



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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Praying For Daily Bread

In the Model Prayer, Jesus Christ teaches His people how to pray. His disciples heard Jesus pray. That's one of those moments in the Bible when I wish I could have been there! In response to hearing Jesus pray, the disciples plead with Him to teach them how to pray, "Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples to pray" (**Luke 11:1**). In response to their humble request, Jesus gives them and us the Model Prayer.

In the Model Prayer, Jesus reminds us that we are coming to our Father in prayer. Because of Him, we can know Jesus Christ as our heavenly Father. We approach Him not as some unconcerned, far-away deity but a good and loving Father. Our praying is rooted in the truth that we are entering the presence of the Father who loves us and wants to bless us.

Following this, Jesus teaches us to pray that God's name would be glorified. We are to seek and plead that God's greatness will be known in this world and in and through our lives. It must be our earnest desire and prayer that God will be revealed to this world for who He is – the great, mighty, true and only God.

Then Jesus teaches us to pray for the advance of His kingdom. The kingdom is the reign of God in the hearts of people as they surrender to Jesus. We are to plead for the spread of the gospel in our neighborhoods and across the world, penetrating and transforming lives. We are also to pray for the return of

Jesus Christ. It must be our earnest desire and plea for our King to return!

In the third petition, Jesus shows us our need to pray for God's will to be done. We are to seek Him for the power to know and do His will as revealed in the Word of God. At the same time, we are to ask for the grace to accept what He provides in our lives. It must be our earnest desire and plea to submit to God's will and carry that will out in our daily life.

Now Jesus gives us the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread" (**Matthew 6:11**). In this petition, Jesus instructs us to seek and depend on God for the daily needs of our lives. It's interesting that this comes as the fourth petition. In our praying, I fear that we often make our needs and wants the priority. Yet, Jesus calls us to make God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will the priority in our praying and in our lives. We often get the order reversed!

This petition reminds us that God is the priority in our praying. At the same time, we can only pray wisely for our own needs when God's name, kingdom, and will are the priority in our lives. In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we will examine this petition and how to apply it to our lives.

What Is "Our Daily Bread"?

The heart of this petition is to ask God for "our daily bread"? What does Jesus mean

by bread? Bread is the ordinary daily food of most human beings, the staff of life, and the main staple of most nations. It refers to whatever we need to sustain our physical lives. In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther explains the significance of the word “bread.” He writes:

What is implied in the words “our daily bread”? All things that pertain to the wants and support of this present life; such as food, raiment, money, goods, house, and land, and other property; a believing spouse and good children, trustworthy servants and faithful magistrates; favorable seasons, peace, and health; education and honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like.

The word “bread” speaks of those things that we need for life and the enjoyment of this life.

Jesus teaches us to ask God to give us our daily bread. He commands us to cry out to God for the needs of our lives. We are to ask our Father for these things. By asking God to “give” us this bread, we are acknowledging that our needs, our blessings, all come to us from the hand of God. God does promise to meet all of our needs, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 4:19**). Yet, Christ teaches us to ask our Father for them. Thomas Watson wrote, “The tree of mercy will not drop its fruit unless shaken by the hand of prayer.” We must claim the promise of **Philippians 4:19** by asking God to meet our needs. We are to seek every mercy from God by prayer.

Jesus reveals that we are ask God for our “daily” bread. By this, He means that we are to pray daily, always depending entirely on the Father for whatever we need for that day. We need to pray this today, the next day, the day after that, and every day that we live. When tomorrow comes, if we are still alive, we are to pray again. We are to depend on God day by day. We are to pray day by day for our needs. We are not to give way to anxious,

unbelieving thoughts but to pray daily for God to provide for us. We are in need daily; we must pray daily.

Jesus calls us to pray this not just for ourselves but also for others. This is why Jesus teaches us, “Give **us** this day **our** daily bread.” The plural in this verse emphasizes that our prayers are to extend to others, particularly believers. Our praying must not be selfish; it must extend to those around us. The Word of God says, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (**Philippians 2:4**). We should be concerned that others have their daily bread. Our sympathy for others should lead us to approach God for the needs of others.

In this petition, Jesus Christ instructs us to seek our Father daily for the needs of our lives. He lovingly commands us to come to the Father with our needs. Not only are we to come in our own behalf, we are to come in behalf of others.

Why Does Jesus Teach Us To Pray This Petition?

There are a variety of biblical reasons why we are to pray for our daily needs. These reasons should also serve as motivations to pray for our daily bread. Why is this petition crucial in our prayer lives?

Because of Adam’s sin and our own sin, we do not deserve anything from God.

