

MATTHEW: sermon study guide

Pastor: Ashwin Ramani

Date: February 8 / 9, 2020

Sermon Title: Tempted: Seeking Approval

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. How would you describe your relationship with social media?
2. We all want to have people's approval in our lives. What do we (as individuals, families, church, city, and country) do to feel approved by others?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read *Matthew 4:5-7, Isaiah 53:1-3; Philippians 2:6-7*

3. The nation of Israel was expecting a conquering Messiah, not one that was fasting away in the desert and being tempted by Satan. What do you think God was doing in the life of Jesus by allowing this temptation?
4. How did Satan tempt Jesus to seek the world's approval? What were some of the ways Jesus used to counter the temptation that Satan was presenting to him?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. The righteousness of Christ is the foundation of God's approval. From the example of Jesus' temptation and His response, why is it important to spend time daily in God's Word?
6. What are some practical ways to respond when Satan tempts us to gain approval outside of God's best for us in our personal lives and in the life of our church?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Pastor Ashwin made the following statement:

"The emphasis on the second temptation of Jesus is on Approval. Satan presented Jesus with a choice. Was Jesus going to follow God's plan for His life or would He bypass the plan in order to win the approval of people? Jesus faced the temptation of being popular and liked by everyone! This temptation is part and parcel of our culture today. It can be summarized by a single question - Whose approval do you crave the most? We are made for God's approval and no human praise can serve as a substitute."

Be honest with yourself this week. From whom or what do you seek to receive the greatest approval? What are some of the things you do to get it? How would your life look if you were to only seek God's approval?

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 4:5-7

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "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."

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Isaiah 53:1-3 (The Message)

Who believes what we've heard and seen?

Who would have thought God's saving power would look like this?

The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling,

a scrubby plant in a parched field.

There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look.

He was looked down on and passed over, a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand.

One look at him and people turned away.

We looked down on him, thought he was scum.

Philippians 2:6-7

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Psalm 91:11-12

¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Deuteronomy 6:16

Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah.

MATTHEW: sermon study summary

Tempted: Seeking Approval

Pastor Ashwin Ramani

February 8th / 9th 2020

Today's sermon focuses on the second temptation with the emphasis on approval. Was Jesus going to follow God's plan for His life or would He bypass the plan in order to win the approval of people? Pastor Ashwin summarized the temptation asking "Whose approval do you crave the most? If it is not Jesus', then you got it wrong." Read Matt 4:5–7.

Pastor Ashwin shows us how this temptation for approval looked like for Jesus.

Satan tries to trap Jesus by quoting from the Bible! The devil takes Jesus to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple of God, and tempts Him to "throw yourself down". Matt 4:5–6. "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."

Pastor Ashwin asks us "Why would this be a strong temptation for Jesus? The lure was for Jesus to do something dramatic to get on the map, so people will flock after Him. This busy temple courtyard would be a great setting for the Messiah to announce his arrival.

Jesus could use His own divine power to validate His identity as the Messiah. What an impact this would have on the people gathered. We are directed to Isa 53:1–3, the depiction of the prophesied Suffering Servant, a very different picture than the temptation that Jesus was facing: trade God's plan with a sensational script of His own making, and sure to receive human approval. Jesus, recognizing the temptation, maintains His conviction to follow God's path for His life! Philippians 2:6–7

Satan quotes Scripture to Jesus (Psalm 91:11–12) but with the primary purpose of distorting the truth. Satan misused the Bible to give Jesus more incentive to seek approval from the world. Jesus responds to Satan quoting Deut. 6:16 "Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah". Jesus takes a stand, draws a clear line and says – I am not going to test God. I am here to submit to God's plan for my life.

Pastor Ashwin asks us, "How does this apply to us today?" In our self-centredness, God becomes a means to our end. He exists to serve us – make us look good in the eyes of others. Referencing an article from Relevant Magazine *Millennials Greatest Problem*, it says that our use of social media, taking selfies, contributes to 'Obsessive Comparison Disorder'. If we are using social media to get approval of others, then our intention is wrong. Pastor Ashwin emphasizes our soul is designed for God's approval and no amount of human recognition can serve as a substitute. God's approval is all we need.

Pastor Ashwin challenges us to use a Bible reading plan. How did Jesus overcome the enemy? We are reminded that without using His divine powers to overcome Satan, Jesus relied on the same resources given to us. Three times Jesus tells Satan "It is Written". He relies on the authority of God's Word. When we are tempted, we need an anchor to keep us grounded, God's Word.

Secondly, Pastor Ashwin encourages us to write down our temptation, and next to it write a Bible verse to counter it. Memorize the verse and speak it in moments of temptation. We will be amazed how the power of God's Word helps us to live in victory over temptation.