

Coffee with Phil - Episode 20

Introduction

Well, hi, and welcome to the podcast. My name's Phil Strong and I'm glad to be with you today. Here I am in the studio surrounded by equipment. Can't see the sun shining, but apparently it is. It's sunny outside and for that I'm grateful. I'm going to be jumping in my car shortly with a coffee and heading South, heading home. So, I'm looking forward to having an afternoon in the sunshine and enjoying my coffee. So, why don't you grab a coffee? Why don't you hang out with me today?

Welcome to the podcast. This is episode 20 and the title of today's podcast is this, 'Is Jesus really leading?' Sometimes we travel through life and we're all focused on us, we're all focused on who we are, we're all focused on what we wanna do, and then, like, this is a story of my life right? I'm type A I'm driven, I'm go, go, go. I'm like, let's get on with it. But you know, someone said to me recently, they said didn't Jesus say come follow me, and if Jesus says come follow me, then why do we pray and ask Jesus to come and bless what we are doing? It was like saying, you know, Jesus, would you follow me?

Should we not take time? I think, here's the big thought for today, should we not take time to see and sense what Jesus is up to, and then put our energy into that, praying into that, working toward that, and so that's the premise for today. I've got a few thoughts to share with you on that, and today I thought we'd look at the Bible. It's always a good idea, isn't it? For us to look at the Bible. I find it's really, really helpful as a guide.

Contrary to the heart of Jesus

And I remember a story of two guys, funnily enough, called Sons of Thunder, and the Sons of Thunder are in fact James and John. And so Jesus, in Luke Chapter 9, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, he set his face like Flint. One translation says, he set his face toward Jerusalem because he knew that he was going to be sacrificial lamb for the people of all creation.

And so, Jesus set his face to Jerusalem. You could read the story from verse 51 of Luke Chapter 9. And Jesus sent messengers, he sent some of his disciples ahead of him, who entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparation for Jesus who was coming. And these guys, the Samaritans, they did not want to receive Jesus, because he was going to Jerusalem. So, Samaritans and the Jews didn't get on so well. There's a bit of rejection happening here.

Now look at this. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them? You might remember that this is what Elijah did in the contest he had with the prophets of Baal, and some translations say should we called down fire from heaven, as our Father Elijah did? But Jesus turned and rebuked them. This is a brilliant example of us, human beings, you and me, reacting in the flesh, and wanting something contrary to that which is on the heart of Jesus.

You know, sometimes I think what we do is we get all uppity, we get frustrated, we get upset, we get angry, we get disappointed, we get hurt, we feel rejected or we just feel embarrassed for someone else, and we react. And sometimes I think, you know, is Jesus leading us when we do that? Turn to Jesus, and what does he say? And in this case he was very quick to rebuke James and John and say, no, you do not know what you ask for.

And so this is, you know, really challenging for us because for me, you know, I'm thinking about all the times of my life where I have reacted in the flesh, I got angry, and if you've ever been in the car with me, you know I'm not a very patient driver, I don't like going slow and I certainly don't like getting held up. In fact, I'm often running late because I've squeezed too much in and as a result of that I get frustrated at the people who are in front of me driving slow. Oh my goodness I even had that on the way to an appointment this morning. Why would someone drive 48 in an 80 speed zone? Seriously, my frustration was obviously because I was running late, but I'm reacting in the flesh.

Jesus gives us even better advice in his beatitudes, it's that, the sermon that he gave us on the mountain side. You can read it in Matthew Chapter 5, and you just scroll down the page and you get to verse 38. Interestingly, in the ESV translation the heading is retaliation. Jesus said you've heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil, if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well, and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

Here Jesus gives us absolutely gold advice here to say, hey guys, your way of thinking, your way of living is not necessarily the way that I would do things. So my question remains for me, and I'm sharing it with you. Is Jesus really leading this aspect of my life? Is he the one who's in charge? Well, look, let's get let's get to the challenge at the end. Let's, let's think about how we pray.

Lord, bless me!

What about the all too often frequent prayer that we offer up to God and say, Lord, would you come and bless what I am doing. Would you truly bless me, and you know, when you don't seek with the heart of God, you can be guilty of pushing your own motives. And there is a brilliant example, again in scripture of this, in the Old Testament. God had given his gift to his people and the prophets and so we see this happening in first Samuel.

First Samuel Chapter 8 and this is the story when the people asked for a king, they said to the prophet, they said give us a king, choose for us. Yeah so Samuel the Prophet is the one that's sort of heading up the story and they come to him and they say give us a king. Give us a king. We do not want to walk in your ways. And Samuel's like, seriously guys, do you not understand what you're asking?

