

Our Place at His Place

Not Into It

June 7, 2020

Welcome to where we're watching and praying that we **enter not** into temptation!



Face any new temptations this week? Or just the same ol' same ol'?



I have **sincere empathy and concern for anyone anywhere who's victimized in any way because of their race.** And so, I've been striving to refrain from ungodly contempt toward the *looters* who've hijacked their cause. And, **it's tempting to paint it all with one big brush.**



Also, when I see the contemptable behavior of those *wreaking havoc* and destroying the very communities of the genuine protesters, I got'a say: **it's very easy to hate the sin;** but, **it takes effort to love the sinner.** And, being cooped up in this pandemic, and now these riots – **all these emotions compromise our rationality and objectivity.** And I don't know about you, but **it's tempting to let visceral feelings dictate my reactions.**



So, I think we should take a good look at the Lord's Prayer; and specifically that part that says: **Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation.**



That *has* to be the *most* misunderstood line in the Lord's Prayer. **Why in the world would God lead us into temptation?!** James (Jesus' oldest little brother) 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

But then, Jesus *doesn't* say to pray, "*Tempt us not into,*" but "*Lead us not into*". So, **does our Father ever lead us to be tempted?**

[Well, as a matter of fact] Jesus was led by the Spirit [of God] into the desert to be tempted by the devil. [And that's actually a really good thing] – Matthew 4:1 NIV

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – Hebrews 4:15 NIV

This word for "tempted" is also translated "tested" depending on context. And James (1:2-4) explains that while **God doesn't do the tempting,** we must realize that **God does allow the testing;** and that this testing has an eternal reason and reward. But, to be crystal clear: **God's Spirit led Jesus to a dance with the devil.** You see, our Father *will* take us to a place to be tempted by the devil.

This can be a bit confusing at first, so listen closely: **Does God tempt us? No.** He's a loving Father. **Does God test us? Yes.** He's a loving Father. **Can there be a test without a temptation? No.** So, what's the difference between doing the tempting and allowing the testing?



Good parenting! If you're a good parent, you'd never tempt your teen to get drunk or high, or to commit sexual sin; but, you'll drive 'em to the prom! And you know full well they'll be dancing with all three of these temptations. You're not ignorant (forget what your teen thinks), we allow them to do things like this because, **our only other option is to restrict them, and prevent them, from developing and strengthening and maturing ... you know: life.**

That's why **we advise 'em and warn 'em even as we drive 'em to their dance.** In this way, **we take them to temptation** – that is, to the place where they'll face temptation – **but never into temptation.** Just the opposite. **We hope and pray they'll follow our lead, not into it.**

And, just like our Father, who is in heaven, **we prepare 'em as much as we can:** arming them with our insight, and providing a way of escape, so they can bear it with our help (*"You call me right away if there's trouble"*). But, just like our Father, who is in heaven, **we are limited, in our efforts to safeguard, by their willingness to receive and act on what we offer.**

And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted [...] *beyond* what you can bear **[by utilizing everything you're receiving from what He's offering].** But when you *are* tempted, he will *also* provide a way out [*"Just call Me"*] *so that* you can *stand up under it* **[which is the goal of every great parent].** – 1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV

And what happens when we consistently stand up under a weight? **Our muscles grow – by a process of tearing and repairing.** This is also the way spiritual muscle develops. Just before James assures us that God doesn't tempt us, he said:

Blessed is the man who perseveres *under trial* **[that's the same word that's also translated as "temptation"]**, 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

Our Father is faithful; **He'll not allow what we can't handle ... without Him.** He'll take us to a place where, one way or another – following the devil's call into it, or following our Father's *not* into it – **we'll learn to trust His love and lean on His Word.** Lately, for me, I'm dropped off at the dance just about every time I turn on the news!

Now, when Jesus was tempted – and we're told, *"He himself suffered when He was tempted"* (Heb 2:18) – **what was the way of escape that the Father had already provided? His life-giving Word.**

Each time He's tempted, He stands up under the weight by leaning on scripture. **When it comes to temptation and God's Word: if you want to get out, you got'a get in.**



It's all very confusing down here; but then, what kid every really appreciated or understood their parent's drive-to-the-dance chats? Plus, it seems kind of backwards; but, **we can't learn the lesson till after we face the test.** That's how the tearing and repairing of spiritual muscle works down here.

