**2**

**Facing Temptation**

***Matthew 4:1-11***

In Stephen Vincent Benet's short story, The Devil and Daniel Webster, a New Hampshire farmer named Jabez Stone is hit by a string of natural disasters and just plain bad luck. One day, after his two children come down with the measles, his horse begins to cough, his wife gets sick, and he breaks his plowshare on a rock, Jabez decides that's the last straw. In a moment of anger and temptation, he says, "I vow it's enough to make a man want to sell his soul to the devil! And I would, too, for two cents." Of course, the devil takes him up on his offer and grants him ten years of success and prosperity.

At the end of the ten years, when the devil comes to take possession of his "property," he is confronted by the great Dan'l Webster. Thus begins the greatest trial of all time, with the devil arguing for the prosecution and Daniel Webster arguing for the defense.

GROUP DISCUSSION. People often claim that everyone can

be bought for a price. Explain why you think that's true or false.

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PERSONAL REFLECTION: In a moment of anger or frustration, when have you done something you later regretted?

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***14 Spiritual Warfare***

In this passage the devil tempts Jesus to sell his soul for

"all the Kingdoms of this world and their splendor." But

this account also reveals three key ways the devil tempts

us and how we can resist those temptations. Read

Matthew 4:1-11.

1. Looking through these verses, what clues do you have

as to what Jesus would have been thinking and feeling?

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2. Verse 1 opens at the beginning of Jesus' earthly

ministry. Why do you think the Spirit led Jesus into

the desert to be tempted by the devil?

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3.If there's nothing wrong with being hungry, and there's nothing wrong with bread, then what was the temptation

(vv. 3-4)?

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4. When we fail to trust God, how can we be tempted to

meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways?

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***Facing Temptation 15***

5. In the second temptation (vv. 5-6), was the devil misquoting Scripture, as people often claim? Explain.

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6. Jesus responds in verse 7 by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16. How does testing God differ from trusting God?

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7. What is wrong with demanding "right now" that God

prove his presence, power or care?

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8. In the third temptation, the devil promises to give Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor" (vv. 8-9). If Jesus would eventually receive all of these kingdoms

any way, then what was tempting about the devil's offer?

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9. The devil offers us shortcuts in contrast to what Eugene Peterson, quoting a phrase from Friedrich Nietzsche, has called "a long obedience in the same direction." Why are these shortcuts really spiritual short-circuits?

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**16 Spiritual Warfare**

How do these shortcuts tempt us to bow the knee to Satan-even when that's not our intention?

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10. Throughout this passage, Jesus demonstrates trust, obedience and true worship. How can we make these

our ultimate weapons against the devil's temptations?

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*Pray that God will grant you deeper trust, stronger obedience and more heartfelt worship as you seek to follow him.*

**Now or Later**

Take time this week to reflect on some of your deepest needs. Have you been trying to meet some of those legitimate needs in illegitimate ways? If so, ask the lord to deliver you from that temptation and to enable you

to trust him to provide for you. Thank him for his love and care over every detail of your life.