

Message Reflections

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

Message Reflections accompany the [weekly message](#).

The current sermon series is right up my alley. I love a good road trip, and am currently planning a pretty epic one. In the span of a little over 2 weeks, my family and I plan to cover 12 states, 6500 miles, 7 National Parks, 2 amusement parks, and whatever roadside attractions might pique our interest along the way. It's a good thing that, to me, part of the fun of a road trip is the planning. I have spent hours researching the best routes, figuring out how to maximize our time, choosing accommodations in cities closest to the highest number of National Parks, and checking the weather for each locale so we know how to pack. Our trip is still a couple months away, and no doubt I'll spend a good deal more time online planning and researching before we load our kids in the car (after half a dozen last-minute bathroom reminders) and hit the road.

Contrast this road trip with one that I took in the summer of 1998. During the summer break between my sophomore and junior years in college, I was living and working in Syracuse, NY, but I am from the Boston area, and planned to go home one weekend after work on a Friday. The internet existed in 1998, but using it to map a route wasn't really a thing at that point. So I looked at a paper map, found I-90 heading east between Syracuse and Boston, and headed out. Somewhere very early along the way, I must have missed a turn and didn't find I-90. But I did find another road that said some number and the word east, and figured, "Good enough." Except that it turned out that that road went *northeast*. Blissfully unaware, I turned on my audiobook and continued on what I assumed would be about a 5-hour drive. Several hours later I was ready to stop for some gas, so I paused my book as I looked for a place to fill up. The radio came on in the background. "Oh, the French station," I thought idly. I took some French in high school, but didn't remember enough to understand what I was listening to, so I changed the station. "Huh, another French station, interesting." And so it went as I changed the radio dial a couple more times. Seemed odd for the middle of New York and Massachusetts. Montreal, maybe, but surely I hadn't gone so far out of my way as to make it to Canada...

Finding a gas station, I stopped and filled up, then went inside to take a quick look at a map. I asked the attendant if he could tell me where I was.

"What city you're in?" he asked.

"What city, what state, yes, please," I confirmed sheepishly.

"You're in Plattsburgh, New York."

"Oh, whew, I thought I was by Canada."

"Well, not quite, but you are about 20 minutes from the border," he said. "Where are you trying to go?"

I think I pretended I was close to where I needed to be, purchased a map, and headed back out to complete a 9-instead-of-5-hour drive, having taken the unintended scenic route through Vermont and New Hampshire. 20+ years later, my family still gives me a hard time about accidentally almost going to Canada, and I'm sure I deserve it.

What was the big difference between those two trips? A guide. In the case of my upcoming road trip, Google is a pretty good guide. I can get most of the information that I need to plan the best and most efficient trip possible with a few keyboard clicks. In the case of living our lives to become more like Jesus, the best guide is the example that he provided, which we read about in the book of Matthew.

As Matthew 4 opens, Jesus has just been baptized, and now he is *"led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil."* (vs. 1). Well that doesn't seem like a good idea. Why would God allow Jesus to experience temptation? I'm sure he had more reasons than I know, but I think one of them is so Jesus could be our guide when we experience temptation. Satan is crafty, but he is also predictable. He is going to try to tempt us in the same ways he tried to tempt Jesus 2000 years ago.

First, Satan wants us to ask ourselves if God will really provide. He's shrewd. He doesn't tell us that God won't provide, because for a lot of us the automatic response would be "yes, He will." Instead of a direct challenge, Satan injects doubt. He did so way back in Genesis 3, when he asked Eve, *"Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"* (vs. 1). Jesus, of course, responded very differently to this kind of questioning than Eve did. Jesus would have been able to turn a stone into bread, as the devil suggested, and provide for Himself. But He trusted God to provide for Him.

Satan then tries to get Jesus to question whether God will protect Him, and he even quotes Scripture to support his deceit. *"If you are the Son of God, jump off [the Temple]! For the Scriptures say,*

He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone." (vs. 6)

Jesus doesn't fall for it. He again answers with evidence from Scripture: *Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'" (vs. 7)*

In his third attempt, Satan offers Jesus the world, in exchange for Jesus' worship. Do you really need to praise God? *"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'" (vs. 10)*

Three times Satan tries to get Jesus to question what He knows to be true about God. Three times, Jesus responds out of His knowledge of Scripture and God's character. And then Satan goes away. For a while.

Jesus' example shows us how we should respond when we are tempted. And it's definitely a "when," not an "if". Satan *"prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:8), but we have a guide for this road trip, and can be prepared for Satan's attacks.

Questions for reflection:

1. Which of Satan's questions (Will God provide? Will God protect? Do I need to praise God?) tends to trip you up the most?
2. How does Jesus' example help you to face temptation?
3. Luke 4:13 closes the same story told in Matthew 4 with, *"When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came."* Why did the devil give Jesus a reprieve? What might a "next opportunity" look like in your life?