



Pray Like Jesus

Part 5 – Lead Us, Protect Us

Pastor Ted Cunningham

I heard word this week from Houston. Our friend Gary Smalley is down in Houston. On Thursday, he went into hospice care, so we know that his time upon this earth is not long, but it reminds me what D.L. Moody said. “One day, you will read in the paper that D.L. Moody has died, but don’t you believe it for a moment. For it is at that moment that I’ve never been more alive.” And all God’s people said... Amen.

This has been a good week. I did a conference yesterday and during the last session, I cried for about 40 minutes through. It was on the honor list. You know how much I like talking about the honor list. I shared it with a group in Chicago. I told them I should refund all the travel money they gave me because I was just terrible. I was just thinking about Gary. It was also kind of in my hometown. How many of you love going back to your hometown? How many of you try to avoid your hometown at all costs. There are good and bad memories at home.

For me, I don’t even really go to where I live which was Oswego, Illinois; I go back to a place called Naperville, where Grandma lived. How many of you loved going back to Grandma’s house? Every time we go there... It’s been about three or four times in the last couple of years. I take the same tour. I make my family endure the same tour through Naperville of where I fished and where Grandma and I walked, where we sat for parades, where we ate, and where I did dishes. I take pictures all along the way.

Corynn finally says, “Dad, I’ve lost count of how many times you’ve taken the same picture.”

There’s just something about going home. As we get older, we realize, as the scripture says, it’s better to go to a funeral than it is to go to a party. Why? That’s because it’s at a funeral that you begin to make better decisions about life. You love deeper. You learn to forgive. You learn to let things go.

How many of you have ever been in a situation where you thought your life was about to end? If you’ve been on American Airlines, raise your hand. For some of you, it was war. For some you maybe it was a flight. I read the story a couple of weeks ago from a pastor. His name is Andrew Wilson. This was in Christianity Today. You can look it up online I’m sure. He tells a great story about being on a flight that he thought was going down. It fits very well as we start off today.

Eleven years ago, my wife and I were on an Air New Zealand flight that felt like it was falling out of the sky. Approaching the Queenstown airport in mid-winter—with mountain ranges on both sides and a huge lake straight ahead—we were caught in a giant wind tunnel. The plane was shuddering and

sporadically dropping 50 feet at a time. The cabin filled with shrieking and praying. Many people were crying out to a God in whom they did not believe. Just as there are no atheists in foxholes, there certainly aren't many on buffeted flights.

Thirty minutes later, after having landed safely, the group of strangers waited at baggage claim, looking awkwardly at each other. No doubt, many of them felt silly.

The content of those prayers fascinated me. I suspect it reflects the way many of us intuitively pray. The most common petition I heard was some variant of "deliver us from evil:" "Help!" "Save us!" and "Oh, God, please don't let me die!" Crises prompt cries for deliverance, with the immediate need for safety drowning out all other concerns. Whenever I listen to baptism testimonies at my church, I am struck by how many people called out to God for the first time in a moment of personal danger.

The other prayer I heard, though more infrequently, was "forgive us our sins" in some form or another: "I'm sorry" and "God, please forgive me." People want to be at peace with God when they die. So after crying out for rescue, they apologized as they prepared to meet their Maker.

I've only been in one situation like that. It was on a flight with Amy to Asheville, North Carolina. It was one of those big prop planes. The cabin filled with smoke. The same thing happened. People started crying out. I don't think I helped any by singing Tim McGraw's *Live Like You Were Dying*. That's a true story. I looked over at Amy and... The lady in front of us... I'll never forget it. She was holding onto the seat, she was crying out, and she was afraid. I looked over at Amy and in a loud enough voice... Because I always like to participate with everybody around me. I said, "I've never been bull riding!" That was my big regret, but I had no other regrets. I never went skydiving, but I was at that very moment. Isn't it something that the prayers – I like how this pastor said it – intuitively come out of us?

In this message, the last part of this series we've been in... We've looked at the model prayer, the Lord's Prayer that he gives us to pray. In Matthew 6, we saw that Jesus actually gave us more instruction about how to pray. There is more weight in the passage on that than there actually is on "this is how you should pray, this is what you should pray, this is the outline that you should be looking at."

Today we are looking at the very last part – *Lead Us and Protect Us*. Throughout this whole series, we've looked at the idea of public prayer verses private prayer. In other words, the difference between a showcase prayer – a prayer where you are trying to impress people around you, using big words or a lot of words, repeating your words – and a private prayer.

