

BREAKING BARRIERS TO INTIMACY WITH GOD:
Overcoming Deception
A Study of Matthew 6:13a

Characteristic of Completeness: Prayer

Big Idea: Pray with your eyes open.

Related Scriptures: Genesis 22:1; Matthew 4:1; Luke 22:40-46; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Hebrews 11:17; James 1:2, 13; 1 Peter 5:8

Introduction:

1. It was still in my office the extra large bottle of *Moët and Chandon* champagne with the note. The note was from the CEO of the multi-billion-dollar parent company in London that had just recently purchased the marketing research firm where I was Executive Vice President. The note was one of congratulations—congratulations and a job well done in landing the largest new account in the history of our company.

It had been a team effort, but at the time, I felt like it was my baby. I had designed the research. I had written the proposal. I had made the sales pitch. I was the one who got the call from the client saying we won. So I got the bottle of champagne from the CEO. And I had been feeling pretty good about myself.

But not now. Not in this moment.

You see, after a lot of hard work and upfront costs, the hard-won research program was now up and running. And the really big checks from the really big client were just beginning to arrive. But now, in this moment, one of our account executives sat in the gray leather guest chair on the other side of my burl-wood desk. And she was pale. She said we have a problem.

She showed me the report. We had sent out to the big client an important report—a report that had the wrong information. We had made a mistake in processing the research data, and we sent it out wrong. And we sent it out wrong to a whole bunch of people all over the country—a bunch of our client's clients. So this would not only make us look very bad, it would make our client look bad as well. And it was irretrievable. Too late to get it back.

And the account executive pointed out a couple of other things. She showed me that the corrected report results were different, but not that much different from the erroneous results we reported. So the chances of somebody making a wrong decision based on our wrong results were nil. And she mentioned one other thing. Only three people knew about the mistake: the two of us and the guy who processed the data.

The account executive didn't come right out and say it, but the temptation was so palpable, it felt like a person sitting right there in the other guest chair, and she was

introducing me to him. And here’s what Mr. Temptation had to say: We could cover this up, and nobody would get hurt. In fact, our client might even *want* us to cover it up because he would otherwise have egg on his face, too. And look, if we come clean on this, we could all get hurt. We could get another kind of note. A pink slip.

I glanced over at the bottle of champagne in my office. It still had the note: Congratulations. But I wasn’t feeling bubbly.¹

2. In the midst of difficult situations, how can we handle the temptation to do what is wrong? When life gets tough, how can we resist the urge to do something that is just not right? In stressful circumstances, how can we stay on the right track?
3. For some weeks now, we’ve been studying our way through the Lord’s Prayer. Today, we come to ► Matthew 6:13 where Jesus teaches us to pray to our heavenly Father this way:

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:13 “And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. . . .”

I want to show you that this prayer is an important part of dealing with temptation in the midst of trying circumstances. This prayer helps us to handle it.

Our topic or ► Characteristic of Completeness is prayer. And this prayer in particular helps us stay on track in the midst of hardship—on track to do the first part of the Lord’s Prayer: to honor God’s name, to build His kingdom, to do His will. Apart from this prayer in Matthew 6:13, we are liable to be deceived into dishonoring His name and damaging His kingdom and distorting His will.

But the prayer is not just something to repeat mindlessly like some kind of magic formula. The words convey some ideas that we need to understand. There is a prayerful perspective that underlies the prayer.

Let me explain.

- I. Let’s consider the meaning of some of the key terms of this verse.
 - A. First, let’s talk about the term, ► “lead.” What does it mean?
 1. There’s nothing all that tricky about this word. The original Greek word literally means to bring or carry in.²

¹ By the way, we fessed up, and the world didn’t come to an end. In fact, the client said he trusted us even more, knowing that we would be honest even when it’s easy not to be.

² Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. “εἰσφέρειω,” (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).

2. The Bible provides us with a mental picture of what this word means. Luke Chapter 5 describes a situation in which Jesus is teaching in a crowded home. Some men outside the home are trying to bring a paralyzed man in to Jesus so that he can be healed. Verse ► 18 says,

^{NKJ} Luke 5:18 Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him.

The word translated, ► “bring” in Luke 5:18 is the very same word translated, “lead” in our text. It describes our heavenly Father bringing us into a situation.

