

Text: James 1:2-4, 12-15

Title: "And Lead Us Not..."

Introduction: We continue today to examine the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Again, this was a pattern for prayer ... an outline of how to pray. Jesus plan was not to give us words to recite, but a framework to live by. So, as we look at this prayer, it's not just about what to say to God, it's about how to live for God in this life.

We are now most of the way through the prayer, but today we hit on a very important part of the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation..." Why is this so important? Well, how many of you wrestle daily with temptation? It's a very real part of our lives.

Do you remember a couple of weeks ago we talked about how we can tell the whole Biblical Story by using "bread"? We can also tell the whole Biblical Story by watching God's people be tempted to do things that are hurtful to God or to God's kids.

For example, it started with Adam and Eve. Like us, Adam and Eve had two voices with them wherever they went. God's voice was present in saying, "Welcome to Paradise! Everything here is for you. There is only one thing that you may not do and that is to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." Wow! What a great deal. Adam and Eve had everything they could ever want. They had all the food they could eat. They didn't have to work. They didn't have to shop for clothes! What more could they ask for?

But God placed one choice in front of them. God did not invent them or us to be robots. We are created in God's image and like we do, God wants to be loved for Who God Is! God wants us to CHOOSE God! God said to Adam and Eve, "You have a choice ... I trust that you will follow me!"

Then, the other voice showed up ... The voice of the serpent! And you can hear it can't you? "Are you sure God meant that tree? He could not have meant, don't EVER eat from it. Just one time won't hurt anything. You won't get caught. It will be worth it. Look how beautiful it is. Can you imagine how tasty it must be?" We all have two voices, don't we?

### **Let's Pray!**

I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will find our scripture for today and on the other is an outline of how we are going to deal with this part of the prayer Jesus taught. You will find that there are fill-in-the-blanks in that outline and the idea is that you will fill in the blanks. This will help us to hear what God wants to say to each of us today and hopefully help you later as you discuss what we learn from God's Word today.

For those of you listening online, you can download the insert and the sermon notes from our website.

Now, there is something in this section of the Disciple's Prayer that is a little bit confusing and I want to take time to attempt to clear that up before we go any further. Our next line in the prayer is "Lead us not into temptation..." My question is; why would we ask God not to lead us into temptation? Is there a chance that God will lead us into temptation if we don't ask for the contrary?

According to our Scripture reading from the Book of James, there is no chance that we would be tempted by God to do anything other than good. Listen:

**READ JAMES 1:2-4, 12-18 NOW!**

Please note that in these few verses James is addressing two different things that seem very similar when translated into English.

**#1** In verses 2-4, James is talking about testing. Testing is set up in different arenas of life for our improvement. We are tested to find out where we are at and to hopefully motivate us to get better. In school, we are tested so that the instructors can pinpoint where the student is at in their understanding of the material. These tests cause the students to work harder at the material and hopefully get better in their understanding.

The same thing happens in other places. Musicians practice and then they are tested at ... concerts or recitals. Athletes practice and are tested in ... games or matches. Business people continue to improve and are tested by the business world's ebb and flow. As a pastor, I study hard to learn new ways to invite individuals to get to know Jesus Christ and to grow in their faith ... get better at being who God calls us to be. The test comes when I teach or counsel or preach.

All of those things, as James reveals, are for our good. When God tests us ... that is for us. It is for our growth.

I think that so many people come into Christianity thinking that the "Peace that Passes Understanding" and "God so loved the world..." means that God offers us COMFORT. We think, "If I just become a Christian, God will make my life easy." Christianity is not an "Easy Button".

What God wants out of our relationship/partnership is not "Comfort" but "Character"! God works with us, like a good parent, to develop our character so that we become more like Christ. God does not want you to be comfortable; God wants you to be GODLY! God wants to mold us into what God wants us to be ... so, we can fit into God's plan (not ours). Please understand that being molded can be painful!

**#2** The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that James talks about here is "Temptation".

Now, James said that there is no way that God would tempt us. If that is so, then why do we say in our prayer "Lead Us Not Into Temptation"? The way we have it in our prayer is "Lead Us Not Into Temptation" with a comma coming after "Temptation". What if we added a comma after "Lead Us"? Now, we've separated it so that the first thing we are asking is that God "Lead Us".

