

# 15 SAVE AND DELIVER US

RICK: Come on, cheer up! Everything's okay now.

WILLIE: Oh, I know. It's just that . . .

RICK: What?

WILLIE: I know that I never even took those pills, but I wanted to. That's what bothers me. I can't believe that—knowing what I know and all. If you hadn't come by, I probably would have, too. I've always been totally against drugs—any kind—but . . .

RICK: Yeh, but you *didn't*. It's over, man.

WILLIE: I wish I could believe that. I mean, if it can happen once, it can happen again. I was feeling so down, I just wanted to get high. Maybe I'm not as strong as I thought I was.

• This story is right from the headlines. Another person who never thought he or she would face drugs, did face drugs. Willie was fortunate; his friend came by at the right time and helped Willie avoid making a big mistake.

At some time or another we all learn that one of the deepest marks of our humanity is temptation, and the hardest part of the lesson—the one that Willie was learning—is that sometimes we can fail. It is frightening for it teaches us something about ourselves we would rather not know.

This final session about the Lord's Prayer looks at two related Petitions: "Save us from the time of trial" and "And deliver us from evil." These two petitions come right to the heart of what it is like to be a human being.

## 3 STATEMENTS

- All humans face trials and require assistance in overcoming them.
- God is the adversary of evil.
- To seek God's protection from evil is to commit ourselves to self-care and the care of others.

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*Source*

## PAUL TEACHES ABOUT TEMPTATION

Temptations or trials happen to everyone, not only to the weak or to the sinful. The greatest of our Christian teachers, the apostle Paul, knew this. In one place, he gets right to the heart of it. Read what he says.

Open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 and read the passage. Then answer the following questions to check your comprehension.

1. Do you think Paul's warning in verse 11 means: (check one)
  - a. Everyone is tempted.
  - b. The proud are tempted.
  - c. Fools are tempted.

2. Are temptations harder for one person than for another? Why or why not?

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3. Who helps us endure temptation?

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4. Why do you think we need help in enduring temptation?

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*All humans face trials and require assistance in overcoming them.*

There are two very important ideas in this passage that we don't want to miss. The first is that Paul is not writing about how to *avoid* being tempted. All are tempted.

The second idea is that God is our power and strength in times of temptation or trial.

## WHAT DOES MARTIN LUTHER SAY?

Read Luther's explanations to the Sixth and Seventh Petitions of the Lord's Prayer on page 173.

Luther wants to put one idea to rest right away. Notice that his first words are "God tempts no one to sin." What an awful idea it is to picture God trying to lure us into sinning against God—into breaking the relationship circle with God! Unfortunately, some people have been burdened with the weight of this idea. They see God more as an adversary to be overcome than as a friend.

Everything God has revealed to us about the divine nature, however, cries out against this idea. God has sought a relationship with us so intensely that God even gave up Jesus Christ to the cross so that the relationship would be mended.

Luther tells us that God remains our friend, offering always to preserve us from our own weaknesses. The "final victory," as Luther terms it, is a product of God's love and grace.

*God is the adversary of evil.*



In the explanation to the Seventh Petition, Luther takes the thought one step further. Other bad things may occur to us that are not the direct result of our yielding to temptation. There is sickness, the effects of advancing age, and finally there is, for each of us, death.

We do not pray that God will take away these common parts of human life, but rather that God will save us from their ravages. For citizens of the kingdom, there is in every struggle an opportunity to grow in grace. Even death, our final enemy, becomes a friend through God's action. Death is now the gateway to full citizenship in the full kingdom of God.

## EVERYONE IS TEMPTED

Return to what Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. At the heart of what Paul says is this important truth: *All humans face trials and require assistance in overcoming them.* "God is faithful," says Paul, "and will not let you be tested beyond your strength."

Is this true? Yes it is. But only when we rely completely upon the power of God—something we are often unable or unwilling to do. And that is where God's offer of forgiveness to us becomes so important.

## GOD IS THE ADVERSARY OF EVIL

How can we so confidently believe that God will be with us in time of trial? Our confidence grows from what God has revealed to us.

As we have said, God has intensely sought to preserve the relationship with us. This we know through Jesus Christ. But something else we know is that God is the adversary of evil.

Some people understand evil to be the work of the evil one, Satan, or the devil. Their experience of evil is that it seems to be so personal and so powerful that there is simply no other way to understand evil. Jesus certainly spoke of evil in this most personal of ways.

