

The young mother is in the kitchen just passing through. She glances out the dining room windows and sees her little boy gleefully riding his bike, up and down the driveway. This is his first “Big Boy” bike and he was getting the feel of it. Just as she turns to head back to the kitchen she hears; “Hey Mom. Watch this!” She turns around just in time to see....

Let’s pause here for just a moment. Don’t worry, they won’t mind, and step back a few weeks. Back to late February. This little boy is having his birthday. Just when he thought that it was over, his Dad grins and tells him to come outside to the garage. There, back in the corner out of site (because it was blocked by the car) was a bike. A nice green bike with large tires and a book rack on the back, and a big red bow on the shiny handlebars. “Now” Dad explains, “you are big enough for your big boy bike. But, you will have to wait until the snow is gone before you can ride it.” The young father had done his homework. He had talked to the salesman at Sears and explained that his son was rather hard on his toys and very rambunctious. The salesman assured the young father that this bike was designed to withstand anything that a young boy could dish out. It was very sturdy and could take a licking.

The previous summer, the young family had been working on the yard, so there were still piles of black dirt strategically placed around the house. One of them just happened to be at the end of the driveway.

“Hey Mom. Watch This!” The young mother had just enough time to yell “**WAYNE come here quick**” and before either of them could yell “STOP”, that little dare devil took off at full speed, peddling as fast

as he could down the driveway straight towards that pile of black dirt.

Hey mom, watch this. Those 4 words send hearts to the stomach, breath to catch in their throats, and time itself, to slow down so that they could see every little detail of that blur of bike and rider go sailing up over that pile of dirt, only to become separated in mid flight with the bike going one way and the rider the other. In full fledge parent panic they raced out to where everything and everyone had landed...only to see their son get up laughing and jumping around like nothing happened. The bike, on the other hand, had NOT lived up to the salesman's assurances. It seems that the bike could handle anything, but a 5-year-old boy with the temptation, the urge, to fly.

Before we go any farther, lets define Temptation. Just so that we are all on the same page. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: Temptation is a strong urge or desire to have or do something, especially something that is bad, wrong, or unwise. **Think about that: (now repeat the definition)**

No one is exempted from temptations. As you heard here in our scripture readings today. Even Jesus was tempted. Now, I can't even imagine going more than 12 hours without getting something to eat, but Jesus went 40 days and 40 nights! You can just imagine how hungry he was. That is why the Devil thought that he had the perfect way to show GOD that even his most beloved Son could be tempted. By tempting Jesus to quell his hunger by turning the very stones around him to bread so that he may eat. But Jesus was not easily tempted. His answer was; **"It is written: 'Man shall not live on**

**bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”**

Wow. The Devil thought that he had him. As hungry as he was, Jesus turned down that temptation. The Devil thought, man, I need to step it up a little. So, he did just that. He took him to the Holy city and then up to the highest point of the temple there and told him to jump. Well, not in those words exactly. He DARED him to jump by saying: *“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”* In other words, he double dog dared him to jump, to prove that he was in fact, the son of GOD and that GOD would not let him be harmed. Now Jesus was quick. He came back immediately with: **“It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”**

The Devil just stood there, shaking his head. Thinking that he really needs to up the ante and make him an offer that he can not possibly refuse. All of the kingdoms and land under his rule. That is a power that must surely tempt the son of GOD. So, he took him to the highest mountain peak and had him gaze down upon the kingdoms of the world with all of their spender and made his final pitch: *“All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me.”* Jesus at this point is getting a little perturbed. He just wants all of this to end. Inwardly he is probably chuckling at the Devils attempts to tempt him, but he is growing weary of them, so he answers this final time: **“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”**

Now, Dad got the bike exchanged and I took better care of it after that. But the temptations never stopped coming. No, they changed their names and went from being called **Temptations** to **Dares**. “I dare you to...”, “I double dog dare you to...” Then, when you left high school and entered College or the military, they changed to **Challenges!**

Wouldn't it be nice if the temptations, dares, and challenges that you faced, came with that little voice of reason that made itself present whenever you got into a bind. That little bell, that voice, that..."Mom-ism".

**I DARE you to jump off this cliff into the water below.** Hmm. It is hot out here, and that water really looks cooling. Are there any rocks down there? Is it deep enough? What about the current.

“DING” If your friends jumped off a cliff, would you?

Huh? What?

“DING” If your friends jumped off a cliff, would you?

Ummmm. No?

“DING” Might I suggest that you just walk down to where they are swimming and join in that way?

You know. I think that I will just hike on down to where they are and join in. I really don't feel like jumping today.

**Hey Kevin! Johnny has a copy of the answers for the test in History tomorrow. He snuck it off the teachers' desk. Everyone's got one, do you want one?** Hmm. That test is really going to be a hard one. I

could really use the extra boost knowing the answers. Besides, everyone else has a copy. Why should I be left out?

“DING” Just because everyone is doing it, does it make it right?

But I want to do well on the test!

“DING” How about you hit your notes one last time. You have good notes and you have time.

Nah, I don't need them. I took some good notes and I just have a few more pages to read.

You see, GOD will not put any temptations before you without also giving you a way through them so that you can endure them. We call them Mom-isms, a little birdie, a sixth sense, a gut feeling, or the best one, your conscious. It could be a friend, a teacher, or even a stranger, but GODs message will get through. It is up to you to decide whether or not you are going to listen, to make that choice.

Not all temptations are bad. Not all temptations will get you hurt. For those of you that don't know yet, I love to cook. A lot of the things that I make, are just ideas that pop into my head at any given moment. There are times though, that I see something posted on Facebook or in a store and I am tempted to try making it. This kind of temptation is only bad or hurts if the recipe I try turns out to be really bad tasting. But if it turns out well, I may have learned a new combination of sauces, or cakes, or foods, to add to my ever-growing bag of tricks.

Temptations are all around us, every day. Most of the time we just pass them by without a second thought. Other times they catch us, and we are tempted to do or say something that we normally would not do or say. This is true, not only at home, but at work, and at school. Anywhere you happen to be, temptation will be there in some way, shape, or form. School is starting up soon and those of you heading into Middle School for the first time are going to be subjected to a lot of new things, along with possibly larger classes. You may be tempted to do or say things just because you want to fit in. But before you take that leap, before you jump on the wagon, stop and think about it. Listen for that little birdie, listen to that gut feeling, if it doesn't seem right, doesn't feel right, maybe that is GOD giving you a way out of the situation.

For those of you in High School, you have already been there, done that, and know everything already. Right? I mean, you have never been tempted to skip a class to head to McDonalds for an early lunch or sneak out of practice because you are just not feeling it today. You guys are above all of those temptations, riiight? But just incase you aren't, know that GOD will always give you a way out of them. You just need to listen for them.

Jesus was tempted too. So don't feel bad. Just remember that even though there are temptations in your path, GOD will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, and when you are tempted, he will always provide you with a way out so that you can endure it.

Amen.