



# Temptations and choices

A time to reflect on difficult decisions, temptations, and what we really need.

Discovering God offers practical ideas for informal services and events where the focus is on creating community and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that the church is available to all.

Underpinning the materials is an intention to gather together and with God, sharing experiences and stories, and learning together by providing resources that give an opportunity to develop:

- ♥ **empathy** – helping to understand others by listening to their stories
- ♥ **resilience** – learning to trust in God, to have a sense of being valued and protected
- ♥ **self-awareness** – developing a knowledge of ourselves, by asking questions, thinking and reflecting in order to grow
- ♥ **faithful living** – a conscious intention about how we act in our daily routines, with eyes open to see where we need to do God's work.

We urge leaders to act as facilitators, limiting time spent leading from the front, and encouraging people to participate and interact together in mixed age groups. The ideas will work in face to face gatherings, and with minimal adaptation for online use. More guidance on using Discovering God is on the [WEB](#) in the Worship and learning support area.

## Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme.

The current cost-of-living crisis has, for many of us, impacted the choices we make. Rising prices and financial constraints may underpin more of our decisions. With a heightened awareness of our finances, we have an opportunity to reflect on what is essential and what is simply desirable. Many are faced with difficult if not impossible choices – e.g. eat or heat? But what is truly important? What is wise? Are we sometimes tempted to make wrong or bad choices?

Give each person a chocolate/sweet; tell them that if they can resist the temptation to eat it, they will receive another at the end of the session.

God, we have made so many choices already today:  
what to eat; what to wear; what to spend; who we trust.  
We are surrounded by needs, wants and decisions.  
We choose to be here now and think about how we make choices.  
We ask you to help and guide us. **Amen.**

## Somewhere to finish

Before you end, come together to gather your thoughts and, if appropriate, to pray.

Did anyone wait until the end to receive two chocolates/sweets? Give them out and discuss how those people feel who had eaten theirs at the start. Did anyone's choice affect someone else? Would anyone change the choice they made, looking back?

Spend a few moments time sharing with each other the choices you must make day-to-day.

Faithful God, we lay before you the choices and decisions we face.  
Help us to make wise choices with our resources, time and finances,  
and to resist the temptation of always looking at what we don't have,  
or seeking to meet our needs in unhealthy ways.  
When we are tempted to be controlling or stingy, give us courage to  
be generous and caring. **Amen.**

## Follow-up ideas

- If you can, buy Fairtrade Easter eggs/gifts. This choice will make a difference to the farmers and workers who have produced them.
- Set aside some time to evaluate how you spend your time and money. Are you spending on needs or wants? What are you tempted by? Who or what are you trusting for provision?
- Choose to be thankful – even if/when times are tough. Each day, write down something that you are grateful for.

## Something from the Bible

Linking the introductory activities to the theme and Bible passage.

### Luke 4.1-13

In this passage, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism. He experiences forty days of testing – we hear of only three temptations that represent the greatest tests of all.

### Read and share

**You will need:** copies of the 'Temptation' story (see [WEB](#)).

Ask the group to think about 'baddies' from films and stories. What do they look and sound like? Ask them to do a baddie's laugh! Is it easy to spot a baddie? Read the 'Temptation' story, putting on a baddie's voice for the voice of the devil, either by reading it yourself or having volunteers if they are confident. Now reread it, shouting the devil's voice. Repeat the story once more, but this time make the devil sound very gentle and friendly.

Talk about which of the voices was the most persuasive, or more difficult to spot. What would tempt you? If you were devising three big tests, what would you offer?

### What can we learn from this passage?

Jesus doesn't let desires as such physical hunger distract him. He says that the Word of God offers far more strength and satisfaction. We may be driven by physical desires: seeking food, possessions, material things to make us feel good, or even to numb us from pain. During Lent Christians practice fasting – going without food or something else for a period of time – as a way to remember that desire should not drive us; it is God who truly satisfies.

Jesus resists the pull of worldly power to embrace his role in the kingdom of God. He does not claim his authority before it is the right time. By following God's way, however difficult and challenging that might be, he demonstrates true authority. It can be tempting to want things before we can afford them or to take on a role before we are truly ready. That's not an excuse for inaction, but for Christians it is a call to learn patience – to 'wait for God'.

Jesus refuses to force God's hand in order to prove himself. It can work the other way too: 'I'll believe in you, God, if you do this for me'. Neither of these are God's way. For Christians, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus shows us that God's approach is one of sacrificial love and service, of giving up on things such as control and proof.

## Explore... temptations and choices

Choose from these activities to help people explore the theme. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters to help you plan and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God.

### Bare necessities **WE**

Play or show a video clip of the song 'The Bare Necessities' (from *The Jungle Book*).

Discuss together: What are the bare necessities of life? You could also approach this from the world of 'human rights': What would you grant people a right to have? Jesus said, 'One does not live by bread alone' – what do you think he meant by this?

### Needs vs Wants **WES**

**You will need:** large sheets of paper, felt tip pens.

Ask two people to lie down on the paper so you can draw round them and create two distinct outlines. Label one of the resulting figures, 'Needs' and the other, 'Wants'. Invite people to write or draw in the appropriate outline things that they either need or want. Reflect on how many people in the world live without things we may consider to be 'needs' (e.g. electricity, Wi-Fi, access to a bank account or a car). Does familiarity and availability make us feel we 'need' certain things – is this part of what temptation is? How do we choose wisely?

### Perspective chat **WEA**

Invite the group to think about choices they make – as individuals, as a family/household, at work/school, etc. – day-to-day. Is anyone able to share some really tough decisions they have had to make? How might our choices affect other people, and how often do we think about that? If it is appropriate for the group, turn these thoughts into prayer, asking for God's help to make the right choices.



### All we need **ES**

**You will need:** paper, magazines and catalogues, scissors, glue.

Invite people to create a collage of images displaying the resources and times God has provided. Encourage people to think more widely than food, water and shelter – or even material things in general. What do we need in terms of relationships, or being healthy, or spiritually? The Beatles famously sang 'All you need is love'; Christians often say something similar – what do you think it means? How do we choose to love?