



THE LORD'S PRAYER – A PRAYER OF SANCTIFICATION
“Lead us not into temptation”
Matthew 6:9-13

The Church at Canyon Creek, Austin, Texas
©Monty Watson, May 26, 2019

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This is a photo of an F1 tornado. With wind speeds of 90 mph, a small twister can take a few shingles off the roof or break a few branches. This is a photo of an F5 tornado. This is the largest tornado ever filmed or photographed. It struck Moore, Oklahoma, in 2015. With winds over 220 mph, F5s have been known to hurl garbage trucks through the air, rip asphalt roads from the ground, and turn entire neighborhoods into rubble. The F5 that hit Moore was on the ground for 40 minutes and chewed a path 2½ miles wide and 20 miles long. It left 24 dead, 377 injured, 1,100 homes destroyed, and \$2 billion in property damage.



Here’s another picture. Just a simple blue house. Would you believe a natural disaster happened here that was just as bad as a tornado? In the middle of the night, a Florida man was sleeping in his bed and a sinkhole collapsed under his bedroom swallowing him to death. From the outside, the house looks fine, but here is the 20-foot crater that took his life.



Here are two illustrations of how temptation works. Temptation can strike suddenly like a tornado. A tornado can level a house and temptation can level a soul. Or, temptation can slowly erode the spiritual foundation of our lives and we don’t even realize it is happening. Either way, suddenly or slowly, it’s coming. And either way, temptation can be devastating.

Resisting temptation is so critical to spiritual life that it is included in The Lord’s Prayer. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He gave them what we call The Lord’s Prayer. The Lord’s Prayer teaches us how to pray and it also shows us the way to the Father’s heart.

Prayer is an invitation to talk to God. Even better, it is an invitation to talk to *our Father*. Prayer is how we, as God’s children, come to our Father with any need and any question. Prayer is an invitation to pour out our hearts to Him.¹ When we really think about it, it is amazing that the Creator of the universe would listen to the prayers of such small creatures like us, and yet that’s exactly what our Father promises to do.

Here’s how Jesus taught His disciples, and teaches us, to pray. Let’s recite it together.

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” (Matthew 6:9-13, traditional)

The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer of trust (“Our Father”). It is a prayer of adoration (“Hallowed by Your name”). It is a prayer of submission (“Your will be done”). It is a prayer of provision

(“give us our daily bread”). It is a prayer of confession (“forgive us our sins”). And as we will see today, it is a prayer of sanctification (“lead us not into temptation”).

WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL?

When it comes to temptation and sin, I think there’s one question that goes through most people’s mind. We may not say it out loud, but a lot of us are thinking it. **“What’s the big deal?”** We know what the Bible says about a lot of stuff, but when we look at what’s normal in the culture, “What’s the big deal?”

- “What’s the big deal with cutting corners at work? Everybody does it, and if I don’t, I won’t be able to compete.”
- “What’s the big deal with copying homework or a term paper? That’s not cheating. Everyone does it.”
- “What’s the big deal with smoking pot? Everybody does it, and it’s legal in more and more states.”
- “What’s the big deal with watching a movie with a little violence or a little sex? It’s just my way of unwinding after a long day.”
- “What’s the big deal with pornography? It’s private, it takes my mind off my problems, and it doesn’t hurt anyone.”
- “What’s the big deal with profanity? Everyone throws out a four-letter word from time to time. It’s just my way of letting people know that I’m serious.”

There are a hundred other examples of when we say, “What’s the big deal?”

Craig Groeschel is a popular Christian author and pastor of Life Church. A while back, Craig asked different friends if they had seen a good movie lately.² These were friends on the church staff, and friend after friend told Craig recommended a certain movie calling it the funniest movie they had ever seen. But before he watched the movie with his family, Craig checked out some reviews online. He found that the movie had 91 “F” bombs, 41 references to excrement, 25 slang words for various body parts, and used God’s name in vain 31 times. So Craig chose not to watch the movie with his family. The next day he asked his friends, all on the church staff, if they realized that the movie had 91 “F” bombs, which was one every minute in the film. And one after the other, they all said the same thing. “Really? I didn’t even notice.”

That’s the big deal with temptation. When we don’t even notice. When we no longer realize what sin is and when we no longer feel discomfort or conviction. The big deal is when we no longer dread the thought of disappointing our Father, dishonoring the sacrifice of Jesus, or grieving the heart of the Holy Spirit.

WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL? HERE’S THE BIG DEAL

What’s the big deal? Here’s the big deal. ***The thrill of temptation always leads to regret.*** Sin is fun, but only for a little while, and then it always leads to regret.

