

We've Said It All Our Life, But What Does It Mean to ask God to "Lead us not..."?

Matthew 6:13

In Matthew 6:13 we open to the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. This part of the prayer model Christ Jesus left us sometimes puzzling. It is something we have said all our life, and perhaps puzzled over from time to time.

WE ALL KNOW WHAT TEMPTATION MEANS. RIGHT?

We all have experienced being tempted to do, say, or think something and have struggled with that temptation. But what does it mean when we are told by Jesus to ask God on a daily, or even more frequent basis, to "lead us not into temptation"?

Does that mean God sometimes does lead us to temptations, and we are somehow supposed to ask Him to stop doing that? Sounds strange when we think of it that way, doesn't it?

So this is a challenging passage. How do we come to the correct, proper, orthodox, sound interpretation of Matthew 6:13? The answer to that question is also the same answer to every hard passage, every problem passage, and every so called discrepancy in the Bible.

Each time we study the Bible we are confronted with the doctrine of Bible interpretation or what theologians called "hermeneutics". There are three simple elements we can consider to understand this verse: the problem, the passage, and the prayer.

UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL TEMPTATION

Temptations, and God not "leading us into" them is a strange combination of thoughts about our perfect and holy God. Does God tempt people? No, and yes, depending on how you use the word tempt. Does God ever tempt anyone to evil? Never. But is there another meaning for "temptation" that is not always evil? Yes.

So there are trials and temptations presented in God's Word. Trials are positive, temptations are negative. The word Jesus used here is a neutral word. It is neither positive or negative. It just means a hard time that can become either good or bad for us.

But before we jump into a Biblical word study of this phrase we've said all our life, step back and look at the whole concept of understanding the Bible.

I've spent most of my life studying the Bible, and seeking to come to a proper understanding of the interpretation God intended for each passage of the Bible. As we study any portion of the Word of God we must pause to remember that: God is the Author of all the Bible.

EVERY VERSE IS PART OF SCRIPTURE

God inspired “every word” of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God breathed out a pure, perfect, and supernatural book in the Bible.

The Bible is complete, it is inspired, and it is Divine. Jesus believed that, taught that, and practiced that and so do we. But if God inspired every word, and the Spirit of God guided every human writer (2 Peter 1:20-21), that means that the Scriptures have an amazing, supernatural, divine unity. Every part of God’s Word agrees with every other part of the Bible because a perfect and wise God wrote all of it.

That means if any passages seem to conflict or appear discrepant to another, the problem is our understanding of that passage, not God’s. That also means that the weight of the whole Bible rests upon every individual part. Every interpretation of any Scripture is always made by context: both within the passage of the chapter and book, as well as the context of the entire Bible.

We could say this, every verse in God's Word has the weight of 31,100 other verses¹ upon it.

All of what God has said impacts anything that we read in the Bible.

***Analogia Scriptura* (one of those Latin credos of the Reformation) means that the Bible never contradicts itself. Or, in other words, all Scriptures fit together. Scriptures do not contradict one another, rather they all explain the same truths.**

Interpretations in theology are only a sum of the parts of Scripture from which they are drawn. The Bible is always consistent within itself.

So expositional study and teaching from the Scriptures is always explanatory of what the whole has to say about any part.

EVERY ELEMENT OF THIS PRAYER IS VITAL

Jesus gave only one model prayer.

Jesus only commanded us to pray in this manner.

This prayer opens to us all the spiritual resources, Biblical promises, powerful blessings, and mighty works that God wants to do in and through us. How do we know that? Because God wants us to communicate with Him by prayer; and this is the manner in which He asked us to pray.

This prayer was never repeated by anyone recorded in the New Testament so it was not for repetition, but for reflection and imitation. Think of this prayer as a complete unit. It returns to where it started with a complete focus upon God.

1. THIS PRAYER IS VITAL BECAUSE WE NEED HIS FOCUS

Because we all are so prone to distraction, we need God to focus each of us back on who He is as our Father.

¹ In the old KJV there are 7,956 New Testament verses; 23,145 Old Testament verses; a total of 31,101 verses in the Bible; 1,189 chapters; 790,676 words; NASB has 782,815 words; ESV has 757,439 words; the NIV has 726,109 words; and the NKJV has 770,430 words. These words of the Bible are translated from the 8,674 Hebrew words, and the 5,624 Greek words that the 19th Century J.A. Strong counted in his Strong’s Concordance of the KJV. Those ancient languages 14,298 Hebrew and Greek words are translated into 12,143 different English words. Amazing.

Our God is All-Loving, All Knowing, All-Powerful, and Always-Present.

Those four attributes form the perimeter of a Divine Box that can surround, and frame every event in life. Those four truths about our Heavenly Father give a perimeter that protects us from any event getting out of control. Anything placed within that box of God's Love, Wisdom, Power, and Presence stays under His control. Anything under God's control is no longer out of control in our lives.

Those attributes can also frame our response to life.

Remember only 10% of life is made up of what happens to us, the other 90% is made up of our responses to those events.

God wants to frame 100% of our life with His unchanging, all powerful attributes, and shape our responses to reflect His love, wisdom, power, and presence.

