



Condensed Milk (Matthew 6:9-13 Series)

How to Pray, “Lead us not into temptation” (6:13).

SUMMARY: When we pray “And lead us not into temptation” we are asking God to keep us and others from those sins we are prone to fall, or give, into. Having just prayed for the forgiveness of our debts, and those of others, it is logical to pray against the temptations that draw us into sins. God sees that life is a sin minefield for us. Do we see life that way?

Those who feel least the need of God’s protection from temptation are the most likely to fall. How many have sinned great sins and are suffering sadly only because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time and in the wrong state of mind? How many others have stayed in a happy place because God regularly redirected their steps to shield them in their most vulnerable areas? Just as we are to pray daily for God’s *provision* (bread) and *pardon*, so we ought to pray daily for his *protection*.

Some things that are a temptation for us we do not even recognize. We need God, who knows everything, to lead us away from what we do not see. But other temptations we are quite aware of. Temptations in the area of our sexuality are a temptation to many. Anger may be another person’s temptation. A sharp tongue, a grumbling attitude, a love of material things, self-pity, fear and doubt, these and many other things can be temptations for us. We should thoughtfully observe ourselves and our circumstances and pray specifically against the things we know will tempt us.

When at first we read this petition, we might have found it odd. Why would God lead us into temptation unless we ask him not to do so? Two things are at play here. First, this expression is likely a figure of speech called litotes. Litotes is a way of expressing something positive by denying its opposite. For example, we might say, “That guy is no dummy” and by that we mean he is quite intelligent. So, in this petition we are actually asking God to keep us from temptation. The second thing at play is the recognition of God’s

¹ Bible verses on protection from temptations:

Matthew 26:41. Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

1 Corinthians 10:13. No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted

sovereignty, that he “works out everything” according to his will... (Eph. 1:11). In other words, we recognize that all the events and circumstances of our lives are governed by God. He is never the agent of temptation (Ja. 1:13) but he can and does choose what temptations he will permit into our lives.

For his own reasons (to teach us humility, dependence, and for testing are a few) God allows temptation to be the common lot of all people (1 Cor. 10:13). There are two ways to grow in spiritual strength through temptations and God uses both. One is to face temptations in real time and resist them. The other is to face temptations ahead of time and overcome them through prayer. Now, if Jesus tells us to make this petition a part of our prayers it must mean that it is important and that God is pleased to answer it. There are potential failures ahead that are sure to deaden our souls, injure our relationships, and ruin our reputations, but God can keep us from them. The very act of praying against temptations, often by being specific, helps us to be on the alert to resist them. This petition also means there are times God will not keep us from temptation unless we ask him to do so. Our lack of dependence on him for this is sure to lead us into sins. If this were not true, we would not have to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

We become as little children when we pray this petition because we are acknowledging that we are led and that we need protection. Those who believe in their vulnerability and dependence upon God for spiritual victory are the most gracious to others who fail. They know that their way is straighter and purer because God has answered their prayers. They really believe the statement, “But for the grace of God, there go I”. And they know that a Father has walked with them, protecting them from their own weaknesses and tendencies to evil. And so, once again the Lord’s Prayer shapes and molds us as we pray its themes. It improves our humility, our dependence on God, our holiness, and our gentleness towards others.

Practice Exercise: Write at least one sentence of prayer that expresses this theme. The verses in the footnotes can help you as you reflect on them.¹

beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Galatians 5: 19-21. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.



Condensed Milk Questions For...

How to Pray, "Lead us not into temptation" (6:13).

Content Questions:

1. What are we praying for when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation?"
2. Why do we need to pray this petition?
3. What should we do about temptations we know about?
4. While the Bible says that God does not tempt us to evil (James 1:13), that is, he is not the agent of temptation (the world, flesh and devil are) in what sense does he lead us – or not -- into temptation?
5. What are the two ways we, personally, avoid the damage temptations can cause?
6. How does this petition shape and mold us spiritually?

Discussion Questions:

7. What stands out to you in this article and why?
8. In what way is life a sin-minefield and what examples come to your minds?
9. What feelings do you have about making this petition a regular part of your life?

Take-Home Practice:

In the prayer journals you've been given try to daily journal a prayer that expresses the themes of the Lord's Prayer to this point.

