

## NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Deliver Us – The Lord's Prayer

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I was twenty-two years old, a rookie with the Washington Redskins and it was late in the season and there was a friend of mine who wanted to come and check out a game and it happened to be a young lady that I liked for quite some time. She wanted to come with a couple of people and I was excited to see her, I hadn't seen her in a while and I moved from Miami where we both were from when I was fourteen but you know, we stayed in touch. And so she came and almost immediately after she arrived it kind of went down pretty quickly. Um I wanted to go and hang out with some friends of mine and play some cards and bring her along and just kind of, you know, chill out in that really wasn't the plan that she had in mind and so there was some tension there about this particular plan. She didn't want to be there and I didn't like the fact that she didn't want to be there and so that was a little bit of a problem. So I got a little upset and I decided that I was going to take her and whoever came with her back to her hotel and I left her there. Yeah, I was mad. And I went on and I did exactly what I wanted to do that night because that's what I felt like doing. So the question is how does someone travel hundreds of miles to come and see you and you abandon them and refuse to engage with them? I'll tell you how. It's when you allow things like anger to take over you and fuel the selfish nature that we already have. I was definitely out of character that weekend because I had never been known to treat people that way, still not known to treat people that way. But this is what happens when we fall victim to this little thing called temptation. And we think often times that you know temptation is these huge things like that have to do with our money or sex or drugs but sometimes its smaller things or its decisions that we're making that seem good but that are not necessarily good or decisions that are self-serving that are about us and they don't produce good even though they may feel good in the moment.

I'm glad that there is this guy named Paul who has written the majority of the New Testament who says for those of us who are called according to God's purpose somehow or another this stuff works out for our good. And how about three or four months later I met my wife, Erica, and that wasn't good that was great and it was also a God's grace. But the funny thing about that was when we met she wouldn't give me her number she said I need to pray about this first it was almost as if she had this sense that I'm Mr Football Player you're not going to abandon me. Now she doesn't know this story, never heard it, she's going to hear for the first time this weekend. But she had the presence of mind to pray because sometimes something seems good and maybe I seem good but you know she just needed to pray about it just to make sure.

This weekend we continue our series focusing on the Lord's Prayer specifically Matthew 16:13, I'm sorry 6:13. And this is the last of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer. And it reads "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one". There are a couple of things that I want to unpack for us this weekend one having to do with temptation the other one having to do with the evil one. Now on the surface, one could read the first part of verse thirteen, is God being the one that tempts us? And then we've got this other thing he's talking about the evil one these are two pretty big things.

But before we do that I just kind of want to hit the rewind button and do a quick recap. Week one Pastor Heather talked about "our Father" the beginning of the Lord's Prayer which Jesus is giving us access to God the Father. And in week two Pastor Joel talked to us about "thy kingdom come" God's kingdom and what that is all about. And then we three, the Campus Pastors talked about "our daily bread" our daily provision from God and being solely focused on that. And then week four which was last week Pastor Mark talked about "forgiveness" and the power of forgiveness and what happens in our lives when we forgive. This week is the last petition in the Lord's Prayer and it's asking for deliverance.

Now as we zoom out and we look at the Lord's Prayer and we look at the big picture and the big idea there's some consistency here because Jesus is doing what he has always done throughout the Gospels. This is actually a prayer of reorientation and that was part of his teaching was to reorient us. And reorientation has to do with the action of changing the focus or direction of something. And so in teaching the disciples he's refocusing and giving them new direction on how to pray and things like how we can relate to God or how we reference God, how we place his will before our own because we can trust that he has our best interests in mind. Jesus is also refocusing us through provision in saying that we can ask for daily provision and only be concerned about that because his bread never runs out. And we don't have to be arrested by the scarcity mentality that says that we, we're concerned about not having enough, God is more than enough. And then Jesus is also reorienting us by talking about how it's important for us to forgive, it's that we can and we should ask for forgiveness because we have ourselves been forgiven. This seems like maybe a simple thing but you must understand that in this day and time when things were going on it wasn't commonplace to forgive so this is a seismic shift that Jesus is introducing because retaliation and corruption was just rampant in that day. Now we land at the place where we're asking for deliverance and deliverance from temptation and the evil one.

So in the next few moments that we have together, I just want to address two questions. Number one; how do I resist temptation? Number two; who or what is the evil one? Now these are pretty big subject matters and they could deserve an entire sermon series or sermon of their own as a matter of fact last year we did an entire series called "Tempted" but in the time allotted I just wanted drill down for us just to give us a little bit more clarity on what Jesus is saying. And the good thing is Jesus gives us several references about these questions that I want to highlight for us.

