

connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

Miracles

The Transforming Power of Jesus

A STUDY OF
Matthew

Robby Barrett • Micah Caswell
Vivian Conrad • Charles Glidewell
David Morgan • Gene Wilkes



 **BaptistWayPress**
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*Miracles: The Transforming Power of Jesus (Matthew)—
Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide*

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How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect with Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guides* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.
5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session

can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)

6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Premium Commentary. Plan to get the additional Bible study comments available online. Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website. The price of these comments is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

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FREE! Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at www.baptistwaypress.org. Watch for them in the “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to www.baptistwaypress.org and click on “Teaching Resource Items” under the “Teacher Helps” tab for this study. These items are selected from the “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

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Miracles (Study of Matthew)

The Transforming Power of Jesus

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lesson 1

Overcoming Temptation

MAIN IDEA

Satan's resolve is to thwart God's plan for us and those we influence.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

How can I resist sin?

TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to understand that God allows testing in our lives to strengthen us.



Bible Comments

Understanding the Context

Jesus' public ministry began with John baptizing him in the Jordan River. Soon afterward, Jesus spent isolated days determining how being obedient to God would unfold in his life. Satan ("the tempter") challenged Jesus regarding the implications of God's statement: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:17) and used temptations to test Jesus' commitment to God and his plan.

As the dove descended upon him, and the heavenly voice spoke, Jesus recognized allusions to Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42. The psalm described the reign and rule of God's anointed. Jesus also understood the reference to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 42:1. Determining how these two seeming different identities would merge in his person and work was at least part of the reason Jesus sought solitude. *What did it mean to be God's anointed? What would obedience to God entail? What would it mean to be a suffering servant?* Few people realized that the Messiah and Suffering Servant would be the same person. Even Peter, after confessing Jesus was the Christ (Greek equivalent of Messiah), refused to accept that Jesus would suffer and die (Matt.16:22).

All three Synoptic Gospels address Jesus' temptation experience in the wilderness. Mark's account is concise: The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness with wild beasts for forty days (1:12–13). Luke's recollection of the event harmonized more with Matthew's than Mark's but with two significant differences. Luke reversed the order of the last two temptations and explicitly stated that Satan would return to tempt again at "an opportune time" (4:1–13).

Several parallels between Jesus' temptation and the Old Testament provide helpful background. Jesus' use of quotations from Deuteronomy, as well as their context, may suggest that he succeeded in the wilderness, whereas Israel failed. One might also see a contrast between Jesus and Moses (See Deuteronomy 9:9–18). Throughout the Book of Matthew, we can see comparisons between the two. One is the connection of both with Egypt and

the massacre of children associated with their births (Exodus 1:15–22; Matt. 2:13–18).

Interpreting the Scriptures

Led into the Wilderness (4:1)

4:1. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, not to be tempted as we understand the word, but for testing. The Greek word has both a positive and negative sense. The negative sense of the word denoted tempting with the intent to cause the tempted to fail. The Book of James illustrated the positive, where testing one’s faith produced endurance and strong character (1:2–4).

The word “devil” means slanderer. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) regularly used this term to refer to Satan, described as the one who opposed God (See 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1–2; Zechariah 3:1–2). Matthew used two terms in this chapter for this person: “tempter” in verse 3 and “Satan” in verse 10.

“Wilderness” pinpoints the location of the temptations as the desolate area that lay west of Jericho, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea. Also, the idea of wilderness may suggest Jesus was grooming for his work, just as Israel prepared for its entry into the Promised Land as it wandered the wilderness.

Turning Stones into Bread (4:2–4)

4:2. The number forty represents a significant but limited period. Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness. Moses tarried forty days on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:18; 34:28), and Elijah traveled forty days to Horeb (another name for Sinai, 1 Kings 19:8). The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years (Numbers 14:33–34; Deut. 8:2). Matthew may have been stressing the parallel of the fasting of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus.

Any link between Jesus and Israel was one of contrast. Israel failed to remain faithful when tempted in the wilderness. Jesus, however, remained loyal to God and his word. All the quotations Jesus used appear in Deuteronomy, Moses’s final sermon to the Hebrews.

