

“And lead us not into temptation...”

The Lord’s Prayer

Recorded in two instances (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4), Jesus teaches the disciples how to pray. Although there appears to be a slight difference between the two prayers, Jesus presents them as the ideal prayer, one in which should be repeated. While there is a risk of the prayer becoming a thoughtless liturgical exercise, the prayer reflects Jesus’ main teachings, and He addresses this specific risk in both Matthew and Luke accounts.

At the beginning of Matthew’s account of the Lord’s prayer during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents prayer as righteous, an activity that is considered right and good in the eyes of God; it is not righteous when practiced in public for the benefit of one’s image. And, in the context of Gentiles, Jesus specifically speaks to “thoughtless repetition.”

“Take care not to practice your righteousness in the sight of people, to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, so that they will be praised by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charitable giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But as for you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. (Matt 6:1-7)

At the end of Luke’s account of the Lord’s prayer, Jesus tells a parable about a person, hosting a guest, approaching a friend at an inconvenient time to borrow some food to feed his guest. The parable places a focus on two people: a) the host who wanted to serve and persevered to wake up his friend, and the friend, though inconvenienced, got up to do the right thing of helping his friend. The attitude of the host is the example for the one who prays: a desire to serve and persist in that endeavor. The friend, reflecting the human quality of grudging reluctant help in the face of inconvenience, ultimately helps or risks losing his friend’s respect. Juxtaposed against this recognizable human character, Jesus, in figuratively associating God as the friend, highlights God’s righteous character of doing the right thing without any reluctance as a Father would His children.

And He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine has come to me from a journey and I have nothing to serve him’; and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even if he will not get up and give him anything just because he is his friend, yet because of his shamelessness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened. Now which one of you fathers will his son ask for a fish, and instead of a fish, he will give him a snake? Or he will even ask for an egg, and his father will give him a scorpion? So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:5-13)

Woven within this parable is a similar juxtaposition presented in the Sermon on the Mount. In His public sermon, Jesus speaks of how God responds to prayer, and the juxtaposition is used to introduce the Golden Rule. Prayer matters, because it reflects one’s recognition of God (Lord of all) and one’s dependence on God (the Lord who provides at His discretion); a liturgical exercise is the Lord’s Prayer devoid of recognizing and depending on YHWH.

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“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or what person is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matt 7:7-12)

With careful observation of the two recorded instances of the Lord’s prayer, one may perceive that there is a clear emphasis of Jesus’ teachings and a template of how one may pray to God.

Matthew 6:8-15	Luke 11:1-4	Observations
Jesus is speaking publicly during the Sermon on the Mount.	After His prayer time, Jesus is speaking privately to the disciples.	
8) So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.		Jesus teaches of God omniscience.
	1) It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, when He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.”	Prayer, talking to God, is a skill that is taught.
9) “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father, who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10) Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.	2) And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.	“Our Father” is a personal address and in the context of a relationship, which is appropriate for any petition. “Who is in heaven” recognizes the real existence of God by identifying His residence. “Hallowed be Your name,” in the past tense, recognizes that God is holy, sanctified, and set apart from sin. “Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven” recognizes the future consummation of God’s kingdom on earth just as it is already established in heaven.
11) Give us this day our daily bread.	3) Give us each day our daily bread.	Jesus’ prayer for the provision for our physical existence is in the context of serving God on earth.

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Matthew 6:8-15	Luke 11:1-4	Observations
<p>12) And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.</p> <p>13) And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’</p>	<p>4) And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation.”</p>	<p>In Matthew, Jesus presented the Golden Rule after the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 7:7-12) and in Luke, before the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 6:31-36).</p> <p>“Do not lead us into temptation” discussion is seen below.</p>
<p>14) For if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.</p> <p>15) But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.”</p>		<p>Jesus explicitly indicates that the Golden Rule includes a divine dimension; what you do to others will influence what God will do with you.</p>

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt 6:13; Luke 11:4). What does this mean? The enigma of Jesus’ phrase is rooted in a confusion in understanding God and His temptation of human beings.