We focused on the private prayer. You get alone with your heavenly Father. ***"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."*** We are approaching him as Dad. We are focused on the private prayer. Today we are going to end this prayer in Matthew 6: 13 that says, ***"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*** At the end of this prayer, we cry out "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." We need to learn something today about temptation.

Here's the first thing we want to know for sure about temptation as we just prayed, "God lead us not into temptation..." God does not tempt us. God does not tempt anyone to sin.

We read this in James 1. **13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.** God is not the one tempting us; it is our own desires that are luring and enticing us from the time we are tempted to actually sinning. We have to understand God in not doing that.

Here is a very important part too. I want to focus right now on the ladies. You need to understand this. I talk to a lot of wives who don't understand this next point. Temptation is not sin. The temptation to go somewhere on the computer that you shouldn't go is not sin. Going somewhere on the computer where you shouldn't go is sin. There's a big difference. I have to say it again because the ladies, right now, they know *My husband is tempted in this area and because he's tempted, he's a pervert.* No. He's tempted... We are going to see in a second that Jesus was tempted and yet was without sin.

Today we want to talk about a strategy for when you are tempted so that you don't sin. To know that you can make that decision... And with the strategy that we are going to develop, we have to fully understand how the evil one tempts us. Let's look at his strategy as we develop our own strategy so we are prepared.

It's in Genesis 3 that we get his strategy. **1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"** Understand that part of his strategy is taking God's word and twisting it just a little bit. It sounds right, but it's not. Satan has the same strategy as Hallmark. You need to understand this. You read cards and you're like *This is close. This is somewhat what the scripture teaches.*

They are using the words of the Bible, but it's not true. When it tries to comfort someone who is mourning by saying... And my friend, Gary Smalley will soon leave this earth, but guess what, he will never ever, ever, ever, ever become an angel. Don't buy a card like that. But you're like *Boy, when I read it though, it sounds nice,* but it's wrong. That's the difference. It's not true. I hear Christians say this all the time. "Heaven got a new angel today." No heaven did not. Because humans are created, angels are created, and we don't go back and forth.

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden..." This is important. We can't skip past this Verse 2 because here's where she's going to remind him of what God actually said. "God said we get all of this - the whole garden – but not this one tree." So, Satan is wanting to get the eyes off the whole garden and onto the "no." He's wanting to taint all of the garden with the one tree.

This is what we have to understand. We are disciplined to say "no" to the bigger picture. Jesus said, "I've come to bring life so that you might have it more abundantly." I say "no" to the one thing so I can experience the abundant life. In Christianity today, I think we believe discipline is the ability to say "no." But discipline is more than the ability to say "no." Discipline is knowing why we say "no." Discipline is understanding we are saying "no" to this because I understand God's plan for marriage. We don't say "no" to pornography because we're afraid we're going to get caught and everything is going to get ruined. We say "no" to pornography because we love the abundant life.

3 "...but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

Now watch what the crafty serpent does. **4 "You will not certainly die..."** He just flat out denies God's word. **...the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

1. The evil one tempts you by telling you there are no consequences.

"It's just for this little moment that you can enjoy this. It's just for this moment that you can indulge. After all, you've worked hard all week; just enjoy this little bit right here. You've been so good for so long; just this little bit ain't gonna do nothing. If you partake in it, it's not going to impact your family."

We have a city that is built off this lie. What's the city? I'm not bashing Vegas today. I have friends that are making a living in Vegas right now. I have many pastor friends who are reaching so many people through that city, but I have a clear warning for any friend of mine in entertainment or whatever it is that leaves here to go work in Vegas. You have to have a strategy because what happens in Vegas does not stay in Vegas. What happens in Vegas stays with you. What happens in Vegas... I tell all my entertainment friends... Over the years, a lot of them have left here to go make a living. I say, "Go! Take on the world. Make a living. Be successful. But have a strategy because in Vegas, it's not a bunch of old women flirting with you after the show. No. You get up on stage and sing love songs for your entire show and afterwards women throw themselves at you. Do you have a plan?" I get pretty aggressive with this when I'm talking to my friends. They tell me they will get one and I go "NO! You need one right now!"

I'm going to Vegas in May for an event and I've got a plan. Do you know what the number one part of my strategy is? Take my wife. That's my number one plan. Take my wife and look at the sidewalk the whole time as I walk through that town. Do not let your eyes off the sidewalk until you get into your room. I have friends that say, "I don't know how it happened!" "I don't know how I ended up with her!" "We just went out for Tapas." If you don't know what Tapas are... Let me help my Ozarkian friends here. Tapas are small plates. He said, "It was just small plates and we ended up sleeping together."

