



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



HG60: Living The Lord's Prayer (7/8)
Protection: Battling Against Evil

Matthew 6:5-15

Home Group Study Notes

27th November 2011 - Revd Tom Loh



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

When you go to the supermarket, which three items do you always find impossible to resist buying?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...





Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read through the text for this study, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, of your answers with your Home Group.

1: Who leads us into temptation, God, the devil, other people or ourselves? In what ways are we led into temptation?

2: How can we be delivered from evil when the world is so full of it?

3: How can we resist temptation, and how can we help each other?

To be a Christian is to participate in the divine nature, and to enjoy the loving fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because we live in Christ we are sons and daughters of God the Father, fully accepted, as Christ is himself. And through the sweetness of the company of the Trinity we can escape the corruption and temptations in the world caused by evil desires (2 Peter 1:3-9). For this reason we pray most earnestly to God the Father, each day, that we would be spared from a trial or temptation that would interrupt the sweetness of a life lived in their company. This is our greatest fear.

We have a heavenly champion who can sympathise with us

Jesus knows all about temptation. He went head to head with Satan and beat him every time (e.g. Matthew 4:1-11). Imagine the intensity of pressure Jesus must have been under by Satan his whole life, right up to the moment he died on the cross. Satan must have tried every possible angle to tempt Jesus to do something that served his own interests rather than God's. Yet, even under the most extreme pressure, Jesus remained without sin. In itself, a miraculous and astonishing achievement. Therefore, whatever temptations we are going through, we can be sure Jesus understands. Whatever temptations and struggles we are facing in our lives, he will have faced also, and he knows how to get through it. He knows how to help us, and strengthen us – and when we fail, he won't accuse us (that's Satan's job). No, he'll pray for us that we won't harden our hearts and turn our backs on him.

That was Jesus' concern for his disciple Peter. Jesus knew that when Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31-34), Peter would give in to the temptation and betray Jesus. However, Peter's denial was not what Jesus was afraid of most. Jesus was afraid that Peter, after denying him, would feel too ashamed to come back to him. Do you remember what Jesus said at the end of John's gospel? He asks Peter, "do you love me?" – in other words, "after abandoning me, do you still want me?" The issue was not whether Jesus still loved Peter, but whether Peter still loved Jesus. Jesus does not reprimand those who fail him, or betray him (he's not like us). Rather he wants to comfort us, and restore us into fellowship with him – he wants to put his arm around us and let us know there is no sin that would cause him to abandon us. His only fear is that we'll not want him anymore. As Christians we have a wonderful friend in Jesus. He is faithful and understanding. He alone can stand against the temptations of the evil one, and he alone stands in heaven on behalf of sinners.

Don't forget to pick up a copy of: *Daily Prayers for the Armour of God*
(Pray these on a morning when you wake up and on an evening before sleeping)

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.*

We're praying to be delivered, to be saved! Therefore, we cannot be complacent. If we don't know our weaknesses, be assured Satan does – and he'll constantly exploit them. He might leave us alone in some areas of life, as long as he owns us in others. Someone might be hard working and always ready to help people, but in other areas of life bad tempered and greedy. Satan is happy for us to have our illusions of goodness, as long as he knows – where we're weak - we'll come when he calls.

So, how do we overcome temptation? Can we?

The only defence we have is our identity in Christ

Even as Christians we are still sinners. We should not be surprised at our constant failure to resist temptation. However, the important thing is how we respond when we do sin. When we sin, Satan will say something along the lines of, “Sinned again have we? Well now you've blown it. Call yourself a Christian? It's obvious where your heart really belongs. You should probably avoid reading the Bible, praying and meeting with other Christians as you'll only feel guilty and condemned, and rightly so”. At this point the Christian can despair and their love for Jesus can grow cold. This is what Satan wants. Rather, the Christian should respond by saying, “you are right, Satan – what of it? I am a mighty sinner but I have an even mightier saviour who loves me and died for me. I would have it no other way. Sin is not the end of me, for Jesus is mine and he has taken care of everything.”

The Christian gospel is not – saved by grace, but stay saved by being good. The Christian gospel is far better. The Christian's standing with God is never based on performance, or goodness. It is only ever based upon the performance and goodness of Jesus. Jesus is our righteousness. When God looks at the Christian, he sees only the pleasing righteousness of his Son Jesus, and not the sin of the believer. The Christian is clothed in the blood of Jesus and their sins are washed away. Satan can make no accusation against the Christian, as Jesus is their righteousness.

And a heart captured by his love.

Satan wants to rob us from the truth of the gospel and the joy that comes with it. For it is only the joy of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord, that will teach us to say no to temptation. When our hearts are full of Jesus and his love, and our minds held captive by him, temptation will lose its power. We won't want to sin and our hearts will desire Jesus alone. As the Psalmist says, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25).