Just ask David. David had completed a series of military conquests and decided to take a vacation. Second Samuel 11 tells us what happened. “In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab ... (and) David stayed behind in Jerusalem. Late one afternoon, after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath” (2 Samuel 11:1-2, NLT). The rooftop of most houses was like a flattop patio and was a private place. So it was common for a person to bathe on the roof. It just happened that David’s roof was higher, and he was able to look down at the woman. So David “sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, ‘She is Bathsheba ... and the wife of Uriah (one of David’s loyal soldiers).’ Then David sent messengers to get her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her ... Then she returned home. Months later, Bathsheba sent David a message, saying, ‘I am pregnant.’” (2 Samuel 11:3-5, NLT).

David didn’t wake up one morning and decide to have an affair and get a woman pregnant. He didn’t wake up one morning and decide to betray a friend, destroy his family, or offend his God. He never intended to become that person. But he did, because he allowed temptation to ambush his soul. And the same thing can happen to us. When you give in to temptation, you do something you never intended to do and you become someone you never intended to be.

I can imagine David later muttering to himself, “How did I get myself into this mess?” The Bible explains how. “Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust” (James 1:14, NAS). David was enticed by his own lust, and he was carried away.

If David were here today, he would plead with us to flee temptation. And one of the reasons is because of the ripple effect. You may think your sin doesn’t hurt anyone else, but it does. David’s family suffered because of his affair with Bathsheba. One of his sons raped his own sister and later tried to overthrow David as king. Like a tornado leveling a house, lust leveled David’s house.

Our sin hurts those around us, but the most devastating consequence is *spiritual torment*. David was transparent enough to compose three psalms about his greatest failure.

Psalm 32 – “When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me” (Psalm 32:3-4, NLT).

Psalm 38 – “O Lord ... Your arrows have struck deep ... My whole body is sick; my health is broken because of my sins. My guilt overwhelms me – it is a burden too heavy to bear ... because of my foolish sins ... All day long I walk around filled with grief ... I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart ... I am deeply sorry for what I have done” (Psalm 38:1-6, 8, 18, NLT).

Psalm 51 – *For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.* “For the choir director”?! David wrote a song about his greatest sin. Why? Because he wanted his greatest failure to be a warning to others. “Don’t do what I did! It’s not worth it.”

“Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you

alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight ... Oh, give me back my joy ...”
(Psalm 51:1-4, 8, NLT).

If David were here today, he would tell us that temptation always leads to regret. He would warn us that it’s just not worth it.

A PRAYER FOR SANCTIFICATION

J. I. Packer writes, “Life is a spiritual landmine,” and we dare not trust ourselves, so we pray, “Father keep us safe.”³ That’s why Jesus taught us to pray “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” And we pray it because we need the Father’s help.

And we pray it because we have an enemy who is out to get us. Satan is called the “father of lies” (John 8:44). He is called the “tempter” (Matthew 4:3). He lies, deceives, seduces, and lures us away from God. That’s why the Bible says, “Be alert ... Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NIV).

James Emery White writes, “Every day I am tempted to do things that will embarrass God, that will move me away from him rather than closer to him. Left to myself, I will succumb. So I am in desperate need of God’s help to live the way I am supposed to live.”⁴

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” It’s a prayer for sanctification.

Paul urged the Christians at Thessalonica to pursue sanctification. “I urge you in the Lord Jesus to walk and please God, and to excel still more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1, paraphrase). “I urge you in the Lord Jesus.” May Jesus be your inspiration. May His love and His sacrifice and His grace inspire you. If you believe in Jesus, if you love Jesus, then “walk and please God ... (and) excel still more.” This is a plea to pursue for sanctification. Three times Paul used the word in his letter to the Thessalonians.⁵

Sanctification means being set apart for God, living a committed and holy life for Him. It is the process of being changed and transformed into the likeness of Jesus. It is the process of breaking down bad habits and creating holy habits. Sanctification is the renovation of our souls, change from the inside out.⁶ God’s plan is that we be “conformed to image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). That we look like Jesus, love like Jesus, and live like Jesus in every way. The Bible says, “Whoever says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same way in which He walked” (1 John 2:6, ESV).⁷

This was the goal of Paul’s life. He admitted, “I’m not perfect. I have so much further to go. But I want to be all Christ wants me to be. I want to take hold of Him, as He took hold of me. That’s why I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”⁸ What is the goal? What is the prize? Jesus! To see Jesus. To stand before Jesus in honor and not in shame. To be received into the presence of our glorious and gracious God, and live in His presence forever. Eternal rest, eternal peace, eternal joy. This ultimate goal, this ultimate prize, should inspire us and motivates to pursue sanctification, to “walk and please” Him. And that’s why we pray “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

WHY ARE WE SO VULNERABLE TO TEMPTATION?

