



1st week of Lent | Do you dare pray a dangerous prayer?

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”

(Luke 4:1-2)

Main point:

What have you been praying for lately? Too often the content of our prayers is for our lives to become more comfortable, relationships to be restored, bodies to be healed, finances to be supplied. But, I don't think it was these kinds of prayers that Jesus prayed during his forty days in the wilderness. I think he prayed 'dangerous prayers'.

The Spirit's Lenten call is for us to accompany Jesus into the wilderness. There we will be challenged to pray 'dangerous prayers'? Dangerous prayers challenge our status quo, drawing us to renew our commitment and dedication to walk faithfully in fulfilling God's mission. Dangerous prayers will always require us to deny the stubborn and proud desires of our heart, resist temptation, so when we walk out of our 'wilderness of testing', we are filled with the Spirit and empowered for kingdom ministry in the world. Do you dare pray such a dangerous prayer?

Intro |

Have you ever wondered what Jesus did while he spent 40 days in the wilderness? Yes, I know he was being tempted by the devil, but the portion of conversation we have in the Gospels, really only accounts for a snippet of action – certainly not occupying 40 days! What was Jesus praying the rest of the time?

'Well we don't know!' I hear you utter. True, we cannot know the exact words Jesus prayed, but I think we can understand the essence or attitude in which He prayed.

To help us discover this, let us step back into the Gospel story.

In what can only be described as a powerful encounter with His Heavenly Father, Jesus arose out of the waters of the Jordan River, having been baptised by John the Baptist.

A voice thundered from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21-22, and John 12:29)

But, almost immediately, Jesus heard the whisper from the Spirit of God.

So, He "... full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry." (Luke 4:1-2)

Today, I'd like us to focus on these two verses – as they set the tone and pattern for us as we too respond to the Spirit's call to enter our 40-day Lenten journey.

Point 1 | The Lenten season is designed to stimulate our spiritual appetite, reactivating the Spirit of God within us, so barriers can be broken which prevent the power of God from flowing through our lives.

Most of us here today know that the season of Lent is designed to be a time when the Spirit of God invites us to enter a time of testing. We may choose to 'turn up the intensity' of this time of testing, by denying ourselves of something we would normally enjoy or find comforting. The choice to deny ourselves stimulates a renewed dependence on God.

Now, each of us will take steps to deny ourselves in different ways – and that is a decision between you and Jesus.

However, I do encourage you to purposefully consider what in your life may be put aside, or denied, so as to intentionally provoke a sense of being tested or tempted.

In essence you are creating an environment where there will be a battle of the wills – the desire to eat chocolate, drink wine or watch TV will 'argue' against your decision to forgo these pleasures. And so repeatedly you'll be challenged to answer, whose 'will' will prevail?

Just like fasting from physical food stimulates our physical appetite, the process of fasting is designed to stimulate our spiritual appetite.

Success in prevailing against these desires, will require a greater dependency on drawing on the power of the Spirit, and trust in God's ability to bring transformation in your life.

As 'followers' or disciples of Jesus, we pattern ourselves after the Captain of our faith (Hebrews 2:10).

We follow Christ's example, desiring to have the same mind and attitude which Jesus had toward His heavenly Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

So, the process of denying yourself, moves you to experience a very real and vivid sense of what it must have been like for Jesus to not just go without food for 40 days, but also being tested by the devil the entire time!

So, let's consider, with what heart or attitude did Jesus have, as He stepped into His 40-day time of testing?

Point 2 | A heart that is prepared to respond to the Spirit's prompting to voluntarily enter a time of testing, is a heart that has allowed their own will and agenda to be submitted to God.

Ask yourself, 'do you think Jesus *wanted* to be led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil and go without food for forty days and forty nights?

I mean, if God said, 'I'd like you to go out into the middle of Australia and fast for 40 days, so that the devil himself can try his best to tempt you,' would you say, 'Oh Yes, God! That sounds wonderful?'

I know I wouldn't.

Let's not forget, Jesus was human. He got hungry!

Let's not over spiritualise the scene here – Jesus would have been hungry on day two and three, just like we would when we go without food for a few days.

And He wasn't going through this time of testing with all his buddy's – No! The Spirit of God led him into the wilderness "to be tempted by the devil".

Why? Because God the Father was training His Son, in what would be the pattern and framework for how Jesus' ministry would be for the next three years.

Some of you are not sure of what I'm saying, so let's read Hebrews 5:7-9,

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent

submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him"

For 40 days, again and again, the devil bombarded Jesus' with questions on his divinity (Luke 4:3). The devil tried to lure Jesus away from worshipping his Heavenly Father, to worship and submit to him (Luke 4:7).

But in all cases, Jesus triumphed. So that at the end, he could say, with perfect honesty, *"... I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."* (John 5:19, also John 5:30, 6:38,)

Jesus reached a place whereby his 'will' was in total sync with his Heavenly Father's 'will'.

(Note: It is not that Jesus didn't have an independent will or agenda. He, like us, needed to lay down his own 'will', so as to submit to his Father. That's why he prayed in Gethsemane "not as I will but as you will" (Matthew 26:29)

But what about us? Can we ever reach a place where our 'will' is in total 'sync' with God's will?

Well ... despite the fact that such a state seems ridiculously unachievable, that is exactly the state of heart that Jesus desires we have.