Do you know what I told him? "Small plates lead to sex. You know better."

"Ted, how did I end up with a prostitute? It was just sushi."

"Sushi leads to sex. Sushi and sake are bad combinations. What are you thinking?"

You'll never catch me eating out with another woman other than Pat Kershaw, but she's 80. She was in the first service and so offended when I said that. But, I do have a rule. You have to be over the age of 70 if I'm going to meet you for coffee.

You have to be aware. There are consequences and you need a strategy. You need to understand what's going on.

2. The evil one tempts you by denying God's Word.

“Do you know what? You make this say whatever you want it to say. You love whomever you want to love and then whatever passages in God's word deny the way you want to think or feel, we will just say they are no longer relevant in the conversation. You marry whomever you want to marry; it doesn't matter. Whatever that is, we will just say that was 2,000 years ago in another culture.”

“Men lead your homes? That was in a time when women were property. Men aren't called to lead anymore. We can make the scripture say whatever we want. We can go to the scripture with our ideas of what we want to be true and we can twist the scripture any way we want.” Satan says, “Go ahead because God's word is whatever you want it to be. You can focus on whatever parts work for you and leave out the parts that don't.”

3. The evil one tempts you with an offer to be God.

Not only do you determine right and wrong, but now you are in place of God. We have a word for this and here's the word: Idolatry. We become worshippers of ourselves. Today, I just want you to know that you can have victory when tempted.

Many of you know my story. I grew up in an independent, fundamental, Baptist church. We got the no, no, no and we got the list of no's of what we shouldn't do. We never got the why attached to it. It felt to me like what I experienced this week when my wife took our family on an excursion to a zoo. We went to a zoo because on the front of the pamphlet, it showed they had a show with marching flamingos. If that doesn't get you excited, I don't know what does. There were 15 marching flamingos. They were trained according to their natural instinct. I know you didn't prepare yourself today for an impersonation of a marching flamingo, but I'm going to give it to you because you have to kind of get it in your mind. Their body doesn't move; it stays in one position and it's just their legs. So, for 30 bucks, you can see this, but for now, you're just going to have to imagine it.

We go to this show. We sit down around this big fenced in area with white picket fence. They've been building the show up. About 20 people gather around this fence and we sit there. They have 15 flamingos. They come marching into the pen. They are just kind of huddled up together and they are eating on the ground. A few minutes later, what looks like the gardener walks in. He looks like a guy who really doesn't even want to be there. He walks over to where the flamingos are and gets behind the last one he can. He's on this side of the fenced in area.

This is the show right here. He yells “Haah! Haah!” and they all take off across the pen to the other side. I look at Amy... I thought they were going to be doing tricks with their necks or something. No. Then after they all got to the other side, the gardener gets behind them again and yells “Haah! Haah!” and right back over to the other side they go. Here's the best part. The MC makes us give them applause. It was all back and forth with this guy yelling “Haah! Haah!”

I'm thinking *Come on! You've already got our money and now you are going to insult us by making us give them applause?! I looked over at Amy and I said, "I'm no bird expert, but I think I can do this. I think I could train flamingos." I looked around at all 20 of us and we're all thinking Are you kidding me? Seriously? Did they get away with this?*

We left and this became so much fun for our family because I thought I'm going to see if this works with parenting. Now, to get them in the car, to get them to bed, to get them to dinner, I just come up behind Corynn and Carson and yell "Haah! Haah!" It's worked all week. They are running around like crazy. It has worked so well, next week, I'm going to try it with Amy. So, if you see me at Target behind her cart going "Haah! Haah!" you'll know. I've obviously had so much fun with that one.

This is the problem with how many of us parent and how many church leaders have taken on temptation. Any time something is presented to our children or presented to us, we just need someone around going "Haah! Haah!" But we need to learn what our strategy is and how we are disciplined when tempted.

Dr. David Jeremiah says this and I think it's brilliant. *"You have to know your strategy before you are in the situation."* Young lady, let me just explain this to you. Know what you believe about moral purity before the first date. We believe decisions have power. You don't make a decision on your moral purity while on the date. The decision is made before the date. He uses this illustration and it may be a little older. He says, *"A back seat is not a place to figure out what you believe about sex before marriage."* You do that long before. You make that decision. And you have to make the decision before the situation arises. Your parents aren't always going to be around going "Haah! Haah!" The dads are going let's do it with the boys. "Haah! Haah!"