And so he goes to the Lord. So first Samuel Chapter 8 in verse 7 here the Lord said to Samuel, Obey the voice of the people and all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. Oh my goodness. You know, when we choose to play the Lord of our own lives. And say come Jesus and follow me. We're actually rejecting God. Oh, man, if that doesn't put the fear of God into you and to me and to everyone that's listening man alive. We should not be saying God come and bless what I'm doing. We should be saying God, what are you doing and how can I be part of that?

But look at this. This God just Rams at home. First Samuel 8, verse 8 accordingly, to the deeds that they have done from the day I brought them out of Egypt, even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, they are not also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice. Only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king, who will reign over them.

Like in my modern translation, if I was paraphrasing that, I'd say God was saying to us, look, you get what you ask for, that you may not like it. And I think sometimes we pray and we ask God to give us what we want, and then the reality is we get it. He gives it to us, and we're like ohh man, this is actually not that good.

Yeah, and Israel asks for a king, and they were oppressed. They were abused, they were taxed, they were protected. They were loved by some kings. They were served by others, but ultimately the fruit of that is that the people of God had rejected the God who saved them out of Egypt and called them his own child. They rejected him, and they wanted a king. I've been lamenting over this and thinking about it in preparation for the podcast, and I think too often in my life, I'm praying and I expect God to answer my prayers in the way that I imagine would be best for me and the way I want it to look or the way I want to feel, as long as it's good in my view. And so let me say this a different way. When we pray and say, God, would you answer my prayers? We're actually telling God what to do so you've gotta be very careful how you petition your prayers.

What is best for me?

And look, I'm a big fan of actually putting our heart before God. But when you're trying to manipulate God. You are really coming almost like a spoiled child. And you know, let's just say you have a need for let's just dump this roll down. Let's don't make it real simple. Lord, I would love a car park right outside the door of the shop because I don't want to walk. The Lord would bless me, if the Lord would bless me as his child, and give me a car park right next to the door of the shop, it would please me Lord, if you would do.

Yeah and then the Lord was like, well, you know what? I can do that, but what's better for you is to get your fat butt out of the car and walk down the road and get a bit of fresh air. And what would you know, that I've already organised for you to bump into someone who's going to be a blessing to you and that you're gonna be a blessing to them. But if you don't want that what I'm going to do says God is I'm going to give you that car park right outside the door and you're not going to walk, you're not going to get the fresh air, and you're not going to get the joy of connecting with that person that I have prepared for you today.

Come on, let's pray better prayers. Let's say, Lord, would you make today my best day. Lord would you show me your hand in my life today? God, would you help me to see you in every aspect of my day? And if you would shine your face upon me, I would know that you truly are my Heavenly Father who goes with me in the day.

Let's not stop asking for car parks, so let's start asking for God to be glorified in our lives. You know, sometimes I think we ask for financial provision because we want God to rescue us from bad decisions that we've made or crisis that we got ourselves into. I've done a little bit of work in helping couples go through challenges in life, and I've, you know, Kathy and I would tell you, we've certainly had our fair share of challenges and quite often you know it, you might laugh at this and point the finger. So let's

do that instead of you confess, but you know one person might say look. If only you would help me fix my spouse. I just really need them to change. I want them to change so that my life will be more enjoyable.

And that's just, you know when someone says that to me, I know the classic need that they have is for them to grow up and learn how to be a servant in their marriage. So be careful what you look for. Be careful what you ask for. But let's be real and let's open ourselves up and be vulnerable for God and allow the vulnerability that we bring to God to be his tool in his hands that he can do his work in our lives. Look, I know I've. I've given you some scripture to think about and I look, I really do hope that you checked the transcription or the notes, find the references and spend time for yourself reading the scripture cause all I try and do is be a sign post to point you to the scriptures, that the scriptures would be doing the work in your life.

Disciples embrace discipline

And here's another one, speaking of just allowing God to do his work, Hebrews chapter 12 is just such a brilliant passage. I just want to start from verse seven. You can read from the beginning, but it's for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline. If you're left without discipline, in which we've all participated in, but then you're not sons, you're illegitimate, the Bible says you're illegitimate if you're not getting disciplined.

