

I am not what you call a handy person. There are some of you here that when something goes wrong around the house you know exactly what needs to be done. You can fix a busted piece of drywall, or repair a leaking sink, or even pop the hood of your car and detect the problem immediately. I am not that guy. But I have found a source where I go and watch someone else do the repair. Then after watching them, I have better idea of what I'm supposed to do.

YouTube. It's amazing the amount of helpful videos people have put on there to walk me through a project. I've watched how to change a broken belt on our washing machine. By watching YouTube I've figured how to make better movies on my computer. I've even learned how to change the brakes on our van by watching a video.

It's so much easier to learn while watching someone else do it. We need an example in order to know how to best move forward in many situations. One of those situations that I think it's helpful is in our attempt to "Follow the Spirit." For what are the types of situations that the Spirit leads us into? Are there things that the Holy Spirit leads us to do that would help me become more dependent upon Him?

Who is a good example that I could watch?

For some modern examples: I think that God places people in your life that are being Spirit led. I know that there are people within this church that God has placed in your path as an example of those who are dependent on Spirit. What about some biblical examples: You'll find plenty of examples in the Old Testament with Moses, and David. And you'll find some in the New Testament with the Disciples like Peter and John.

This morning we're going to look at the greatest example (and you know where I'm going with this), we're going to look at Jesus. Something that we're told in 1 John is,

whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

If we say that we're alive in Christ, we are taking our cues from Christ as to how we living day to day. There is no greater example for following the Spirit than Jesus. For everything that Jesus did was a result of being led and empowered by the Spirit. Jesus lived, thought, worked, taught, conquered sin and won victories for God the Father by the power of the Spirit.

Let us Follow the Spirit through Christ's Example that we see in Matthew 4.

But before we dive into our text, I think it would be helpful to give a *little bit* of a summary of what we know has happened so far in Jesus' life up until this point. And I say a little bit, because there's only a little bit of information that we have concerning Jesus' life before the launch of his public ministry. We know that Jesus was born to Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem. He lived for a period of time in Egypt as a young child and then eventually the family moved on from there to the small town of Nazareth where Jesus would grow up.

I believe that Jesus grew up unknown by the world around him. Sure they knew he was the son of a carpenter, but they didn't recognize that he was the Son of God. His neighbors probably respected him as a teenager. People knew him as a hard worker, a young man who was kind and considerate. But no one believed that Jesus was God, not even his own family.

You think Jesus' brothers and sisters, they must have grown up hearing the stories of their oldest brother's birth. The star, the manger, that there was no room in the inn for mom and dad, the excitement of the shepherds who came in saying that they're here to see the baby that angels were proclaiming as the Savior. Even though they had heard the stories, they didn't believe Jesus to be anything more than their older brother.

But then we arrive to Matthew chapter 3 where Jesus is approximately 30 years old and it's time for God the Father to announce to the world that Jesus is in fact, the Messiah. Jesus is the King that the world has been waiting for. The way that the Father announces that is through Jesus' baptism by his cousin John who has this dynamic ministry that has been taking place down at the Jordan River.

John is a little hesitant to baptize Jesus (understandably so), but eventually John consents and places Jesus under the water and raises him up again. And we're told in Matthew 3, that immediately following that moment the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested upon Jesus. And then a voice boomed from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

This is a very significant day. No doubt there were many people that day who were standing on the banks of the Jordan River. They came to hear John proclaim a message of repentance. But they received something so much greater that day. They assumed they were watching an ordinary man step out into the water as Jesus approached John the Baptist. But as Jesus walked back onto that shoreline, they were without question that this man was sent from God.

And this is where we're going to pick up and start diving into Matthew 4. Let's begin by reading verses 1-2.

READ MATTHEW 4:1-2

The Holy Spirit Leads Jesus to the Wilderness immediately after Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan River. In your estimation, would you say that the Jordan River baptism was a high or low moment in Jesus life?

