



<sup>4</sup>Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'

<sup>9</sup> Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", <sup>11</sup>and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

<sup>12</sup>Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

(Luke 4:1-13)



Want to edit your digital photographs? Watch the BBC?  
Keep track of your exercise? Play a game? Diagnose an illness?  
Pretend to drink a beer? There's an App for that!

You know what an App is, right? An application ... a specialized program that you download to your smartphone, or tablet, or computer or these days even to your TV, refrigerator and whatever other appliance is labeled as “smart”! Apps run the gamut from games to business programs, allowing you to play Angry Birds or keep your appointments, keep track of the steps you walk in a day, check your bank accounts and make investments, look up recipes, watch the video monitor connected to your homes security alarm or at your child's daycare, order dinner or groceries to be delivered to your door, check the latest weather conditions, see a list of which gas stations and restaurants you'll find at the next interstate exit, book a hotel or call a cab or uber ride, develop this slide presentation for worship, there are even Apps for keeping track of your Apps! A recent check on Google reported there are more than 2 million apps currently in existence with hundreds, perhaps even thousands, being added every single day. May goodness, what a world we live in! There is apparently an App for almost everything ... well, maybe not quite! Let's watch ...



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HTOKAVON8c>



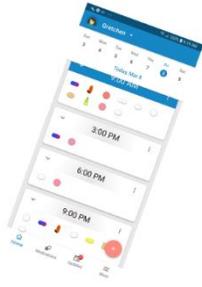
There's an App for 'almost' everything! I guess that explains why so many of us are staring at our phones these days, instead of looking at other human beings. And if you're even thinking in this moment of looking at the Apps on your phone, I need to warn you ... I have recently developed an App which allows me to Zap you with my trusty pointer if it detects you looking down at your phone or nodding off during the sermon!

Yes, there's an App for 'almost' everything! According to *The Atlantic* magazine, apps are now available to transform us into "thinner, richer, all-around-better versions of ourselves."

Want to lose weight, become wealthy or break a bad habit? There's an app for that -- and that -- and that! The key is *behavior modification*, supported by smartphone technology. Numerous diet and life-style and weight-loss Apps now help you track your calories and carbs, plan your menus, log your steps and then let you share your weight-loss data with others, giving you the social support you need for success.

But maybe you want to save money. There are Apps which offer a reminder whenever we go to use our credit or debit card to hold off on impulse purchases so that we will be able to stay on our budgets.

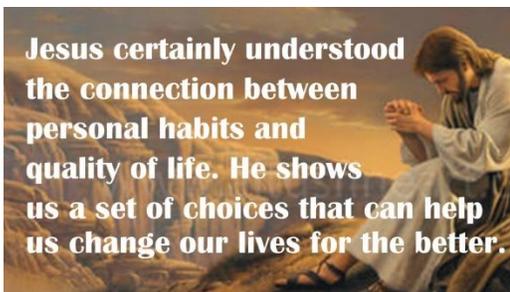
After leaving the hospital Thursday evening and picking up eight (yes, I said eight) new prescriptions, I was totally overwhelmed with all these new medications and when they should be taken. And the doctor kind of got my attention in the hospital when he said, particularly of one medication, "If you don't take this every day, you will die." So, what did I do when I got



home? Yes, there's an App for that ... and I downloaded it. I entered in all of my medications, what they are for, the dosage and the times they are to be taken and then, at the scheduled times, I get the annoying sound of a pill bottle

being shaken. But, if it helps me remember to take those all-important pills, it's worth it, right?

What if we want to watch television less or say "thank you" more? There are 'habit breaking' Apps which let us choose the behaviors we want to target, and then each time you find yourself repeating that behavior, you register it in the App. At the end of a day or a week or a month, you can pull up a chart which informs you of the progress you're making, or the ways you're slipping. It's kind of a gimmick, yes ... but for those of us who are visually stimulated and respond to this type of feedback, it could be a very useful tool for changing our behavior!



Jesus certainly understood the connection between personal habits and quality of life, which is why he watched his behavior closely during his 40 days in the desert. He made a set of choices and modeled them for us – new habits

and practices that can change our lives for the better. Although Jesus didn't write a program for our smartphones, he did give guidelines and social support for resisting temptation. And as we "App-ply" these principles and guidelines to our lives, we will grow in our faith and understanding and move toward a more whole and healthy and balanced life! Sounds like a good plan for the season of Lent, doesn't it?



Take this app for example: the '*Trust God, not Self*' App. Luke tells us that Jesus was tempted for 40 days by the devil, and during that period Jesus ate nothing. When those days were over, "he was

famished" (Luke 4:2).