1. God tempts only His own people. In all the instances of the Bible’s recording of God’s temptation of human beings, He tests only Believers.
2. God tests only if a Believer loves and obeys Him, which is in contrast to Satan who tempts one’s natural desires to disobey God’s word.

The first recorded instance of God’s temptation is seen in the testing of Abraham’s obedience: will Abraham obey or disobey God’s word to save his son (Gen 22:1-14)? Abraham had to weigh his love for God against the love for his son. And note carefully that God did not allow Abraham to commit the sin of murder and instead provided an animal for the sacrificial offering.

When God tempted the nation of Israel, He was evaluating their love and word of agreement to adhere to the Mosaic Covenant (Ex 16:4; 20:18-21; Deut 8:1-6; Judg 2:20-23; 2 Chron 32:30-31).

God temptation may even include the rise of false prophets to test the nation of Israel, who made the commitment to “listen and obey His word” (Deut 13:1-4). Failure in discernment indicated the failure of knowing God’s word.

3. God used Jesus to test the disciples (John 6:4-6). As Jesus tests His disciples of their desire to love God, they learn more about Him and grow in faith.
4. This is the method by which one’s faith is approved by God. Abiding in God’s word is the means to pass God’s test, if it should occur, as well as the means to escape Satan’s temptations (2 Tim 2:15; Heb 11:17-19; Jas 1:13-15).

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When Jesus prays, “and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt 6:13; Luke 11:4), He is asking His Father not to test the love of His people but to save them from the evil of Satan. Jesus recognized a tough future for God’s people who believe in His name (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom 10:8-13).

The birth of Jesus heralded the inauguration of the kingdom of God (Luke 1:31-33), which will be consummated with His return (Mark 13:1-37; 14:62; Luke 17:22-37). This is in direct challenge to Satan (John 12:31; 14:29-31; 16:8-11).

Now judgment is upon this world; now **the ruler of this world** will be cast out. (John 12:31)

And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. I will not speak much more with you, for **the ruler of the world** is coming, and he has nothing in regard to Me, but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let’s go from here. (John 14:29-31)

And He, when He comes, will convict the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment: regarding sin, because they do not believe in Me; and regarding righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you no longer are going to see Me; and regarding judgment, because **the ruler of this world** has been judged. (John 16:8-11)

Believers will be persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ, which He calls “tribulation” (Matt 13:20-21; 24:9-13; Mark 4:16-17; John 16:13). In the context of the end times, when “the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place,” Jesus speaks of the “great tribulation” as an extreme and lethal persecution of Believers (Matt 24:21; Mark 13:14-19).

In one sense, tribulation is essentially akin to God’s testing His people of their love for Him. However, in contrast to appealing to one’s natural desires to sin and disobey God’s word, this evil testing of those who place their faith in Jesus Christ is intended to coerce a denial of faith.

Jesus’ prayer of “deliverance from evil” may not be just in regard to evil as it is currently understood; but, may well have this issue in view.

Encapsulated within the Lord’s Prayer is the essence of Jesus’ teachings. The prayer reflects the two greatest commandments:

1. And He said to him, “‘You shall love (agapē) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. (Matt 22:37-38)

9) “Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father, who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10) Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

11) Give us this day our daily bread. (Matt 6:9-11)

2. The second is like it, ‘You shall love (agapē) your neighbor as yourself.’ Upon these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matt 22:39-40)

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- 12)** And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- 13)** And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'
- 14)** For if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
- 15)** But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.” (Matt 6:12-15)

With an emphasis on forgiveness in the context of God's forgiveness, Jesus establishes a comparison. Unknown to the public at the time, God's forgiveness involved a great personal cost – the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. In God's view, forgiveness is the ultimate expression of agapē love.