High: without a doubt it was a high moment. Jesus has just been announced to the watching world that He is in fact the Son of God. And where does the Holy Spirit lead Jesus immediately after that? To the wilderness; a place where Jesus would be completely isolated from everyone and everything. This would a period of time where Jesus would be stripped of every comfort that the world has to offer. No shelter from a storm that could roll through. No shade from the blazing sun. No bed lay down on at the end of the day. And then above that, Jesus was going to fast for forty days –he was going to go without food.

And strictly speaking on a physical level, Jesus was heading into a low moment. But as you read through your Bible you will see that that is often in the case with the people of God. God brings a moment of victory and immediately following that there is period of testing. Let give you one examples from the Old Testament.

The clearest example in my mind is Elijah. Elijah was a prophet of God in a period of time where many people, including God's people, the Israelites, were being led astray to worship the false god, Baal. Obviously, God did not approve of that, so God's prophet Elijah told the King that because of the people's rebellion there would be no rain until Elijah said it would rain. I could imagine the King not having a big reaction and just blowing it off. But then three years go by without a drop of water falling from the sky. That's a major drought in a culture where there's no Giant Eagle or Wal-Mart that you can just drop in and get whatever you need. People are suffering.

So by third year of that drought the King's attention is focused directly on Elijah because he had predicted that this would happen. And many of you know the account that takes place; Elijah challenges the King and his 450 prophets of Baal to a showdown to determine who was truly serving the true God. The challenge was to offer a sacrifice on Mount Carmel. They would place a bull on top of an alter and whoever's God sent fire down from heaven to light the sacrifice would obviously be the true God.

That day God showed himself in a mighty way. Elijah was given victory before all of Israel. The watching world had seen that the God Elijah served was the one and true God. But happens in the very next moment? The King's wife Jezebel wants Elijah killed and Elijah is on the run for his life. The moment before he's been given this amazing victory and the very next moment he's at the bottom of the barrel wishing that his life was over.

Elijah had no choice but to depend on God. And here's the principle that I want you to grab ahold of; often times what you will see in Scripture and what you will notice in your own life is that there are seasons that you walk through, or moments where things go well. Where God gives you victory over a certain sin you've been battling,

or things in your relationships have been running really smoothly, and you could name 100 other victories that you would classify as a high moment.

But... from those high moments, the Holy Spirit leads you into a time where you have no choice but to depend on Him. It's not an every time occurrence; there's no need to duck and hide when something good happens because you're waiting for the bad news that's inevitably around the corner. No, that is not what I'm saying.

But what I am saying is that the Holy Spirit does lead in our lives in this way from time to time. Because when we do succeed or when something important happens, we are frequently tempted to believe that we have made the accomplishment take place in our own power and that success is rightfully and permanently ours. Success can make us feel invincible.

That's why 1 Corinthians 10 tells us,

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Don't ever get to a place where you think you are independent and strong enough to walk through life on your own. Our lives should be marked by a growing dependence on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does lead us through many times of success and victories. And there will be times that He will guide us toward times where we will be intensely focused on Him and also dependent on Him to make it through that season of life.

For Jesus, it was leading Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Now Jesus is without sin. We believe Him to be fully God, but we also need to recognize that He is fully, completely, and 100% man. And as He walked here on this earth He experienced the same struggles that we struggle with today. Over a forty-day period He would become incredibly hungry. He would experience weakness as the body is deprived of a basic necessity.

But as his body was weakened physically, I know that beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was being strengthened internally as he spent uninterrupted time with His heavenly Father. You see, fasting then and fasting now, carries along with it two basic activities. It's a period of time that you go without food so that you can turn up your prayer life to a greater degree of intensity. Fasting walks arm in arm with prayer.

And no doubt, Jesus was communing with His Father over those 40 days. We see here in this narrative that Jesus was led from one physical blessing toward a place that physically desolate. But for Jesus, I believe He was led from a spiritual blessing right on toward another one. And it's at that moment in time that the devil, the tempter, the one whose sole driving goal in this world is to frustrate the plan of God, leaps into to wreak havoc on Jesus life.

