**Reflections 9-15 March 2025**

**Tools to survive and thrive**

**Bible study on Luke 4.1-13**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Loving God, at the start of Lent,
help us as we explore what it means
to survive and thrive, even in the difficult times.
Thank you that you go before us
and show us the way.
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

**Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness**

**4**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **2**where for forty days he was tempted[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25066a)] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

**3**The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

**4**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25068b)]”

**5**The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6**And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. **7**If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

**8**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25072c)]”

**9**The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. **10**For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you
    to guard you carefully;
**11**they will lift you up in their hands,
    so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25075d)]”

**12**Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25076e)]”

**13**When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

**Bible notes**

The wilderness is traditionally the place of testing, formation, new beginnings and encounters with God. In the Hebrew Bible, it is in the wilderness that the people of God learn, through trying and failing, through instruction and practice, through encounter and through experience, to live God’s way. This difficult, formational time for the embryonic people of God followed fast on the heels of the high point of experiencing salvation from oppression and slavery through the plagues, the Passover and the parting of the Red Sea. Similarly, Jesus has just experienced the high point of his baptism and the reassurance of the voice from heaven confirming his identity; now he needs to work out how to live this out. The 40 days – like the 40 years for his ancestors – may or may not be an exact length: ‘40’ denotes a ‘significant’ period of time. As with the wilderness experience of his ancestors, Jesus faces temptations around his identity, the need to be fed, the question of who to worship and why, and the enticement to test God. Jesus responds differently from his ancestors, providing a different model of living out our identity as the people of God. Key to his survival in the face of these difficult circumstances is Jesus’ security in his identity as the Son of God, affirmed by God at his baptism – it does not need to be put to the test. Jesus is also secure in his knowledge of Scripture, God’s instructions on how to live. Filled with the Holy Spirit and secure in the Word of God, Jesus has what he needs to survive and grow.

**Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

What do we mean by ‘wilderness’ or ‘desert’? They feature so often in Bible stories as physical places, but many of us may not come across either. Yet the part these landscapes play in the lives of Bible characters seems to be really important. The Russian word ‘poustinia’ means ‘desert’ – it also refers to a plain hut in a remote place to which an individual can retreat. Might desert for us mean a difficult life experience, rather than somewhere physical? How did Jesus survive the wilderness before his ministry began? There are clues in all three synoptic Gospels. What were his tools for survival? And could we apply them when we enter our own desert?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| A person holding a flashlight and a first aid kit  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |

* What equipment would you need to not just survive, but thrive, in a harsh landscape?
* What tools does Jesus rely on in his wilderness experience?
* Is there a Bible verse you would like to hold onto this week to help you through testing times?

 **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Creator God, you tell us that you will make a way in the wilderness.
Help us to see it, however faint it may be to our human eyes.
Guide us through the desert and help us to find the oases,
so we may flourish for you.
**Amen.**