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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Chaddick

Born in the San Francisco Bay area, Tim Chaddick grew up as the son of a pastor. While he was still a boy, his father was plagued by physical difficulties. As his dad’s health deteriorated, so did the church, and Tim’s involvement in it. Growing up in an extremely irreligious town, Christian faith quickly became the last thing on his mind.

In his early teens, Tim embraced the “ unholy trinity” of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll. Becoming sexually active in the ninth grade, he consented to his first abortion by the tenth. He experimented with a host of drugs before getting hooked on crystal meth. But the precious center of Tim’s life was undoubtedly music. Playing in several punk bands, he saw music as his savior—the one thing that brought value to his existence.

But this illusion wouldn’t last. The drugs and alcohol became all-consuming. Romantic relationships ended in broken hearts and Tim’s own mortality struck him when a close friend committed suicide. Around this time, in 1999, a friend randomly invited Tim to a horrifyingly cheesy Christian event in San Jose. For reasons unknown even to him, he agreed to go.

As the preacher related the gospel, the Holy Spirit touched Tim’s heart in such a powerful way that he broke down and wept. He realized the depth of his sin and recognized the glory and power of Christ. After sleeping in the church’s gym, he called his bandmates in the morning to tell them that he had met Jesus.

Tim interned at a large church in Orange County, where he befriended a pastor named Britt Merrick from Santa Barbara County. Greatly moved by Britt’s heart and the spirit of his church at Reality Carpinteria, Tim moved with his wife and baby girl to join the staff. A year later, Jesus called Tim and Lindsey to plant a church in Hollywood. The prayer meetings began and in 2006, Reality LA launched.

Tim currently serves as the founding pastor at Reality LA. He and his wife, Lindsey, live in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles with their three daughters.
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible study book includes six weeks of content for group and personal study.

PREPARATION
The group facilitator and group members are encouraged to prepare as much as possible each week in advance. This would include reading the introduction to each session, completing and reviewing the previous week’s personal study, and looking over some of the questions that will be asked in the next Group Discussion.

GROUP DISCUSSION
Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the Group Discussion. Each Group Discussion uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God’s Word, and with the teaching of Tim Chaddick.

START This section includes reflection questions on the content from the previous week and a brief lead-in to the topic being discussed that week.

WATCH This section includes the key text from Tim’s teaching, along with blank space for taking notes as participants watch the video.

DISCUSS This page includes discussion questions that guide the group to respond to Tim’s video teaching and to relevant Bible passages with meaningful conversations.

CONCLUDE This last section encourages your group to pray for each other about what you’ve learned as you close your time together.

PERSONAL STUDY
Each week of Bible study is divided into three sections of personal study. In these sections you’ll find biblical teaching and interactive questions that will help you understand the topic discussed. Attached to each of these sections will be a Reflect and Respond section that will allow you to apply the teaching you’ve learned in a specific way.
TIPS FOR LEADING A GROUP

PRAYERFULLY PREPARE
Prepare for each meeting by—

REVIEWING the weekly material and group questions ahead of time;
PRAYING for each person in the group.

Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God’s Word.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS
Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they’ll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by taking into consideration—SEATING; TEMPERATURE; LIGHTING; FOOD OR DRINK; SURROUNDING NOISE; GENERAL CLEANLINESS.

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they’re welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they’re also not distracted. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what’s most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

INCLUDE OTHERS
Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they’re but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to—

INVITE new people to join your group;
INCLUDE any people who visit the group.

An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite someone to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible study book.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION
A good small-group experience has the following characteristics.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.
NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER. Be sure that your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS. Don’t feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they’ve just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don’t just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you’re studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don’t actually want to hear their answers or that you’re looking for only a certain answer.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust Scripture to be the authority and God’s Spirit to work in people’s lives. You can’t change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to God’s Word and to active steps of faith.

KEEP CONNECTING
Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another’s lives, the more they’ll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

Encourage group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through—EMAILS; TEXTS; SOCIAL MEDIA.

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for—MEALS; FUN ACTIVITIES; PROJECTS AROUND YOUR HOME, CHURCH, OR COMMUNITY.
SESSION 1

VOICES IN TEMPTATION
“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” —Martin Luther King Jr.

