

THE LORD'S PRAYER — GUIDANCE

Week 6 | "And lead us not into temptation..."

INTRODUCTION

Church, have you ever asked somebody for directions and then argued with the directions they gave you? "Turn right." "Are you sure? Because I feel like we should go left." We asked for help, but apparently we were only looking for somebody to agree with us.

We can do the same thing with God. "Lord, lead me. Show me Your will. Order my steps." But then He begins putting His finger on something we don't want to surrender. A relationship. An attitude. A habit. The way we use our money. The way we speak when we're angry. And suddenly, "Lead me" becomes, "Could You lead me somewhere else?"

We want to know where God is taking us, but following Jesus also means letting Him address what is taking hold of us. And sometimes the most important guidance we need isn't about which opportunity to pursue. It's about which desire we need to surrender.

Over these last several weeks, we have been walking through the Lord's Prayer. Our series big idea has been this: **Jesus didn't just give us words to pray; He gave us a way to live.** He is forming us into people who know the Father, honor His name, seek His kingdom, surrender to His will, depend upon His provision, and receive and extend His forgiveness.

Now we come to this phrase: "And lead us not into temptation." Last week, we prayed about forgiveness. We brought the debts we owe and

the debts we have been holding against others before the Lord. This week, Jesus teaches us to bring Him the places where we are vulnerable. We need forgiveness for where we have fallen, and we need guidance for where we are going.

Church, we don't only need God to help us recover from the wrong road. We need Him to lead us down the right one.

BIG IDEA — WE NEED GOD'S LEADING BECAUSE WE CANNOT ALWAYS TRUST OUR DESIRES

Our desires can tell us what we want. They cannot always tell us what is wise, what is holy, or what will bring life. Sometimes the thing we want most in the moment is the very thing that will take us somewhere we never intended to go.

That is why Jesus teaches us to pray, "Father, lead us." **I may not be able to trust every desire, but I can trust the Father who leads me.**

SCRIPTURE READING — MATTHEW 6:9–13

Jesus says, **"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"**

This is the Word of the Lord.

Before we go further, we need to understand what Jesus is teaching us to ask. Is God trying to tempt us? Do we need to convince Him not to lead us into sin? No. Remember our approach to Scripture: the Bible interprets the Bible. James 1:13 says, **"When tempted, no one should**

say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone."

The Father we met at the beginning of this prayer has not changed by the end of it. He is still good. He is still holy. He is still worthy of our trust.

The Greek word translated "temptation," *peirasmos*, can refer to testing or temptation, depending on the context. A trial can become an occasion for temptation. In hardship, we may be tempted to distrust God, take a sinful shortcut, or turn away from Him. God can use hardship to mature our faith, but He never entices us to evil. His purpose is to form us in faithfulness. The enemy's purpose is to draw us into disobedience.

So we are asking our Father to protect us from being brought into temptation and to keep us faithful when testing comes. "Father, guard our steps. Keep us from the places where we would be overcome. We know our weakness, and we need Your help." We are asking for guidance because we trust His goodness.

1. WE NEED TO BE LED

Jesus teaches us to pray, "Lead us," because we are not spiritually self-sufficient. We need the Father's wisdom, the Son's lordship, and the Holy Spirit's presence.

And that can be hard to admit. We like being capable. We like knowing what to do. The longer we have been doing something, the easier it becomes to assume we can handle it. But experience does not eliminate our need for dependence upon God. You can know the songs,

know the Scriptures, know how church works, and still need to pray, "Father, lead me today."

Proverbs 3:5–6 says, **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."** Notice the invitation: "In all your ways submit to him." We want God to direct our paths. But are we willing to submit our ways?

Sometimes we ask for guidance after we have already decided what we are going to do. We have built the plan, made the commitment, and justified the decision. Then we ask God to bless it. But following Jesus means He has the right to redirect us. **I cannot sincerely pray, "Lead me," while refusing to be led.**

Jesus teaches in Luke 9:23 that following Him involves denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily. That is more than adding a little religion to the life we already wanted. It means our desires no longer have the final word. Jesus does.