Let's keep reading on as I want to point out to you how **The Holy Spirit Leads Jesus Through Temptation.**

READ MATTHEW 4:3-11

Satan sets out to frustrate the plans of God. Satan intended to lead Jesus into sin and disobedience. But God the Father demonstrated that Jesus was completely holy and worthy to be in the position that he was in. But let's walk through the temptations that were given to Jesus, there were three:

First, Satan entices Jesus to Serve Himself. To say that Jesus was hungry after a 40 day fast was an understatement. His body was weak; his need for food would have been apparent to anyone who would have walked by and seen him. And the devil approaches and says,

"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

The devil calls into question a couple of different things in that one statement. He says, "**if** you are the Son of God..." *Really Jesus, you're going to tell me that you're the eternal one, that you're the ruler and Creator of all things, and yet I find you here weak and all alone.* Satan was suggesting that Jesus being hungry was incompatible with His being the Son of God. I think he carries the same tone as the mocking crowd who would eventually yell to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, come down off the cross!"

Satan calls into question Jesus' real authority. But also, I think the devil is tempting Jesus to doubt the word of God. Jesus is in the wilderness because the Holy Spirit had led him there. He's weak, he's tired, he's uncomfortable; and Jesus was being tempted to doubt the Father's Word, the Father's love, and the Father's provision.

But Jesus was on a mission to do the Father's will, wherever it may lead. There was a trust between the Father and Son that could not be fractured. Jesus knew that he was better off to obey and to depend on His Father, than to grab satisfaction for Himself, even though he was in great need of it. So Jesus responds by quoting scripture.

Read Matthew 4:4

This verse is taken from Deuteronomy 8 and was originally given to the people of Israel after they had spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. This is a verse that recalls God's faithfulness in taking great care of his children. Jesus testifies to the fact that God will supply every need that He has and that God the Father is dependable in all circumstance. Jesus is saying that I trust my Father and I'm giving into any temptation to doubt Him.

Jesus demonstrated that it is not food that is the most necessary part of life; it is the creative, energizing, and sustaining power of God that is the only real source of man's existence.

The devil failed on that first attempt... but he's persistent so he moved along to another temptation. The first temptation was to test Jesus, **the second temptation was to Test God**. The devil brought Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple and said to him,

READ MATTHEW 4:6A

Josephus, an early church historian, records that this drop from the top of the temple to the ground below was some 450 ft. It was a huge drop! The devil begins again by saying "if you are the Son of God..." prove it. You say you're the Son of God, let's see how much He really cares about you. And Satan even attempts to use his Bible by quoting Psalm 91.

READ MATTHEW 4:6B

But Jesus resist that temptation as well. God the Father has already proven Himself. Jesus had spent eternity past with His heavenly Father where they had continually poured out love toward one another. Jesus knew that to test God was to doubt God. And our greatest need is not to prove God's faithfulness, but demonstrate our own.

Sure, there will be times that God expects us to take risks in order to obey His will, but to risk to fulfill our own ambitions or to force God's hand is simply foolish, and Jesus says just that:

"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

So the devil had failed once again. But he makes one final attempt by bringing him to a very high place where they could see all the kingdoms of the world.

READ MATTHEW 4:9

Satan tempts Jesus to worship him. You see, God the Father's plan in testing His Son in the wilderness was to prove Jesus' worthiness to inherit and rule the world. But Satan's plan was to draw the Son away from that worthiness by enticing him to **grab** the kingdom the Father promised to give him. Satan is no dummy. He knew what Jesus up to and he was saying, "instead of enduring that long, humiliating, and difficult road to the cross... Jesus you could rule the world right now if you simply bend your knee to me."

But Jesus knew the shallowness of that offer. Satan's price is always immeasurably more than leads us to believe. And he reject Satan a third time in the same manner as he did two times before, by quoting scripture. He tells Satan to get out of there as he quotes from the Old Testament.

READ MATTHEW 4:10-11.