The devil tempted him for the first time by saying, "***If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread***" (v. 3). I always have this image in my head when I read this scripture of the devil being a little playful and cocky, perhaps with a smirk on his face (if he had a face), and the voice of a cunning Disney villain . "***If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread***". Notice that the devil is making a reasonable request here: Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God. He certainly has the power to turn stones into bread. He hasn't eaten for 40 days so he is definitely starving ... I imagine a loaf of bread would look pretty darn good at this point in the story, and it would give Jesus some much-needed energy. In addition, the idea of bread in the wilderness has a nice ring to it, since that is what God provided to the people of Israel through the gift of manna. It would be a metaphor and an image and a memory that Jesus would understand and respond to.

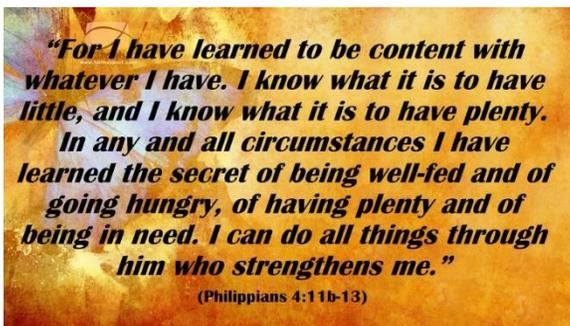
But Jesus says no, because he is in the habit of trusting God, not himself. If he performs this miracle, if he turns the stone into a loaf of bread, he will be serving his own needs instead of allowing God to provide for him. And so he responds to the devil by quoting right back to him a line from the book of Deuteronomy, the same verse that reminds the Israelites that God

provided them with bread in the wilderness: "One does not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). Instead, we are to live by trusting what God says and does.

After the summer Olympics in 2012, there was a rash of Olympic athletes' praising God for their gold medals. Gabby Douglas was the first black woman in Olympic history to win gold in the women's gymnastics individual all-around. Gabby, among many other athletes, thanked God by saying, "I give all the glory to God. It's kind of a win-win situation. The glory goes up to God and the blessings fall down on me." Countless Christians were inspired by Gabby's performance and her willingness to trust God instead of herself.

But how about when a faithful Christian does not win a medal? Runner Lolo Jones, who speaks frequently of her faith in Christ, spent four years training for the 100-meter hurdles. And even though she ran an outstanding race, she came in fourth and failed to medal.

Jones was devastated but didn't lose her faith. She says she has never "prayed to win a gold medal at [the] Olympics and never will." She says that the Lord is her shepherd, and she "shall not want."



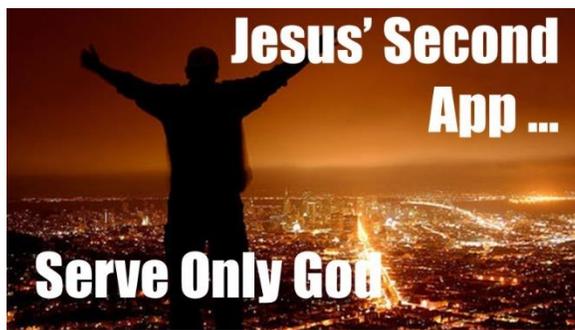
Remember these words of Paul, written to the church at Philippi? "For I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:11b-13)

When we trust God instead of ourselves, we're thankful in both success and failure.

Whether we win medals or not, we can be grateful for God's gifts of life, breath, talent, strength



and the love and support of family members and friends. If we apply ourselves to trusting God, we shall not want. That's App #1 – Trust God-Not Self!



Or how about this app: the *Serve Only God* app.

In the second temptation, the devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. The tempter says, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you,

then, will worship me, it will all be yours" (vv. 5-7). Is this a reasonable offer? What do you think? Just imagine all the good Jesus could do if he had authority over the kingdoms of the world. With a single command, he could eliminate poverty, disease, hunger, injustice, violence and abuse.

But there's a catch, isn't there? As in so many temptations that present themselves to us in life, there's a catch: Jesus must worship the devil, compromising with the power of evil. For Jesus, such a price is too high, even if great good can be accomplished in the world. Jesus quotes the book of Deuteronomy once again, saying, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him" (Luke 4:8; Deuteronomy 6:13, 10:20).

I think this App is a difficult one for us, because we're asked to make compromises every day. Do we work overtime to make a little more money for our family, or go home at a normal hour to spend time with them? Do we save money by buying products manufactured in countries where workers are exploited, or do we pay a little more for American-made goods? Do we push for better environmental standards, even when protecting the environment will hinder certain industries?

These are tough choices, and none of them breaks down into good versus evil, God versus the devil. But what Jesus is asking us to do is serve God ahead of ourselves, putting God's interests first instead of our own. Jesus could have had great earthly success if he had worshiped the devil, but instead he chose to resist that temptation and focus on serving God.

We can do the same, by turning to God in prayer when we are confronted by a choice between overtime and family time. We can commit ourselves to loving our neighbors as ourselves before we purchase a particular item. We can take seriously our role as stewards of God's creation when we take stands on the economy and the environment, knowing that God wants us both to use and to preserve the resources of the earth.