So, the first question; how do I resist temptation? The first thing I think we need to do is we need to clear up this potential misinterpretation that we read here. It says lead us not into temptation and when we read it, it reads like the temptation is coming from God, but when we translate the phrase 'lead us' from Greek to Aramaic, now Aramaic was the language that Jesus spoke. Its permissive meaning here reads do not permit us to go into temptation or trials. In essence, we're asking for God's help to avoid our own self-destructive tendencies as Theologian Kenneth E. Bailey would say. So this is also the context of the prayer because earlier the petition is this "your kingdom come, your will be done" in other words don't let me be tempted to choose my will over yours. Now one other thing I want to make note here; James, the brother of Jesus also clarifies this a little bit for us. He says, in chapter one verses thirteen and fourteen, it says 'when tempted no one should say God is tempting me for God cannot be tempted by evil nor does he tempt anyone but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire

and enticed'. James is just simply saying to us it's not even in the nature and character of God to entice you actually it's a battle within us. Jesus models for us and teaches us how to win this battle. Matthew four it says that Jesus was tempted by the devil. Which I don't know, for me gave me some consolation that Jesus himself was tempted so I'm not alone in this thing. Matthew says Jesus has been tempted for forty days and he was hungry. One of the greatest understatements in the New Testament, I mean it's pretty obvious after forty days Jesus would be hungry. And I mean I'm fasting right now for Lent and I know many of us are so you know I feel like I'm constantly thinking about food so you know when you read that you're just like mmmm, forty days. And wouldn't you know it this week Satan, I mean one of the baristas at Ebenezer's offered me a cinnamon bun. I resisted it but she can see it in my eyes that I wanted it. So back to Jesus, four different times in Matthew four Satan appeals to what he knows Jesus' flesh wants. And so after forty days you know he makes his first pitch at trying to tempt Jesus and he said why don't you turn this stone or this rock into bread. And you know thank God that I'm not Jesus because I know how I am when I get hungry and that probably I probably wouldn't have responded the way Jesus responded. My first thought is you better get out of my face before I bust you upside of the head with that rock. But that's not what, it's not, it's not what Jesus said. This went on three more times so a total four times Jesus is tempted by Satan. And his response is 'it is written' and then he repeats three verses from Deuteronomy and one from Psalms and the whole point here is in the face of temptation Jesus strengthens himself in God's word. So that tells us that God's word is an essential part of our spiritual diet which is not sometimes the stuff that we want the cinnamon buns and whatever else you can feel in the category but it's the stuff that we need that's going to sustain us in the times that we are tempted.

I know we sound like a broken record here and that's National Community Church always talking about spiritual disciplines and one of those being reading God's work but it's because it is essential. There are a few more times that Jesus is teaching us about temptation. We don't have time to unpack all of them but I would like to share one more with you in Matthew 26 and then there's a parallel account and Luke twenty-two, Jesus goes into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray or the Mount of Olives in Luke 22 and the disciples are with him but they fall asleep. And Jesus is praying, he rebukes them and he says watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. Listen to this the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Lord knows that's true. So not only should we pray but we should be watching. See this has to do with having some level of awareness of self and awareness of surroundings Now I think the surrounding piece is a little bit more obvious but, but I think one of the most helpful things that we can be is self-aware. There's an acronym that maybe some of you have heard of called 'halt'. It stands for hungry, angry, lonely and tired. And it is in those times when we are the most vulnerable and this acronym is used a lot in recovery programs but it's a very practical tool for all of us because if we can identify we're in any one of those categories are we can probably help ourselves make better decisions because we are all susceptible to this self-destructive behavior. So, then the prayer helps us to identify where we are and what's going on with us and when we're self-awareness enough we can adequately direct that prayer and then the prayer becomes both a hedge and a help for us. So in both Matthew 4 and Luke 22, we see that Jesus was strengthened. This is what he said he was strengthened after he prayed and he was attended to by angels. So, lead us not into temptation is an acknowledgement that we are susceptible, we have the will and the good intentions but our flesh is weak.