Self-denial doesn't mean every desire is wrong or that our personhood doesn't matter. It means we surrender the right to make ourselves the highest authority. We bring what we want before the One who knows what is good. We can say, "Lord, this is what I want. This is what I feel. But I want to follow You more than I want to defend my own way."

And His guidance often begins with something He has already made clear. Tell the truth. Forgive. Honor your marriage. Treat that person with dignity. Stop returning to what is destroying you. Ask for help. Sometimes we are waiting for God to reveal the next season while He is asking us to obey Him in this one.

We don't need a new revelation to obey a clear instruction.

The Holy Spirit leads us through Scripture, brings conviction to our hearts, and helps us receive wise counsel. He will never lead us to disobey the Word He inspired. An open door is not automatically God's direction. A strong feeling is not automatically His voice. We bring those things before Scripture and ask whether they are consistent with the character and commands of Jesus.

We also need people who can help us discern wisely. Sometimes the person who disagrees with us is the person helping us see clearly. If everybody we consult has to affirm what we already want, we have made it difficult to receive guidance.

And being led by God doesn't guarantee an easy road. Psalm 23 describes a Shepherd who leads along right paths and remains present in the darkest valley. Sometimes obedience costs us something. Sometimes the faithful choice is the difficult choice. But we can trust the Shepherd who walks with us.

That is daily dependence. Just as we prayed for today's bread, we pray for today's guidance. "Father, lead me in this conversation. Lead me in this decision. Lead me when I'm tired, disappointed, or afraid." Church, **Maturity is learning to depend upon God in places where we once trusted ourselves.**

2. TEMPTATION IS REAL

Jesus teaches His disciples to pray about temptation because He knows they will face it. Loving Jesus doesn't mean you will never be tempted. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't mean you become incapable of sin. Serving in ministry doesn't place you beyond vulnerability.

We need to take temptation seriously without allowing it to make us afraid of every thought and feeling.

First Corinthians 10 gives us an important warning. Paul reminds the church that Israel experienced God's deliverance, guidance, and provision. Yet many still turned toward idolatry and disobedience. Then he says in verse 12, **"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"**

They had experienced God's grace, but they still needed to respond faithfully to it. So do we. Yesterday's obedience does not remove today's need for dependence.

Peter learned that painfully. Before Jesus' arrest, he was certain he would remain faithful even if everyone else fell away. I believe Peter meant it. He loved Jesus. But he overestimated his own strength. Later, in Gethsemane, Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 26:41, **"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."**

Their willingness was real. Their weakness was real too. They needed to watch and pray before the pressure arrived. Church, we cannot build our faithfulness on good intentions alone. We need to remain attentive to our weakness and dependent upon God's strength.

James 1:14–15 describes how our desires can draw us away and entice us. Desire, when it conceives, gives birth to sin. That means we cannot explain every struggle by blaming the devil. There is an enemy, and we will talk more about deliverance next week. But Scripture also calls us to examine what is happening in our own hearts.

Temptation often takes a desire for something good and offers a disobedient way to satisfy it. We want affection, rest, security, relief, or recognition. Those desires need wise direction. The desire for affection can become an inappropriate relationship. The desire for relief can become dependence upon something destructive. The desire for security can become dishonesty. The desire to be heard can become permission to hurt somebody with our words.

Temptation says, "You can have what you want without trusting God's way."

That is what we see in Genesis 3. The serpent questions God's word and casts doubt on His goodness. Adam and Eve begin looking at what is forbidden as something desirable. They reach for what God has told them not to take.

There is a question underneath that story that reaches into our lives: "Can I trust God to be good when He tells me no?" Can I trust Him with my sexuality? My finances? My future? My anger? Can I believe that His boundaries are good even when I want to cross them?

Temptation encourages us to focus on the immediate benefit and ignore the eventual cost. "Nobody will know. Just this once. You deserve it." It rarely shows us the damaged trust, the people who will be hurt, or the hold a habit can gain over time.