“It was hidden right there in plain sight!” Have you ever said that?

Perhaps finding what’s hidden comes naturally to you. You can solve crossword or picture puzzles easily. You have a knack for deciphering riddles or little enigmas. Movies like *The Sixth Sense* or *Shutter Island* aren’t mysteries. You knew Bruce Willis was dead, and Leonardo DiCaprio was crazy from the very beginning. Most of us become “aware of the obvious” after we watch these movies. We make statements like, “I need to watch it again now that I know,” or “Yeah, I see that now since hindsight is 20/20.”

Or maybe as you read poems and short stories, you pick up on the literary layers and find the double meaning in everything. In a group setting, you have the relational skills to immediately discern who’s flirting with whom, and who’s even got a chance. You know why this girl is “single for a season” and why this guy is “single for a reason.”

But most people haven’t fully developed this ability. In one area or another, we have trouble seeing the obvious. If you were that boy growing up with ADHD fetching tools from the garage for your dad, then you totally understand this notion that something can be “hidden in plain sight.” You very well may still be looking for that monkey wrench. And yes, “If it were a snake, it would have bit you right on the arm!”

Well, we have a snake that slithers in and out of our daily lives—and we don’t even know it. This session is about discerning how Satan uses the things around us we don’t see to tempt us away from God. These are structures, ideas, daily norms, conventional wisdom, and cultural practices in place—and they have been “hidden in plain sight” for centuries.

Discerning how the Enemy tempts is another step in better discerning the voice of God. This experience is about pursuing God through the lens of finding the meaning of temptation.
START

Use the following questions to begin your small-group time. Beginning next week, your group members will discuss the previous week and what you learned. Since this is the first week, spend some time projecting your thoughts forward.

What would you like to see happen in your own spiritual life through this study?

List the two or three things you know you need to do to get the most out of this study. Share them with the group to see if they can help.

What about the role of temptation in your life are you most interested in developing your understanding?

One of the ways the Enemy deceives us is by convincing us that God will only lead us out of temptation. But God is perfectly able to prevent temptation from occurring if He so desired. Instead, He chooses to allow for humanity to be tempted. That God would allow temptation sounds strange to us—but His purpose is to prove the good, not draw out the bad. We know that God doesn’t directly tempt us, but in the moments of testing we’re often drawn away from good by our own desires.

WATCH

Read Matthew 4:1-4 in preparation for the video. Use the space provided below to take notes or to highlight key thoughts as Tim unpacks this passage:

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” 4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

MATTHEW 4:1-4
DISCUSS

Reflect on the video with your group, using the following discussion questions.

What was the one thing you resonated with most from Tim’s teaching?

How do you respond to Tim’s comment, “Each time you choose truth in the face of a lie you flex a muscle that strengthens your character and launches you deeper into the life of the Spirit”? Have you seen this to be true in your own life? Explain.

In what ways does the testing of your faith reveal the depth of your commitment to Christ?

Tim said, “Satan’s great temptation is to get you to act independently of God, which is to say we’re God.” What does this mean to you? How are we suggesting that we’re gods ourself when we act independently of God?

Tim discusses three ways that Satan tempts:

1. Satan will exploit your weakness.
2. Satan will undermine your priorities.
3. Satan will appeal to entitlement.

Which one of these ways do you identify with the most? Why?

CONCLUDE

Spend some time praying for one another before you close your gathering.

There are three different individual readings that coincide with this session. Each one is an extension of Tim’s teaching from the video segment. It’s important that you spend some time doing these individual studies each week. Attached to each of these readings is a Reflect and Respond section. Use these to further apply the truths you’ve learned to your real-world context. Working through these will prepare you for the small-group time. Each week, the group will be encouraged to share and teach each other what God is revealing to you.

Video sessions available for purchase at www.lifeway.com/truthandlies
"What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

**Anonymous**

**In·cep·tion** [noun]: the establishment or starting point of an institution or activity. Synonyms: beginning, commencement, start, birth, dawn, genesis, or origin.