Satan approached Jesus at the end of the forty days, the time in which Jesus fasted. (Luke indicated that the temptations repeatedly occurred during the forty days.) Satan seized upon Jesus' hunger ("he was famished") to raise the first temptation.

4:3. Matthew emphasized that Jesus was indeed the Son of God by positioning "Son of God" at the beginning of the sentence. When Satan stated, "If you are the Son of God," he was not contesting Jesus' identity. Instead, he was questioning the way by which Jesus would live out his identity. Jesus had heard these same words at his baptism (3:17). Satan was challenging Jesus to use his power in ways that were not in accord with God's will and plan.

Satan tempted Jesus to turn desert stones into loaves of bread, which they resembled. The crux of this temptation may have been for Jesus to use his divine power to satisfy his personal need. We can certainly understand why that action would have been inappropriate. Jesus may also have understood from Satan's temptation that he had the power to provide bread for his people. One of the people's expectations for the Messiah was that he would reintroduce the miracle of the manna (See John 6:1–34).

4:4. Jesus responded to the tempter by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. He used a verb tense that emphasized the permanence of the teaching. He recognized that ending hunger alone would not provide a meaningful life. One experiences the fullness of life only by trusting God.

Angels on Call (4:5–7)

The Jewish people thought the Messiah would be a wonderworker (Matt. 16:1). One example was the multitude that sought to make him king after he fed them (John 6:14–15). Another was Jesus' response to the request of the wealthy man who begged Jesus to send Lazarus back to his brothers (Luke 16:30–31). Although Jesus performed miracles, he did so to signal the kingdom of God had come, not to impress people to follow him.

4:5–6. Satan took Jesus to the temple and dared him to jump, quoting Psalm 91:11–12 to suggest that God would send angels to rescue him. To

know the exact location in the temple is not necessary for interpretation. Perhaps it was the southeast corner, which included a steep drop to the Kidron Valley below. It is noteworthy that multitudes would have witnessed this act, wherever its location. And like the final temptation, this may have been a vision of something that could occur in the future. Satan was tempting Jesus to perform a daring feat that would dazzle the crowds into following him.

4:7. Jesus withstood Satan’s temptation, citing Deuteronomy 6:16. Jesus did not mention the location of Israel’s temptation, Massah (Exodus 17:2–7). Soon after they left Egypt, the Hebrews ran out of water at Massah. They quarreled with Moses demanding that he, and by implication God, provide them with water. Exodus 17:7 speaks specifically of the people testing God.

Compromising with the World (4:8–10)

4:8. According to Matthew, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain where he could see all the world. This temptation came in the form of a vision; no mountain allows one to see the world as a whole. Perhaps Jesus, during his time in the wilderness, climbed one of the mountains from which he could see the far reaches of Palestine, as did Moses (Deut. 34:1–4). Satan may have used such a panoramic view to seduce Jesus. That the Messiah would drive out foreign rulers and restore independence for the Jews was a major expectation and longing for Jews. That this was the final temptation highlighted its importance.

Also stressing its significance was the prominence Matthew gave to mountains. Jesus taught on a mountain (Matt. 5:1). After feeding the five thousand, he went alone to a mountain to pray (14:23). The transfiguration experience occurred on a mountain (17:1), as did Jesus’ final appearance to the disciples (28:16).

4:9. The devil offered to give Jesus the world—if Jesus would but bow down and worship him. Notice the tension created by the devil’s words. God is Creator and this world belongs to him, but Satan is described as “the ruler of this world” and the prince of this age (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:11–12; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9–17). While we may correctly assert that Satan is subordinate to God, “the tempter” exerts

strong influence and wields considerable power in this age. Satan can, for a time, resist the will of God.

Jesus saw the plight of his people and understood he was the Son of God who came to rule and establish his kingdom. His choices: Worship Satan and compromise with how the world built empires (coercion, force, violence) or remain committed to God's way, where the Messiah would inaugurate his kingdom through his work as Suffering Servant.