- B. Now, ► let’s consider the term, “us.” To whom does the term, “us” refer? Well, you may recall that, back in ► Verse 9, the Lord’s Prayer starts with,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:9 “. . . Our Father in heaven . . .”

So, it seems that our text is referring to those who can call God, “Father.” That would be those who have been adopted into God’s forever family through faith. It’s the children of God. Today, that would be defined as all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin.

- C. Now, let’s consider the term, ► “temptation.”

1. The original Greek word translated “temptation” in our text is *pay-ros-MOS*. It’s a part of a word group that includes two other synonymous words derived from the same root: *pay-ROD-zo* and *ek-pay-ROD-zo*. All three words in the word group mean the same thing. According to one dictionary they mean, “to try to learn [or reveal] the nature or character of someone or something by submitting such to thorough and extensive testing.”³

In the Bible, the verb form of the word group is variously translated as, “tempt,” “try,” or “test.” The noun form is translated “temptation,” “trial,” or “test.”

The word group is morally neutral by itself. It is not inherently good or bad. Nevertheless, it can carry a positive or negative connotation, depending on how it is used.

2. Let’s consider some ways the word group is used in the Bible. This morning, I want to consider two of the primary ways the word group is used. Each usage

³ Louw-Nida *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2d ed, J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida, eds, s.v. “πειρασμός,” (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988).

is distinguished by the person and the purpose behind the temptation, trial, or test.

a. For example, it is used to describe God testing people. Sometimes, God is the subject doing the testing and His people are the objects of His testing.

(1) For example, you may have heard of the biblical account of God testing Abraham by commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. God is clearly identified as the One doing the testing in ► Genesis 22:1. It says,

^{NKJ} Genesis 22:1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham . . .

Looking back on the event from the New Testament, ► Hebrews 11:17 says,

^{NKJ} Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac . . .

The word, ► “tested” comes from our same word group.

(2) Whenever the Bible speaks of God as the agent of testing, the purpose of the testing is positive. It’s good. God tests His people for the purpose of refining and revealing their character. God tests His children to reveal that they are created in God’s image. God tests His children to advance His agenda on earth. As we have seen in our previous studies of the Lord’s Prayer, God’s agenda is to honor His name, to build His kingdom, and to do His will.

(3) Because God’s tests are always good, whenever the Bible speaks of God doing the testing, our word group is normally translated, “test,” or “trial,” *not* “temptation.”

b. In ► stark contrast, the very same word group is also used to describe Satan tempting people. Here, Satan is the subject doing the tempting; people are the objects being tempted.

(1) Satan’s purpose is always bad; he wants to entice people to sin. He wants to entrap people. He wants to get the goods on them so he can undermine God’s agenda. Whereas God wants to honor His own name, Satan wants to smear it. Whereas God wants to build His kingdom, Satan wants to

destroy it. Whereas God wants His will to be done, Satan wants to thwart it.

- (2) Because Satan's purposes are always bad, whenever the Bible speaks of Satan doing the testing, our word group is normally translated, "tempt," or "temptation."
- (3) For example, Satan would like to destroy families through adultery. That's why ► 1 Corinthians 7:5 warns married couples to satisfy each other physically, saying,

^{NKJ} 1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive one another . . . so that Satan does not tempt you . . .

The word, ► "tempt" comes from our word group. In fact, it's the very same word Hebrews 11:17 uses to describe God testing Abraham. The difference in connotation stems from the person and purpose behind the word.

- (4) Let ► me give you another example in which a single biblical passage uses our word group in very different ways. James ► 1:2-3 says,

^{NKJ} James 1:2 . . . count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Here, the word, ► "trials" comes from our word group. The implication is that such trials come from God and that they are good. They produce patience.

Nevertheless, we drop down just a few verses and read this in ► Verse 13:

^{NKJ} James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

The words, ► "tempted" and "tempt" are from the very same word group. In fact, James 1:13 says that God Himself does not *pay-ROD-zo* anyone. But, remember, Hebrews 11:17 says that God did indeed *pay-ROD-zo* Abraham. What gives?

Well, the same word is used with different purposes in mind. God tests Abraham for the positive purpose of revealing his faith. But, God never tempts anyone as an enticement to sin; that's what Satan does.

So, does God lead His children into temptation? The answer is "yes" and "no." Yes, He does if the term, "temptation" is viewed as a positive testing. No, He does not if the temptation is viewed as an enticement to sin.

