

No Shortcuts:
Communion Sermon
3 March 2004

<p>“This is a shortcut.” This four-word phrase strikes as much fear in me as that other famous Alabama 4-word phrase: “hey y’all, watch this!” This phrase is usually followed by 2 words: “trust me.”</p> <p>Jesus trusted God. When the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness, Jesus trusted Him and obediently followed. Then, during that time, Satan appeared, tempting Jesus. Satan’s words all came down to 2 phrases: “This is a shortcut. Trust me.”</p> <p>“You’re hungry. Take a shortcut and make bread.” “You want to rule the world. Take a shortcut; worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world.” “You want the people to know you are the Son of God. Throw yourself from the pinnacle of the temple, and they will know you are the Son of God. Trust me.”</p> <p>In every instance, Jesus refused to take the shortcut. I don’t think it is coincidental that Jesus refuted Satan by quoting from Deuteronomy every time. Deuteronomy is the book where Moses warned the Israelites about shortcuts: “You want to worship God? Do it His way.” “You want your children to live? Teach them God’s way.” “You’ll want a king.”</p>	<p>In every instance, the Israelites tried to take a shortcut and found — to their horror — that the shortcut led through oppression by the Canaanites and exile in Babylon.</p> <p>Jesus refused to take shortcuts to establish His kingdom, choosing instead to trust God, even when that trust led Him to homelessness, rejection by His people, a cross — and a grave.</p> <p>Just as there were no shortcuts to God’s plan for Jesus, there are no shortcuts for the Church today. Our people come to church expecting us to give them a 3-step plan to success, invite them to the latest and greatest study, and offer them the latest entertainment during the service. But activity is no shortcut for spiritual life; programs are no shortcut for study; entertainment is no shortcut to worship; and excitement and emotion are no shortcuts for the presence of the Spirit.</p> <p>Every temptation offered to Jesus presented Him with shortcuts to obtain what He needed to accomplish: to eat, to rule, to demonstrate trust in God (and perhaps showboat before the crowd). Jesus showed trust instead. I point you back to the Psalm for today: “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, abides under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 He shall say to the LORD, ‘You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God in whom I put my trust.’”</p>
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