Other people see evil as the cumulative effects of all the evil acts and evil decisions that have built up over the course of time.

Either way, we know that there is an unending attack on our relationship with God and the people God loves. And God is the enemy of this attack. Our confidence that God will save and deliver us comes from our deep confidence that *God is the adversary of evil* and therefore the adversary of those forces that threaten to break the relationship circle with God and with our brothers and sisters.

## OUR PART

Think back to the opening dialog between Willie and Rick. Do you think God stepped in to help Willie? If so, how? If not, why not?

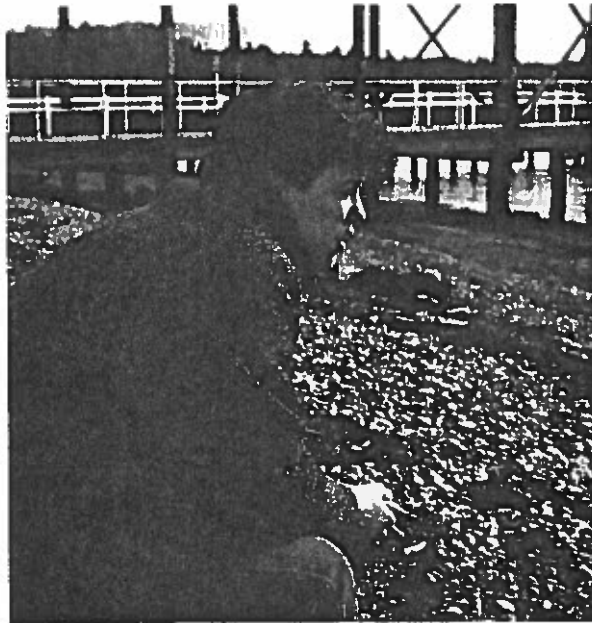
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In the experience of God's people there seem to be several ways that people have felt saved from the time of trial. Read about the following ways and share some situations you may know about.

### ● *Prayer*

Prayer is a powerful thing. It is, as we have said, a personal communication between ourselves and God. Prayer is the nurturing of our relationship with God and God can use it powerfully to protect us from breaking the relationship.



KAREN HOLSINGER MULLENMUNICORN

### ● *Reflection on the consequences*

God does not shield us from the consequences of our yielding to temptation. Perhaps this is on purpose. When God helps us recognize that the consequences for an action will be broken relationships and painful experiences for ourselves or others, this can help us resist. Momentary gains are often overshadowed by long-term consequences.

### ● *Other people*

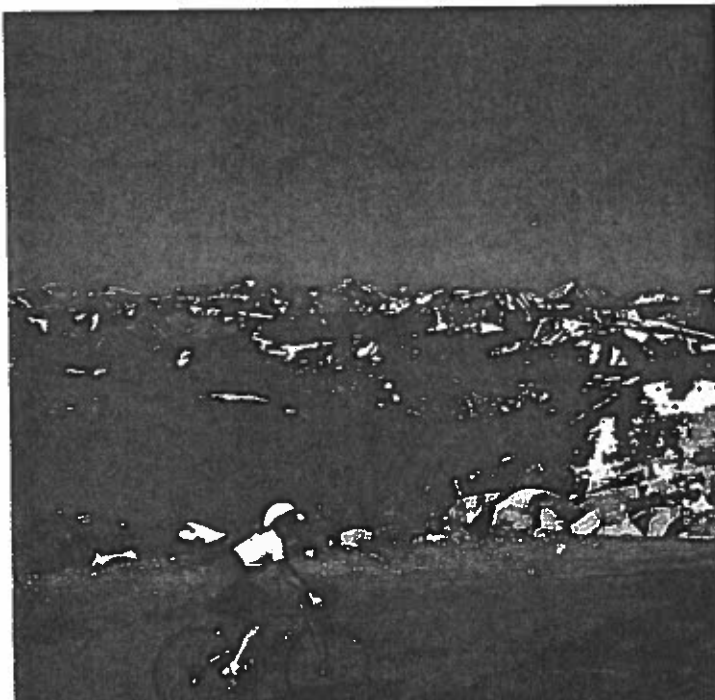
God works, it seems, more often through other people than in direct interventions of our activities. How valuable it is to have a trusted friend, counselor, pastor, or parent with whom you can talk! These persons are gifts to you from God. Wise and trusted persons do not reject you because you are tempted. If they are wise, they already know that temptation is common to every person. But they may help you think through your temptation and provide you great help this way. Some-

times, if your friend cares enough, he or she may even assist you by setting a boundary for you. No one wants to hear someone else say, "I will not allow you to do this." But there are times when, in love, this is exactly what the situation requires. The more serious the potential consequences are, the more likely a good friend is to create a boundary for you. You are always finally responsible for your own decisions and actions, but a firm hand from another can be a great help.

