

Be Prayerful

1. Warm-up question: At the outset of his sermon, Pastor Robert told how his youngest son Tony climbed up high on the cabinets to grab and devour an entire bag of Oreos, then denied doing it. What's one of your earliest memories of experiencing and yielding to temptation?
2. On Sunday we wrapped up our sermon series on The Lord's Prayer by exploring the last petition in the prayer – "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Once again let's read the passage where Jesus gives us The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:7-15, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Robert called our attention to the phrase in verse 5 where Jesus says, "When you pray. . . ." That exact same phrase is repeated again in verse 6, then again in verse 7. Not that Jesus didn't say, "*If* you pray," but rather "*When* you pray." The assumption is that every believer will be in regular communication with God. But the truth is, we often let life get in the way. How is your prayer life going? Do you feel you're investing enough time in prayerful conversations with God? If not, what tends to get in your way?
 - b. As already noted above, Jesus teaches us that one of things we should regularly pray is, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." When you think about it, that seems like an odd thing to pray. Why would God ever lead us into temptation, especially since elsewhere the Bible says, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." James 1:13. So what did Jesus mean when he taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation?" Robert told us that the Greek word for "temptation" used in The Lord's Prayer has two different possible meanings: (1) an enticement to sin, temptation, whether arising from desires or from outward circumstances; or (2) adversity, affliction, trouble: sent by God and serving to test or prove one's character, faith, holiness. Which of these two meanings makes the most sense to you in the context of The Lord's Prayer?
 - c. If we go with the second meaning, the essence of the prayer becomes, "God, keep me from trials and tribulations," which makes a lot of sense. But what about the first meaning. Do you think God ever deliberately leads us into a situation where we will face temptation? If so, why might God do that?
 - d. We are often most vulnerable to temptation in situations of adversity that stress us and leave us tired, angry, lonely, or scared. Robert told about a friend who realized he owed a lot of money on his taxes. In desperation, he decided to lie by fudging the numbers. Tell us about a desperate or difficult time in your life when you succumbed to temptation.

- e. By teaching us to pray, “Lead us not into times of trial, but deliver us from evil,” Jesus was training us to realize that in times of trial, we should have a heightened awareness of our susceptibility to temptation and, therefore, seek extra strength from God. Tell us about a stressful situation you’re facing right now that calls for extra vigilance and prayer to stay in the center of God’s will.
3. Prayer is perhaps the single most powerful resource we have in life. In Jeremiah 33:3, God says, “Call on me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things that you do not know.” To remind us of the power of prayer, Robert shared the true story of a woman who, way back in 1912, was unable to sleep. Her spirit was restless and filled with fear for her husband, so she got on her knees and began to pray. At the time, her husband was returning from England where he had been doing research. He was on the Titanic. The moment the woman was moved to pray coincided precisely with the time the Titanic hit the iceberg. The woman kept praying continuously until at 5:00 a.m. her time, peace suddenly came over her. That coincided with the precise time her husband dragged himself out of the frigid water and into a lifeboat that was intercepted by a larger rescue ship. That’s the power of prayer!
 - a. James 5:16 says, “Confess your sins to each other and *pray* for each other so that you may be healed. The *prayer* of the righteous is powerful and effective.” Tell us about a time in your life when you experienced the power of prayer.
 - b. Suppose someone asked you to explain why prayer is so powerful and how it works. How would you answer?
 - c. In the King James version of The Lord’s Prayer – the one we often recite – the wording says, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Other modern translations give a slightly different spin to that last word, saying, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” That’s a reference to Satan. How do you feel about the idea that there is a malevolent being who seeks to undermine you and separate you from God? Do you buy that? Why or why not? And if you embrace the concept, how does the presence of Satan in our life raise the stakes during times of adversity?
 - d. Although our focus tonight has been on the vital importance of prayer in times of adversity, prayer is not just for times of adversity. James 5:13 says, “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.” The word “afflicted” means extended seasons of suffering, protracted seasons of trouble. We’ll all face seasons like that, but we’ll all also experience seasons of great joy. In those times, James says we should sing psalms, i.e., lift prayers of praise. Sometimes we talk to God only when we need help. James reminds us to also talk to God when things are going great. So, to wrap up tonight, share something you’re giving praise for in your life right now?

Matthew 6:7-15

⁷And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

⁹In this manner, therefore, pray: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.