

Following Jesus: The Gospel Path Jesus Left for Our Safety

Matthew 4:1-11; 6:13; 1 John 2:15-17

The simplest description of what we are as Christians comes from Christ's first call to those first disciples in Matthew 4:19. Jesus explains the new life He was offering, and the salvation He was purchasing, and the Gospel of repentance He was preaching.

He reduces everything down to two words:

Follow Me

This two-word call summarizes the simple yet hard choice that had to be made, because either we are following or we are not. There are degrees of following (closely, distantly, sporadically, etc.) but there can be no doubt. If we are following someone it is intentional and it is a choice.

Trace with me now these six times Jesus asks people to follow Him, here in Matthew.

Matthew 4:19 (NKJV) Then He said to them, “**Follow Me**, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 8:22 (NKJV) But Jesus said to him, “**Follow Me**, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Matthew 9:9 (NKJV) Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “**Follow Me.**” So he arose and followed Him.

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, **and follow Me.**”

Matthew 19:21 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and **come, follow Me.**”

Hearing & Following Christ Starts With Salvation

Now, turn onward to John 10.

Always remember that one of the most powerful verses of assurance and blessing for us as believers comes from Christ's words in John 10:27. Please stand as we hear what Jesus said.

John 10:27 (NKJV):

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and **they follow Me.**

Pray

Salvation is when we are found by our Good Shepherd.

We hear Him, forsake going our own sinful way, and begin the rest of our life listening for His voice in His Word, and following Him.

Those who hear and follow Christ are believers, who are called Christians, who are called disciples.

The Lord left a prayer for His followers or disciples.

The Lords Prayer is actually the prayer of those following Christ.

This prayer is the daily confession of all the ways we need Him.

Following the Gospel Pathway Jesus Left for Us

Each of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer to us His disciples, marks an area that we are to confess or agree with God each day that we need. Prayer is expressing how much we need the Lord.

When we pray, we reveal how much we realize our great need of God's help in life.

The less we pray the less we consciously know that we need Him.

Think with me of what we confess about our need for God in each petition.

As we do so, remember this is a shared need. Jesus said we all have these same needs every day. All your brothers and sisters in Christ sitting around you right now exactly need God's help in each of these areas.

Following the Pathway of Worshiping God

When we seek our Father in Heaven, we have started to worship.

When we stop each day to focus our hearts upon our Father, we get focused on the Character of God. That is the start of our life of worship.

We need to frame each event that arrives in life with those four unchangeable features of God as our Father.

We all need daily reminders that our Father:

Always Loves

Always Knows (Omniscient)

Always With Us (Omnipresent)

Always Almighty (Omnipotent)

God wants us to worship Him. We worship Him in spirit and in truth. The truth about God is contained in the doctrines of His character, and Whom He has revealed Himself to be.

We need to stop each day to focus upon God and worship Him for who He is.

God wants us to renew our desire to focus our distracted minds upon Him each day.

Following the Pathway of Surrendering to God

When we seek His Kingdom we surrender.

Surrendering to God is a choice that needs constant renewal. Life is a river flowing in the wrong direction. Surrender is when we start resisting the current of life that is always trying to sweep us away from God.

Each day we don't surrender, and resist the world, resist our flesh, and resist the Devil: we float a day's length away from God. Each day we float God seems more distant, His Word more difficult, His will more unclear, and His joy and peace more lacking in our lives.

God wants us to renew our surrender to Him each day.

Following the Pathway of Fellowshiping with God

When we seek for His will we are seeking fellowship.

Fellowshipping with God is a part of our daily needs. Jesus affirmed, "Not my will but Yours be done". That is how to walk with God.

Wanting God's will is the pathway to fellowship. Amos reminds us "can two walk together unless they agree"? Fellowship with God grows as we more and more agree to walk His way.

He asked us to seek Him first (Mt. 6:33). Usually what we think of early in our day is what is most important, and will shape our day. God wants us to think of Him early, and He wants to dominate our days.

God wants us to renew our desire to know and do His will each day.

Following the Pathway of Trusting God for Daily Needs

When Jesus instructed us to ask for daily bread He was inviting us to learn to walk more by faith and less by sight. Jesus already told us we need more than daily bread, we need every word of God to live the life He plans for us.

Living by faith means trusting God more and more each day. Our faith is fed by His Word. God says faith comes by hearing His Word. God says finding and eating His Word brings joy and rejoicing to our heart.

As Hebrews 11 reminds us, without a life of faith, it is impossible to please God. When we believe God He rewards us who diligently seek Him. This prayer sums up all the areas we need to seek Him for: a life of worshipping God, a life of surrender to God, a life of fellowship with God, a life of trusting Him for daily needs, a life of seeking His cleansing, a life of finding His protection, a life of seeking God's glory.

God wants us to trust His provision of grace to help us make it through life each day.

