

## Week 4: Matthew 4

### Hook



**Main Point: Jesus is the Son of God who came to bring light into the darkness, so we should devote ourselves entirely to following Him.**

One of the most iconic posters was created in 1917 by James Montgomery Flagg. Flagg is said to have been the highest-paid magazine illustrator in America at the peak of his career.<sup>i</sup> Just after the United States entered World War 1, Flagg created a poster with the phrase “I Want You for U.S. Army” with a picture of a stern-looking Uncle Sam.

In 1917 and 1918, more than 4 million copies of Flagg’s poster were created to enlist young men to enter the war effort.<sup>ii</sup> This poster is more than 100 years old, and even today, it is one of the most recognizable posters of all time.<sup>iii</sup> This call to service was captivating for many who saw it. People were inspired to join the military and perform other actions that helped the United States military on the war front.

**Q: What is it about this poster that would make someone want to join the U.S. Army?**

**Q: What are some other iconic advertising campaigns that you remember?**

**Q: What tools have you found helpful in introducing the Gospel to others? What tools have you found helpful in encouraging and equipping other believers to grow deeper in their walk with Christ?**

## Week 4: *Matthew 4*

### Book

**Main Point:** Jesus is the Son of God who came to bring light into the darkness, so we should devote ourselves entirely to following Him.

#### **Matthew 4:1–11 [Read]**

**Talking Point 1:** Jesus is focused on the kingdom.

**Q: Even as Christians, why is it so difficult to face temptation in our lives? How should we combat these temptations?**

This scene is the second of Jesus' preparatory events – the first was being baptized by John and now being tempted by Satan. It is here in the desert that Jesus is offered a shortcut to a kingdom, bypassing the pain that He would experience in the future, including His sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus' experience in the wilderness provides Him with the opportunity to demonstrate His obedience and resolve to complete the mission that He has been given.

The same Spirit that had anointed Jesus for the work of the ministry now leads Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. Note the language in verse 1; it is the Devil who would tempt Jesus, not the Spirit. God does not tempt us to sin (James 1:13). And although Satan will be taking action against Jesus, the temptation is permitted by God Himself; Satan is bound by what God will allow (recall the story of Job, Job 1:6–2:7). God will use this event to allow the faithfulness of Jesus to be proven.<sup>iv</sup>

Jesus fasted, as many Jewish people did, to greater focus on prayer and be more attuned to the things of God.<sup>v</sup> Modern-day hunger strikes have ended after 21–40 days, ending at these times due to the life-threatening side-effects of the participants.<sup>vi</sup> While undergoing starvation, side effects include faintness, dizziness, blood-pressure drop, slowing heart rate, weakness, abdominal pain, depression, and taken to the extreme, participants run the risk of heart attack and organ failure.<sup>vii</sup> The physical toll on Jesus after 40 days and nights of fasting must have been agonizing.

The Enemy seeks to take advantage of Jesus' weakened physical state and tempts Him to satisfy His own physical hunger. The stakes are high for the Devil at this moment. He knows that Jesus' victory on the Cross will ultimately result in Satan's destruction.<sup>viii</sup>

The tempter is not questioning Jesus' validity as the Son of God; instead, he challenges Jesus to reflect on His position and come to the conclusion that certainly, the Son of God has the right to satisfy His own need.<sup>ix</sup> After all, water was taken from rocks during Israel's time in the wilderness. John the Baptist had stated that rocks could become

heirs of Abraham, why not transform rocks into food? What's so crafty in this temptation is that there appears to be no sin in turning the stones to bread. Something so similar had been done for Israel generations ago. The sin is that this is not the Father's will for the Son in these moments; the Father desired for the Son to fast.<sup>x</sup> Often the temptations that snare us are not grievous sins but presumably innocuous options that detour us from completing the work that God has for us.

Jesus responds with a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3, a portion of the law in which the people of Israel are reminded of God's faithfulness to provide manna during their time in the wilderness, a lesson in relying on God's provision instead of one's own ability.

Satan tries again; this time, he takes Jesus to the highest point of the temple and tempts Him to demonstrate His ability to preserve His own life. The Devil quotes Psalm 91:11–12, a promise that God will protect “he who dwells in the shelter of the most high” (Psalm 91:1), but he misapplies it; the Psalm is in no way encouraging the faithful to put themselves in harm's way willingly. Jesus once again meets the tempter with Scripture to refute his attack, this time quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 – man should not put the Lord to the test.

