

Weaving the Word

Not Into Temptation

Part 41 – August 9, 2015

Welcome to where we're learning to count the cost to follow the One who paid the price



We're looking at the Lords' Prayer Guide; and, specifically what *has* to be the *most* misunderstood and misapplied line in it:

“... lead us not into temptation.” – Matthew 6:13a NIV

After confessing our *committed sins* (“forgive us our debts”) **we now pray offense** and we **personalize this portion with our potential sins**.

But, **why in the world would God lead us into temptation?**

At this point, most commentaries and sermons say that this can't mean what it seems to mean because *James* is quite clear that ...



When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For **God cannot be tempted** by evil, **nor does he tempt anyone**; – James 1:13 NIV

True. But, **Jesus doesn't say to pray, “Tempt us not,”** just **“Lead us not into a time or place of temptation.”**

There's no suggestion that God is the one doing the tempting.

So, James, though absolutely correct, simply doesn't apply.

But, **does God ever lead us to be tempted?**

And the answer is ... *drum roll please ... yes!*



Jesus was **led by the Spirit** into the desert **to be tempted by the devil**. – Matthew 4:1 NIV

The Mount of Temptation, c. 1890

James says that **God doesn't do the tempting**, but **God does allow the testing**, and that **our testing has a purpose and a prize**. (1:2-4)

To be clear: **God's Spirit led Jesus to a dance with the devil**.

So, **can we trust our Father if He's gonna pull stunts like that?**

Absolutely yes! This can be a bit confusing, *but ... Does God tempt us? No.*

Does God test us? Yes.

Can there be a test without a temptation? No.

So, what's the difference between tempting and testing? *Everything!*



A good parent would never *tempt* their teen to get drunk, or high, or commit sexual sin; **but, you drive 'em to the prom, where they dance with all three of these temptations.**

Because, **our only other option is to restrict 'em and prevent 'em from growing, maturing, developing, strengthening, and becoming.**

So, we advise 'em, warn 'em, and then drive 'em to the dance.

We literally lead our children into well-measured temptation. Or we'd hinder, hamper, and stunt their growth. And, *that's* a "stunt" the Holy Spirit *will never pull!*

We safeguard 'em as much as we can: arming 'em with our insight, and providing a way out if needed ("*Just call me*"), so they can bear it.



And God is faithful; **he will not let you be tempted** [Notice it doesn't stop here; but adds] **beyond what you can bear.** But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out [*Just call Me*] so that you can **stand up under it.** – 1 Corinthians 10:13b NIV

What happens when we stand up under a weight? Our muscles tear and repair and strengthen. This is the way God's children grow.



Just before saying that God doesn't tempt us, James says:

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has **stood the test,** he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. – James 1:12 NIV

And, our Father is faithful; **He'll not allow what His children can't handle ... *without Him.***



When Jesus was tempted – and we're told that, "*He himself suffered when He was tempted*" (Heb 2:18) – **what was the way out that God provided Him?**

Three times He's tempted, and three times He *quotes scripture.*

The way out will always be through the Word.

You see, as a *Good Father*, **God must allow us to endure more than we can handle without leaning on, and learning from, Him.**

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, **whenever you face trials of many kinds**, [knowing that God only leads us to His eternal purpose and our eternal best] because you know that the **testing** [the *tearing*] of your faith **develops perseverance** [the *repairing*]. Perseverance must **finish its work** [the *strengthening*] so that you may be mature and complete, [not stunted] not lacking anything. - James 1:2-4 NIV



So, the Spirit leads us to *our* dance with the devil; *because, what the enemy devises to destroy us, God uses to develop us.* But this makes *“lead us not into temptation”* even weirder!

Is Jesus saying to pray: *“Don’t do it, God! Don’t do it!”* Is He saying, *“Wow, God got me good in the wilderness! Did not see that coming! So, you all better pray, ‘Lead US not into temptation. Don’t do us like you did poor Jesus!’*

Of course not. That distorts the very nature of our Father. And *that’s why* this can’t mean what it seems to mean. *So, what in the world is Jesus saying here?*

How do we personalize this portion of His prayer guide?

First, we need to realize where the dance takes place.



Remember the campfire story where a babysitter gets scary calls, so she barricades the doors, and phones the police? And, they somehow check her phone record, and tell her *what?*

“The call is coming from inside!” Well, *brace yourself:* after saying God doesn’t tempt us, James says:

... but each one is tempted when, **by his own evil desire**, he is dragged away and enticed. – James 1:14 NIV

“The call is coming from inside!”

Secondly: we need to get past a little cultural language barrier.

We hear, *“Lead us not into”* and we think, *“Don’t lead us into”*. But, Jesus isn’t telling us to pray, *“Don’t lead us,”* or *“Lead us NOT”*. Just the opposite!

We’re calling on God to “lead us” ... but, where?

“Not into” is a negative synonym for “out of” or “away from”.

It’s odd, but not totally uncommon to us: *“I so want to be not in here right now! I want to be not in these wet clothes.” “How are you feeling?” “Not so hot.”*

We use negative synonyms all the time (*he’s not too sharp; she’s not too swift; they’re not too bright*), **because they serve to emphasize our point**; like saying, *“It won’t kill you,”* instead of *“It’s good for you.”* **This little play on words serves to emphasize our point.**

And, so ...

- Instead of “stylish” or “classy” ... it’s “Not too shabby”
- Instead of “attractive” or “pleasing” ... it’s “Not bad; not bad at all”
- Instead of “out of” or “away from” ... it’s “Not into”

So, don’t pray, “Lead-us-NOT”; instead pray, “LEAD-US ... not-into”.

The Apostle Peter states a similar thought, but in the *positive*.

... the **Lord** [our Father] knows how to **deliver** [lead] the **godly** [those who love Him] **out of** [also known as: *not into*] **temptations** ... – 2 Peter 2:9b NKJ



Jesus never played defense.

Right up to and through the moment He was betrayed.

On reaching the place, [Gethsemane] he [Jesus] said to them, [Peter, James, and John] “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” – Luke 22:40 NIV

In other words: *“Boys, pray on the offense!”*

So, on the offense, we pray: *“lead us ... not-into temptation.”* And we pause, and **personalize this by acknowledging the temptations we’re most likely to give in to**, so our Father can prepare us.

- **It’s a time to examine our old patterns and weaknesses.**
- **It’s a time to search His Word for wisdom and inspiration.**
- **It’s a time to identify Godly support and accountability.**
- **It’s a time to rehearse our strategies and escape plans.**

It’s not a prayer to be spared, but strengthened.

It’s a cry for God’s help, so we’ll be alert and equipped, and will not yield or fall when that inevitable call comes from inside ... *and it’s time to go to the dance!*