Following the Pathway of Avoiding Sin

When we ask God to forgive us we are declaring that we believe His standards, rules, and laws have been broken by our choices. We confess that He is the One in charge, we are not. We are sinners He is holy. We sin against Him and others, and only He can cleanse us.

So each day we say I want to sin less frequently and respond to You more completely. Paul says that grace teaches us how to deny ungodliness, and how to live righteously and godly each day.

God wants us to choose to lay aside those besetting sins because of His grace.

He wants us to love Him more than those temptations that constantly come our way.

God wants us to take the pathway of avoiding sin.

Following the Pathway of Obeying God

When we ask God to lead us we are expressing our desire to obey.

Obedying God is described in the Bible as following Him. We are like sheep who want to go our own way. The simplest definition of sin in Isaiah 53:6 is wanting our way. That is why we need to ask God for help to follow Him. “Lead us” is how the sixth petition starts. Leads us so that our trials do not become temptations that pull us away from God.

The only way to be delivered from the Evil one who prowls around seeking to devour us, is by following the pathway God has given us. We follow our faithful God away from the ruinous ditch of yielding to temptation that leads to sin. We follow our powerful God into the way of being strong in His power and stand against all the wiles of the Devil.

So many believers are oblivious to Satan’s attacks. So many believers are wounded and paralyzed by the fiery darts that are flying toward us every day. Only the armor of God can protect us. Nothing we do on our own works. The strength of our flesh always will fail us.

God wants us to follow the pathway of following His leading, by obeying Him daily.

Following the Pathway of Humbling Ourselves

Finally, the longing of our hearts as Christ's followers is that God get all the credit. We want God to get the glory and honor.

That is what we say forever when we see ourselves around the Throne in Revelation 4, 5, and 11. That is the chief end of man, to glorify God. So each day we make sure our life is pointing at God. Each day we make sure we are following the pathway of magnifying God, which leads to us choosing to humble ourselves. Pride and humility are mutually exclusive. We choose one or the other each day.

This last petition is a choice to clothe our self with humility.

God wants us to follow the pathway of humility.

This morning as we look back in v. 13 at the sixth petition of the Lord’s prayer we remember the truth that all of life is about following the Lord. Each of the petitions that we were given to guide our prayers describes one dimension of following Him. Since the Lord’s Prayer is all about following Christ, then the sixth petition is all about:

Following Christ: The Pathway Jesus Left for Our Protection

The opening words of the sixth petition set the stage for our understanding.

How does v. 13 start? “And LEAD us not...”. Notice that if we obey, we are to be following Him. Jesus asked us to follow Him. If we are following Him, then we are following the path Jesus left for our safety. The Lord is leading, and as we follow Him we are saying that when He leads us into trials to refine and grow us, help us to follow Him away from allowing those trials to become temptations.

Lessons from Christ's Temptation

Christ's temptation was real; it was real physically, it was real emotionally, and it was real spiritually. Jesus felt every pain, every attack, and every pressure.

But, as Christ's temptation shows us—Satan can only persuade, he can't push. The Devil tempts, but it is we who transgress. The Devil doesn't make us do it, we do it ourselves. Jesus shows us we are responsible for our sins because of the sin we have within. Jesus didn't sin although He was completely tempted, because He has no sin within. But, a tempted Christ always understands His tempted people.

The essence of Christ's temptation in all three versions was to act independent of God. It is okay to be hungry and want food, tired and want rest, weary and want an end to the attacks—but it is wrong to get anything apart from God's way, God's timing, and God's blessing!

Satan Always Targets the Same Three Areas

The Apostle John in 1 John 2:15-17 explains the world we are not to befriend or love is all the lusts and evil desires packaged in varied shapes, sizes, and colors...that always fall into one of three categories:

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV) **Do not love** [present active imperative] the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The world operates by sending us temptations packaged as enticements from our lusts.

“Lust of flesh”¹

We are tempted by the flesh to chase pleasures: this equals the cravings of the body.

Whether for food, pleasure, or fun: our bodies are built to crave and God says don't allow your flesh to control your cravings.

God says those fleshly desires are worldly; and He is against that lust in any form in our lives.

“Lust of the eyes”

We are tempted by our eyes to chase stuff: this is lust for things.

Lest we think that this is not as bad as the lusts of the flesh, remember that covetousness (insatiable longing for more things) is as damnable as idol worship. That means that the lust for possessions is as wicked as the lust for immorality.

Beware of both, they are deadly!

¹ 030319; 051120; 110522

“Pride of life”

We are tempted by pride to chase status: this equals the boasting of the mouth.

This is selfishness because I’m most important.

This is irritableness because life revolves around me.

This is untruthfulness because I need to protect myself.

This is laziness because I want to rest and comfort myself.

All of these are pride as well as obvious lust for status and special recognition.

Pride in all its forms is heinous to God.

When Jesus met the Devil in the wilderness His only resource was God's Word—and that is the weapon Satan fears.