The last temptation attempts to entice Jesus by offering instant power – the Devil would give Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world if the Son would only worship the tempter. These things would be coming to Jesus, after His death and Resurrection, despite the actions of the Devil, but here an offering is made for Jesus to bypass the sacrifice and immediately enjoy the victory.<sup>xi</sup> Jesus pushes back with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:13: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.” With this final rebuke, the Devil leaves, the very help that Jesus was tempted with in verse 6 arrives, and ministers to Him for some time until He has recovered and is prepared to begin His ministry.

Jesus was tempted in three ways, in a similar fashion to Adam and Eve: an appeal to physical appetite, to personal gain, and to power/glory.<sup>xii</sup> Once again, we are reminded that “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Satan was crafty in these verses, avoiding a full-frontal attack but instead using carefully designed temptations to sideline Jesus from his mission.<sup>xiii</sup> Satan preyed on Jesus' physical weakness, manipulated Scripture, and offered a way to circumvent the pain that was necessary to accomplish the mission. How did Jesus fight back? He knew the Scriptures, not just repetitious memorization, but understood them to the point that they shed clarity on the decisions that Jesus would make.

**Q: How does the Devil demonstrate his craftiness in these verses?**

**Q: What can we learn from Jesus' responses to the Enemy's temptations?**

**Q: What are some verses we can use when we are tempted?**

**Matthew 4:12–16 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** Jesus brings light into darkness.

**Q: What does Jesus' going to these places of darkness say about His ministry?**

Jesus leaves Nazareth when news of John the Baptist's imprisonment arrives (Matthew will explain more in chapter 11 concerning this event). Jesus now returns to Galilee, specifically the town of Capernaum. This city was more significant than Nazareth; it was larger and located next to the Sea of Galilee. It would become His base of operations for the remainder of His ministry.<sup>xiv</sup>

During the ministry of Jesus, the population of Capernaum would have been around 50 percent Gentile. Although Jesus' offering of salvation was first to the Jews, this certainly foreshadows the Savior's work among those who were not born children of Abraham.<sup>xv</sup> This area was home to a trade route that ran into the Mediterranean sea, a place to expose travelers, even Gentiles, to the ministry that would change the world.

It was this region in which Zebulun and Naphtali, two tribes of Israel, had settled following the conquest of the Promised Land.<sup>xvi</sup> Described as "Galilee of the Gentiles," this far north territory was quite removed from Jerusalem. It had been captured by Assyria in 722 B.C. and had mostly remained in the control of Gentiles until the second century B.C.<sup>xvii</sup>

And this was the land over which Isaiah had prophesied in Isaiah 9:1–2 that a great light would be experienced by those who walked in darkness. Jesus would bring the light to the Jewish people in this area who had been walking in darkness. Light, in this context, refers to the knowledge of and obedience to God, compared to darkness or the ignorance or disobedience to God.<sup>xviii</sup> The Jewish people in this region, who had seen the horrors of the Assyrians, longing for liberation from Gentile rule, would have the massive privilege of being the first to see the light. This is the sixth Old Testament prophecy that Jesus fulfilled in the book of Matthew.

**Q: What benefits did Capernaum offer Jesus' ministry?**

**Q: In what ways is Jesus "the light"? What does it mean to walk in the light (1 John 1:5–7)?**

**Q: How can we encourage others to walk in the light?**

### **Matthew 4:17–25 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** A call to follow the King demands an immediate and total response.

**Q: What does it mean to fully follow Christ? What are some characteristics that would identify of a follower of Christ from the world?**

Jesus' message is a mirror of John's (3:2), both men announcing the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, both pointing to the reality of the Messiah (v. 17). The Messiah collects two fishermen, Peter and Andrew. Andrew was no stranger to Jesus as he had been a disciple of John the Baptist. A disciple was an "adherent or follower of a master, an intimate companion in some common endeavor, often learning and promoting a particular ideology."<sup>xix</sup> Matthew would use the term to describe the 12, and outside of that small collective, the word was assigned to followers of Jesus who were more devoted than the large fickle crowds.

Typically, a disciple would confront a master, asking for permission to become a disciple; here, Jesus instead calls the brothers. He calls them to abandon their work of seeking fish from the sea in exchange for pursuing people from a lost world to the life-giving message of the Messiah. The term "followed" in verse 20 is used by Matthew often to imply discipleship – Jesus is inviting these two to an intimate, intentional discipleship relationship.<sup>xx</sup>

Jesus repeats His call this time to James and John. Of note is that Zebedee is present in this story; these two weren't just leaving their work, they were leaving their father and the family business. Matthew would record in 10:37 the words of Jesus:

*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

The priority of discipleship is high, and a genuine pursuit of Jesus is all-consuming.