But look at this from another direction as well. If God uses other people to assist us in times of trial, then God uses you to help others! You will probably not hear a voice from heaven telling you to get yourself over to a friend's house to help out. God is usually more subtle than that. Most often, we are unaware that God is using us until we look back upon it later.

Finally, there is one additional way to look at all of this. For young people today, some of the strongest trials come in the form of things that can hurt us like drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. These are forms of self-abuse. Some other forms of self-abuse include improper nutrition, lack of rest, physical inactivity, and inadequate use of medical, dental, or psychological services when required. When we pray these two petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we are in fact committing ourselves to taking care of ourselves and others. Self-care, like so many other things, is a gift from

**To seek God's protection from evil is to commit ourselves to self-care and the care of others.**



God but a gift we have the freedom to receive or reject. *To seek God's protection from evil is to commit ourselves to self-care and the care of others.*

Discuss these questions with your classmates.

- Is self-care selfish and egotistical?
- Can you think of a time when God used you to care for another person? Were you aware of God's involvement at the time?
- Have you ever faced a great temptation and resisted it through prayer?

## FURTHER

### *opportunities*

#### *Bible Reading and Reflection*

Read and reflect on the following Bible passages this week. If you prefer, you may choose one of them to meditate on daily.

- Psalm 116:1-7
- Ephesians 6:10-18
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5
- James 1:12-15
- Psalm 117

#### *Memory*

Memorize Luther's explanation to both the Sixth and Seventh Petitions. By now you should be nearing the time when you can recite from memory the explanations to all seven Petitions and the Introduction.

#### *Activity 1*

Speak with your pastor to see if there is a member of your congregation who would benefit from the caring of your class. This may be a one-time work project or a commitment to provide care over a period of time. Then plan your care and deliver it.

Through reflection upon the consequences? Through the assistance of a trusted and wise friend?

# Shaping life

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Here are three scenarios. What would you do in each one? Is your action a reflection of your citizenship in the kingdom and of your baptismal mission?

### Activity 2

Make a plan to give yourself self-care. Do you need rest? Plan how to get some. Do you need to lose or gain weight? Perhaps you should exercise. You know yourself best. Make sure that your plan has achievable goals and that you are not taking on too much at one time. You can get some additional assistance by sharing your plan with someone and asking that person's assistance in keeping to it. It is wise to consult a doctor or nutritionist before beginning any sort of a diet. Part of good self-care is knowing when to ask for help.

### Activity 3

Make your own crossword puzzle to share with friends or parents. Use the following key words in your puzzle and add whatever additional words you like.

SELF-CARE	EVIL
TEMPTATION	ADVERSARY
CONSEQUENCES	TRIALS

You will have to make up the definitions or find them in the text and then lay out your puzzle in typical crossword puzzle format. If possible, have several copies made so you can share it with several people.

- You are invited to a party. You know that there will be drugs and alcohol. You have told your best friend that you don't want to be where that is going on, but your friend insists on going. What do you do?

- You've been under a lot of stress at school lately. You feel way too tired for your own good and you've felt on the verge of breaking down. What do you do?

- A friend tells you in confidence that he or she has been drinking a lot lately. Hardly a day goes by when your friend doesn't drink. Your friend made you swear to secrecy because of the certainty that his or her parents would "freak out" if they knew. What do you do?

- You are out with some friends. Someone who is a few years older than you is driving very fast and taking a lot of chances. What do you do?



RICHARD WEST

# FOCUS

## ON "FOR THE KINGDOM . . ."

You may have noticed long ago that the final words we usually say in the Lord's Prayer are not words that Jesus used when he taught this prayer. The Doxology, though, is from Scripture. Look up 1 Chronicles 29:10-13. The Doxology we use comes from David's blessing of the Lord. Christians began using this Doxology many, many years ago as their response to the Lord's Prayer. Eventually, it came to be used as a part of the prayer itself!

Read the explanation to the Doxology printed on page 173.