Adam stood as the representative for all mankind. **Romans 5:12** tells us that “all sinned” in Adam. Therefore, what sin did to him it does to us. We are not only charged with his guilt but we have also inherited from him a sinful human nature. We are accountable for our own sins as well as original sin. Our sins have separated us from God and robbed us of all of God’s blessings. Because of sin, we have forfeited the enjoyment and use of the material blessings that sustain life.

Jeremiah 5:23-25 says it well:

“But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.”

Because of Adam’s sin and our sin, we have no right to any material blessings from God. We do not deserve anything from God. We have no claim on God.

Sin has not only deprived us from any good from God, it has also brought God’s curse, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life” (**Genesis 3:17**). Because of sin, every blessing of life is cursed; there can be no true enjoyment or fulfillment in any thing that a person has. As long as a person rebels against God, there can be no hope of enjoyment or satisfaction in the blessings of God.

When a person turns to Jesus Christ, God forgives his sin. He removes the curse from his life. The child of God can now ask of God for his daily needs. The child of God can now enjoy and find satisfaction. The child of God can now trust God to provide for Him – to grant him the good things of this life. Out of Christ, we deserve nothing but the curse and wrath of God. However, in Christ, we can call on and depend on our loving, good Father. We can ask Him to grant us the good things of this life and find true joy and satisfaction in them.

Because only God can sustain us.

Earthly blessings in and of themselves cannot sustain us. We are not independent of God. We are in His hands moment by moment. The real usefulness of earthly,

material things depends on the blessing and working of God. Food cannot give nourishment to the body apart from the blessing of God. Medicine cannot provide healing for the body apart from the blessing of God. A job cannot provide apart from the blessing of God. I could go on but I hope you see the point. We tend to forget that we are dependent on God every moment of our lives. We tend to place our faith in things – the material blessings of life rather than God. It is God who provides, nourishes, and heals. We are in utter need of His blessing on what we have. We should use earthly things but place our faith in God who gave them, and who alone can bless them to our use. Jesus teaches us this petition because only God can sustain us and not simply the blessings that He gives.

Because we don’t merit or earn the good things of God.

When Jesus says that we are to pray, “give us,” it reveals that God is gracious and good. We don’t ask God out of merit. In other words, God does not owe us anything. We have to approach Him as needy people. Whatever God gives us is the gifts of God’s grace to us. All that we have comes from the gracious, good hand of God. Furthermore, it is not simply or directly because of our ingenuity and labor that we have acquired our material possessions. It is solely because of the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God.

It is not by man’s power or ingenuity that he possesses and enjoys the blessings of life, The Word of God says, “And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth, But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth the power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (**Deuteronomy 8:17-18**). It is God who empowers us to live and work. God grants the ability to labor and to gain. God alone has the power to grant us the

material possessions of life. This petition reminds us of this truth.

Because we are prone to ask God out of ungodly motives.

Jesus guides us to pray for God to grant us our daily bread. We are to pray for God's provision, submitting to what He desires to grant us. He teaches us this because of our tendency to pray out of wrong motives. In **James 4**, he informed his readers that they often lack the things that they need because of an attitude of self-sufficiency. They did not ask God to give them what they need (**4:2**).

Yet, he goes on to warn them about asking for things out of the wrong motive, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (**James 4:3**). Their requests were legitimate, but the reason for making the request was illegitimate. They only wanted to satisfy their own cravings, pamper their own passions. God's glory, God's service, the consideration of other people – none of these things entered into their thinking. Such prayers are an insult to God. He will not grant those requests.

Jesus gives us this petition to remind us of our need to seek God for our needs. There is nothing wrong with pouring your heart out to God for what you need, even what you want. Yet, it must be with the submissive attitude to receive gladly and rejoice in whatever God chooses to grant. This petition is a rebuke to self-centered praying that only seeks one's own pleasure.

Because we are to depend on God on a daily basis.

This petition highlights our tendency to self-sufficiency. We are often "practical atheists." We confess our belief in God. We profess to believe in God. However, we often live as if there is no God. This petition calls us back to a daily dependence on God. Jesus

rebukes our sense of self-sufficiency and calls us to walk in dependence on God.

How do we manifest this dependence? We do it primarily through prayer. By praying for our daily bread, we are daily depending on God. Our praying for God's provision of our needs shows that we are seeking to depend on Him.

I can tell when my dependence on God begins to lessen. It is when I grow slack in my prayer life. Yet, the opposite is true. I know that I'm growing in my dependence on God when I'm spending time with God, pouring out my heart to Him concerning the needs of my life.

Because of our tendency to be self-centered.

As I've studied and meditated on this petition, it amazes me that Jesus teaches us to pray, "Give **us** this day **our** daily bread." This cuts me deeply with conviction. It burdens me. I have to ask myself, "How many times have I prayed for myself without praying for others? How many times have I poured my heart out to God for what I need without doing the same for the needs of others?"

