In the normal course of life, Christians are found "taking their meals together with gladness..." (Acts 2:46). The value of bodily deprivation, is not intrinsic. When practised for its own sake, it becomes a problem (Col 2:20-23). The Lord does not encourage us to be ascetic and austere in our way of life, but rather to enjoy God’s gifts, yet "seek first the kingdom of God" (Mtt 6:33).

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Temptation is often unnecessary. God will gladly help us to avoid plenty of situations that we need never get into, where we would be tempted.

Evil is over there, and good is over here, and if we stay here in the good, we won’t get into trouble. For example, if you are here in Bible class tonight, you are not in the sort of danger you might be in, if you were at a sleazy night club tonight. In that place you would not be distancing yourself from lust and the bad company that may corrupt good morals (1Co 15:33, 2Tm 2:22). By leading you here to Bible study, God has helped you to avoid temptation, and temptation wasn’t necessary. However that is not the whole story.

More often than not, God’s objective is not to lead us away from temptation, but rather to lead us into goodness (Tit 2:11-13). You might assume that if God is leading us to do good, then surely he is leading us away from temptation. It’s not that simple.

Put another factor into the equation: Satan and his objective. As soon as we do this, we realise that the closer God leads us to doing good, the more Satan tries to deter us, and tries to make us do evil. So, while there are many temptations God can lead us away from, there are also many that he cannot avoid leading us into. By leading us to do good, he brings us to the attention of the devil and temptation ensues.

That’s why Jesus, after saying, "Lead us not into temptation" then adds, "But deliver us from evil" (Mtt 6:13). God cannot help leading us into temptation, but he has the power, having led us into it, to help us out of it, to "make a way of escape" so that we can resist (1Co 10:13).

Every time we follow God’s lead, Satan comes to tempt us aggressively, just as he came to tempt Jesus when God led Jesus into the wilderness (Mtt 4:1-3). God also led Jesus to the cross, but he led him through it too, and raised him up.

Remember that "God does not tempt anyone" (James 1:13). and "knows how to rescue the godly from temptation" (2Pet 2:9).