



Links Players

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS 6: AWAY FROM TEMPTATION

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13, NIV)

I HAVE NEVER BEEN AN ESPECIALLY LONG HITTER, so I’m not tempted to go for the green on risk-reward par-5 holes very often. But for many years, I could hit the ball pretty high when I wanted to, so I loved the challenge of selecting the right club to send a shot high enough but also get maximum distance out of it. Once in a while, the temptation would come back to bite me, though, and the result was anybody’s guess. Ricochets are unpredictable like that!

You probably don’t need me to tell you that temptations of any kind can lead to big trouble when we answer their call. Sometimes we convince ourselves that we didn’t get burned last time, so we’ll be fine again this time, but that is only succumbing to the truth of Ecclesiastes 8:11: “When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people’s hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.” Sooner or later, however, we can count on facing the consequences of letting temptation take us into sin.

What is both remarkable and comforting is that Jesus understands all of this. We know from the writer of Hebrews that the Lord was “tempted in every way” and thus that he is able to “empathize with our weaknesses.” We do not follow a Savior who is so holy that he doesn’t get it. Instead, he is holy yet compassionate, because he has lived where we live—in a world bent on dragging us away from God.

Next, we hear Jesus’ words about prayer to his disciples. We are to say to the Father, “Lead us not into temptation.” Jesus didn’t pretend; he didn’t act as though we would be impervious to temptation when we became his. Temptation is still out there, still coming for our hearts. Jesus taught that we might ask in prayer not only that we would stay away from sin, but that we wouldn’t even be tempted. How great that would be!

But there is still more. In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle wrote that “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” It’s a promise: Testing will come, but we can resist the temptation in Christ’s strength.

Friends, the flow of Scripture is clear. Jesus will lead us away from temptation. Now we must choose to follow him.

Opening questions Where are you most risky on the golf course? Are you satisfied with how often it pays off? What, if anything, could you do to outrun the risk?

READING Hebrews 4:14-16; Matthew 4:1-11; James 1:13-15

Jesus and our faith (Hebrews 4)

What excellent qualities do we find in Jesus through this passage? What do you think it means to “hold firmly” to your faith in Christ?

Jesus in the face of temptation (Matthew 4)

In what way do you find it meaningful that Christ faced temptations as we do? Do you think he felt the weight of temptation to a greater or lesser degree than we do—why?

The result of temptation (James 1)

What destructive course was outlined by James? How does giving in to temptation demonstrate that we are not fully following Jesus?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2020 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/cYo0q582dwQ>