**Study Series: Truth and Lies**

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**Lesson Title: “Religious Temptations” (pp. 18-27)**

December 13, 2020 Session 02

**The main point of this lesson is:** Even Christians’ religious culture can become a tool for Satan to tempt them.

Focus on this goal: To help adults assess there religious culture for elements distracting them from following Jesus.

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 4:5-7

To the Leader: Do an Internet search for “simple illusions” if you need help preparing for Step 1.

Before the Session

1. **Prepare to display or demonstrate** an illusion (optical illusion or simple “magic” trick). **OPTION:** Enlist a learner or other church member who enjoys doing illusions to prepare one quick example. (Step 1)

2. **Enlist a group member** to share the Civil War illustration from the first four paragraphs of Day Four. (Step 5)

During the Session

**Step 1. Introduction / Discussion Starter**

**Show or perform** your prepared illusion (or **call on** the enlisted adult).

**Guide participants to share** answers to Day One Discussion Question (p. 18).

**Acknowledge** that most people enjoy illusions.

**Ask** what makes illusions so fascinating.

After brief discussion, **raise the question** of whether Christians ever experience religious illusions.

**Probe thinking by asking** what elements might be necessary for a religious illusion to occur.

**Ask** what the discussion of illusions might have to do with a study like the current one from Truth and Lies.

**Step 2. Day One – The Illusion**

**Invite a volunteer to read** the Alfred Lord Tennyson quote (p. 18).

**Ask:**

1. Was Tennyson correct?
2. Why would “half a truth” be “the blackest of lies”?

**Read** the last paragraph on page 18 and **invite** reactions and discussion.

**Direct participants** to read Matthew 4:5-7 and identify where in the passage they see “deception,” “mystery,” and “the spectacular.”

**Acknowledge** Satan’s showmanship and ability to mimic some of the works of God (think of the early plagues in Egypt duplicated by Pharaoh’s men) and religious experiences of people.

**As a group, answer** Day One activity 1 (p. 19).

**Step 3. Day Two – The Framework**

**Review** the opening five paragraphs of Day Two (pp. 19-20).

**Ask** the Day Two Discussion Question (p. 19).

**Lead participants** to offer their understandings of the significance of the second temptation of Jesus. (Matt. 4:5-7).

Depending on the group’s discussion, **supplement** with the two interpretations presented in Day Two (p. 20).

To summarize, **stress** that Satan can use our own religious culture as an instrument in tempting us to sin.

**Ask learners** to reflect on the religious culture of your group and church (places, traditions, beliefs held important by the body of believers), and suggest ways Satan might use them to tempt believers to elevate them above God and His Word.

**List** these on a visible writing surface.

**Step 4. Day Three – Satan’s Use of Scripture**

**Ask** what religious element Satan used in his second temptation of Jesus.

If it is not already there, **add** God’s Word to the list you made in Step 3.

**Use** the Day Three opening paragraphs (p. 21) to **stress** that Satan is quite familiar with God’s Word.

**Follow that up by asking** how Satan could use something as good and holy as Scripture to tempt Jesus (or us!) (by misapplying or taking the Scripture out of context).

**Invite participants to identify** what Jesus’ response (Matt. 4:7) reflects (at least two things: knowledge of Scripture and recognition of Satan’s abuse/misuse of Scripture).

**Ask rhetorically** how equipped learners are on those two counts to counter Satan’s temptations.

**Request a volunteer read** the first paragraph of page 22.

**Review** the list made in Step 3 and **stress** that 1 Corinthians 10:13 applies in all the situations, but it is still dependent on us to be alert to and recognize Satan’s temptations.

**Step 5. Day Four – Another Battle in Another Wilderness**

**Call on the learner** to share the Civil War examples.

**Stress** that we, too, are in a war, and like the examples given, we often experience “friendly fire.”

**Discuss** how friendly fire can happen among believers.

**Ask** what advantage it is to Satan for Christians to engage in friendly fire with one another. (Among other things, one incident can distract and effectively eliminate a number of believers, perhaps even an entire church.)

**Help learners recall** the information from Session 1 (p. 9) about Roman soldiers training in groups, not alone.

**Stress** that allowing ourselves to be isolated from other Christians because of friendly fire isolates us and makes us more vulnerable to Satan’s temptations.

**Step 6. Day Five – The Triumph**

**Relate** the information about Thomas Jefferson and The Jefferson Bible (pp. 25-26), then **read** the Day Five paragraph (p. 26) beginning, “In some ways, ….”

**Review** the various suggestions for gaining a fresh perspective in Bible reading, then **ask** how members can help each other prosper from one or more of these approaches.

**Invite volunteers to share** their responses to activity 2 (p. 27) and pair with others who have the same interest.

**Step 7. Live Out the Lesson**

**Direct attention** to Day Five activity 3 (p. 27).

**Encourage** participants to reflect on that question and their answers in the week to come.

**Close with prayer**, asking God to help group members to not allow elements of their religious culture to distract them from following Jesus.