If we apply ourselves to serving only God, I am confident that we will be able to find a faithful path through these challenges. That's App #2 – Serve Only God!



And now we get to the third temptation of Jesus – the third App that he models for us in our scripture this morning. The *Do Not Put God to the Test* App. In his last temptation, the devil takes Jesus to the top of the temple

in Jerusalem and invites him to throw himself down, trusting the promise of the Book of Psalms, "His angels ... will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone" (Luke 4:9-11; Psalm 91:11-12). After hearing Jesus use Scripture in his previous responses, the devil is clever enough to use God's word as part of his own temptation.

But once again Jesus resists, going back to Deuteronomy to find the words, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Luke 4:12; Deuteronomy 6:16). Jesus trusts the power of God to save him, but he is not going to tell God when and how to do it. Even at the end of his life, he does not ask God to rush in and rescue him from the cross. But the promise of Scripture comes true for Jesus, as God raises him from death to life everlasting.

If we're honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we have all put God to the test from time to time. Charles Rush, a pastor in New Jersey, says he thinks it starts in the third grade, when we get a pop quiz on the multiplication tables. We say, "God, please, if Mary Jones' paper can come into view during this test, I promise I will eat my broccoli for a whole week."

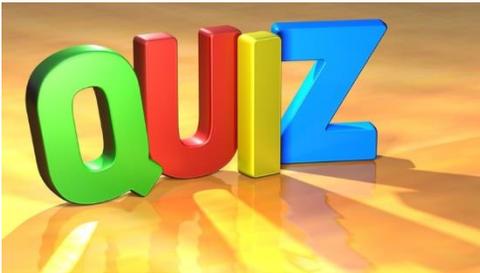
From there, it just escalates – in a crowded parking lot, we might find the words going through our mind, "Dear God, please just open up a space for me somewhere! I will forever be grateful if you do!"

Or at the ball game, we wouldn't be the first to mutter under our breath, "O God, just let this pitch land in there for strike three. I promise I'll never ask you for another thing as long as I live!"

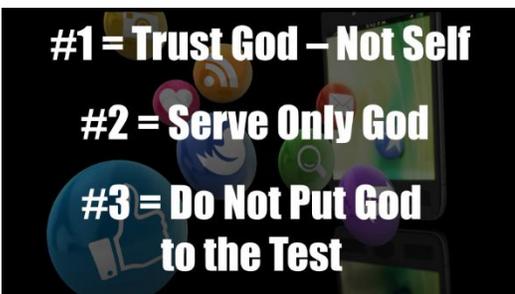
Or after the job interview -- "O God, let those guys emerge from behind the conference room doors with a job offer. I promise I'll go to church for a month straight."

Or in the cath lab at the hospital ... “Please God, please let me get through, help the doctor to fix what’s wrong, and I’ll do anything for you, I promise!”

In all of these cases, we are bargaining with God, making promises in exchange for particular types of help. Unfortunately, this is a form of testing God, which Jesus refuses to do. If we avoid this temptation, we too, will move closer to God and find a sense of peace ... in his will, and in his time, not ours. Looking at the entire temptation story, we see that all of Jesus’ choices enable him to remain close to God and his divine agenda. And so, that’s Jesus’ Third App – Do Not Put God to the Test!



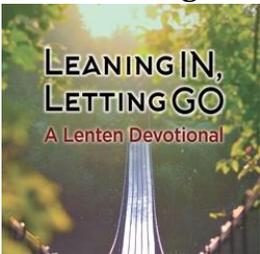
Now I have a little impromptu  
quiz for you this morning!



Can anyone name the three temptations, the three “Apps” that we talked about this morning? The first one? Anyone? The second? The Third?

Trusting God, serving God and not putting God to the test. These are the apps that Jesus uses in his own time of trial, and they are habits that he recommends we “App-ly” to our own struggles. If we change our habits, we can change our lives. It’s a good way to begin the six weeks of Lent, don’t you think?

And speaking of the six weeks of Lent, we have a little gift for you this morning! We’ve ordered these little Lenten Devotional Books for you, “Leaning In-Letting Go”, to assist you on your quest for spiritual discipline and growth during this season of Lent. It’s not an App – although I’m confident that if you search the term “Lenten devotional” in the App store on your phone, you will find such a thing. This is not an App, it’s a real paper that you can hold in your hands, and dog-ear the pages and mark them up with notes and highlights and keep it by your bed. We hope it is something that you will find useful, that you can “App-ly” to your life during these coming weeks as we journey through Lent and anticipate celebrating the resurrection



together on Easter Sunday. Here’s a short message from the author, Nicole

Massie Martin

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=9UNt1oc2HsA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=9UNt1oc2HsA)

This Lenten Devotional is also available for

Kindle download from Amazon.com