It's our tendency to be self-centered. We tend to think only of ourselves. We tend to pray only for ourselves. That's why Jesus gives us this petition. It's a rebuke to this self-centeredness. It's a challenge to pray beyond simply what we need, what we want. It's a call to intercede for those around us and their needs. God gives us the glorious privilege of being a channel of blessing to others. Take advantage of this gracious opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others!

How Do We Put This Petition Into Practice?

We have already looked at the basics of this petition. We've also seen why Jesus gives us this petition. Now, we need to examine how

to put this into practice in our lives. How do we pray and live out “Give us this day our daily bread?” I would ask you to consider the following ways:

- **Pour your heart out to God concerning your needs.**

This petition calls us to seek God for what we need on a daily basis. Your Father loves you. He is good and gracious. He is ready and willing to bless and provide for you. Yet, He calls you to pray. He exhorts you to seek Him for what you need. What needs do you have? Cry out to God concerning them. What burdens are you carrying? Cast them on to your Father. This petition is a loving, gracious command. Your Father is ready to hear from you concerning what you need.

- **Ask God to help you enjoy the blessings that He gives to you.**

We are not simply to ask God to give us those material things that we need. However, we are to ask for the ability to enjoy what He gives. The Word of God says, “Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him the power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in all his labor; this is the gift of God” (**Ecclesiastes 5:19**). In this text, God empowers a man to enjoy what God gives. Solomon says that it is God that gives a man the power to eat, to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor. The Word shows us that we must pray for the power to accept and enjoy what God gives us. The gift of God is the ability to benefit from and delight in one’s job and one’s material possessions. This petition teaches us to pray for this gift – the gift to benefit and delight in what God gives.

- **Intercede for the needs of others.**

We have the privilege of bringing the needs of others to our heavenly Father. We can

make a tangible difference in the lives of others by asking God to meet the needs of others. I have a place in my journal and in my prayer time to pray about the needs of others. Yet, I labor to pray for the needs of others as soon as I hear it. When someone calls me or shares a need with me, I pray at that moment. I also pray as I’m out and about. I strive to practice “spiritual eavesdropping.” For instance, I was sitting in a restaurant. The lady at the table next to me was telling another lady about some needs in her life. I began to ask God to intervene in the woman’s life and provide for her. Whether in our quiet time or sitting in a restaurant, we can ask God to give people their daily bread!

- **Plead with God for the grace to be content with what He graciously provides.**

What is contentment? It is an inner attitude in which we can rest satisfied with the will of God. It is the ability to rest in and rejoice over what He gives us in His infinite wisdom and goodness. They that deserve nothing should be content with anything! We submissively receive whatever God gives without murmuring and complaining. We thankfully enjoy all of God’s gifts and leave our future in His wise and loving hands. Pray for the grace to walk in contentment. Ask for the Spirit to cultivate contentment in your heart and life.

- **Ask God to deliver you from anything that would woo your heart away from Christ as its chief love and delight.**

Proverbs 30:7-9 records a prayer of Agur:

“Two things I have required of thee; deny me them not before I die; remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty or riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say,

Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of God in vain.”

Agur does not trust his own heart. He knows himself and his sinful frailty. He fears that if God makes him rich, he would be arrogant and would deny the Lord. If God made him poor, he would murmur and complain and would steal from others. For this reason, he prays that God would give him just what he needs to live in this world for him. He fears being rich and sinning or being poor and sinning. He pleads with God to grant him what he needs to love Him and serve Him. Matthew Henry once wrote, “Sin is that which a good man is afraid of in every condition and under every event.” We need to pray for God to give us what we need to love Christ and to live for Him in this world. We must ask Him to deliver us from anything that would draw us away from Christ and faithfulness to Him.

- **Remember that praying this petition does not justify laziness, passivity, and inactivity on our part.**

Trusting God to give us our daily bread does not justify laziness, passivity, or inactivity on our part, as if all we have to do is sit and wait for God to drop into our laps whatever blessings we need. This kind of an attitude is contrary to the Word of God. As we pray and wait trustingly for God to provide for us, we are to persevere in well doing. As we cast all our cares on Him, we are to do what He has commanded us to do in working to provide for our families and ourselves. The Bible says that the one who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel (**1 Timothy 5:8**). In fact, living in idleness without labor in a vocation, when one is able, is viewed by God as theft. The Bible’s exhortation is clear, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither

should he eat” (**2 Thessalonians 3:10**). God calls His people to work and to pray, trusting for His provision in His time and His way.

