

## **Teach Us To Pray: Lead Us Not Into Temptation**

**Matthew 6:9-13; James 1:2-4, 13-14; Matthew 26:39b, 41; Hebrews 4:15-16**

Read Matthew 6:9-13. In summary, we have so far covered: *God, You are holy and I pray that Your will, not mine, would be done here on earth. I trust You for everything I need from moment to moment. Your grace-filled forgiveness and acceptance of me encourages and allows me to have grace and forgiveness for others.* And that brings us to today, *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

**What is temptation?:** On the surface, this portion of the prayer gives the impression that God has the habit of sending temptation our way. However, God does not tempt us. Read James 1:13-14.

The word ‘temptation’ has a negative connotation. It is seen as a way of trying to get someone to fail or sin. The Aramaic word for ‘temptation’ is *‘nesiona’* (neh-see-OH-nah) which is more closely translated to the word ‘testing’ or ‘trial’.

‘Test’ is a more neutral sounding word in our time. A teacher invested in the wellbeing and success of students can give a test. A parent may let their child choose from two options to test if they will make the wise decision or not. A test can reveal truths about knowledge and wisdom. The test is not to set you up for you to fail - but to help you grow.

So the line in this prayer is saying, ‘Please do not lead me into a test, but if I must face it, help me to pass.’ That seems logical. No one wants to be tested. It’s uncomfortable, unnerving, and gives you the sweats. Who would want to voluntarily step into a test?

But testing is important for growth and development. Read James 1:2-4. Tests reveal what we are made of and can help us become spiritually mature when we pass. However, we are all broken people living in a broken world. Failure is always a risk.

When Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane and left his disciples to keep guard, He returned to them after an hour and found them sleeping and gave them this warning: *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* (Matthew 26:41) We are all weak and are at risk of failing the tests that will come in life.

**Jesus in the Test:** Even Jesus, who was not at risk of failing the test, did not want to go through it. Right before He came out to find His disciples asleep, Jesus prayed: *“My father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”* (Matthew 26:39b)

Jesus’ prayer is an echo of the line we are looking at today. He asks to not have to go through the test then yields His will to the Father. Jesus is showing that He fully trusts God to carry Him through the test.

Jesus was no stranger to being tested. In Matthew 4:1-11, we read about Jesus being tested in the wilderness. When Satan tried to persuade Jesus to turn stones into bread, He was being tested in whether He would trust God’s provision. When He was told to throw Himself down to force God’s hand, He was tested in trusting God’s protection. Finally, when told to bow down to Satan in order to take control of the kingdoms of earth now, Jesus was being tested in trusting God’s planning. Jesus passed each test proving that He trusted God fully.

This was a reversal of the temptation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. They failed the test by choosing to trust their desires over God’s wisdom.

**Guardrails:** So, how do we make sure that when the test comes we are prepared to pass? A few years ago, I was introduced to the concept of setting guardrails. These are pre-decisions that

protect us from disaster. Just like guardrails on the side of the road keep you from crashing into a ditch or off a bridge, spiritual guardrails can help keep you on the right path and away from danger. For example: if you know you have a weakness for chocolate and you are trying to stick to a healthier diet, decide before you go to the store that you will not buy a party sized bag of Reese's.

When I think about Adam and Eve with this in mind, I can't help but wonder why they were hanging out by the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil in the first place. Perhaps a guardrail for them would have been finding another path that did not lead them by the only thing God told them to avoid. But isn't that just human nature? We are drawn toward what we know we need to avoid. *"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak..."* Guardrails can teach us self-control and discipline so that when a test comes we have already chosen our limits.

What does this look like practically?

- Digital boundaries
  - Set filters, limit screen time, take a social media break, delete gaming apps
- Relationship boundaries
  - Deciding now what you will/won't do
- Financial boundaries
  - Create a budget and stick to it

Tests will come. Guardrails can help you to stand firm when they do. It's hard at first but testing produces perseverance.

**Deliver Us From Evil:** When we pray this prayer, we are praying not only for strength in the test but also for rescue from evil. The enemy's strategy is to twist desires, create shortcuts, and promise something good outside of God's plan. Sometimes the temptation comes through obvious evil, but sometimes it's much more subtle like falling asleep on our watch.

But we are not alone in the test. We have the help of the One who has been through it all. Read Hebrews 4:15-16.

We can come to Jesus when we are weak, when we are being tested, and even if we fail a test. He can help us persevere and is there with open arms full of grace and forgiveness.

There are going to be tests and temptations in this life, but this prayer teaches us how to navigate through them. It shows us that it is ok to be honest with God. We can pray that the tests do not have to come, but realize that tests will come at times. We can seek God's wisdom in our lives and set guardrails. Don't wait for the moment of pressure to decide your limits. When the tests do come, we can rely on God's strength to deliver us through them .

### Discussion Questions:

- Where do you need to set guardrails in your life?
  - Where do you lack discipline and are most likely to fall into temptation?
  - What would those guardrails look like?
- Are you in the middle of a test right now?
  - Are you trying to endure by your own strength?
  - How can you invite God to deliver you from falling into temptation?