I mean, we had, says the Bible, earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live. For our fathers disciplined us for a short time as it was best for them. But God disciplines us for our good that we may share His Holiness and finally verse 11. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the fruitful peace of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Oh, guys, look just a couple of simple thoughts here that might help us in being led by Jesus. Here's my connection. Listen to this. Watch this. The word discipline comes from the word. Disciple and we know that a disciple is a follower of Jesus. So if you want to be a follower of Jesus, is Jesus really leading you, is my question. If you wanna say yes and you say Jesus, would you lead me? I will be a follower of Jesus. That means you're being a disciple of Jesus. Which therefore means you need to be open to the discipline of being his follower. Same word, guys.

What's my point? If Jesus is leading you, it's best for you to endure his pathway because it is for your good and once you have participated in it as a son of God you will then experience his Holiness

Look, verse 10 you would share in His Holiness and later, whilst it's painful for now, we all know that, it will yield you the peaceful fruit of righteousness, which means right standing before God being in line with his heart and his will for who you are.

Come on. This is the whole point here. If Jesus says come, follow me. He knows what's good for you. So where do we wanna land this today? For me, I have been spending time as I've been driving. I spent a bit of time driving my car and in this past season of my life and it gives me time to think and I enjoy the driving and I enjoy the thinking time cause probably over half the time I'm driving by myself.

But here's what I've been contemplating is, who's in the driving seat of my life, who's determining the direction, who's determining the time frame, who's determining the goals that I've been setting as Jesus really leading me? And so I've had to change the way I think. I've had to come back to the basics and say God, you actually know what's better for me and I accept that. And also I believe that you make all things work out for good for those who love you, and according to your purposes, that's Romans Chapter 8.

If I believe that, if I truly believe it, then I'm gonna make sure that my life is in line with that, and for me to make sure my life is in line with that. Then I need to trust you to lead me, so God, you know what my needs are. You even know what my heart's desire is. But Lord, you also know what the best pathway is for me. And sometimes I want to take the shortest route from A to B, and God says look, come the long way, come with me, we'll walk it together, and as we spend time together on this pathway you and me we're going to grow closer together.

What about you?

So what does your life look like if you were going to truly be honest in your reflection. Kathy and I have just finished watching a season of a TV show called CSI, and these guys are crime scene investigators, it's what CSI stands for, but they look at the crime scene and they look at the evidence and the evidence tells the story. And we quite like it because, you know, there's always something geeky that they do and like we're just not science geeks. So we can find that interesting cause we never think like that. So Kathy and I have been watching CSI and they have the saying they say well, the evidence always tells the story.

And so I want to say what is the evidence in your life. What's the story it's telling. One of the tools that you'd commonly accept would be used by investigators are fingerprints. Well, here's my question for you. Does your life show the fingerprints of Jesus? Does your life show the fingerprints of Jesus? Is there sufficient evidence in your life that Jesus is on the throne? Jesus is your king. He is your Lord, and he's the one that's leading you.

Please, please, please don't be a follower of Jesus by words only, but be it by dedication and commitment. Don't be one of those Christians that says I'm all for God as long as God's all for me. And God is for you, but it doesn't always look and feel the way you would think it was, and just go back to my point around my expectation of how God answers my prayers isn't always truly in line with the way that God wants it to look like.

So let me finish with something practical that you can do and take away, because I'd love for you to be able to get something out of this rather than just hear Phil rambling. So what I want you to do is look at your life, take a, take a quiet moment to look at your life.

And one of the ways that you can get guidance in this is to say where is my life. Where is my life flowing with evidence of Jesus? Where is my life flowing with evidence of Jesus? And you can see this by the fruit. So, a good tree bears good fruit. Jesus is evidenced by the good fruit in your life. Where's the good things happening? Where's the breakthroughs happening? Where's the blessing for other people? Where is God glorified in your life? Where is his truth? His promise? You know his scripture evidenced the most. Which part of your life is flowing with evidence of Jesus. That's a short question that might take you some time to answer. But I would say this where he is flowing is where you should be going, where he is flowing is where you should be going.

So, I want to encourage you today, dive deep. I am choosing to do the same and if we catch up to have a conversation about this, I'm looking forward to sharing more of my introspective journey into the depth of the question. is Jesus really leading my life? And if you aren't able to connect with me in that way, then why don't you find someone else share the podcast with them? Get them to listen, to reflect, and then why don't you get together and have a cup of tea or a coffee with them and go on the journey together? We're not supposed to do this alone, so let's do life together.

I want to thank you for joining me. Thanks for subscribing to the podcast channel. We're gonna push out some more of these each week, actually, so grab them on the platform that works for you, share them with your friends, and thanks for being part of the community. Have a fantastic week and I look forward to the next time where you and I can grab some coffee time together.