

Take-Home for Session 2: Prepare Yourself for Temptation

If You Come Forward to Serve: An Inductive Study of Sirach

What We Found

- Ben Sira's honest recruiting pitch: if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation (2:1). Trial is the normal companion of discipleship, not a sign of God's absence.
- Gold is tested in fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation (2:5). Fire refines gold; trials received in faith purify rather than destroy.
- Three anchors for the tested: wait for his mercy, trust in him, hope for good things (2:7-9), backed by history's cross-examination: who ever trusted in the Lord and was put to shame? (2:10).
- We discovered Jesus living the pattern: baptized and declared beloved Son, then led straight into the wilderness to be tempted (Matthew 3:16-4:1). The Master walked the road first.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Anthony of the Desert

The father of monks, according to the sayings handed down from the Egyptian desert, taught that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven untested, and that we should expect temptation to our last breath. His sayings echo the realism of Sirach 2:1: temptation is the job description of anyone serious about God.

Traditional sayings of the Desert Fathers associated with St. Anthony (Apophthegmata Patrum tradition, paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Teresa of Ávila

Teresa, who endured decades of dryness and opposition, counseled her sisters that patience obtains everything, that God does not change, and that whoever has God lacks nothing. Her famous bookmark prayer is Sirach 2:6 (trust in him, and he will help you) lived out over a lifetime.

The bookmark prayer found in her breviary, traditionally attributed to St. Teresa (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: Thomas à Kempis

The Imitation of Christ teaches that no one is so perfect as to be beyond temptation, and that trials are useful because they humble, purify, and instruct us. Fire tests iron, he writes, and temptation tests the just man. The thought is Sirach 2:5 handed on across some sixteen centuries.

The Imitation of Christ, Book I, ch. 13 (traditionally attributed to Thomas à Kempis, paraphrased)

Live It This Week

- Memorize the memory verse cold. It is the title of our whole study; you will use it for the rest of your life.
- Take the trial you named in the Send question and write one prayer at the top of a journal page: Lord, use this furnace to refine me. Under it, each day this week, write one line about what God might be burning off.

- Pray the last petitions of the Our Father slowly each night (lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil), remembering that the Greek of Sirach 2:1 uses peirasmós, the same word family as this petition.

Scripture Memory Verse

"My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation." (**Sirach 2:1**)

Before Next Session

Read Sirach 3:1-16 and 3:17-31, and notice which two very different topics the chapter joins.

Catechism References

CCC 2846-2849; CCC 164-165