- **Matthew 6:33 must be the priority of our lives.**

The Lord Jesus Christ declares to us, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you” (**Matthew 6:33**). Jesus cannot be any clearer or forceful. The believer in Jesus Christ is not to worry about any aspect of his life in this world – not his health, strength, success, daily bread, or what is going to happen to him. Rather than being consumed with anxiety about these things, the Christian is to trust God for everything. We are to be consumed with seeking above all God’s kingdom and His righteousness, knowing that as we do, everything else will be provided for us. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once wrote, “If I am guilty of being worried and anxious about these matters of food and drink and clothing, and about my life in the world, and certain things which I lack – if these dominate me and my life, then I am really living and believing as a heathen.” We must live in faith, earnestly, intensely, and constantly seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If we pursue that goal, then we can trust God to provide all that we need. Our Father in heaven knows what is best for us.

- **Be diligent to thank God!**

God is the Source and Donor of all our blessings. We should acknowledge this. Praying for our daily bread includes thanking God for His provision. It is the height of irreverence to pray for God’s provision and then not thank Him when He provides. All our blessings come from God and to Him all our praises should return!

Praying Through Philipians 4

The following is a prayer guide to enable you to pray through **Philipians 4**. This chapter coincides with Jesus' teaching concerning praying for you daily bread and seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This chapter combines the two concepts. You can use these Scripture prayers to pray for yourself, others, or your church.

Father, I plead that You would empower me to stand fast in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant me the power to cling to Christ and to His Word no matter what **(4:1)**.

Father, I pray that I will be of the same mind and heart with other believers. Deliver me from a jealous and divisive spirit **(4:2)**.

Father, empower me to be a peacemaker; help me to be an instrument of reconciliation among believers **(4:3)**.

O God, enable me to rejoice in Jesus always. Let me walk every day in the joy of Jesus **(4:4)**.

Father, I ask that my moderation would be known to all men **(4:5)**.

Father, I pray that I would not be anxious about anything. Instead of worrying, teach me to pray. When I'm tempted to worry, help me to make my requests to You **(4:6)**.

Father, empower me to pray and not worry so that I can experience Your peace that passes all understanding. Let this peace guard my heart and mind from being overwhelmed with worry **(4:7)**.

Father, enable me to think and meditate on You and Your Word daily. I ask that my mind will be focused on You and Your Word and not my anxieties or worries. As I fix my mind on

You and seek to obey You, I pray that I will experience Your presence, the presence of the God of peace **(4:8)**.

Father, by Your grace and Your Spirit, teach me to be content in any situation. Your Word says that I can do all things through You who gives me strength and provides for me. Help me to live content, resting in what You provide **(4:10-13)**.

Father, I plead that You would meet all my needs according to Your riches in glory by Your Son Jesus Christ. This is Your promise and I rest in You to do it **(4:19)**.

Father, I pray that everything in my life will be to Your glory. I ask that You will provide for me in such a way that it brings glory and honor to Your name **(Philipians 4:20)**.

Praying For Your Pastor's Preparation

One of the most powerful ways to pray for your pastor is to pray for his sermon preparation during the week. If we desire to have powerful sermons from a pastor, then we must cry out to God for the pastor as he prepares his sermons. The following is a prayer guide that you can use to pray during the week for your pastor:

- *Pray that the message your pastor is preparing will be an evident part of his life.* Request that he will thoroughly investigate his own life to deal with any pockets of compromise that exist as they relate to passage that he is studying. Ask that he will be able to preach the message without hypocrisy.
- *Plead for the protection of your pastor's sermon preparation time.* The timing and variety of distractions from sermon preparation time remind us that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood but the

spiritual forces of evil (**Ephesians 6:12**). Ask God to fight the battle against the distractions and barriers that can rob your pastor of time to prepare sermons.

- *Ask God to give your pastor the grace and power to rightly divide the Word of God.* Call on the Holy Spirit to help your pastor rightly interpret the passage. Plead that God will grant insight and lead him into the right understanding of the text.
- *Pray that your pastor will choose the right words to frame his outline.* Ask that his outline will be an effective tool for the Holy Spirit to employ in conveying truth to peoples' hearts and minds. Plead that his words will not be misleading or distracting.
- *Ask that your pastor will have insight into the needs of the congregation as he prepares sermons.* Plead that the ways the pastor applies the sermon will address the current needs of the members of the congregation.
- *Plead that people will attend the worship services to hear God's Word.* It's easy to assume that people will show up to hear God's Word. Don't assume it; pray for it. Ask that God will draw people to hear the Word of God.

- *Pray that the congregation will be in the right frame of mind to hear the Word of God.* Ask that the time before people get to church will prepare them not distract them from hearing the Word of God. Plead that people will reach their seats with well-prepared hearts.
- *Ask that God will prevent the distractions to the clear hearing of the Word of God.* The enemy fights against the clear hearing of God's Word with the most common of weapons – a crying baby, a cell phone ringing, an allergy attack, a dead or faulty microphone. Call on God to deal with these things that people might hear the Word clearly and with understanding.

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