In the movie *Inception* (2010), Leonardo DiCaprio’s character Dom Cobb was a corporate thief who had developed a technology that allowed him to steal the most hidden of valuable things. He wasn’t after money or merchandise; he wanted ideas.

Banished from his home, Cobb’s criminal pursuits had cost him everything he loved. He was offered one last job and a chance at redemption, helping him attempt to gain his old life back. However, he’d need to pull off the perfect, almost-impossible heist ... in reverse. He had been hired not to steal an idea from someone’s mind but to plant one.

For an idea to take root within someone’s mind and heart as their own, it would need to be planted deep within their soul. Cobb needed a framework and a plan that would layer his dream-within-a-dream sequence deep enough so the inception would take root as an original idea. Successfully, he represented the master deceiver. He stole the truth from someone and lied, calling it his own. He planted a lie within someone, having convinced them to believe it as truth.

What personal beliefs, ideals, traditions, or practices have you questioned throughout your life?

How can you be sure that what you believe is authentically yours?
SATAN’S SCHEMES
When Peter wrote his letters to the church, they were experiencing severe persecution. It had only been a few decades since Peter witnessed the resurrection. Peter’s ministry found in the Book of Acts had long past. And many miracles had come and gone since Peter had seen his Lord face-to-face. Peter had experienced much in the last thirty years. He had witnessed both the mighty hand of God and the merciless hand of Nero.

While Paul remained a prisoner in Rome, Peter was a free man. He watched many in his Christian community flee to save their lives. During this time, the great fire had destroyed much of Rome (A.D. 64), the Jewish revolt began (A.D. 66), and Nero would soon raze the temple in Jerusalem to the ground (A.D. 70). Peter knew that Rome was becoming less tolerant of those who bore the name of Christ.

And it wasn’t just the Jewish church who was suffering; both Jews and Gentiles felt the blister of the Emperor’s rule. Nero blamed the Christians for the fire, and he waged war against the Jews who continued to rebel. It didn’t matter to him. They were the enemy of the state, and Nero showed no discretion as he dished out his brutal punishment.

So Peter wrote to both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Many of them were discouraged. He urged the elders to remain vigilant and aware of the Enemy’s schemes.

The theme of suffering appears in every chapter of 1 Peter. He used forms of the word suffer sixteen times in his first letter. It’s believed that Nero’s heavy-handed approach had caused a ripple effect—emboldening a prejudice from the unbelieving Roman citizenry. They were probably making life miserable for Christ-followers. The words of Peter in both 1 and 2 Peter were actually one of the last letters to be written in the New Testament.

As you read this passage, remember that during times of duress, we’re not at our best. Suffering has a way of clouding our perception of reality and hampering our God-given wisdom. As a result, we have difficulty discerning the arrows of the Enemy. We often blame our family, friends, work, church, and government—anything and everyone except the Enemy.
8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

1 Peter 5:8-9

While hunting their prey, lions will use a cunning approach and stealth. As they near their target, they will break the silence with a large roar, confusing and scaring the prey. This disorients these helpless animals with confusion and fear. The targets that are the weakest and most isolated are easily trapped. Satan is like a loud, boisterous lion. But he doesn’t start roaring from far away. He waits until he’s close enough to pounce. The danger doesn’t start with the roar. It begins with his crafty pursuit in silence.

Temptations show up as whispered suggestions, half-truths, or even truths told as a lie. They linger long because they’re embedded into our culture. They could be realities we assume to be true, or they could show up as respected structures in society. These kinds of temptations are the residual work of our Enemy long at work. He’s quietly uses them every day to draw near to us—and we don’t even know it. Satan’s just waiting for the right time to confuse, isolate, destroy, and conquer us.

Jesus was physically weak when the Devil came to tempt Him. How has the Devil tried to take advantage of you in your weakness?

It’s difficult to recognize temptation and set your mind on God during times of suffering. In what ways have you been able to identify the quiet “schemes” of the Enemy?
GROUP TRAINING

In the Book of Ephesians, Paul brought our attention to the plots and ploys of our Enemy. Paul used the profile of a Roman soldier to remind us that our fight against the Enemy is a real one—and that we need to be prepared. Roman soldiers were trained with the toughest of grit. They persevered through arduous physical and weapons training. Every day they had five hours to complete a twenty-mile march. In addition, they ran while carrying heavy packs and trained with wooden dummy weapons that weighed twice as much as the real ones.

