt us to depart from our journey to God. What we find in the wilderness with Jesus is a clearer understanding of our God-given purposes, an exploration of who we are in God’s sight. When that knowledge becomes more focused for us, we seek the strength found in God’s forgiveness and find blessings that support us on our way. This is the message of the Lenten season.

Lent is a time of spiritual self-examination and recommitment—a time to let go of old ways and start over. Traditionally, people give up things for Lent as a self-discipline removing the interference of the world that can separate us from God. It helps to clear the mind and body and opens us to the spiritual. Jesus fasted from food. The forty-day period associated with Lent, significant throughout the Bible as a time of transformation, signifies the forty-days

of temptation of Jesus found in Matthew 4:1–11. For Jesus it was a time of preparation between his baptism and the beginning of his ministry

Experience

Temptations

Temptations are ever-present in our modern-day wilderness, ready to lead us away from God and God’s purpose for us. Temptations may present themselves in the form of over-zealous patriotism, elitism, social status, or consumerism. They may look like the newest CD, the coolest clothes, or a special group we just have to belong to. Temptations are the things that lead us in the opposite direction, especially when they become the focus of our worship instead of God.

Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, paper, pens

On paper, ask students to list three to five things that tempt them. Invite students to share if they are willing. Some things may be tangible such as food or possessions. Other temptations may appear as the desire for power or the craving of attention. Ask students to circle their most powerful temptation, the one they struggle against the most. Ask: “What in your life do you need to change, to transform? What are you willing to give up to help make that transformation happen?” Discuss the options. Prayer and scripture study is a place to begin to find God in the wilderness of our daily living. Divide these scriptures among the group and ask them to share with the rest of the class how the scriptures help in finding God in the wilderness: Genesis 2:15–17, 3:1–7/2:18–20, 3:8–12 IV; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12–19; I Nephi 3:28–33; Doctrine and Covenants 85:17–18b.

Genesis 2:15–17,
3:1–7
Genesis 2:18–20,
3:8–12 IV
Psalm 32
Romans 5:12–19
I Nephi 3:28–33
Doctrine and
Covenants
85:17–18b

Lost in the Wilderness or Emerging with Purpose

As Lent begins it is good to look at our lives, temptations, and weaknesses. It is a time to return to God, seeking forgiveness, and emerge from the Lenten experience with new vision and purpose in living for God. Ask: “What might one of God’s purposes for me be at this point in my life? How can I develop this purpose?” Respond to these questions on the paper provided, and set a goal to work on for the next forty days.

Expand

Suffer Us Not

Together pray the Lord’s Prayer found on page 111.

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Lectionary scriptures—Genesis 2:15–17, 3:1–7/2:18–20, 3:6–12 IV; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12–19; Matthew 4:1–11; I Nephi 3:28–33; Doctrine and Covenants 161:4b