

Learning to Pray with Jesus: Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Matthew 6:9-15, James 1:12-18 || Pastor Alex Watlington || 27 March 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What word describes what you think of when the topic of prayer comes up?

Worship: [Psalm 121](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [Matt 6:9-15](#), [James 1:12-18](#) (*Read aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

Jesus concludes His prayer rather abruptly, asking the Father to “*lead us not temptation but deliver us from evil.*” The apostles of the early church added “for thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever” at the end. It’s a doxology, a means of ending this life-changing prayer in praise, joy and fulfillment. But the only way for us to end that way is to get through Christ’s final petition. We need to take this call for our Father to lovingly protect us from temptation and evil as a blessing. Once we do this – with full understanding of this petition’s origin and taking hold of the power to pray it – then we can look to God with the joy and praise we are called to.

The Blessing of This Prayer // “*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him*” writes James (1:12). In this context, ‘blessed’ means to be fulfilled. James is saying that a full, happy life doesn’t come by avoiding trials, but by enduring them. It’s as if withstanding temptation and surviving trials brings about personal enrichment that cannot be found anywhere else. It’s certainly counterintuitive and uncomfortable to accept when we hear this. But as a Harvard professor wrote, “*Without setbacks and hard things, we don’t develop a ‘psychological immunity’ and when the normal frustrations of life come, we think something must be terribly wrong.*” Essentially: avoiding trials makes growth and fulfillment impossible. But then what is the ‘crown of life’ James is referring to? It’s not a metaphor for eternal life (as if our salvation depends on our ability to withstand temptation); rather, it’s speaking about a blessing we can experience in this life. If we stand with God through trials, those hardships will strip away the things we thought could bring fulfillment, allowing us to discover who we really are.

Origin of This Prayer: Lead Us Not Into Temptation // If God tempts no one ([v13](#)), what does it mean to pray this? As theologian Dale Bruner wrote, we need to read this as asking God to not *allow* us to be led into temptation. Because there’s a dangerous misstep made when we mistake God using our circumstances for His good purposes and us playing the victim, blaming Him for all the things we are wrestling with. To think this way is to believe that God is not good or sufficient. In truth, the Lord’s Prayer helps us get in touch with the responsibility we must grasp amidst trials and temptations. Temptation most acutely comes from *within* us ([v14-15](#)). And succumbing to our desires – placing them ahead of and more important than our Father – is what leads to death. So most of all, what we’re praying for is for our Father to protect us... from ourselves.

Origin of This Prayer: Deliver Us From the Evil One // The Devil will constantly remind us of the temptations that have sunk us – especially anything that makes us feel unable to pray for God to keep us from such temptation. In a sense, the evil one seeks to exploit our temptation and add trial to it... the goal being that we give up turning to God. What do we need in the face of these lies? We need to remember that the Bible never says that union with Christ will free us from falling into sin ([Rom 6:7](#)). Jesus is the one who overcame our sin, not us. We also need to remember that there is a plan behind our struggle – that we might see the depth of God’s love ([2 Cor 12:7-10](#)). Finally, we must remember that the closer we are to Christ, the heavier the temptation ([Luke 22:31-33](#)). And so when we say this, we are indeed praying, “*Protect me from the lies I tell myself... and the lies I myself am told.*”

The Power to Pray This Prayer // Where do we find the strength to pray *and believe* this prayer in the midst of temptation? Our desires will give birth to things that will make our lives terribly unstable. And if we live by them, then our lives will feel as stable as our own will – all over the place. The way we move forward is to stop looking at (and to) ourselves for the strength to endure. Instead, we need to remember the Gospel and our redemption in Christ. It is God’s unchanging will that we would be His children ([James 1:17-18](#)). If we hold up this truth in the thick of temptation, there we find the power to endure. Because it’s not our power that we need; it’s our Father’s.

Discussion Questions (*You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.*)

The Blessing of this prayer

- “God tempts no one.” Who then is responsible for temptation? (See [James 1:13-16](#))
- How does this section of the Lord’s prayer become a blessing?
 - “The one who stands through temptation is fulfilled or completed” (based on the Greek wording behind this passage). What do you think of this idea? ([James 1:12](#))

Origin of this prayer

- What is the false belief about the origin of temptation, and how does it “lead to death?”
 - Why are we so prone to blame the Lord and others when things go wrong?
 - How does the prayer “*Lord protect me from me*” help us understand the root of much temptation?
- The power of the second part of the prayer, “deliver us from evil,” acknowledges that we have already succumbed to temptation. Here, Satan prowls and uses the sin to create more guilt and shame. Which biblical stories exemplify this? How do these stories show us the path through these thoughts?

The power to pray it

- Where do we get the strength to pray this prayer – especially in times when we really don’t want to?
- What experiences have you lived through where you see how God used your trial for good purposes?
 - “*The deeper you get into Christ, the harder it will be to pray ‘lead us not into temptation.’*” Why do you think this is true? How do we see this in the disciples like Peter?
 - How does knowing and remembering that you are a child of God change how you experience trials and temptation?

Prayer

Continue to pray for the situation in Ukraine, for peace, Christ’s mercies and intervention. Pray for our Pastoral Search Team nominations and process. Pray for new and non-believers to attend the Christianity Explored Classes. For this week’s Prayer Guide for personal or group use, click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude

Share any experiences you have had with Prayer Walking. What surprised you? What encouraged you? What made you uncomfortable? How did you pray differently? How did it enhance your prayer time?

This week, continue to pray through the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:3-17](#)) to guide you in prayers for yourself and others in times of temptation and trial. See the resource [A Simple Way to Pray](#) by Martin Luther [HERE](#).