Soldiers of the Roman army never trained in isolation. They were always in groups—divisions, legions, armies. Think about this as you read Paul’s warning:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 6:10-12, NASB

In what ways does Satan try to separate and isolate you from your Christian community?

When you're alone (or feel alone), how has Satan attempted to exploit your weaknesses?
Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:1-2

These worldly patterns are the evil structures that are hidden within our culture, and Satan uses them every day to shift our focus off of God. These structures can seem harmless and neutral, but they have been set in place by the Evil One.

Here are some of the big lies that the Enemy has planted in the systems of this world. Can you think of more?

1. God doesn’t care because people are suffering.
2. Truth is relative, and the Bible is unreliable.
3. God isn’t good.
4. Your sexuality defines who you are.
5. Jesus isn’t coming back.
6. I don’t even exist.
7. No one will know.
8.
9.
10.

If those are the big ones, what are the small ones? And where are they? As you seek to discover the whispers of the Enemy embedded within our society, practice listening to the Holy Spirit. Spend some time in public places. Think about what you already know about how the Enemy works.

For instance, his name means “the accuser of our brothers” (Rev. 12:10). This is what Satan does—he accuses. So what systems and structures, fads and cultural nuances are presently perpetuating accusation and slander? Satan doesn’t want us to experience true forgiveness. He’s going to condemn us. So what half-truths has he already told to find us guilty?
Ask God to reveal to you the evil structures in your own local culture. Chronicle what you see in the space provided below the questions.

How has the Enemy embedded his system into:

- The fashion industry?
- Politics and government?
- Academia and education?
- The music industry?
- Entertainment?
- Career advancement?
- The American Dream?
- The concept of retirement?

What are some other structures of evil that you face every day in our culture? What areas in your life have been affected because of these?

Could there be any lies that the Enemy has embedded within you that you may not even know about? Pray asking God to show you the subtle things that draw you way from Him.
This is a true story. Just a few years ago a Massachusetts family made the news. They had to call 911 because they got lost inside a giant corn maze. It’s a popular attraction, and hundreds of families each year pay the price of admission to have some fall fun.

Even though this maze was created so that people would get lost, this family of four was never in any real danger. It’s just that the mom had brought along their three-week-old baby, and they panicked. They thought it would be a fun night out. Yet, they didn’t give themselves enough time to finish the maze in the light of the early evening. The fun-seeking couple could see when they started, but after the sun went down their family “night out” turned into a nightmare.

Once the local police were notified and arrived at the corn maze, the family was rescued within minutes. What they didn’t know, though, was they had almost made it to the end. They were only twenty-five feet from the exit.

When you find yourself disoriented and unprepared, what’s your first reaction?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you prepare for the worst things in life?


Imagine entering into a time of temptation the same way the family strolled into that seven-acre maze of towering cornstalks. How long would it take us to realize the inevitable failure? Unprepared and easily spooked, the darkness would fall and we would no doubt lose our way:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

PSALM 119:105
The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

PSALM 19:8

OUR SPIRITUAL WEAPON

We must remember that when Jesus taught His disciples and the crowds, His audience was Jewish. His words, lessons, and parables all coincided with His culture—Jewish holidays, festivals, and customs. He used the opportunities to teach about God's kingdom, as well as who He was.

John tells us that it was in early autumn, the time during the Feast of Tabernacles (see John 7). This feast lasted for a week. It commemorated the Israelite's days in the wilderness. When Moses led the nation of Israel, they lived in “small tents” or tabernacles while waiting to enter the promised land.

Many Jews thought that the coming Messiah would reveal Himself at this festival. It was something to behold. The week of celebration was dominated by two temple ceremonies—the water-pouring (because God gave them water in the wilderness) and the illumination of the temple (because God led them in the wilderness by fire that lit up the sky).