To be a Christian is not about keeping the rules. Nor is it about pleasing God so that he lets us in to heaven. It is about having our hearts captivated by the love of Jesus, and having our lives found in him. When this happens, all our vanity and boasting evaporates. When we know that Christ is our righteousness and that his blood washes all our sins away, then nothing will cause us to lose hope (Phil 3:2-11). If we know our salvation is not based on our own performance and cannot be lost, then let Satan accuse away for he cannot change the gospel – that Christ loves me.

4: Can we ever lose our salvation?

5: If Jesus was without sin, could he really have been tempted? Can he really understand?

6: Read Ephesians 6:10-18. What can we learn here about the power of the devil's forces? About their strategy? Consider the equipment listed: is it for offensive or defensive purposes? Finish this study by praying together: *Daily Prayers for the Armour of God*



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG60: Living The Lord's Prayer (7/8) *Protection: Battling Against Evil*

Matthew 6:5-15

Home Group Sermon Notes

27th November 2011 - Revd Tom Loh

Introduction

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. This is the final petition of the Lord's Prayer and is the last thing to be prayed as we ready ourselves to face the day. It is a prayer that comes from the urgency of a heart that knows the dangers each and every day holds.

The story of human temptation is the oldest in the Bible, and since the Garden of Eden humanity has always been at the mercy of temptation to evil. Jesus knows that there is no greater danger to his followers than faced by the temptations of the evil one, Satan.

Testing and Temptation

The word for *temptation* used in the Lord's Prayer could also be translated *testing*. When we are asking God not to lead us into temptation we must remember that God does not tempt people, and neither can God be tempted (James 1:13). There is no darkness or wickedness in God that he would desire to do evil or see others fall into sin. Rather the Bible reminds us that it is the desires of our own heart that lead us into temptation. But God does test us. He does this to help us grow in maturity and love. Without testing love has no meaning. How would we know God loved us, if his love was not tested? God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). People often wonder why, if God does not tempt us, did he put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden? He did it so that we could demonstrate that we trusted and loved him. However, when God tests us, Satan often tempts us. Satan used the same situation to tempt Adam and Eve. The difference? God expects us to trust him; Satan expects us to please ourselves. So why do we ask God not to lead us into a time of testing? Because we know how even the slightest of tests in our lives can cause us to fall into temptation and sin, rather than loving trust. This prayer is a prayer of honest vulnerability.

Temptation comes from the devil

Thus, temptation comes from the devil, or Satan. However, this does not mean we can blame the devil for all the wickedness in our world, nor for every bad thing that happens to us. As Christians we cannot deny that the devil is a very real and incredibly powerful creature who is bent on tempting people away from Jesus. However, we mustn't use the devil as a way of absolving ourselves of responsibility when we sin.

As James reminds us, "each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires, he is dragged away and enticed," (James 1:14).

The devil does love to tempt us though, and he has one very simple tactic, and it is to "please yourself!" Whether we want to be rebellious rule breakers seeking freedom from constraint, or whether we want to be good rule keepers seeking respect from others, Satan is happy to give us what we want - "You want to be good? Fine, here are the rules, go crazy", "You want to enjoy yourself and do what you want, don't let anyone stop you - it's yours for the taking". Either way, as long as we don't turn from pleasing ourselves to trusting in Jesus for salvation, he's happy.

The Bible reminds us that it is not a select few "Satan worshippers" who are under the devil's power, but the majority of the human race. Satan is the god of this age (2 Cor 4:4), and many are those who walk the broad road to destruction. Essentially, human nature as it is born in Adam, follows the way of Satan and always pleases itself.

Temptation is common to everyone

As Christians we can find it upsetting when we find ourselves constantly tempted, and even more so when we always seem to give in to it. We can often feel like the only one who struggles. We look around at other people in church and we wonder if anyone else has thoughts like mine. We hide our sin and our evil thoughts because we are convinced no one else would understand. We're then filled with doubt as to whether we can be Christians at all. The devil loves this, and will encourage us to question our commitment to Jesus. However, we need to remember that temptation is common to everyone. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, "no temptation has seized you except what is common to man," (1 Cor 10:13).

I find this encouraging and re-assuring. Whatever your struggle is today, believe me, you are not the only one. We are all sinners, we are all desperately wicked - as Luther once put it - "The truth is, I am all sin". Even the Apostle Paul admitted that whenever he tries to be good, he finds the opposite happening; he does evil (Romans 7:14-25). Remember, Satan would have us believe only the deserving are loved by God. This is an outright lie.

Anyone who walks closely with Jesus undergoes temptation. If you are not tempted by the evil one, it is because you're already given over to your own sinful desires. The only soldiers who are not attacked in battle are those who are either already captured, or dead!

We cannot resist Temptation

Oscar Wilde once said, "I can resist anything, except temptation". Was he particularly weak, or worryingly insightful? The simple truth is, none of us can resist temptation in our own strength. Satan is way too powerful, and our hearts are way too full of evil desires to resist even the slightest temptation. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, is therefore a prayer of desperation that comes from a heart that knows it is vulnerable. We know what we are capable of and we're letting God know. We're reminding him that we can't handle even one day with all its trials and temptations. We know how easily we fail him, and nothing hurts us more.