Chuck Swindoll has said this for years. The first time I heard it, I memorized it. I hope you do as well. If you hear this, take this deep into your soul. *"Sin will take you farther than you want to go, will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost more than you ever wanted to pay."* You have to make the decision.

As we've said, God does not tempt you and temptation is not sin. Here's what we do need to know today. **God does not directly tempt us to sin, but he does allow testing.** We read this at the commencement of Jesus' ministry. His ministry is established upon the earth for this short time. He is tempted by the evil one and let's look at how his strategy comes against Satan's strategy.

Matthew 4: 1-11 – ***1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*** God's not tempting him, but the Holy Spirit is leading him to a place where Satan will do this. So, God does allow testing. ***2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*** ***3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."***

It's very important that you see this because we are going to see it four times in this text. ***4 Jesus answered, "It is written..."*** Jesus is going to quote scripture. Jesus is going to explain what he's doing based on the word of God. ***"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."***

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written...” Now watch; Satan is going to quote scripture. **“He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”**

7 Jesus answered him, “It is also written...” Have you ever been in one of these debates where you’re quoting scripture back and forth? Jesus brings the scripture right back to him. **“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”** This is in Deuteronomy.

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 “All this I will give you,” he said... All this I will give to you? He is the Son of God. When you are tempted by the evil one please understand; he’s making offers he can’t come through on. Don’t fall for the offers. **“...if you will bow down and worship me.”**

10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan!” This is a great line for temptation. Someone throws themselves at you... It doesn’t have to be in Vegas; it can be in Branson. If they throw themselves at you, I think it’s an okay line to say, “Get away from me, Satan.” I don’t care because however Satan is coming against you, you can resist. **“For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”**
11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Here’s the bottom line of this text. Jesus refuted Satan and resisted temptation by quoting God’s word. This is why we talk so much about memorizing and meditating on scripture. When we memorize and meditate on scripture and we find ourselves in a situation of being tempted, it is the Holy Spirit at work within you and me that brings the scripture back to our minds. I encourage you to quote it aloud. Raise your hand if you’ve seen the movie War Room. When Priscilla Shirer’s character walks out on the front porch and she is rebuking Satan, it’s going to make even our most staunch Baptist in here get excited. She comes out and she is proclaiming the name of Jesus over that home and refuting, rebuking Satan. “Get behind me! Get out of the way!” This is why we take the word of God and the scripture deep into our soul.

This is important. We read this in Hebrews 4: 15-16. **15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses...** Jesus is your high priest. You don’t need an earthly priest to make intercession between you and God; that’s the person of Jesus. Jesus is your high priest. **...but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.** This is important to understand.

John Piper said it this week and I think it’s a perfect fit for this message. He said, “Guys, if you were sitting down at the computer today and you were getting ready to click onto a porn site and I was standing over the top of you and I said “Okay make that click and you will die immediately, don’t make the click and I will hand you ten thousand dollars in cash.” In this room, your like “I wouldn’t make the click.” The point there is that you can resist. You can say no. You’ve given in to the temptation 30, 40, 50 years of your life and you find yourself in the same patterns of sin. You can refute the evil one and resist sin. And all God’s people said... Amen. You’ve got this. You can do this.

16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Young men, you've got this. You can overcome this. You can say no to the temptation. It is more than possible in the name of Jesus.

Bob Deffenbaugh puts it this way. *"When we pray to not be lead into temptation but deliver us from the evil one, we are asking the father's help in avoiding such situations. We ask for doors to be closed that have difficult situations in the other side. We ask for our hearts to be strengthened and focused on good things. We ask for wisdom to recognize and avoid troubling circumstances."* You've got this.

Growing up, not only did I attend an independent, fundamental church, but I also attended an independent, fundamental Baptist camp in the summer. I remember, even as a little kid, looking up at the slogan going across the front of where we had worship and preaching. It was the camp slogan and I think it was well intentioned, but wrong. It simply read, "It is easier to build boys and girls than to repair men and women." I remember even as a ten year old thinking... I was thinking about the family members that I know that are struggling with addiction. Those who have had broken marriages and broken families and broken relationships.

They were medicating with drugs, alcohol, sex, whatever the case may be. I was thinking *Okay, there's just not as much hope for them as there is for me?* Let me ask you. With the gospel of Jesus Christ, do we believe that to be true?