The devil unsurprisingly leaves as he is only allowed to be wherever God gives him permission to be. So we've walked through this passage and I believe that the Holy Spirit is active through this entire section as He leads and directs Jesus life. I want to be very practical with the time that we have left today as I want to encourage you to Follow the Holy Spirit in the same way. I want to give you **3 Aspects of Following the Holy Spirit** that all of us should consider as we observe Jesus life.

Application:

First, Embrace Difficulty. I'm not advising you to pursue difficulty as an end in itself. But if the Holy Spirit is leading you toward a difficult circumstance or a tough period of life, don't withdraw from that situation. We don't get a lot of details as Jesus leaves the Jordan River and heads into the wilderness to begin a fast for forty days. But we can expect that Jesus did it willingly. He didn't drag his feet or approach it with a poor attitude.

He knew it was going to be physically difficult. He knew that there was temptation lurking ahead but He embraced it.

I can think about this my own life. I'll be very honest with you, I didn't want Thad to leave. Over the past four years Thad and I had developed a great friendship (even though he's a Notre Dame fan). I had been challenged more under his leadership and through our weekly conversations in that four year period of time than I had been challenged in perhaps my entire adult life.

So his stepping down really scared me as it would put me for the very first time as the only one on the pastoral staff. You see, I've always have had someone in the office that I can back up to, someone right next door that I pass the difficult questions onto, someone who carries a little more of the load of pastoral care. And I don't have that anymore. I'm not saying that I'm completely alone right now, there are other godly leaders in the church, but there is definitely a shift that has taken place.

There's a few different things that you can do when difficulty comes. You can simply run. You can say it's too hard and the grass looks greener everywhere else, except for right here. You can also just duck and hide. You can kind of just hold on until this season blows over. Or you can embrace it. You can trust that the Holy Spirit has brought this season into your life and He is going to use it for His glory and our good.

That's what I'm hoping to do with the difficulties come my way. I'm hoping that God will use whatever circumstances, good or bad, to refine my life in order to be more effective for His Kingdom.

I hope you will make that choice as well. Embrace Difficulty. Another aspect that I want you think through as we follow the example of Jesus as He followed the Holy Spirit is I think it would be good for you to Consider a Fast.

Second, Consider a Fast. If I were to guess, I would imagine that fasting is not a regular part of too many of our lives. We need to understand what fasting is. Fasting is not some duty to perform and only reserved for the super mature. It's a practice that should be included in all Christians lives because it can go a long ways in sharpening our affections for God.

Fasting can be done for 12 hours, 24 hours, or even beyond that. The main purpose for fasting can vary from one fast to the next, but the main focus is that it's a period of time that you are intensifying prayer life. Here's what John Piper has to say about fasting:

She reveals the measure of food's mastery over us –or television or computers or whatever we submit to again and again to conceal the weakness of our hunger for God. And she remedies by intensifying the earnestness of our prayer and saying with our whole body what prayer says with the heart: I long to be satisfied in God alone!

I'm not suggesting that you must fast every week or every month, but there should be periods within our life where we set some of things of this world aside and with help from the Holy Spirit, focus our feelings, and then express our complete dependence on our God.

There's one more area that I want you consider and it is that I would like for you...

Third, Memorize the Mind of God. You'll notice that in every situation that the Jesus tempted that He responds by quoting scripture. God gives us a lot defensive weapons to guard against schemes of the devil. But do you remember what is listed in Ephesians 6 as the only offensive weapon? The Apostle Paul tells us that is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

If the Bible is the greatest weapon, that this is not just the manual to life, should we put this weapon into use? I think we should read it, I think we should study it, but also think we should devote large chunks of energy to commit the word to memory. It's not just for memories sake, so that you can quote back to someone next week and then move onto another one. You linger on that verse; you hover over that passage so intently that you begin to feel it, and then in those moments in life where that verse applies, the Holy Spirit is able to bring it to the surface of your mind where you can fully put it into action.

Jesus followed the Holy Spirit's leading to embrace difficulty, take on the challenge to fast, and to know the mind of God to defeat the schemes of the devil.