

Lent, temptation and the Word.

Before Jesus started his ministry he was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to spend 40 days of preparation. Spiritual discipline played a key role while Jesus fasted, prayed and learned about his messianic calling.

The Season of Lent can for us be such a time of learning to walk with God.

For forty days in the wilderness Jesus fasted. Because of this, Luke explains, "he was famished" (Luke 4:2). Being so hungry set Jesus up for the devil's temptations. He said: "*If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread*" (Luke 4:3). At first glance, there seems to be nothing especially wrong with this challenge. Later in his ministry Jesus would produce food miraculously, so why not now make bread from a stone while he was so hungry?

There are at least two things wrong. Firstly, turning stones into bread was the sort of thing that pagan magicians did to impress the crowds. The devil really was saying, "Jesus, you have divine power, so show me your tricks!" and the purpose of God's miracles is never to entertain anyone. Secondly, the devil's challenge to turn stones into bread must have come during a time when the Spirit still wanted Jesus to fast. This was the sort of temptation that makes our sin to look like not such a serious issue. One that said - do it, it is only human. You are hungry - will God really be offended if you feed yourself?

This is one of our classic arguments for going with worldly practices and ways: - it is natural; it does not matter that much, God will understand.

How did Jesus respond to the devil's temptations? He quoted Scripture. Jesus said: "One does not live by bread alone." This comes from Deuteronomy 8:3, where Moses reminded the Israelites of their experience in the wilderness: "*[The Lord] humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*" **By citing this passage of Scripture, Jesus defied the devil's challenge.** His hunger for bread did not matter as much as faithfulness to God. Submitting to God's will really mattered

To overcome temptation, Jesus quoted Scripture.

There is divine power in God's Word. There is power in God's Word that exceeds my willpower. When I am tempted, I need to hold onto God's Word, embracing its truth and using it as the sword of the Spirit to fight off the enemy. The more we are immersed in Scripture, the more we will be strengthened by the Spirit to defeat temptation.

If you find yourself being tempted, hold onto the Word of God. Read it. Say it. Sing it. Allow its power to help you defeat temptation.