But we also need to hear this clearly: **being tempted is not the same as sinning.** Hebrews tells us Jesus was tempted, yet without sin. An unwanted thought, a strong feeling, or an invitation to do wrong does not mean you have already surrendered to it. You can experience

temptation and turn toward Jesus. You can bring the struggle into the light before it becomes a choice you regret.

Still, don't make peace with what is trying to pull you away from God. Don't keep feeding a desire and then wonder why it has grown stronger. Don't keep creating access to the same temptation and assume your intentions will protect you.

Joseph, in Genesis 39, fled when Potiphar's wife tried to draw him into sexual sin. His faithfulness brought unjust consequences, but remaining there was not the faithful option. Sometimes obedience means leaving. **You do not have to stay near temptation to prove that you are strong.**

Closing the app, ending the conversation, leaving the room, or changing the routine may be the answer to the prayer you have been praying. When we ask the Father to lead us away from temptation, we need to be willing to follow.

3. WE CAN TRUST HIS LEADING

Now hear the hope. We are weak, but we are not abandoned. Temptation is real, but God is faithful.

Immediately after warning us against overconfidence, Paul writes, **"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." - 1 Corinthians 10:13**

The promise rests on these words: "God is faithful." We can trust His leading because we can trust His character.

This passage is specifically about temptation. It doesn't mean every hardship will feel manageable or that we should be able to carry every burden alone. But it does mean temptation never makes disobedience our only option. God provides a faithful way forward.

And notice: He provides a way out "so that you can endure it." Sometimes His provision is an opportunity to leave. Sometimes it is strength to remain obedient while the desire is still pressing upon us.

The way out may not feel easy. You may still want what you are surrendering. You may still feel the urge to send that message, tell that lie, or return to that habit. But you can turn toward Jesus and obey Him while those feelings are present. You don't have to wait until obedience feels easy to take the next faithful step.

God's grace does more than pardon the past. His grace empowers a different future.

Titus 2:11-12 teaches that the grace of God brings salvation and teaches us to say no to ungodliness and to live godly lives. Grace doesn't leave us resigned to whatever has been controlling us. The Holy Spirit works within us to renew our desires and form the character of Jesus.

This is part of what we mean when we talk about holiness. God wants to shape our hearts so that our lives are increasingly marked by love for Him and love for people. He wants to address the anger underneath our outbursts, the pride underneath our defensiveness, and the hunger for approval underneath our compromises. We need more than outward restraint. We need inward renewal.

And as God works, He calls us to respond. Philippians 2:12–13 holds these together: we are called to work out our salvation because God is at work within us, shaping our willingness and our actions according to His good purpose. Our obedience is a response to His grace. We depend upon Him, and we actively follow Him.

That help often arrives through ordinary means. Scripture. Prayer. Christian community. An honest conversation. Counseling. Celebrate Recovery. A practical boundary. A change in access.

If we ask God to guard our marriage, we should guard our conversations. If we ask Him to free us from a destructive habit, we should address what keeps feeding it. If we ask Him to lead us, we should receive correction from people who love us. Prayer and practical obedience belong together.

And remember, this prayer is plural. “Lead us.” Jesus is forming a people who follow Him together. We need each other. You don’t have to tell everybody everything. But somebody should know how to pray for the struggle you actually have. Someone should be able to ask how you are doing and receive an honest answer.

God’s provision may come through the person you have been avoiding because you don’t want to be honest.

At Light & Life, we want to be a place where people can receive grace and take real steps toward freedom. You can ask for help here. You can begin again. And you can grow. The Father is faithful, and we can trust His leading.

GOSPEL CONNECTION — JESUS REMAINED FAITHFUL

Our hope reaches deeper than a better routine or a stronger boundary. Our hope is Jesus.

Matthew 4 tells us that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, where the devil tempted Him. The Spirit's leading and the devil's tempting had different purposes. God was not enticing His Son to evil.