3. Well then, ► how are we to understand Jesus when He says in our text,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. . . . ?

If you think about it, this presents a bit of a challenge.

- a. I have concluded that God never tempts anyone as an enticement to sin. So, if we take the word "temptation" to mean an enticement to sin in our text, why would we ask God not to do something that He would never do anyway?

That would be like praying, "God, please don't lie," knowing that He can't lie.

That would be like praying, "God, please don't miss this," knowing that He never misses anything.

It doesn't seem to make sense.

- b. On the other hand, because the word "temptation" comes from our word group, it could be rendered either, "trial," or "testing." In fact, the ► New Revised Standard Version of the Bible renders it this way. It says,

^{NRS} Matthew 6:13 And do not bring us to the time of trial . . .

But, this raises another problem. You see, if we take "temptation" to mean a testing or trial from God, why would we ask God to withhold such testing when the purpose of such testing is always good? If a trial from God honors His name, builds His kingdom, and accomplishes His will, why would Jesus be telling us to pray to avoid such trials?

This doesn't seem to make sense either. So, ► did Jesus make a mistake here? I don't think so.

- c. Here is an important insight that I believe holds the key to understanding our verse—indeed I believe it holds a key to making sense of life's hardships: In ► any given hardship faced by the believer, God tests *and* Satan tempts. The very same event in your life that is used by God as a test will usually be used by Satan as a temptation. On any given occasion, God may be trying to accomplish one thing, while Satan is simultaneously trying to accomplish just the opposite. That's the way it usually works.

- (1) Let me give you an example. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth, ► Matthew 4:1 records,

^{NKJ} Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Who is doing the leading here? God is leading in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Why is the Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness? God is testing, and He's doing it for a positive purpose: to reveal and authenticate Christ's character through the testing.

What is the devil doing at the very same time? He's tempting Jesus to fall. Satan is enticing Jesus to sin.

- (2) Let's ► bring this idea closer to home. Let's suppose you contract an illness. This shoe fits a lot people in this church. Cancer. Multiple Sclerosis. Chronic fatigue. Could this be a test from God? Yes, it could. God may want to purify your motives, or to depend on Him more, or to focus more on heaven and less on earth.

Could Satan also be at work in your illness? Yes, he could. Satan might be tempting you to despair, anger, or bitterness. Or he might be inviting you to turn away from God.

What God intends for good, Satan tries to use for evil.

- (3) Let's suppose you have lost your job. Could this be a test from God? Yes, it could. Maybe God has something better for you. Maybe He wants to weed out some materialism that

has crept into your life. Maybe He wants you to be a little less self-reliant.

At the same time, Satan may be at work, tempting you to curse God for your misfortune. What God intends for good, Satan tries to use for evil.

- (4) So, with this in mind, our text makes a little more sense. When we pray . . .

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:13 . . . do not lead us into temptation .

. . .

. . . we recognize that two things are happening. God is testing for good and Satan is tempting for evil. So, we're saying, "God, don't give me a test so hard that I succumb to Satan's opposing temptation. Father, I want to accomplish Your purposes in this trial, not Satan's. Lord, help me to pass Your test."

I think the New Living Translation of this verse captures the meaning well when ► it says,

^{NLT} Matthew 6:13 And don't let us yield to temptation

. . .

4. This idea is rather simple. But, its implications are far-reaching. It suggests that, in the midst of hardships, we should pray with our eyes open—one eye on the test, the other on the temptation. In fact, that's the ► big idea of my sermon today: Pray with your eyes open. We keep one eye on the test, praying to learn whatever needful lesson or character refinement God may have for us and to stay in His will, to pass the test. And we keep the other eye on the temptation, praying to avoid or to be protected from whatever lie or deception Satan may be using to trip us up. Focusing on one and not the other is dangerous.
 - a. For example, failure to keep a prayerful eye on Satan's temptation in the midst of hardship can spell trouble. Let's say you're struggling with a chronic illness or disability. If you forget about the possibility that Satan could be working on you in the midst of your hardship, I think you will be more open to discouragement, depression, even bitterness toward God. You might begin to believe the lie that God is not really good to you, that He doesn't care, or that He's punishing you.