**I. "Lead Us..."**

Asking God to "Lead Us" will help us as we deal with temptation. We all have a natural leaning toward temptation. If we ask God to lead us, knowing that God, as James said, will not lead us toward temptation, we will take *the first step in avoiding temptation!*

In the Bible, God is constantly trying to lead His people. Lead the people through the wilderness with a pillar of fire and a column of smoke. God tries to lead the people in the right way by giving the 10 Commandments. "Follow these and it will help you follow Me!"

Psalms 23 = "You lead me beside the still waters ... You lead me in the paths of righteousness..." All this has to do with God attempting to lead us in the right direction and protecting us from the bad stuff.

In the New Testament, Jesus defines what it means to be a disciple...

A. A Disciple is a Follower

1. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a "Follower" of Jesus.
2. When Jesus calls the fishermen from the shore, Jesus says, "Follow Me..."
3. He preaches and says, "If anyone would be my disciple, they must deny themselves, take up their cross and FOLLOW ME."
4. Jesus = "I am the shepherd. My sheep know my voice and they FOLLOW ME."
5. To be a follower of Christ means that we will go in His direction ... to call Jesus "LORD", means that we want to do this life they way HE LEADS us to!

B. Pray: Lead Me Lord...

1. A great prayer when you wake up in the morning would be, "Lead Me, Lord... show me where you want me to go, meet who you want me to meet and then give me the boldness to say and do what you would say and do."
2. It will be more difficult to be tempted if we pray that prayer and focus on Jesus as Lord throughout the day...
3. "BUT, how do I know what God wants me to do or say or what God's will is for my life?" Great question!
  - a. Most of us don't get a written message on the wall or a loud Godly voice shouting down at us daily... BUT, God does still lead us in other ways.
  - b. Ever felt like God might be nudging you to do something?
    - i. Call a friend ... later find out that you called at just the right time.
    - ii. Maybe you have signed up to help with a mission trip or a ministry because you felt God kept putting your eyes back on that announcement or you couldn't get it out of your mind ... that's the Holy Spirit nudging you.
  - c. In our times of Bible Study ... I hope you are reading your Bibles ... Read a chapter a day if you can't do the whole Old Testament in 2009 ... but ask God to show you something that you can use in your faith journey. God is good!
  - d. In times of prayer ... take time to listen to what God can use YOU for.
  - e. In Worship ... maybe God is trying to get your attention about something and being here with God is a way that you can hear. Singing/ Prayer, etc. Write in your notes and read them later ... what does God want you to know?!?
4. God still speaks today, but are we listening ... which voice are we listening to?

## II. Help Us Not To Sin (“...Not into temptation”)

- A. After we pray for forgiveness, what? We just prayed “Forgive us our trespasses...” Now, we are asking God to keep us from having to ask for it AGAIN!
1. We are good at being tempted, aren't we? In hundreds of ways we are tempted every day. Watching things we shouldn't watch, materialism, speeding, gluttony, etc.
  2. When we pray, “Lead me not into temptation”, that really opens up opportunities for God to show us the ways we are tempted and how to avoid them. Sometimes we are not aware of our temptations and the things that trap us... I believe that God really wants us to know what tempts us and what is sinful.
- B. What is Temptation ?
1. Well, temptation is that which tries to draw us away from what is good for us in life and toward what is bad for us!
  2. Most of us have a nose for temptation...
  3. My dog, Wesley, has a nose for temptation. He tries really hard to be good, but sometimes he just can't help himself... Thursday night I grilled out on our patio ... Wesley space ... happens all the time ... drippings off of the grill = probably not that good for Wesley's stomach ... I also clean up after him ... I told him “no” when I let him out on Thursday night and Friday ... yesterday, I was not out there with him and our patio looked like it had been professionally scrubbed and cleaned... I have told Wesley 100 times not to lick that stuff up, but he just can't stop himself—even though I know it's bad for him.
  4. When I opened up the back door, you should have seen the look on Wesley's face ... he was ashamed. He knew that he had done the wrong thing!
  5. There are some things that Wesley cannot resist the temptation of and what I need to do is to keep him inside after I grill so that temptation is gone ... or until I can clean it up.
  6. When we pray, “Lead us not into temptation...”, that means, essentially, “God, please don't let me out on the patio until it's cleaned up! I can't handle and don't want the temptation. Close the patio door!”
- C. Pray: Steer me clear of temptation...
1. When we pray this prayer and mean it, God will keep the patio door shut. When we pray this prayer and mean it, God will let you know when you are headed toward a temptation.
  2. There will be distractions away from temptation if we are sincere.
  3. God will close the patio door ... but not lock it!