We believe in Jesus and we love Jesus. So, *why are we so vulnerable to temptation?* Because we have an enemy who is out to get us, and Satan knows how to customize a trap for every one of us. He knows when we're vulnerable. And we're vulnerable ...

- when we're busy and not paying attention.
- when we're neglecting the spiritual disciplines of the word, prayer, worship, and community.
- when we're tired and worn out.
- when we're under pressure or stressed out.
- when we're in a bad mood, discouraged or depressed, angry or frustrated, afraid or insecure.
- when we consume large amounts of media and allow the values of the culture to shape our thinking.
- when we're addicted to some kind of idol; career, money, technology, sports, video games, or whatever might be an idol in our lives.
- when we put ourselves in situations where temptation is heightened.
- when we're bored and looking for some fun.
- when we have a lot of time on our hands.
- when we think no one is watching.
- when we think "What's the big deal?"

If any of that describes you, you're vulnerable to temptation.

HOW TO RESIST TEMPTATION

Here are some things we can do, and must do, to guard resist temptation.

Start with confession. If you've failed, God will forgive you. After failing miserably, David begged God for mercy. "(O Lord), do not remember the sins of my youth ... Purify me from my sins ... wash me ..."⁹ And the Lord responded to David the same way He always responds to those who confess their sin. "I will blot out your sins ... and will never think of them again" (Isaiah 43:25, NLT). The Bible promises, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, ESV).

Stay in God's Word! Psalm 119 says, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word ... Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:9, 11, NAS). David also prayed, "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me" (Psalm 119:133, NIV). Those words were written by someone who knew how easy it was to slip, to stray, to fall. To resist temptation, you have to fill your mind with truth. You have to stay in God's word.

Keep talking to God. Jesus told His disciples, “Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). Keep praying, “Lord, lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13). “Lord, I need Your help!” You cannot resist temptation unless you’re in constant communication with the Father. The Bible says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7).

Rely on the Holy Spirit. “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16, ESV). Willpower is not enough. None of us is disciplined enough or strong enough to resist temptation by willpower alone. We need the Holy Spirit. And as we yield to His power and invite Him to reign in our hearts, we can say “no” to temptation. The Bible says, “(Jesus) was tempted ... (and) He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18, NAS). “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation” (2 Peter 2:9, NAS). “When you are tempted, He will also provide a way out” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV). With the Holy Spirit’s help, we can be victorious over temptation.

Avoid tempting situations. If you’re an alcoholic, don’t go to a bar. If you have a problem with materialism, cut up your credit card. If you have a problem with pornography, when your wife goes to bed, the computer goes to bed.

Have spiritual friends who encourage you and hold you accountable. You can’t grow as a Christian and you can’t resist temptation without friends. All of us need spiritual friends who will be honest enough to point out our blind spots and ask us the tough questions. You won’t make it without friends.

CONCLUSION

Temptation can strike suddenly like a tornado. A tornado can level a house and temptation can level a soul. Or, temptation can slowly erode the spiritual foundation of our lives and we don’t even realize it’s happening. Either way, suddenly or slowly, it’s coming. And either way, temptation can be devastating. Every day, every one of us faces temptation. Sometimes we resist and sometimes we don’t.

When we do sin, God **always offers grace to those who repent**. No matter what you’ve done, God will forgive you. The Bible says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NAS).

God wants us to know that **victory is possible**. When Jesus died for our sins, it was not just to get us to heaven. When Jesus died for our sins, He freed us from the power of sin right now. We can say no to temptation. Victory is possible. “Thanks be to God, though you used to be slaves to sin ... you have been set free” (Romans 6:17-18).

NOTES

¹ See Psalm 62:8.

² Craig Groeschel, “What’s the Big Deal about Profanity?” at Crosswalk.com.

³ J. I. Packer, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), page 85.

⁴ James Emery White, *The Prayer God Longs For* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), page 90.

⁵ “For this is the will of God, your *sanctification*; that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to control your own body in *sanctification* and honor, not in lustful passion, like those who do not know God ... For God has not called us for impurity, but in *sanctification*” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 7). The NIV and ESV use the word “holiness” interchangeably in the passage, while the NASB consistently translates the word as “sanctification.”

⁶ Sanctification is an on-going process. Whereas, justification happens the moment we believe in Jesus. At the moment of salvation, we are fully forgiven, born again, and immediately become children of God. Justification is like the birth of a baby. It happens in a moment in time. Sanctification, on the other hand, is like the growth of the child into adulthood. Sanctification is a lifelong process of becoming more and more like Jesus.

⁷ See Colossians 1:28, “complete in Christ.” See Ephesians 4:13, “to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” See 1 Peter 1:13-16, “like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

⁸ Paraphrasing Paul from Philippians 3:14.

⁹ Psalm 25:1, NAS, Psalm 51:7, NLT.