Once you recognize that's exactly the kind of thinking Satan would promote, it dawns on you, "Hey, I'm being duped here." Then, you can more easily pray against deception, and replace those lies with the truth that God works all things for the good of His children, He does care for you, and there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

- b. It works the other way, too. Forgetting to focus on God's test in the midst of hardships can lead us to demonize everything and to miss the lesson God may have for us.

Let's say you're struggling in some relationship. Maybe you're struggling with your spouse or your children or with a colleague or friend. Say you feel victimized by something they have done or are doing to you and it's created a real hardship for you.

If you chalk this up to nothing more than evil being foisted upon you, you may miss what God wants to teach you. Keeping one eye on God's test views hardship as teacher, not torture. What does God want to build into you? What does God want to refine out of you?⁴

- c. In the midst of hardship, God tests and Satan tempts. Pray with our eyes open—one eye on the test, the other on the temptation.
- D. From our text, the term, ► "deliver" is fitting in light of the deceptive danger posed by Satan in the midst of trials. It's a strong word. It means, "to rescue from danger, with the implication that the danger in question is severe and acute."⁵

But rescue from what? It's from ► "the evil one," according to our text. Some of you may wonder, "Wait a minute. I grew up reciting the Lord's Prayer and we said, "deliver us from evil" not "deliver us from the evil *one*. Which one is it?"

Grammatically, it is possible to take this as being rescued from the abstract idea of evil and not from Satan specifically. Some English translations render it this way.

⁴ There is a classic Old Testament story of victimization involving a young man named David who was to be the successor to King Saul for the throne of Israel. King Saul was evil and insanely jealous of David and sought to murder David over and over again. David became an innocent fugitive on the run. Those were hard times for David.

But, in the midst of this hardship, God was testing David for his own good. Gene Edwards, in his book, *A Tale of Three Kings*, observes,

King Saul sought to destroy David, but his only success was that he became the handmaiden of God to put to death the Saul that roamed about in the caverns of David's own soul. Yes, it is true that David was virtually destroyed in the process, but this had to be. Otherwise the Saul in him would have survived.

David accepted this fate. He embraced the cruel circumstances. He lifted no hand, nor offered resistance. Nor did he grandstand his piety. Silently, privately, he bore the crucibles (22-23).

⁵ Louw-Nida, s.v. "ῥύομαι."

Nevertheless, when the Greek verb, “deliver” is paired with the preposition, “from” it almost always means to rescue from a person, not an abstract idea.⁶ And, in light of our discussion about trials and temptations, I believe the person in view here is Satan himself. Prayer for deliverance from such a dangerous foe fits with other Scriptures as well. For example, ► 1 Peter 5:8 says,

^{NKJ} 1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

In the face of the dangerous deception of our adversary the devil, we must prayerfully depend on God to rescue us.⁷

III. What’s ► the application for us? How do we put this to work in our lives?

A. It’s very simple. Are you facing hardship? Then, pray. Pray with your eyes open.

1. Pray with one eye on the test. “Lord, I don’t know exactly why I’m going through my present hardship, but I really want to pass your test. Do your work in me. Help me to see whatever lessons there may be for me in this.”
2. And, pray with the other eye on the temptation. “Lord, keep me from failing your test. Protect me from the lies and deception of the evil one. I want to

⁶ Ray Pritchard, *And When You Pray: The Deeper Meaning of the Lord’s Prayer* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 189.

⁷ Once again, Jesus provides an example. We might argue that Jesus’ victory over Satan came on Friday—the Friday on which He was crucified—because that’s when He paid the price for our sin, so that we might be saved.

Then again, we might argue that Jesus’ victory over Satan came on Sunday—the Sunday on which He rose again—because by rising again, Jesus demonstrated His victory over sin and death.

Nevertheless, I think a strong argument can be made that Jesus’ victory over Satan came on Thursday—the Thursday before His crucifixion, the day He squarely faced God’s test of the coming crucifixion, the day I think He also faced Satan’s temptation to avoid the cross. That day the victory was won in fervent prayer.

On that Thursday, the day before Jesus was crucified, Jesus took a few of his followers with Him to a secluded place to pray.

All of them were facing hardship. Jesus knew about the torture and humiliation He would face. His followers were not as clear about it, but, according to Scripture, they too were very sorrowful. It was a very hard time.

I want you to see that in the face of hardship, Jesus practiced and preached prayer as the primary and indispensable way of resisting temptation in the midst of hardship. And, Jesus prayed with His eyes open—one eye on the test, the other on the temptation.