He wants us to pray "according to the will of God" and to live discerning what "God's will" is for our lives (1 John 5:14 and Romans 12:2)

Point 3 | The prayer of dedication and submission, which asks God to break our will and prideful attitudes is a dangerous prayer! It leads us to a place where the power of God may flow through our lives, into the lives of others.

So, let's return to the question, 'how did Jesus pray as he communed with his Father, while in the wilderness?'

If the prevailing temptation of the devil revolved around Christ's divinity and exclusive worship of God, then Jesus must have been praying what is often called the 'prayer of dedication and submission'.

Let's look at these. A few years ago, I read a provoking book entitled, "Dangerous Prayers: Because following Jesus was never meant to be safe". The author, Craig Groeschel, writes that prayer is designed to break us out of the restrictive "spiritual safety bubble," so that our faith muscles grow.

We know our faith is where God wants it, when our prayers regarding a problem or situation, are filled with expectation of what God is able to do, rather than being focussed on the enormity of the difficulty and God's inability to do anything about it.

Now the prayer of dedication and submission is known as a 'dangerous prayer'.

Why? The prayer involves laying down our own agenda, our own plans, our own doubts, and offering God free reign to direct our heart, our words, our responses, and our desires – so the content of our prayers are predominantly not asking for *our* will to be done, but praying for *God's will* to be done.

What does the prayer of dedication and submission sound like?

It means, we relinquish our desire to maintain control over our lives.

We ask God to show us the ugliness of our proud confidence that we know what's best.

We ask God to fill us with His desires and His plans, we ask Him to give us eyes that see what issues or people are on His heart.

Do you see how similar that is to what we discussed last week? The heart of true prayer is to love what God loves, to desire what God desires, to share God's heart, praying what He desires.

Application | The prayer of dedication and submission means making a commitment to praying what God desires. It is God's desire that many in Southlakes come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

So, what is God's heart toward our community here at Southlakes?

God's heart is fixated on searching for the lost. His heart is all about rescuing and delivering people from bondage to the enemy.

We know that Jesus' heart was in sync with God's heart. He knew His mission was, "to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)

Is that our mission? Is that at the top of our prayer list?

I know how easy it is for these kinds of prayers to slip down my personal prayer list ... so far it's often forgotten.

That's why during lent, I have made a decision to pray this prayer of dedication afresh.

I'll be asking God to fill my heart with compassion for the lost of Southlakes to meet their Saviour.

At the end of this message there are two prayer suggestions. One is the prayer of dedication and one is some verses which will guide you in praying for the lost.

As we take our first steps into the wilderness, knowing it will be an uncomfortable and testy time, will you join me in this type of prayer?

The Prayer of Dedication & Submission

Father, I pray the prayer of dedication and submission. In every area of my life, I belong to you. Father, I'll go where you want me to go, I'll do what you want me to do. Not my will, but your will be done. Thank you, Father that you work in me both to will and to do of your good pleasure. You have a good plan for my life, a plan of peace and joy.

Father, what you want and what you desire is what I want; that is what I desire. Not my will, but your will for my life every day, Father. Not my own way, not the way of the flesh [???}, but the way of the Spirit. Father, your will, your plan, your way.

Father, I dedicate my life to you in every area. You have a plan for me in every area of life. Thank you, Father, for the joy of obedience. I will obey you with joy. Father, I want to have the spirit of obedience in my life, not rebellion or pride, not resistance or hard-heartedness, but a soft, sensitive heart that is willing to do anything.

I turn away from rebellion and stubbornness in Jesus' name.

Father, I say before your presence that I am willing to do anything you want me to do. No matter what people say, no matter what the world says, you have found a willing person. You have found an obedient person. Father, I will do what you say all the way, just the way you say it, no more and no less, and with joy. If you ask me to share and speak about my faith in you Jesus, I will not remain silent, but will have courage to speak of your faithfulness and grace.

Thank you, Father, for the spirit of faith and the spirit of obedience. And Father, thank you that your will, will be fulfilled in my life to your glory. I ask these things in Jesus' name. **So be it.**

But, how do I pray for the lost?

If you are unsure how to pray for the lost, may I suggest using the following scriptures.

1. Pray that God would draw them to Himself, as only He can do (John 6:44).
2. Pray they seek to know God (Acts 17:26-27).
3. Pray they believe the Word of God (First Thessalonians 2:13).
4. Pray that Satan is kept from blinding them from the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4).
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict them of their sin, and their need for Christ's redemption (John 16:8-13).
6. Ask for God to soften their hearts (Hebrews 3:15).
7. Ask God to send someone who will share the gospel with them (Matthew 9:37-38).
8. Ask God to release laborers for the harvest (Matthew 9:38).
9. Pray that God would give you the opportunity, the courage, and the right words to be able to share the truth with them (Colossians 4:2-6 and Ephesians 6:18-20).
10. Pray they turn from their sin and the error of their ways (Acts 17:30-31 and 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)
11. Ask God to open their eyes (Second Corinthians 4:3-4).
12. Pray they would put all their trust in Christ (John 1:12; 5:24).
13. Ask that God will release the ministry of angels (Hebrews 1:13-14).
14. Pray they make Jesus Christ the Lord of their life (Romans 10:9-11).
15. Ask that they take root and grow in their faith (Second Corinthians 2:6-7).