Matthew doesn't take the time to note if Jesus knew James and John before He called them to follow. Instead, the emphasis is once again placed on their response – they followed Him "immediately," just as Peter and Andrew followed "immediately."<sup>xxi</sup>

Verses 23 through 25 provide a summary of the public ministry of Jesus. His message (v. 17) was such good news (the word *euangelion* translates to *Gospel*) that "gospel" became synonymous with the message and the title given to the books that tell His story.<sup>xxii</sup> And the message was accompanied by miraculous events: healing of the sick, those oppressed by demons, those plagued by seizures and paralytics – he healed them all. This work brought crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis (the "10 cities", east and south of the Sea of Galilee), Jerusalem, Judea and west of the Jordan.<sup>xxiii</sup>

A call to Jesus demands an immediate response and one of complete devotion. If you are a believer, Jesus has also called you to radical and immediate discipleship – to hear His voice and respond in full. The four who followed Jesus in this chapter would go on to experience and accomplish great things for the kingdom, but it all began with a decision. Leave behind your concern for your future. Leave behind the concern for your own comfort. Leave behind your plans. Follow Jesus.

**Q: What is the cost of discipleship? What is gained in discipleship?**

**Q: Why is the message of Jesus “good news”?**

**Q: What are some things that get in the way of our fully following Jesus?**

## Week 4: Matthew 4:1–25

### Took

**Main Point: Jesus is the Son of God who came to bring light into the darkness, so we should devote ourselves entirely to following Him.**

Just as Flagg's poster was effective in helping people sign up and support the war, we are responsible as followers of Christ to introduce as many people as possible to Jesus and help believers to grow in their walk with Him. At Prestonwood, we have a resource called *Starting Point* that can help lay a foundation for your relationship with Christ. We need people who can help lead others through this resource as well as people who are interested in going through this resource. Please contact your division minister for more information if you are interested.

### CHALLENGES

**Think about some temptations that you might face.** Just like Jesus, we face temptations in our lives that are attempting to sideline us from what God has called us to do. Jesus confronted these temptations head-on with Scripture. What are some verses that can help you when you are tempted?

**Pray for opportunities to bring the light of Jesus into the dark world we live in.** Pray for God to give you the wisdom and discernment to see people's brokenness and share the hope that we have in Jesus. Pray for opportunities to plant Gospel seeds in relationships with those you might never see again (waiter or waitress, the person in front of you at the grocery store, etc.)

**Act: Follow Christ in everything that you do.** Being a disciple of Christ is more than something you do; it is who you are. Full obedience and submission to Christ in every area of our life is required for us to follow Him. This obedience should be seen in the way we treat and love others, the way we handle our finances, the way we run our families. What are some areas that you need to adjust to submit to God's plan fully?

## Hook, Took & Editing by Ryan Irwin

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<sup>®</sup> <https://illustrationchronicles.com/I-Want-YOU-The-Story-of-James-Montgomery-Flagg-s-Iconic-Poster>

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<sup>®</sup> <https://time.com/4725856/uncle-sam-poster-history/>

iii

<sup>®</sup> <https://www.xerox.com/en-gb/digital-printing/insights/custom-poster-prints>

iv

<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, Craig L., "Matthew" *The New American Commentary*, Broadman Press, 1992, p. 83.

v

<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 84.

vi

<sup>®</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/food-nutrition/how-long-can-you-live-without-food#bodily-response>

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<sup>®</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/food-nutrition/how-long-can-you-live-without-food#bodily-response>

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 83.

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<sup>®</sup> Gaebelin, p. 112.

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<sup>®</sup> Wilkins, Michael J., "Matthew" *The NIV Application Commentary*, Zondervan, 2004, p. 158.

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 85.

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<sup>®</sup> Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "[Matthew](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 27.

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<sup>®</sup> Wilkins, p. 155.

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<sup>®</sup> Wilkins, p. 173.

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 88.

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<sup>®</sup> Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "[Matthew](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 27.

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<sup>®</sup> Allen, Clifton J., editor. "Matthew-Mark" *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Broadman Press, 1969, p. 100.

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 88.

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 90.

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 91.

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 91.

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<sup>®</sup> Blomberg, p. 92.

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<sup>®</sup> Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "[Matthew](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 28.