



4. Does God tempt us? TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

In response to my last video of Journeying with James - "Listen, Speak and Act" my friend of over forty five years, Stanley George from New York sent me a message.

"My Bible study group is in the Epistle of James. One thing we are unable to reconcile is James saying, "God does not tempt" and the Lord's Prayer where we pray to God saying "Do not lead us into temptation."

It was a great question, and those of you familiar with Indian trains, it was as though Stanley had pulled the emergency chain. To me our train had moved out of James Chapter 1 last week, but Stanley's question, pulled the emergency chain and so we stop in Chapter 1 for another week to reflect before we move forward.

The contradiction that the group was not able to reconcile were two verses in the Bible. One from James writing and the other Jesus' words to His disciple.

James writes in the 13th verse of Chapter 1 these words, 'When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.'

On the other hand, Jesus in the Lord's Prayer teaches His disciples to pray "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Simply put, what Stanley's Bible study group was asking the question, "If God does not tempt us then why is Jesus asking us to pray to God to lead us NOT into temptation?"

I responded to his question this way.

Apart from the truth that James wrote in James 1:13, we know God does not tempt us to sin. How? Because if He did this would be contrary to His holy nature. It would also be against His desire for us to be holy as He is holy mentioned by Peter. (1 Peter 1:16). That apart, it would also be against the numerous commandments in Scripture that tell us to avoid sin and flee temptation.

So, what exactly did Jesus mean? In the Lord's prayer, Jesus says, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one". I believe in this request God teaches us that avoiding temptation should be an important part of our daily Christian life. And an integral part of the model prayer taught by Christ that Christians need to prioritize.

The idea of God leading His people is found throughout the Bible. And especially, the book of Psalms is filled with petitions, requests, and appeals to God to lead us in His ways. So, Jesus asking us to pray to God to lead us is nothing abnormal. Now think about this. God leading us toward good can be done in two ways. He can lead us toward good taking a straight route. Or He can lead us to good by leading us away from evil and dangerous routes.

In the Lord's prayer, when we ask God to lead us away from temptation, we are asking Him to take the

second route. The request is not to be led into temptation but the Christian's desire is to avoid the dangers of sin altogether.

Let me use a hypothetical incident to illustrate Jesus' words "Lead us not into temptation." Most parents with young children know that shopping for groceries with their children is filled with potential danger, especially when passing the aisle of toys or candy. Taking children down that aisle can potentially stir up desires that were non-existent in their hearts until their eyes saw it. Once their desire is expressed by words or actions it could lead to whining and tantrums if they remained unmet.

So, wisdom lies in avoiding those aisles as much as possible and taking safer routes. In this way wise parents avoid unpleasant scenes and spare their children from getting tempted. Praying, "Lead us not into temptation," is like praying, "God, don't take me down the toy and candy aisle today."

It's recognizing that we have a natural propensity for pointless cravings that lie dormant or non-existent until we encounter an opportunity of experiencing them. We can seek God's wisdom and leading to protect us from them. Indeed, there is no contradiction in James saying that God does not tempt us or in the prayer Jesus taught us to ask God to lead daily through routes where we are removed from the presence of unnecessary temptations and tests.

May we remain blessed as we uncover the authenticity of God's truths as we journey with James.

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