4:10. Jesus dismissed Satan, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13. God alone deserves worship and service. To serve God is to act in harmony with his character. To accept Satan's offer would have caused Jesus to act in the way the world employs power. Jesus chose to reject the status quo of the world and change it through his suffering, death, and subsequent resurrection.

Continuing the Struggle (4:11)

4:11. Satan departed, and angels ministered to Jesus. The tense of the verb "left" implicitly suggests what Luke made clear: the tempter would return with further temptations. The text also implies the angels continued to sustain Jesus, both at this time and throughout his ministry.

Focusing on the Meaning

To resist sin, remember how you reach the end may be as important as the goal itself. The result of each of Jesus' temptations was clear: that the world might recognize him as Messiah. But each temptation sought to thwart Jesus' acceptance of his role as a Suffering Servant. Using worldly means to achieve divine purpose is wrong. Just because the goal is good does not mean that it should be achieved by any means. Shortcuts seldom work.

To trust God is to trust his way and power. To test God is not an act of faith. It presumes upon God to intervene when we present tests. We need to be aware of the times we ask God to empower us in what we deem best. Maybe the words of Proverb 3:5 are illustrative: "do not lean on your own understanding."

Satan crafts his temptations to our struggles. The tempter attacked Jesus as he was discerning what being God's beloved meant. Would Jesus seek God's way, or would he depend on his understanding?

Resisting the tempter forges character and spiritual strength. Jesus overcame the wiles of Satan and provided integrity we can imitate. When we conquer temptation, we develop integrity and character with God's help.

Teaching Plans

DISCOVERY PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Prepare a food buffet with several treats, including a dessert, something fried, and fruit (feel free to add others). Ask class members, *Which food tempts you?* Allow time for discussion, and then encourage members to enjoy the foods. If you choose not to provide food, bring pictures to promote discussion.
2. Connect the food buffet and temptation discussion to the lesson by saying, *In today's study, we see that Satan first tempted Jesus with food.*
3. Say, *Today's passage begins the first in a study of miracles described in the Book of Matthew.* Read the following quote from the *Study Guide* to introduce the theme of miracles: *As we begin our study of miracles in the Book of Matthew, you may wonder why we're starting with Jesus' temptations. He didn't perform a miracle in the wilderness, or did he? Because it requires supernatural work, defeating temptation is no less a miracle than giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, saving someone by faith through grace, or calming a stormy sea.*

Guide Bible Study

4. Form three study groups (one for each temptation found in the focal passage).
 - Food Group (4:1–4)
 - Ego Group (4:5–7)
 - Commitment Group (4:8–11)

Ask each group to read their assigned passage and use the *Study Guide* and other provided materials (commentaries, suggested webpages, and so forth) to grasp an understanding of the passage and share with the class their responses to the following questions.

- *What temptation does this passage highlight?*

- *How does it translate to our culture?*
 - *How are we tempted in the same way?*
 - *What was Jesus' first response to the temptation?*
 - *How was Jesus successful in overcoming that temptation?*
5. Before class time, recruit a member to prepare a brief presentation of Satan's role in temptation using today's terminology: Satan is an author, marketer, salesperson, social networker, media consultant, life coach, consultant. Then invite the class to add additional thoughts and insights to the presentation. Encourage discussion.
 6. Direct members to consider the three responses Jesus gave to Satan, which he took from the Book of Deuteronomy (8:3, 6:16, 6:13). Ask, *What role did Scripture play in Jesus' ability to defeat temptation? What role should Scripture play in our response to temptation?*
 7. Say, *While the Book of Matthew focuses on three significant temptations at the end of forty days, the Books of Mark and Luke state that Satan tempted Jesus throughout the forty days.* Ask, *Is there a connection between temptation and our being alone (isolated) or weak (physically and emotionally)? If so, what is it?*

Encourage Application

8. Say, *While Satan may take the initiative in our temptations and testing, God allows them.* Ask, *Why does God allow temptation?* After some discussion, point out the lesson Study Aim: *To understand God allows testing in my life to strengthen me.* Then ask, *How has temptation strengthened you?*
9. Direct members to the *Study Guide* sidebar "Jesus' Temptation Battle Plan." You may want to provide copies of the sidebar for members to take with them. Invite five members to each read one of the steps aloud. Encourage group discussion.
10. Repeat the lesson Study Aim. Then ask, *How do you know you are ready for the plans God has for you? For a new job? For more responsibility? For a new family member? For more schooling?* Encourage members to consider Question 1 in the *Study Guide* as they verbalize responses.