Now I have to say this having the temptation is not wrong because we see that Jesus was tempted but how we respond to the temptation is what's important. So how do we win? Well, number one, we've got to be strengthened with God's word, we must have God's word in our heart, a regular and consistent diet. David said your word have I hid in my heart so that I might not sin against you. Whatever is in your heart is actually what's going to come out and I tell you when you are under pressure that's what's really going to come out is who you really are. So we've got to have God's word in us, we've got to have the regular consistent diet. The second thing is we've got to be watching and praying. We've got to up our level of awareness of what's going on in our environment, what's going on with us to be able to identify and adequately point our prayers in the right direction to help us not succumb to the temptation.

So the second question that I want to dive into this weekend; I just talked about lead us not into temptation and how do we resist temptation. Second question is who or what is the evil one? Second part of Matthew 6:13 says 'but deliver us from the evil one'. Some translations say 'deliver us from evil'. Now the Arabic and the Syriac translations exclusively translate this into evil one. Now the Syriac translation is much closer to Aramaic which is what I said earlier that Jesus spoke, that was his language so it's probably a more accurate translation, is the evil one. But more importantly I think it's important to note that Jesus is clearly saying that someone is behind evil and there's a specific enemy against us. And I think I see him at his worst while driving here in the D.C. area. I mean literally just this week I'm headed down Fourth Street NE over to the southeast side of the city and this guy is coming across the intersection, there's a car in front of me and he's coming across the intersection, there's a four-way stop and he's going to come in and then turn back, a U-turn in the middle of the intersection. And the person in front of me blew which was the right thing to do and he gave her the finger and I'm like 'Bro, that was dead wrong'. Now y'all know that was evil. And listen let me just say if you live in this city in this area and you've been overcome by this evil our prayer teams are available for you this weekend to pray with you and lay hands on you. But seriously I think that we can agree that there is real evil in the world. We see it some of us have experienced it I mean we can turn on the news and look at all of our media outlets and just see the regularity of evil running rampant in our world.

But this person or this entity behind evil the devil, the enemy, Satan or whatever you want to call it I think that's when it gets a little hazy for some of us and we sometimes have a harder time with these sorts of things and that's why we do a group here at NCC called Alpha where we try to tackle some of these really tough questions that people have about what's going on in the world because these are the kinds of questions that need to be answered that many of us are asking or even have had thoughts about. And on that note I just want to give a shout out to NCC youth because this is what they're trying to do right now in this series called "The Bible is Weird" and, and they're trying to answer some of these hazy things in scripture and pull our youth into the mystery of God because once they get older they don't need an elementary faith they need to have wrestled and this is the point in their lives when people walk away from faith because they haven't wrestled with some of these questions. In our formative years, we have been shown some of these examples of who God is and who Satan is and there are these fairy tale false images, God, you know being entity in the sky, he is illuminated with wearing something white maybe a white robe or maybe you see his face or maybe you don't. And then there's Satan he's got these horns and he's pitched fork and you know a little-pointed tail and he's

red for some reason, I don't know why. But as we mature we dismiss the fact that this isn't factual because it isn't but we also need to know that it's not Biblical. Regarding evil, Jesus makes it clear that there is an enemy who has a real agenda. And in Matthew 4 as we referenced earlier it is Satan who is the tempter he's identified as the one who is the tempter. And in Luke 22:30 & 31 Jesus says to Peter, who is one of his disciples, Satan desires to have you but I have prayed for you. Once again Jesus is not only acknowledging that there is an evil one but he's also illuminating his intentions. It is prayer that resists him and protects us from his agenda.

Jesus goes on reveal Satan's agenda in John 10:10 he says the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. But then he gives, Jesus gives us his agenda he says but I have come that you might have life and have it to the full or have it more abundantly as some translations say. Right here I just want to make a quick footnote because I think it's important to do so and we don't have time to really go into a deep dive but if Jesus who is God in the flesh, our Savior is all about giving us abundant life why doesn't he take away evil? Why is there evil in the world to begin with? You know this inquiry has caused many to question their faith in God altogether and some of them have even decided to walk away but what we must understand is that those type of questions speak more to the justice of God or the injustice of God than the existence of God. And I love the way Andy Stanley puts it, he says it makes more sense to be angry at God than atheists. He says the existence of evil, pain, suffering is actually a case for God than not. Because here's the thing God never introduced evil into the world, to begin with. Well, you might say but he allowed it. Actually what he allowed was choice which is a reflection of his love. And even when a different choice was made that allowed evil to enter in the world because man has to come to temptation God didn't set the reset button. He sent Jesus. And Jesus is the reason why we know that God is good because in God's infinite mercy and grace, listen to what he says in John 3:17. Now some of us have heard what John 3:16 says for God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son but listen to John 3:17; God did not send Jesus to condemn the world, a world that needed to be condemned, a world that deserves to be condemned but to save it through him. Later in John 16:33 Jesus says in this world you will have trouble but take heart I have overcome the world. There is no promise that we won't face persecution in this life as a result of evil but there is a promise of presence from the One who has overcome it. In places of extreme poverty and persecution we don't see a mass exodus or running away from faith in Jesus what we see is actually the opposite is it a faith explosion in Jesus and people running towards God. In places of suffering, people are discovering God in a miraculous way.