Our Heavenly Father is perfect, seeing into every secret part of our lives, caring for every need, and rewarding us with inexpressible delights.

To focus upon and **to adore** His Character **stabilizes our lives**.

To focus upon and **to worship** His Majesty **ignites our passion**.

To focus upon and **to rest** in His Faithfulness **quiets our lives**.

The pattern of this prayer that Jesus left for us is to all be seeking His help to focus us more each day on His character, majesty, and faithfulness.

So, we need His focus, and:

2. THIS PRAYER IS VITAL BECAUSE WE NEED HIS CONTROL

Because we all are so prone to wanting our own way, we need to ask for God to control us. God will be surrounded forever by His bondslaves (Rev. 22:3,6,9).

Revelation 22:3-9 (NKJV) And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, **and His servants shall serve Him**. ⁶ Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel **to show His servants** the things which must shortly take place. ⁹ Then he said to me, "See *that you do not do that*. For **I am your fellow servant**, and of your brethren the prophets, and **of those who keep the words of this book**. Worship God."

That is what Revelation says. The word slave has a bit of an uncomfortable ring to us, but not to God. Paul gladly called himself God's slave. A slave is one who does the will of another. Bond servants means slaves.

Heaven is filled by sons and daughters of God who respond to Him as Almighty God with a loves that constrains them to enslave themselves to His desires.

We have been bought at such a high price by a God who so loved the world that He gave His Son for us. We have been purchased by the very blood of Jesus Christ. We have been given an absolutely free gift of infinite worth, and all that God asks in return is that we love Him enough to give ourselves back to His control (Rom. 12:1-2).

As an individual we each need daily surrender. Jesus actually said this is a priority in no uncertain terms. In the very same chapter He says in v. 33 to "seek first the kingdom of God". Everything else flows from seeking the domination of my life by God. Seeking His rule over every area. Wanting His will and not my own. That is the essence of Romans 12:1-2. Surrender

is the gift that I can give to God every day, and it is one that He treasures.

The pattern of this prayer that Jesus left for us is to all be seeking His Control of our lives each day as we surrender to Him over and over, and over again.

3. THIS PRAYER IS VITAL BECAUSE WE NEED HIS LEADING

Our God is so loving, wise, powerful, and in touch with our lives: there is no one better suited to direct us. God wants us to trust Him with all our hearts; and less and less lean on our own understanding. The more we do so, the more He directs our paths (Pr. 3:5-6).

One of the great promises in Scripture is that God Himself wants to show us the pathway to follow through life (Ps. 16:11). He is our Shepherd and as true sheep we follow Him (Jn. 10:27).

The pattern of this prayer that Jesus left for us is to all be seeking His guidance and leadership each day.

4. THIS PRAYER IS VITAL BECAUSE WE NEED HIS SUPPLYING

A shepherd is one who feeds and leads.

The Lord is our Shepherd. He wants to lead us through life, and He wants to feed us (Jn. 10). Jesus said that He was the manna that came down from Heaven (Jn. 6).

Whoever eats of Him will never hunger. Whoever drinks of Him will never thirst but instead have a well of the water of life within (Jn. 4).

Salvation is described as eating Christ as the Bread of Life. Christ's Word is described as our daily bread. What a Good Shepherd He is.

The pattern of this prayer that Jesus left for us is to all be seeking His provision of grace to help in all our times of need, on a daily basis.

5. THIS PRAYER IS VITAL BECAUSE WE NEED HIS CLEANSING

Our unconditional forgiveness has a responsibility attached to it. We who have been completely forgiven must be completely forgiving of others. Lack of forgiveness on our part leads to a loss of the benefits of our salvation, namely the peace, joy, and security.

Christ's cleansing protects the abundant life God planned for us.

Jesus tells us that the normal life of those who follow Him is to be an abundant life (Jn. 10:10) and an overflowing life (Jn. 7:37-39). But Satan's goal is to rob us of that life.

Satan and all his demons want to kill, steal, destroy, and lie about the truths of our abundant life. Spiritual warfare is learning how to stay healthy in a demon-filled, Satan-prowling world. It is learning how to keep from getting devoured by our adversary and his countless hosts that can shoot fiery darts into our minds, confuse, and derailing us if we are not walking by faith.

When we do not keep cleansed by confessing and forsaking all known sin, we begin to shrivel up spiritually. We become empty, aimless, and restless within. The abundant life God gave to us in Christ seems so far away that we don't even remember what life more abundant

was like.

Simply stated, every day we face the conflict between God's plan for us to have an overflowing and abundant life; and Satan's plan to kill our hope, steal our joy, and destroy our usefulness to God.

The pattern of this prayer that Jesus left for us is to all be seeking His Cleansing each day, lest we lose His blessings.

All of this prayer pattern that our Heavenly father sent us can become:

CHRIST'S CHECKLIST FOR OUR DAILY SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Since this entire prayer is shared by all the members of Christ's family (give us, lead us, deliver us, etc.) it is a very clear way to help each other out. We can ask anyone we know who is a believer about how they are doing keeping their focus on God.

We can say how is your surrender?

Are you staying close to Him and following Him each day?