The Father’s test for the Son was intended to reveal character of God. It was a test to reveal to the world God’s sacrificial love, God’s uncompromising justice, God’s tender mercy, and God’s unmerited grace and forgiveness.

I think Satan’s opposing temptation was to entice Jesus to bypass the cross, to skip the excruciating pain, the public humiliation, the agonizing abandonment.

Consider the story, beginning in Luke 22:40 When He [Jesus] came to the place, He said to them [His followers], “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” ⁴¹ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” ⁴³ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵ When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. ⁴⁶ Then He said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

serve Your purposes, not his. I want to honor Your name, to build Your kingdom, to do Your will.”

Pray with your eyes open.

- B. Let me tell you how I totally messed this up recently with the hope that perhaps you can learn from my mistake.

Some of you know that my wife, Cathy, broke her foot about a month ago. Because she is the hub of our family, her broken foot hobbles the whole family. There's the hardship. It's not catastrophic; some of you are facing far worse things. But it's a hardship nonetheless.

When Cathy broke her foot, my to-do list got longer because some things Cathy just can't do while she's in a cast. And I felt like I didn't have any margin before the break.

So I'm thinking to myself that this is some kind of spiritual attack because I believe we're on the brink of some big things God has for us at Moon Valley. We're getting ready to climb. And it would be just like Satan to try to distract and derail and discourage through a foot break like this. So I have one eye on the temptation. I said to Cathy early on, "I think this is spiritual warfare."

So, with one eye on the temptation, I dial up the testosterone, I beat my chest with a "bring-it-on" attitude, and I start blowing through items on my to-do list like a slalom skier slaps away gates on a downhill run. And the more gates I face, the more focused I get and the more determined I ski.

Yes, I have one eye on the temptation. But I don't have the other eye on the test. Yes, I'm looking out for what Satan might be trying to do. But no, I'm not really looking out for what God might be trying to do in this. I'm looking at this hardship as just my torture, not my teacher.

And I didn't realize this until a couple of weeks ago on a Monday. I'm taking Cathy to a follow-up doctor's appointment. It had been three weeks since the break, and Cathy is expecting a green light from the doctor. She's thinking that he's going to tell her that it's almost healed up and that she can go ahead and walk on it normally and get rid of her crutches and return her little rented scooter thing. She's expecting liberation.

What she got was frustration. She learned that the primary purpose of the follow-up appointment was not to declare her freedom; it was just to finally rule out surgery and make sure that the broken bone was still aligned properly to permit the healing that had only just begun. The doctor said more rest, more ice, more time, more scooter, more of the same old constraints for at least another month before we can even begin to talk about any kind of liberation.

And so, we slowly scoot back to the car and pack in. With a broken foot, you don't just jump in and out. You pack and unpack. So, we're packed in. Cathy is silently trying to process the news. And I'm thinking this is just another Satanic gate to be slapped away quickly and decisively.

And so, as I begin to drive, I say, with all the tenderness and sensitivity of a drill sergeant, "No problem. We're going to make it through this." There is a moment of silence, and I'm thinking that I have just successfully slapped away the latest Satanic gate and that it's behind me. And so, I shift to small talk: "Say, look ahead there, it looks like that dry cleaner place is closed."

More silence. Then Cathy begins to tell me the truth. While she is thankful that I've been trying to take up the slack around the house, I've been so driven, so focused that I've been pretty much checked out of our relationship. I haven't taken the time to just talk. She feels like my burden and not my partner. She feels like just another one of those gates to be slapped away in my slalom ski race.

As we processed some more, I began to realize that I was totally missing what God has for me in this hardship. Cathy and I ended up having a nice day as we considered the lesson together. The lesson seems so simple and I've covered it before, but I'm a slow learner. When my to-do list gets longer, I must not allow my important relationships to get shorter. Busyness must never crowd out my close relationships.

This is an important lesson for me as we're about to climb as a church. When we climb, the to-do list will get longer. And when it does, I must not allow my important relationships to get shorter. My relationship with Cathy must not get shorter. My relationship with God must not get shorter. That's God test. That's how I think God is trying to prepare me for the climb.

In the midst of this hardship, God is testing *and* Satan is tempting. God is trying to prepare me for the climb; Satan is trying to distract me from it. And so, I need to pray with my eyes open. One eye on the test. And the other eye on the temptation.