The gospel doesn't repair; the gospel makes you brand new. I'm talking that "iPhone 6 plus out of the box" brand new. You know what I'm talking about. There are no smudges. There are no fingerprints. How many of have pulled out a new phone and you feel like you can't touch it? I'm talking "new car smell" new. I'm not talking "JoAnn and Chip on Fixer Upper" restoration. I'm not talking restoration. I'm talking brand new. He does that with boys and he doesn't that with men. He does that with girls and he does that with women. He does that with eight year olds and he does that with eighty year olds. That is the gospel of Jesus.

When we pray... I took Pastor Bob's prayer and I added to it because I thought about all the situations we have here at Woodland Hills Family Church. Talking about prayer changing us... We say "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name." "I come to you as Dad. This is you, not me."

Prayer changes us

From idolaters to worshippers,
From thieves to givers,
From liars to truth tellers,
From adulterers to loving and faithful spouses,
From arrogant to humble,
From hating to loving,
From bitter and resentful to forgiving.

When we pray and as we have prayed over the last five messages ***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.*** Those are the prayers all throughout this place today.

We pray this prayer over our children: “Father, cover them in the blood of Jesus, protect them from evil, fulfill your purpose in their lives, do not arouse or awaken love before it’s time. I’m not always going to be around my children, running behind them going “Haah! Haah!” Father, let them be guided by your spirit. Let them know that when tempted, they have the ability, through the word of God, to resist. They have that power in them.

By the way, when you look at the scope of salvation, when you are saved, when you place faith in Jesus, you were justified, you were declared righteous. Then you enter into sanctification, you're being sanctified, you're being delivered from the power of sin. One day... as for my friend Gary Smalley, this day is very soon. He will ultimately be delivered from the very presence of sin, and all God’s people again said... Amen. We believe this and we hold this to be true.

I’m going to ask, as we close out our time today, for you to just bow your head and take a moment. I want you to go into that private prayer. I want you, as you pray Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name... Start by calling out to him as Dad. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. If you have physical needs in this place today, you pray that to him right now. Share your need; share your desire for healing. As for the sin that has taken you down, you begin praying right now Father, forgive us of our sins. For the brokenness and the reconciliation, help me forgive those who have sinned against me. Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from the evil one. You take a moment and you pray to your Father.

I’m going to ask you to do something bold this morning, as your church family, because remember this is a collective prayer. It’s lead us, protect us, forgive us, give us. Your church family would like to end this series and this time together this morning by praying for you. If you’ve never placed faith in Jesus and today is the day that, for the first time ever, you have cried out to your Father in heaven in the name of Jesus to be saved, I’m going to ask that you stand.

If you have need... There are many in here today who are mourning. There are those here that are mourning the loss of a family member and at the same time praying for the healing of another. If you have physical need, financial need, I’m going to ask that you stand.

If you’ve never cried out to your Father in heaven, seeking forgiveness for the sin that has taken you down and you pray that today would be the day that you cry out for forgiveness, I’m going to ask that you stand.

As we forgive those who sinned against us. If you have broken relationship, a broken marriage, you’re not on speaking terms with an ex-spouse, you’re not on speaking terms with a child or parent or co-worker and you want to know how to forgive, you need prayer for reconciled relationships, I’m going to ask that you stand.

If you are in situations, are easily tempted, and easily fall, I'm going to ask that you stand that we can pray with you to not be led into temptation and to be delivered from the evil one. If you would like your church family to pray with you, I'm just going to ask that you stand.

Then I'm going to ask some of the church family to just gather around some of those here as I pray on behalf of our church. It was beautiful in the first service to see folks gathered around and praying

Father, it is in the name of Jesus that we come to you, our heavenly Dad. We esteem your name as highly valuable. We bless your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth and through us as it is in heaven. Give us our daily bread. I pray for the one who needs healing right now that in the name of Jesus, they would be healed. For the one who has financial needs, in the name of Jesus, we bring that need to you. For those confessing sin to you right now, they are forgiven in the name of Jesus. For those needing a relationship reconciled, I pray that relationships would be healed in the name of Jesus.

For those who are mourning, we gather as a family around them to mourn with them in the name of Jesus. We mourn with hope. For those leaving here today thinking they can't recover, that recovery has never worked for them, I pray that today would be the first day of sobriety for them in the name of Jesus. I pray that they would cry out to you when tempted, that they would dig into your word when tempted. I pray for all those standing that you would deliver us from the evil one, cover us in the blood of Jesus, protect us from evil, and fulfill your purpose in our lives. It is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen