

# Small Groups

## SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE

Sermon on the Mount – Week 17 – *The Lord's Prayer (Part 4)* – Alex Walton  
[Date], 2024

[Leader Note: If you choose to use the second prayer idea (which summarizes all of the teaching we have received on The Lord's Prayer), you may want to adjust parts of the discussion to allow extra time for that.]

### DIGGING IN:

1. How do you define temptation?
2. What do you think is the cause of temptation?
3. Write a list of the top few temptations that you struggle with (These do not need to be shared with the group).

### MAKING IT REAL:

4. Alex talked about the possible different translations of the Greek or Aramaic word used for "temptation" – trial, or testing. How does the experience of a trial in our life sometimes lead us to a place of temptation?
5. Read the quote below from Henry Nouwen, that Alex used in his sermon on Sunday.

Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection. Success, popularity, and power can indeed present a great temptation, but their seductive quality often comes from the way they are part of the much larger temptation to self-rejection. When we have come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity, and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions. The real trap, however, is self-rejection. As soon as someone accuses me or criticizes me, as soon as I am rejected, left alone, or abandoned, I find myself thinking, "Well, that proves once again that I am a nobody." ... I am no good... I deserve to be pushed aside, forgotten, rejected, and abandoned. Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "Beloved."

How much temptation comes from trying to fill the holes left by emotional wounds we have received? The self-rejection Nouwen talks about is part of our fallen nature, and is also often reinforced by people around us. We fall into temptation when we try to fix the gaps in our lives with something other than Jesus. Our fleshly desires (Mt 26:41, Jm 1:14) are our attempts to fill the places where we are lacking.

6. Consider the areas of temptation you wrote about at the beginning of the study. What need/lack might you be trying to fill by giving in to that temptation? Write it down.

7. Mt 26:41 says, "Watch and pray, so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." How do you think *prayer* keeps a person from temptation?

[Leader Note: As you discuss this question, at some point share the following: Prayer brings you into the presence of the One who calls you Beloved, who loves you unconditionally. As we pray, we not only draw closer to God and who He is but we also see more clearly how He sees *us* and how much He loves us. We can receive His love and the truth that His Spirit speaks over us when we pray. This being *with* God in prayer can keep us from giving in to temptation because *He* fills the gaps in our hearts that we too often look elsewhere to fill.]

## PRAYER IDEAS

- If your group is close and able to be vulnerable together, consider sharing areas of temptation and praying specifically for one another, not only for victory over temptation, but especially for deeper relationship with God – having Him fill in the vulnerable spaces and lead them toward living in their true identity. (You may want to separate men and women for this prayer time)
- Alex asked, "How do we learn to pray this prayer with a deeper sense of what Jesus is calling us into?" Review the different aspects of The Lord's Prayer (printed out on the last page of this guide). Then take some time for each person to re-write the prayer, incorporating the concepts that we have explored in the sermons and study guides. Have each person pray their "version" of the Lord's prayer out loud.

## WANT TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER?

Explore these scriptures about temptation, trial, and testing. Note the *source*, the *solution*, what you learn about *yourself* and what you learn about *God* from these verses.

Matthew 4:1-11  
Matthew 26:41  
Matthew 6:13  
1 Corinthians 7:5

1 Corinthians 10:13  
Galatians 6:1  
1 Timothy 6:9  
Hebrews 2:18

Hebrews 4:15  
James 1:2  
James 1:12-14  
1 Peter 1:3-9

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*The Life of the Beloved*, by Henry Nouwen  
<https://shorturl.at/bu167>

## The Lord's Prayer

As you read through each of the lines of The Lord's Prayer, consider the question, *"How do we learn to pray this prayer with a deeper sense of what Jesus is calling us into?"* Think over the sermons of the past few weeks, and write each line in your own words, incorporating what you have learned about the implications of each part of the prayer. Then pray your prayer out loud with the group.

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.