4. It's still up to us to decide if we will listen to God's voice or not. If we decide to go forward into that temptation, God is not going to stop you. We have a choice!
5. One of my temptations is Ice Cream and Milk Shakes. I take after my Mom enough that if there is ice cream involved, I am in trouble. DQ = pumpkin pie blizzards ... They put it right on the marquee! So, late October and early November, I am avoiding DQ ... but I know that they are there! And I know that once I have one, that voice inside me will be saying, "You already had one, why not two, etc.?" The problem is that I drive by DQ pretty often when I'm running around town ... and if I don't have to I do anyway! "Lead me not into temptation, Lord ... Lead me not into temptation, Lord..." When I finally get my pumpkin pie blizzard ... it's a LARGE! Then ... I'm sick!
6. This is how life is, isn't it? There are two voices in our heads competing for our attention. Which one are you going to listen to?

### III. Save Us From The Evil One ("But, deliver us from evil...")

Finally, "Deliver us from 'the evil one' ..." Some believe there is an actual Satan. Some believe that having evil personified, helps us to put a label on that other voice that draws us away from God. Either way, we have to remember that Satan is not an equal in power to God. The battle that goes on between good and evil is pretty lopsided, but at the same time, Satan is really good at marketing!

Satan is good at convincing us to do things that will hurt us and hurt the people around us because "you deserve it!" We are convinced by that 'other' voice to do things and say things that hurt our chances to help others get to know Jesus Christ. We miss chances because we are convinced to "Look out for #1!" and "Do what feels good!" instead of "Following" Jesus!

When we listen to Satan (C.S. Lewis ... "Screwtape Letters"?), he can be very smooth, very good at drawing us casually and slowly away from where God wants us to be in different areas of our lives. Little do we know ... we are about to crash!

If we would ask ourselves, "If what I'm doing now plays out to it's logical end, where will I be?" we could save ourselves a lot of heartache. BUT, when we are lured to go against God, it's hard to even visualize where we will end up ... all that is cloudy. Everyone around us can see it clearly, but not if we are in our own temptation.

Hear this part of our scripture for today again ... "*Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death. So, don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters.*" James 1:14-16

We have a tendency to say that little things are okay (DQ), but little things usually lead to bigger sins, because if one is okay... One thing can lead to another in a hurry and as Paul says, "The wages of sin are death." Eventually, those small things snowball! And the cost is the destruction of our faith, our dreams, our careers, and the people around us and/or our relationship with God.

So, we need to pray ... "Deliver us from the evil one."

- A. Greek "deliver" is Rush

1. This is the root from where our word “rush” comes from.
  2. Ever watched football? Do you know what it means to “rush” the quarterback?
  3. We are asking God to put the heat on Satan ... rush him ... sack him ... take him down! “Deliver us from the evil one.”
- B. The devil and our part
1. You know the devil is going to do whatever he can to pull us away from God ... not because he likes us, but because he hates God.
  2. Again, this is not an even tug of war between good and evil, but Satan is pretty good at marketing, convincing us that just one time will be okay.
  3. Our part? Our part is to pray this prayer (“Lord, please shut the patio door”) and mean it enough to stop driving by the Dairy Queen.
  4. It’s still our choice whether or not we give in to temptation. It’s still our choice to get as close as we can to sin without doing it. It’s still our choice whether or not we go ahead and sin “just a little” thinking that it will never turn into something bigger...
  5. So pray...
- C. Pray: Save me from anything that would ruin my faith and life
1. Sin is like cancer. People can carry around cancer for a long time and look fine on the outside and feel fine, but inside, it’s really eating the person alive.
  2. 6 months before my Mom died of brain cancer, she was strong and vital and had no idea what was about to hit ... but, it was already there and growing.
  3. Let’s not be naïve about sin. If we allow a little bit in, it will eat us alive.

Let me finish with a couple of things:

1. If you need someone to talk to about what is eating you up on the inside, please contact our office and I will be happy to meet with you, pray with you and offer advice to help you deal with the consequences.
2. If you know that you are sinning, it’s not hopeless. Our Scriptures are filled with God’s people getting 2<sup>nd</sup> chances. The Bible says that if we will ask for forgiveness (and mean it); God will forgive us our sins and never use them against us again. There is hope! Please don’t give up on yourself.

Next Week: The big finish to The Disciple’s Prayer...

Let’s Pray!