11. Say, *Even though the remains of the food buffet are now considered leftovers, some of us may be tempted to take a bite on the way out! And sometime soon in the days (or hours) ahead, other things will tempt us. We must follow the temptation battle plan Jesus gave us.*
12. Close with prayer, asking God to give strength as class members face temptation this week.

DISCUSSION PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Use a fishing lure to demonstrate temptation. Detail the many ways a fisher makes the lure tempting to the fish (coating it with certain smells or colors, casting over and over again, ensuring the lure's movement through the water is just right, setting the bait at exactly the right time to catch the fish). Say, *Satan is a good fisher. He works day and night to cast a lure our way.*
2. Say, *Temptation is not a new storyline in Scripture. The first pages of the Bible highlight temptation.* Invite class members to brainstorm Bible passages and stories of temptation. These might include Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), Joseph tempted with adultery (Genesis 39), David falling for Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), Achan taking the spoils (Joshua 7), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to bow down (Daniel 3), Jonah tempted to run (Jonah 1), and Job's temptation to curse God and turn his back on God (Job 3, 5).

Guide Bible Study

3. Invite a class member to read aloud Matthew 3:13–17 (Jesus' baptism) as background for the lesson. Ask, *What was the significance of Jesus baptism as he entered into this distressing time of temptation?*
4. Present the following lesson outline for today's study:
 - A Dare to Dine (1–4)

- A Dare to Drive (5–7)
 - A Dare to Show Devotion (8–11)
5. Read verses 1–4 aloud and ask the following discussion questions:
 - *What does it mean that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness?*
 - *Did God lead his Son into temptation? Does he lead us into temptation?*
 - *What was the purpose of Jesus' fasting?*
 - *Why did Satan begin the temptations with the phrase, "If you are the Son of God"?*
 - *How would Jesus' turning stones to bread be a sin?*
 6. Perhaps you or a class member have been to Jerusalem and observed the location where the temple once stood. If so, share a brief description of that experience (you may want to show a picture if available). Then give an overview of verses 5–7. Say, *While the first temptation challenged Jesus' identity, Satan used the second temptation to challenge the ego and authority of Jesus. But Jesus didn't need to test God; God affirmed Jesus at his baptism. Ask, How do we test God's promises of safety with our choices?*
 7. Read verses 8–11 aloud and ask the following discussion questions:
 - *How did Satan attempt to destroy Jesus' character and redeeming work?*
 - *If Jesus already had it all, why would this be a temptation?*
 - *What is the significance in this temptation, and the others, of Jesus using Scripture to combat Satan?*
 8. Say, *Jesus knew Scripture, which was an essential part of his plan to combat temptation. Jesus then applied Scripture, which enabled him to resist temptation.*

Encourage Application

9. Ask the class to brainstorm reasons God allows us to face temptation. During the discussion, say, *God allows testing in our lives to strengthen us. Then ask, How did Jesus know he was ready for his ministry and the cross that loomed before him? Say, He faced temptation and was found strong.*
10. Say, *We must recognize temptation to avoid it. People often think they are merely making choices rather than facing temptation to do something displeasing to God. However, Satan is the author and initiator of temptation. Ask, How do we underestimate the devil? State the following:*

- *We do not recognize him.*
- *We forget all about him.*
- *We think we can battle him on our own.*
- *We believe if we give in just a little, it is no big deal.*

11. Encourage class members to silently ponder the temptations they may face during coming week. Money? Power? Greed? Sex? Invite them to repeat this phrase aloud with you: *The focus of my life is trusting and pleasing God, the One who gives me strength when I am tempted.*
12. Close the lesson by reading 1 Corinthians 10:13 aloud: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”