On the last day of the festival, Jesus stood up and created quite the controversy when He boldly shouted:

37 “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.
38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

JOHN 7:37-38

He would later speak to the crowds and say:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

JOHN 8:12

VOICES IN TEMPTATION
In the wilderness when Jesus resisted the Devil, He was prepared with the Word of God. The “light of the world” used the light of His Word (v. 12). As a Son who trusted His Father completely, Jesus learned obedience through a personal knowledge of the Word. When Jesus quoted Scripture, He directed to Himself as much as He did to Satan. God’s Word awakens within our hearts an awareness of the wrong direction and wrong intentions. There’s something mysteriously powerful when we use God’s Word as our spiritual weapon against the Enemy.

How has God specifically used His Scriptures to light the path so you can see the way?

In what ways does your relationship with Jesus, “the light of the world,” help shed more light during times of temptation?

Read this week’s main passage again:

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” 4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

MATTHEW 4:1-4

How did Jesus respond to temptation in Matthew 4:1-4?
How does knowing that Jesus was tempted Himself and now empathizes with our weaknesses encourage us in times of temptation?

There’s no shame in being tempted. God’s Spirit actually led Jesus to this specific time and place for a specific purpose. The author of Hebrews wrote:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

HEBREWS 4:15

What do you think God is expecting from you as you face times of temptation?

What’s the biggest obstacle preventing you from pursuing and understanding the meaning of your personal temptation?
REFLECT AND RESPOND

When you find yourself being tempted, practice quoting Scripture aloud. Do what Jesus did. By faith, trust God and take steps of obedience. You shouldn’t just think these Scriptures quietly in your mind. Speak the Word of God boldly and directly to awaken your heart. For instance, if you find yourself being tempted in any of the following areas, be ready to speak the very words of Christ aloud to resist Satan. These are just a few examples. Use the space provided below these examples to journal how you were tempted and the Scripture you used to resist the Enemy.

When you’re tempted to remain indifferent toward those who are less fortunate than you:

*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*

MATTHEW 25:40

When you’re tempted to harbor hate and bitterness toward those who are against you:

*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*

MATTHEW 5:44

When you’re tempted to refuse to forgive someone in your life:

*But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

MATTHEW 6:15

When you’re tempted to stand in judgment of others of whom you don’t approve:

*Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

LUKE 6:37

When you’re tempted to pursue your own selfish dreams and desires:

*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.*

MATTHEW 16:25
When you’re tempted to be that autocratic, authoritarian leader:

*Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.*

MATTHEW 20:26

When you’re tempted to think that you deserve what life has to offer:

*If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.*

MARK 9:35

When you’re tempted to think that you’re better than everyone else:

*So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*

MATTHEW 20:16

When you’re tempted to think that following Jesus won’t cost you anything:

*In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*

LUKE 14:33

Write down other passages of Scripture that have helped you overcome temptation in the past:

When I’m tempted:
I’ll quote these verses:

When I’m tempted:
I’ll quote these verses:

When I’m tempted:
I’ll quote these verses:
“There are no ‘if’s’ in God’s world. And no places that are safer than other places. The center of His will is our only safety—let us pray that we may always know it!”

CORRIE TEN BOOM

Where have you followed God in life? What would potentially keep you from following at any cost?

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 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 does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

MATTHEW 4:1-4

Some scholars see this first temptation to center on Christ’s physical need. Jesus was hungry, and turning stones into bread would have helped Him eliminate His hunger pains. Others see this first temptation as testing Christ’s Sonship. Could Satan persuade Jesus to act independently of the Father? Only the Son of God could turn stones into bread! Satan could have been luring Jesus into proving something He didn’t have to prove.

We know this much from reading the passage: The Father’s will was for Him to be hungry in the desert with no food. This was a set time for Jesus to be tested. So when Satan offered a slightly alternative plan that included satisfying His hunger, he was saying to Jesus, “You can meet Your own needs on Your own terms in Your own power.”

Read what Jesus quoted in Deuteronomy 8:3. What sticks out to you most?

In what ways do you rely upon yourself? How does the Enemy tempt you in this way?
NOT AN OPTIONAL GOD

Jesus discerned Satan’s intention was contrary to God’s will. And we see the intent of the Devil’s temptation in the way Jesus responded. When He said, “Man does not live on bread alone” (Matt. 4:4), Jesus affirmed that God is \textit{essential} for all things. He’s not a suggestion or an option, but the essential source for all of life.

