

## The Basics of Christian Ministry

Are you a satisfied Christian?

It is my experience that most Christians go through periods of being unsatisfied with their Christian life. For some this is more often than others. It is not because the Christian walk is unfulfilling, but because we feel we are constantly struggling to live the Christian lives that we feel we should be. We don't produce the spiritual fruit that we want to. We cry out with Paul, "what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15). We long to see unbelieving family and friends come to Christ, and yet our efforts go without reward. This especially applies to Christians in any kind of leadership when we are running different meetings or are involved in these events and don't see much fruit.

A wide selection of books advising all sorts of things to help our spiritual lives often make us feel even guiltier.

This week I want us to look at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. I believe that there are certain basics that Jesus puts in place at the start of his ministry. This is taken from Matthew 3:13-4:25.

1. Jesus is Spirit-filled. Through the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17), we see that the Spirit anoints Jesus for his ministry. This is the same Spirit that will remain with him and support him right through his human life to the cross (see Matt. 12:18, 28).

Our Christian lives must also be Spirit filled. We cannot expect spiritual fruit or spiritual satisfaction if we do not seek to live by the Spirit. This means seeking his guidance and power in our lives rather than all the other power and guidance we are offered.

2. Jesus is Humbly Devoted to God. Having been baptised in the Spirit, Jesus is next taken to the desert where he is tempted (Matt 4.1-11). At each point the Devil tempts Jesus to be proud and powerful. Be it to call on angels to save him or taking all the kingdoms of the earth, Jesus is offered to be his own man in power (with striking similarities to the Fall in the Garden of Eden). But Jesus is devoted to the Father and he humbly accepts his role on earth. He could have taken each one of these offers from the Devil, but self-interest and self-aggrandisement is not Jesus' concern.

Similarly, the satisfied Christian cannot be proudly devoted to himself. Instead we must be humbly devoted to God. Not trying to influence him, or tell him where our lives are going. This is seen in patient listening to God.

3. Jesus preaches the Word. The next stage for Jesus is to read from Isaiah and preach repentance (Matt. 4.12-17). He reads the Word, and then preaches it. This is the third basic of Christian ministry. This may seem simple, but often what we say and do we preach everything but the Word. We don't think the Word is cool enough or effective enough so we aim to preach something else.

Our Christian ministries must be grounded in God's Word. That means being absorbed in God's Word as making sure we are preaching God's word in our actions and speech. This will bring satisfaction to God's sower.

4. Jesus has fellowship. The next step for Jesus is to call the first of his disciples (4.18-22). Even Jesus, the Son of God, worked with a team and yet we still try to live independent of other Christian. Fellowship provides companionship, support and love. It is very dangerous to be living apart from a Christian community. They hold us accountable and they support us in prayer.

We must have fellowship in our Christian lives. This can be difficult when there aren't people around us our age, or who understand our situation. But if anyone would have felt that way, it was Jesus. He demonstrates just how important community is.

5. Jesus goes out with the Good News. This is the last part of the narrative before the beatitudes (Matt. 4.23-25). Jesus goes out "preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people". Jesus was active with his calling. He wasn't filled with the Spirit and absorbed in the Word to be on his own, but he took this good news to be the people.

Christian ministry is active. That can be hard because of activity often involves getting over several hurdles. But the benefits and satisfaction to come will far outweigh any temporary hardship that we face. As we see most demonstrated with Jesus who suffered the pain of the cross for the joy to come.

Matt Ford

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## Day 1

Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?"

Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Lord, thank you for your Spirit and for the guidance and power that he brings. At the start of this week, teach me to walk in step with your Spirit. Anoint me that I may be your servant today. Amen.

## Day 2

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "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.'"

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

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Lord, thank you for the example of how Jesus survived the temptation of Jesus. Make me humbly devoted to you today. And may I grow in that devotion to you everyday I pray. Amen.

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## Day 3

Matthew 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

"Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Lord, thank you for your Word that is truth and light to me. Transform my heart and mind through it and absorb me in it. Make me desire your Word more and more each day for your glory. Amen.

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## Day 4

Matthew 4:18-22

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for

they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Lord, thank you for the Christian community you have placed me in. It is so valuable to me. Help me to be more loving and to open myself up to be loved by others, that we as a world-wide Church might be salt and light for you. Amen.

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### **Day 5**

Matthew 4:23-25

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralysed, and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Lord, at the end of this week, inspire and enthuse me to go out and serve you. Guide me in where you would call me to be active. May I bring good news to many different people in what I say and what I do. Amen.