If we won't stand under, we won't understand. So, in the meantime, until we can fully appreciate our Father's heart and mind and perfect plan, just do your best to sincerely ...

Consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials [same word] of many kinds, [How? By trusting that our Father will only lead us into His eternal purpose and our eternal best. You'll wish you had when you look back from up there] because you know that the testing [the tearing] of your faith develops [the repairing] perseverance [the muscle]. Perseverance must finish its work [growth] so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. - James 1:2-4 NIV

And so, the Spirit leads us to *our* dance with the devil, pretty much on a daily basis; *because, what our foe devises to destroy, our Father revises to develop.* The devil isn't *getting away* with something, he's *getting played!* But this makes "lead us *not* into temptation" *even weirder!*



Should we ask our Father to *not* drive us to the dance? Is Jesus saying, "Wow, *God got me good in the wilderness!* I did not see that coming. I'll tell you what: you all better pray, 'Lead us not into a dance with the devil. Don't do us like you did poor Jesus!'" What do you think? But, it's confusing, *right?* So, *what is* Jesus saying here?



First, we need to realize where the "dance" takes place. Remember the old scary campfire story where a babysitter gets murderous threats on the phone? So she nails all the doors and windows shut, and phones the police. And, they say ... *what?* "*The call is coming from inside!*" Well, brace yourself. There's a reason our Father has to let us go to that dance. Guess where it's being held. ***This dance is in our heart!*** Oh, and ***this dance is the kind a boxer does in the ring.*** After James says that God doesn't tempt *anyone*, he says:



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



The call is coming from inside! So, there's no avoiding it. And, if this was only a battle between you and the enemy, you could handle it with far less effort. But, ***it's a battle between you and ... you.***



[And remember, we've been warned that] The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? – Jeremiah 17:9 NIV

Well, I suppose those who've danced *with* it, and stood up *to* it.

And second: the negative grammatical construct of "lead us *not into*," only seems odd, because it's unfamiliar. On an online English translation site, a student wrote: "What does '*I'm not into it*' mean? I can't grasp it." Another answered: English-speakers say not into as a polite way of saying "I don't like it, or want to do it."

"She's just *not into* you, man." "Is it because I'm *not into* Harry Potter?"

Jesus *isn't* telling us to pray, "*Don't lead us*" but "*Lead us*". Where? *Not into* temptation".

Then why doesn't He just say, "Lead us *out of*, or *away from*, temptation?" Because, **we can't flee the war within**. Like it or not, we're at *that* dance every day. And **we will always only have one choice to make: be led into it, or be led *not into* it**. Brother James says:

Submit to God. *Resist* the devil and *he* will *flee* from you. – James 4:7 NKJ



"Hey, want to get drunk or high?" "No thanks; I'm *not into* that sort of thing." "Why?" "Well, the Lord has *led* me to be *not into* it." "Could He *lead* me to be *not into* it?" "Sure. Just ask Him to *lead* you to be *not into* that *temptation*."



Do that, and I think the Lord would say to you what He said to His disciples the night before His crucifixion, in the Garden of Gethsemane, while facing incredible temptation himself.

Watch and *pray*, that you enter *not into* temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. – Matthew 26:41 KJV

"Lord, what should we pray so that we enter *not into temptation*?" "Well, that our Father would *lead us* (to enter) *not into temptation*." "But doesn't our Father routinely take us to a *place* of temptation." "Yes, because you must face the call from inside, so you can learn to lean on Me, and follow My lead, so you can stand up under it, so you *enter not into* it."

He **[also]** said to them, "Pray that you will *not fall into* temptation." – Luke 22:40 NIV

When it comes to the call of sin from within, we have two choices: **fall for it or stand up under it**.

So, we must "watch" by taking a hard look inside our heart, and examining our patterns and weaknesses; and then "pray" by confessing the temptations we're most likely to fall for.

Then, let Him lead you into His Word so He can lead you not into temptation.

This isn't a prayer to be spared from the battle, but prepared and strengthened and led!

Whenever you're tempted to fall for the call from inside; it's time to face the music ... *and dance!*