If we view God as optional, then we don’t believe He’s essential. If we view God as something we can add to our lives “as needed,” then He doesn’t have the power to transform us. So when Satan tries to trick us into being sub-spiritual, he’s really luring us away from what’s most essential to live a transformed life.

Even with the good things that God has given to us—like bread, or shelter, or sexual pleasure, or talents—to indulge in these things apart from God directs us to the realm of the sub-spiritual. We become less of who we’re meant to be, because God is being shoved out of the picture.

Out of a love for self, we’ll pursue what will never fully satisfy. We position ourselves as the deserving recipient of all things good. It’s not so much that we take our focus completely off of God, but that we include God as the source for all of that which we’re entitled.

\textbf{In what ways has the Enemy specifically lured you to embrace an entitlement mentality?}

\textbf{What are some other attitudes that come from living out of a “love for self”?}

As long as we see God in this way, it will be easier to trust ourselves and act independently from God. But to view God as optional is to reject His love for us. Jesus recognized that Satan’s temptation was aimed at the love relationship He had with the Father. Jesus refused to abandon God and His love. Instead, He embraced it and surrendered to it.
And that’s what we need to do. When you make the decision that, “it’s better for me to obey than to disobey,” then you start settling this idea into the deepest parts of your hearts—that God really does love me, and He is good, and He wants the best for me. Our obedience shouldn’t be about proving how much we love God. It should be about accepting how much God loves us.

We abandon our love of self, and we surrender our self to God’s love. Whatever permissions we have given to the Devil in succumbing to temptation, we cancel them when we fully surrender to God love for us. Whatever obstacles are facing us, they’re overcome by God’s love. The decisions we make in the moments of temptation not only demonstrate what we value and love, they reveal the degree to which we believe God’s love truly satisfies.

“God loves human beings. God loves the world. Not an ideal human, but human beings as they are; not an ideal world, but the real world. What we find repulsive in their opposition to God, what we shrink back from with pain and hostility, namely, real human beings, the real world, this is for God the ground of unfathomable love.”

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Read the following verses and reflect of God’s unfathomable and unchanging love for His children:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

JOHN 3:16

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

ROMANS 5:8

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

GALATIANS 2:20
4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.  

EPHESIANS 2:4-5

9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.  

1 JOHN 4:9-11

How many different ways has God lavished you with His love? Use the space below to write them down as God reveals them to you.
Center your mind’s attention and heart’s affection on the love that God has for you. When you’re tempted to abandon this love in disbelief, quote aloud the Word of God. Use the Scriptures listed in the daily devotional to get you started. But find more on your own. The Bible is full of stories revealing God’s love for us.

Consider the story recorded in John 4:1–40. Jesus breaks through every cultural barrier to have one of the single greatest conversations about true worship:

1 The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3 When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. 4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

JOHN 4:1–9

Jews despised the Samaritans. They were a mixed race people, who had intermarried with the Assyrians. They were hated by the Jews because of this cultural mixing, and because they had their own version of the Bible (accepting only the writings of Moses). Essentially, they were considered unclean in every way. The only thing worse than a full-blown pagan Gentile was a “half-breed” Samaritan. The hostility between these two people groups cannot be understated. Jews didn’t touch them, eat or drink with them, or keep company with them.

So Jesus, this Jewish man who shouldn’t have been speaking to any woman—found His way into the presence and company of a Samaritan woman. She was a woman of ill repute. Yet, Jesus spoke to her. He drank water from her jar. He even somehow revealed intimate details about her private life without casting judgment. And Jesus agreed to stay in Samaria for two days.
Jesus cares more about people than man’s traditions, cultural norms, or “proper etiquette.” How else does He show us that He loves us?

These Samaritans responded to Jesus’ love and accepted Him. How do you respond to the overwhelming love of God?

This week, find two more stories where Jesus lavished His love on those. Think about how Jesus shocked His audience with His overwhelming love and affection. Then spend some time journaling about it.