So back to the question who or what is the evil one? He is an accuser, he's a liar, he's a deceiver he's a thief, as Jesus said, he is the enemy of our souls like Jesus told Peter, he desires to have you, he desires to have us but then Jesus calls him out for exactly who he is and then gives us his agenda he gives us a choice. And then he showed us how much he loves us, how much God loves us on the cross. I got to tell your friends, that's a whole lot of effort for a God that isn't good.

Let me see if I can land the plane a little early this weekend, I love when my planes land early. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one is simply an acknowledgement that our human efforts are not enough, our good intentions are not enough and even the decisions that seem good are often compromised by the wrong motivation. This is exactly what happened in Genesis 3 Adam and Eve were tempted by evil and Eve saw the fruit and she saw that it was

good to eat and so maybe it was a good intention but it was the wrong motivation. If she had stopped in that moment and said hold, please, me and Adam are going to go talk to God real quick we'll get back to you. It would have been a completely different situation. And if I'm being totally transparent I mean this is the same struggle I fall into temptation maybe not because I was trying to be evil, there were times maybe, but for the most part I'm trying to do the right thing but it wasn't the right thing and I never stopped to ask God is this a good idea, I never stopped to pray to seek him and then wait for a response and it didn't turn out the way that I thought I regretted it. But this is how good, this is how good God is, Adam and Eve they fall they do exactly what God told him not to do. And so hey what do you do? You do something wrong you do, you do what my kids do, you do what you used to do as a kid, you run and hide. You know you try to cover yourself. It's just terrible because it's not good at covering nothing, you know. And we're not that great covering, we think we are but that's what they did, they went out, so what does God do? He goes and he looks for them, he pursues them, he goes after them. And then in Genesis 22, we see that he makes the first sacrifice killing an animal to cover them with skins, to give them proper covering because he knows that their covering is not going to work. So in his grace, he gives them covering which is the foreshadowing of Jesus coming to be our sacrifice which in both instances we didn't deserve. Jesus is teaching us about God's love in the Lord's Prayer, God don't let us fall victim to temptation but deliver us from the evil one. He knows that we're going to be tempted. So prayer is like that coat that your mother tells you to grab before you go out into the elements because she knows that you're going to be exposed without it and you are going to be vulnerable. And so this is what prayer is like.

This weekend I want to tell you that temptation and evil is real just in case you didn't know it. But God's protection and his presence is real also and is activated, the covering is activated through prayer to cover us from temptation and evil. Before I leave you this weekend I just have an overwhelming sense that maybe someone is at the doorstep of a decision or maybe someone has already made a decision and it wasn't the right decision and so you're kind of in the, maybe, maybe you're trying to cover yourself and your trying to figure out. There is grace there is hope for you. You don't have to stay in that place. There is deliverance for you and Jesus came to be that deliverer. So here's what I want you to do if you're in that place I don't want you to leave this weekend without someone praying for you. We've got prayer teams across all of our locations who'll be ready to pray for you or maybe you have a friend or someone you know you trust that you can share with that can pray for you maybe that's someone you need to call but you need to be prayed for, you need to get that covering before you walk out of the door this weekend. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one is what Jesus is saying we should pray because there's deliverance for us.

Let's pray. God, we thank you so much for who you are, we thank you for how you are speaking to us through this series and God we thank you for how you spoke to us today, God. If there is someone here this weekend who is maybe at the door step of making a decision or they're being tempted and they're feeling a pull in one direction or maybe there's confusion and there is a willingness to do the right thing but they're unsure, maybe someone has already crossed that line and they've made a decision they've fallen into temptation and it's and it's not working out or it's a bad situation, God, in either case, we pray for protection, we pray for covering, we pray for restoration, we pray for direction. And God we thank you that we can come before the Father and we can bring these requests because you love us and because you are a good God. All these

things we bring before you and we thank you for your infinite grace and mercy. In Jesus name,  
we pray. Amen.