Jesus Resisted the Physical Attack of Lust (Mt. 4:3-4):

I like to call this-- *Instant Food* (stones into bread) was targeting Christ's physical desires or by example our appetites. (Mt. 4:2-4; Luke. 4:2-4; I John 2:16).

Satan wants us to question or doubt God’s goodness when we are suffering.

Satan was asking, “Will you fulfill your legitimate desires in an illegitimate way?”

Christ shows us we need to totally depend on God’s provision.

Satan was in effect saying, “You need to take matters into your own hands. God is allowing you to suffer this hunger needlessly. Why go on suffering. Just get what you need now. No one will know and it is okay. If you have the power, use it for yourself. Don’t wait, do it now—you deserve it!” Satan wants us to question or doubt God’s provision of our basic needs and make us take our own life into our own hands—and out of God’s!

This attack was the temptation to satisfy a legitimate desire by illegitimate means. Trying to get what only God can give.

Christ's ANSWER: we need to totally depend on God’s provision.

Deuteronomy 8:3 "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every [word] that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. (NKJV)

Resist the temptations to fulfill legitimate desires in illegitimate ways.

Jesus Resisted the Emotional Attack of Impatience (Mt. 4:5-7):

I like to call this *Instant Fame* (throw yourself down to the crowds below) was targeting Christ's emotional or psychological desires or by example our need for acceptance, approval or applause. (Mt. 4:5-6; Luke. 4:9-11; I John 2:16).

It was Satan in effect saying, “Jesus you’ve been at this thirty years, and what do you have? Nothing. You are a no-one, going no-where, and having no-thing! Just listen to me, do what I say and I’ll give you everything. I’ll make you an overnight sensation.

Satan wants us to question or doubt God’s timing when we are waiting.

Christ's ANSWER: we need to totally depend on God’s timing.

Deuteronomy 6:16 You must not provoke him and try his patience as you did when you complained against him at Massah.

Resist the temptations to impatience instead of waiting on God.

Jesus Resisted the Spiritual Attack of Pride (Mt. 4:8-11):

I like to call this one *Instant Fortune* (bow and get all the world's kingdoms) was targeting Christ's spiritual desires or by example our ambitions (Matthew 4:8-11; Luke 4:5-7; I John 2:16).

This was the throne without the cross.

Ambition is a spiritual temptation because so easily our ambitions align with our pride and cause a rivalry with God for the control of our lives.

Satan was in effect saying, "It is just too hard to wait for God's will. It is a cross that is unnecessary. Here is a short cut, the quick way to success. Don't sweat the details, just do what gets you to where you want to be."

This attack was the escape pain and suffering route.

Christ's ANSWER: we need to totally depend on God's method.

Deuteronomy 6:13 "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. (NKJV)

Resist the temptations to proudly going your own way instead of humbly surrendering.

Christ's Perfect Response to the Devil

His answer was Simple

Christ used a simple method when facing temptation.

His response was not clever, novel or sophisticated.

Even a child could understand exactly what He said.

His answer was Scriptural

Christ used a scriptural method when facing temptation.

For each temptation He had discovered an appropriate Scripture.

For each temptation He quoted an appropriate Scripture.

His answer was Successful

In relation to Christ, it is a total triumph; He is absolutely seen as pure and empowered by the Spirit. He goes on in ministry enabled and strengthened.

In relation to Satan, it is a total defeat; he is absolutely exposed as being in line for his final defeat and destruction in the lake of fire forever.

In relation to us as believers it is a source of great assurance; because Christ met and conquered Satan, through our faith in Jesus we are more than conquerors. God is able to give us an exit to escape any temptation that ever comes!

We Have a Sympathizing Savior

The most comforting conclusion to this temptation is written in Hebrews.

“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

Christ's sympathy is a truth especially dear to us as believers. It is a mine of strong consolation each time we remember that we have a mighty Friend in heaven, who feels for us in all our.

Are you ever tempted by Satan to distrust God's care and goodness?

So was Jesus.

Are you ever tempted to presume on God's mercy, and to run into danger without warrant?

So also was Jesus.

Are they ever tempted to commit a private sin for the sake of some great apparent advantage?

So also was Jesus.

Are they ever tempted to listen to some misapplication of Scripture, as an excuse for doing wrong?

So also was Jesus.

He is just the Savior that tempted people need. Flee to him for help, and spread before Him all your troubles. You will find His ear always ready to hear, and His heart always ready to feel. He can understand our sorrows.

May we all come know our sympathizing Savior by experience! There is nothing like it in this cold and deceitful world. Anyone neglecting Jesus, has no idea what true comfort they are missing.²

Our Savior Has Provided Protective Gear

Which leads us back to the second half of this sixth petition: “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.”

That leads us to the single most vital passage on spiritual warfare found in Ephesians 6. The Lord has made a way for us to stay safe as we walk across the battlefields of life each day. Next time we see our armor.

² Adapted from notes by Ryle, J.C., *Matthew: The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1998, c1993.