

## Introduction

This assembly and classroom follow-up is based on the story of Jesus facing temptations in the desert. Jesus knew the work he had to do but the devil tried to knock him off course from the goal of rescuing the world. Jesus used the words of the Bible to stay on task and go for his God-given goal, even though it was costly and painful. This resource helps children to consider the temptations there are to give up on their own goals, and encourages them to stay on task to the end.

## Preparation

Use a pupil-friendly retelling of this Bible story from Matthew 4:1-11.

You will need some running magazines, a stopwatch and a pair of trainers, some stones, some building bricks to make a tower and a globe.

Finally, prepare five large 'temptation bubbles' for the assembly, which read respectively:

- Just think of all the fun things you're missing.
- Just think of all the free time you're wasting.
- Just think of all the TV programmes you're missing.
- Just think of all the other things you could be doing.
- Just think of the computer games you could be buying.

## Development

1. Introduce some simple keep-fit exercises that the children can do while sat down. Start the assembly by suggesting that we all need 'to get in shape' for the day with some sit-down aerobics, but include some silly ones, too. For example:  
Hands in the air, stretching and wiggling fingers; rolling heads this way and that; rolling shoulders left and right; clenching and unclenching fists; pulling back the forearm to the elbow; some finger exercises (like pointing the index finger up and then to the side rapidly and doing the same with the other hand but pointing it in a different direction to the first); screwing up your nose; raising your eyebrows; smiling, then grimacing; rubbing the tummy with one hand while patting your head with the other, and so on.
2. Well, that's not exactly a full-on keep-fit routine but it's a start! Keeping fit is important, especially for anyone who is planning to enter a race like the marathon.

Produce some running magazines and begin to go through all the preparation and build-up that is suggested in these. Invite some children up to mime the following activities:

- Eating a good diet (*mime eating*).
- Going for short regular runs building up to longer ones (*slow-motion running on the spot*).
- Doing daily exercise (*doing some press-ups*).
- Timing yourself (*holding a stopwatch*).
- Getting a good pair of trainers (*displaying some new trainers*).

NB: It may be that someone on the staff has done or is planning to do a marathon or half-marathon and so you can introduce some true-life information about the training that they may have undertaken or which they plan to do.

Phew! It's going to be hard work. It's not easy having the goal of running a marathon.

3. Now introduce the five temptation bubbles behind each of the children who have been miming the preparation for the marathon. Each of these could be held by another child and then read out loud by a whole class group:
  - Just think of all the fun things you're missing (*held behind the child eating a special diet*).
  - Just think of all the free time you're wasting (*held behind the child doing slow-motion running*).
  - Just think of all the TV programmes you're missing (*held behind the child doing press-ups*).
  - Just think of all the other things you could be doing (*held behind the child with a stopwatch*).
  - Just think of all the computer games you could be buying (*held behind the child with the new trainers*).
4. There are always reasons to give up on the goals we set ourselves – reasons to be tempted not to stay on task. It happened to Jesus, too. He knew that God wanted him to rescue the world from all that was bad but he was tempted to use God's power to do things for himself instead.
5. To unpack the story briefly produce some stones, some building bricks (to build a tower) and a small globe.

These objects represent the ways in which Jesus was tempted to give up on his goal

He could have turned the stones into bread but that would help people only until they were hungry again. *God wanted Jesus to help people in a way that would last forever.*

He could have jumped off the tower and landed safely like a superhero but people soon forget such stunts. *God wanted Jesus to help people in a way that would last forever.*

He could have used evil ways to force the world to change but war and fighting never really solve anything for long. *God wanted Jesus to help people in a way that would last forever.*

Jesus knew that the way of love was the only way to go, so he stuck to his goals. Just like sticking to a good diet, proper training, daily exercise and proper equipment is the only way to achieve the goal of running a marathon.

6. Whatever the goals may be that you set for yourselves, there will always be voices tempting you to give up, telling you there's an easier way, offering you a short cut, suggesting that you cheat.

I wonder what goals you are setting yourself this week/today?

Maybe to try harder in lessons, to make a new friend, to be kind to others, to learn a new skill, to be

more thoughtful, to remember to say 'thank you'.

We need goals, but don't be surprised if you sometimes feel like giving up or not bothering.

Christians believe that God offers us the strength to say 'no' to these temptations to give up. God can help us stay on task.

7. Put up a picture of the temptations of Jesus, such as *Christ in the Wilderness* by Ivan Kramskoy or Stanley Spencer's *Christ in the Wilderness*.

Use one of these pictures as a focus for a final reflection:

- I wonder what your goals are for today.
- I wonder what might get in the way of those goals.
- I wonder if Jesus felt like giving up.
- I wonder if Jesus thought it would be easier to use his position to become powerful and popular rather than go the way of love.
- I wonder what hard choices I might have to face today.
- I wonder if God can give me the strength to stick to what I have decided is my goal.

## Classroom follow-up

1. In a circle start with some keep-fit exercises to link up to the assembly; this time involve the whole body by standing up! After this quick warm-up, sit down and ask the class why they think people don't bother doing any keep-fit exercises. What gets in the way?  
They might suggest: it's too much like hard work; it takes up too much time; it's not worth it; there are more interesting things to do.
2. Create a large cube/dice with the following goals written on the six sides:
  - Do better in my schoolwork.
  - Help more at home.
  - Be kinder to others.
  - Say no to fighting and backchat.
  - Be polite to everyone.
  - Make friends, not enemies.

Invite different children to roll the dice. Talk about the goal on the side that turns up and about what sort of temptations come in to make us give up on that goal. How do they think they can beat these temptations and stay on task?

3. There are various strategies for staying on task to any goals you set. In groups ask the class to decide which of the following they like the best and why.
  - Write down your goals and read them every day.
  - Ask a friend to help you keep on task.
  - Give yourself a reward to look forward to at the end.



- Practise saying 'no' to temptations.
- Keep a tick chart of the good things you manage to do.
- Join a group of people with the same goal.
- Set yourself small steps toward your goal.
- Learn about how other people have avoided temptations.

When Jesus faced his temptations to do things the devil's way, he remembered what God had said in the Bible and he prayed. Christians find help and inspiration to keep on track from reading the stories in the Bible and by praying regularly to God. Are there any Bible stories that have helped them/you keep going?

4. Reaching a goal can be like climbing a ladder but at every rung/step there is the danger of being distracted and falling off!

Give out a pre-prepared sheet to each child on which there is a five-step ladder drawn. At the top of the ladder, invite the children to write their goal for that week/day/term.

Next, on the five steps towards that goal, they should decide on the stages that they want to go through to reach their goal.

Finally, all around the ladder, draw in some temptation bubbles (like in the assembly). In these they should write some of the things that might put them off. They might work in pairs at this point to help each other discover what the temptations might be.