

In our scripture reading today, Jesus faced three major temptations, temptations of the body, the mind, and the spirit. These trials are ones that we encounter in our own lives, but that our children are also facing. In today's world the media and society place such a focus on what we *have* to have, what we *need* to be doing, and what we *must* fix about ourselves. Children are hearing two conflicting messages: "You are not good enough" and "you are entitled to everything." It is these two messages they must contend and wrestle with on a daily, even hourly basis. Temptation to fulfill society's ideals is what I, as a teacher, try to teach my students to overcome.

Stone into bread~ Jesus said "man can not live on bread alone" this message reaches directly into our children's lives. During their day, the media fills their attention with messages on how having everything they could ever want will ensure them an easy, happy life. Children see professional athletes and celebrities making millions of dollars and aspire to become like them. Their role models became famous from reality television rather than helpful contributions to society. Children grow up believing in material wealth as the key to success. Rather than wanting to contribute to a better world, our children are hoping to become rich and famous through means of entertainment. Children see constant advertisements about how to improve their looks and become "better" but against who's definition of better? The improvements our children should be making are of the heart, trying

to figure out ways to help better themselves so they can in turn serve and help others. We, as a church family, can support our children by providing them with opportunities to give back, such as the mission trip to Haiti. The upcoming trip will be powerful for both the group going and the group receiving the help. I look forward to hearing the accounts.

Power over the kingdoms~ With the material wealth, the next expectation is power. Power to have others “beneath” you, serve you. Power to control the situation to get just what you want out of it. With the influence of social media, children are being exposed to just how influential their words can be. With one simple statement posted on social media, I have seen an entire school turned on it’s head. The speed at which messages can travel allow for nearly immediate impact. It is sad that in today’s world, social media is blamed for one-third of all failed marriages. Children are heading into this reality at blazing speed. The behaviors and patterns of relationships are forming around these sites as a major means of communication, and our children are going to suffer. Children use these outlets as a way to express their emotions and interact with others, but the faceless world of social media does not give a child the same connections that face to face contact can. A child does not see the hurt or pain their words can cause behind the message board. The influence of social media on my students’ lives is staggering. Without fail, as a team, our middle school deals with an issue stemming from social media

on a weekly basis. Much of our energy can be spent on quelling the flurry around these outbreaks, rather than giving our attention and efforts to teaching our kids.

Testing~ With all the other growing pains of young adulthood, children are entering a world where boundary lines are blurred and consequences are irrelevant. Just this past week, a fellow teacher and I were sitting at the lunch table pondering why our students are missing so much school. These children are being given the power to make decisions that their parents should be making. “Kids are deciding they don’t want to go to school, they would rather stay home and play video games, so they do. As a school, we can’t do anything to make them come.” Wait, that can’t be right!? Parents wouldn’t knowingly allow their child to stay home, day after day, and play video games rather than attend school and learn; **but it is happening**. Parents are afraid of not being liked by their child; they want their child to think of them as a friend. This dynamic of parent and child gives the kid a false feeling of entitlement. Children see that they are granted the decision making capability of the parent and it begins to filter into other facets of their lives.

I have seen on many occasions the following scenario: “Where is your homework? I didn’t have time to do it. What do you mean you didn’t have time? Well, I had other things to do, so I didn’t have a chance to get to it.” I play this conversation, and many similar, back in my mind to make sure that I indeed am hearing correctly. The priority and focus of a child’s day is not on learning and

fulfilling the expectations of being a student, but rather satisfying their desires to do something with entertainment value. This dismissal of responsibility is setting a child up for trouble down the road. When the accountability of choices and actions goes out the window, what lesson does it teach? Regardless of how important something is, their needs come first. This is the scariest reality our children are facing today.

During our lenten season, let us be mindful of the things we have, but do not need. Let's help guide our children and the future of our world to appreciate these things and strive to give to others as selflessly as possible. The children of today have incredible gifts and a large pool of resources to utilize, our navigation and encouragement will help them make wise and honorable choices both for themselves and those they intend to interact with.

Let us pray:

Father, on this day of love, let us be reminded of your ultimate love for us. Please keep our hearts and minds on our own strengths and help us to use those to better the world we live in. As we go into the community, please let those we encounter feel our love and kindness through actions as well as words. Let us be role models for our own children and the children who are around them. Thank you for your gifts and sacrifice.