Are you seeking His grace to help in times of need, and rejoicing each time you see His provision?

How's your heart, is it cleansed and overflowing with abundant life, or not?

Simply stated, the Lord's Prayer is a pattern for us, a check list for our daily spiritual health. Living a healthy, useful life each day is built around these key elements:

1. Daily **Worship** of Almighty God: Our Father
2. Daily **Consecration** of My Body: Thy Kingdom Come
3. Daily **Submission** to God's Will: Thy Will Be Done
4. Daily **Reliance** on God's Provision: Give Us This Day
5. Daily **Cleansing** of My Relationships: Forgive Us As We Forgive
6. Daily **Protection** of My Mind: Deliver Us From Evil
7. Daily **Seeking** of God's Glory: Thine Is The Glory

Each of these seven petitions is an affirmation of a promise our Father has already made. God's name will be hallowed. God's kingdom will come. God's will is being done. God supplies all that we need to sustain our physical life. God will cleanse away the pollution of our sins if we ask. And we can always be assured of this: God will never lead us into sin.

Which brings us to the sixth petition that is also:

6. THIS PRAYER IS VITAL BECAUSE WE NEED HIS PROTECTION

Look at the the words before us in Matthew 6:13, "and lead us not into temptation".

The Greek word is neutral. It is an event, and our response determines whether it will become a negative (temptation) or a positive (trial).

Notice that it is plural. Just like each of the previous petitions (give us, forgive us), we are now to pray "lead us not". This is a petition that we are to be praying for each other. It is a prayer for protection, and it is shared. It is plural because we all need to be praying all of these

things for ourselves and each other.

It is so much a part of our life to pray for the protection of those we know and love. We pray for physical safety, and physical health. But this prayer goes beyond mere physical needs, and comes into the moral and spiritual realm.

This is a prayer about all of our futures. Jesus is saying pray about where your life is headed. Ask God to keep you and all those you love from getting into anything that would potentially ruin their lives. Think for a moment.

Would sickness, or tragedy, or a debilitation ruin someone's life from God's perspective? Not usually, often it is through sickness they draw closer to God, finding that He is the only part of life that doesn't change, recede, or diminish, but grows brighter and dearer.

THE WORD CHRIST USED IS NEUTRAL

The word "temptation" is *peirasmos* in the Greek. It's a neutral word. It has no moral connotation whatsoever. It just means a trial, a test, temptation.

Notice that in James 1 we find this word, side by side in three [1:2,12 (nouns),13-14 (verbs)] verses with a positive and a negative meaning.

James 1:2,12-14 (NKJV) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various **trials**,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ¹² Blessed is the man who endures **temptation**; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is **tempted**, "I am **tempted** by God"; for God cannot be **tempted** by evil, nor does He Himself **tempt** anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is **tempted** when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

GOD SENDS TRIALS NOT TEMPTATIONS

Trials v.2-12 lead to tested faith, patience, approved living, and a crown of life.

Temptations v. 13-15 are not from God, are fed by lusts, lead to sin, and bring forth death.

Listen to another positive usage of this word in the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 13:3 says, "The Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Trials are the way God reveals how much we love Him.

Trials shows the depth and extent of God's hold on our lives.

GOD IS THE ANSWER TO THE SIXTH PETITION

"The petition is really, "Lord, protect us from running in the direction of sin in our trials." Does that kind of convey the thought? Protect us from running in the direction of sin in the midst of our trial. Cause us not to enter. The original Aramaic would be, "Cause us not to

enter," kind of causative or with a permissive force".²

How would God answer such prayers? We can find that by turning to 1 Cor. 10:13. This verse shows how God answers the sixth petition of the Lord's model prayer for us His disciples.

1 Corinthians 10:13a says, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man..."

Pause halfway through v. 13. Do you see what God is saying? There are no super-human temptations. Everything we face is what all humans face. Nothing we face is ever supernatural, it is common. There is never anything we face that is impossible to bear. We can't ever blame what we do on the devil. We only face common, ordinary, normal human temptations. We never will face anything that is more than we can bear. Now the second half of the verse:

1 Corinthians 10:13b says, "but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."

God has made a promise.

God knows our load limit. Our Father has measured what we can bear.

In every trial/temptation we will ever face He is there.

He is making an exit for us before we get overwhelmed.

He is waiting to show us the way out.

God has promised that we will never face a situation so bad we won't be able to handle it.

GOD IS ALWAYS THE ANSWER

Jesus said ask your Father in Heaven to keep you from turning trials into temptations that will ruin your life.

God leads us into trials (peirasmos) but not into temptations to sin.

Protect us from running in the direction of sin in the midst of our trial.

Cause us not to succumb to the deadening perils of temptations to sin..

Every trial we face has a clearly marked exit, with God Himself standing ready to usher us out of danger.

Every trial we face is human, common, and overcome-able.

God wants to lead us through, and out of every trial in triumph.

This is a prayer about all of our futures. Jesus is saying pray about where your life is headed.

Ask God to keep you and all those you love from getting into anything that would potentially ruin their lives.

² Quoted from Lead Us Not into Temptation Luke 11:4, GTY Code: 42-156