Jesus faced temptation after forty days of fasting. The tempter urged Him to turn stones into bread, to put God to the test, and to gain the kingdoms of the world through false worship. Jesus answered with Scripture, drawing from Deuteronomy and Israel's wilderness story.

Israel had distrusted God in the wilderness. Jesus trusted the Father. Adam had disobeyed in a garden surrounded by provision. Jesus obeyed in a wilderness while hungry. **Where Adam failed, Israel failed, and we fail, Jesus remained faithful.**

His faithfulness continued all the way to the cross. In Gethsemane, He surrendered to the Father's will. He gave Himself for our sins, and on the third day He rose again.

Jesus is our example, but He is also our Savior. His obedience exposes our need and provides our hope. Through Him, we receive forgiveness, reconciliation with the Father, and new life by the Spirit.

Hebrews 4:15–16 tells us that our High Priest understands our weakness. Because of Him, we can approach God's throne of grace for mercy and help. That invitation is for the moment when temptation is strong. It is also for the moment when you know you have fallen.

If you have sinned, confess it. Receive His forgiveness. Take responsibility for the harm that needs to be addressed. And follow Him into the changes that need to happen. You do not have to hide from the One who gave His life to bring you home.

CHALLENGE — WHERE IS GOD LEADING ME?

Church, this week I want us to carry this question with us: **Where is God leading me?**

Sometimes we spend so much time asking, “What’s wrong with this?” that we never stop to ask where it is taking us. We’re looking for permission when we need direction. Following Jesus means asking more than whether we can justify a choice. It means asking whether that choice is helping us follow Him.

Where is God leading me in this relationship? In how I respond when I’m angry? In what I watch, how I spend, or what I reach for when I’m overwhelmed? What is this doing to my heart? Is it helping me love God and love people?

Identify one area where your desires are pulling you away from Jesus, and invite the Father’s leadership into it. Be specific. “Lord, lead me in this conversation. Lead me in this habit. Lead me when I’m lonely. Lead me when I don’t get what I want.”

Then take one faithful step. Set the boundary. Tell the truth. Ask for help. Surrender what He has been asking you to surrender. Don’t leave today with only an intention. Respond to Him with obedience.

We need to be led. Temptation is real. And we can trust His leading. So ask Him honestly: **Where is God leading me?**

RESPONSE — FATHER LEAD US

Church, if you are comfortable, place your hands open in front of you. Let that be a simple expression of surrender. “Father, I am willing to be led.” We have asked Him for daily bread. We have asked Him to forgive our debts and helped our hearts release the debts of others. Today, we open our hands again because we are surrendering control.

Ask the Father quietly, “Where have I been insisting on my own way?” Give Him room to search your heart. Then ask, “What temptation have I been minimizing?” You don’t need to explain it to everybody around you. Be honest with Him.

Now ask our challenge question: **“Where is God leading me?”** What is the next faithful step? It may be something He has already made clear. As we pray, give Him your yes.

Father, we need You to lead us. Forgive us for the places where we have defended our desires instead of surrendering them. Guard our steps and teach us to trust Your goodness. When temptation comes, help us recognize the way You provide and make us willing to take it. Jesus, thank You for Your faithfulness, Your mercy, and Your saving work. Holy Spirit, renew our hearts. Shape what we love. Give us courage to tell the truth, receive help, and obey. We surrender our next step to You. Amen.

If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus, you can respond today. Bring Him your sin and your need. Ask for His forgiveness and begin following Him. You don’t have to repair your whole life before coming to the Savior. He welcomes you by grace and calls you into a new life.

And if you need prayer for a struggle you have been carrying, our prayer team is here. Come receive prayer. Let someone stand with you as you take the next faithful step. There is grace for you today, and there is help for the road ahead.

TRINITARIAN BLESSING

May the Father, whose wisdom is greater than ours, guide your steps and teach you to trust His goodness. May Jesus Christ, who remained faithful and gave Himself for you, assure you of His mercy and strengthen your obedience. And may the Holy Spirit renew your desires, fill you with holy love, and empower you to walk faithfully wherever God leads. Go in the grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.