

"GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD: PRAYING FOR GOD'S PROVISION"
LUKE 11:3

One blistering hot day when they had guests for dinner, a mother asked her four-year old to give thanks for the meal. "But Mom, I don't know what to say," he protested. "Oh, just say what you've heard me say," she told him. Obediently, he bowed his little head and said, "Oh, Lord, why did I invite these people here on a hot day like this?"

We know we should pray, but one of the reasons we don't pray is that we don't know what to say. Just what do we say to the Master of all things? Even if we know we have needs, for what do we ask Him, and how should we ask Him? Those questions are behind the request the disciples make of Jesus, "Teach us to pray." And that isn't just a question for the Twelve; it's a desire we also have — we want to pray more biblically, more effectively, and more like Christ.

Jesus answers the disciples with concise instruction about prayer. He tells them how to address God — as Father (remarkably!), and then He gives them five topics to pray; the first two relate to the nature of God — for the character of God to be hallowed (revered and worshipped), and for God's kingdom to be established on earth. Following those two expressions of worship and submission, Jesus teaches the Twelve and us to pray three corporate and personal requests. The first of those is the simple desire, "Give us each day our daily bread" (Lk. 11:3). With that request He is simply reminding us —

YOU HAVE NEEDS AND GOD IS SUFFICIENT. SO ASK GOD TO PROVIDE FOR YOU.

To paraphrase Matthew Henry, we have something to say to God every day. Many of us are unaware of that need, believing we can live without God — we are unaware of our dependence on Him and obligation to Him, and when we do not go to Him with our worship and needs, we are living without Him.

We don't want to live without Him. We want His help. So what does it mean to pray for daily bread? Let's consider this petition by recognizing three truths about asking God to meet our needs...

- 1. The Way We Ask for Our Needs**
- 2. The Kind of God Who Provides for Our Needs**
- 3. Some Spiritual Provisions in Our Material Needs**

1. The Way We Ask for Our Needs

- **Pray dependently.**

- ✓ The verb **give us** is a request that reminds us that we have a need for something that is beyond our ability. We need help. In fact the need is perpetual (we always have need), so Jesus uses the present tense of the verb — “always give us...” or “keep on giving us...” Because we ask regularly and consistently, it is also an expression of our trust that our loving Father will provide for us.
- ✓ Because we can trust God, Phillips Brooks rightly said, “If man is man and God is God, to live without prayer is not merely an awful thing: it is an infinitely foolish thing.”
- ✓ And that means that because we have perpetual need, we should be in constant prayer (**1 Th. 5:17**).
- ✓ But is this your tendency, too? There is a crisis, and there are desperate pleas for help. Then God answers and provides, or the crisis passes — and everything goes silent.
 - On the afternoon of 9/11, there was a national cry for God. And the next Sunday there were more people in worship services. And within a month or so, everything returned to “normal.”
 - And unexpected death will often compel people to reach out to a church for help; and a week or a month or two later, calls from the church aren’t returned and the person often returns to their previous state. They don’t see their daily need and dependence on God. *We are needy.*
- ✓ Pray in such a way that reflects dependence: pray through your lists, but also pray always throughout the day for the need of the moment (words in a conversation, patience in traffic...).

- **Pray humbly (God’s provision is a gift)** — or, “pray worshipfully”

- ✓ The three requests in vv. 3-4 follow the expressions of worship in the first two requests (v. 2).
- ✓ We might even say that these requests flow *out of* our worship — because we have worshipped God and recognized His grandeur and wonder, we submit ourselves to Him and His authority and seek His help for our needs.
- ✓ Also notice that since Jesus says our request should be **give us** — we are asking for a *gift*. Whatever we ask from God, it is given to us from His grace. It is not an “ought” — God is not obligated to give to us. But because of our relationship to us, He loves to give good gifts and He does give good gifts. But they are just that — *gifts*, not payments.
 - Cf. **vv. 9-13** — come and ask. You have access and you have a Father who loves to give. He is the Father who will provide, but recognize that everything we have is grace. Don’t presume in your prayers that He is indebted to you and obligated to give you all you want (**1 Chron. 29:14**).
 - Everything we have is a gift from Him (**Js. 1:17**) — and He doesn’t change in His generosity.
 - It is a father’s responsibility to provide for the family, and God as *Father*, will provide.
- ✓ In Israel in those days, many were dependent on daily labor to provide for them (**Mt. 20:1ff**). People were more readily aware that they were dependent on God for meeting their needs.

- ✓ We are tempted to think we provide for ourselves by our jobs or 401Ks, or investment planning. We don't. Because we have Kroger and a credit card we think we are self-sufficient. We aren't. Humbly remember that *everything* we have is from Him and everything is a gift.

- **Pray daily for your daily needs.**

- ✓ In two ways, Jesus emphasizes the need for *daily* prayer and dependence: ***each day*** and ***daily***.
 - The phrase ***each day*** is a second reminder to constantly pray for our needs (pres. ***give***). For those who faced starvation (e.g., Paul, 2 Cor. 11:27) that was an easy prayer. For those who had plenty it was a humbling prayer (reminding them they had no guarantees).
 - The word ***daily*** is a difficult word to translate — it could mean “for the coming day,” or “for the basic needs — for nominal existence,” or “for tomorrow” perhaps referring to “final tomorrow” — the end times and the eternal future (reinforcing request for the kingdom, v. 2).
 - ... In the immediate context, Jesus is talking about everyday needs (**vv. 5ff, vv. 11-12**).
 - ... In the Sermon on the Mt., His similar reminder to pray daily is about basic needs (**Mt. 6:31-34**)
 - ... It is probably best to see this as a double reinforcement of request for daily needs — every day I need God to provide for my most basic necessities, or I won't survive.
 - ... Jesus wants to make us realize our dependence on Him *always* and liberate us from anxiety.

So daily we pray for our daily needs and daily He provides and daily we grow in trust.
- ✓ Jesus also stresses that every day we come to God with *all* our needs. The word ***bread*** is a figure of speech called synecdoche (the part represents the whole); so ***bread*** represents our most basic needs for food — and also includes staples like shelter, clothing, health, rest, work, and more...
- ✓ That Jesus says we should pray for food reminds us of several important principles —
 - ***Pray for all things*** — large and small; He is interested in all our needs, not just those that are particularly overwhelming to us. He wants us to entrust our lunch plans to Him.
 - ... It is often asked, “Why would God be interested in something so trivial?” He is interested because it is all part of His creation and it is all created to reflect His glory. So everything is under His care and interest (and He isn't strained by the burden, **12:6-7**).
 - ... Last Sunday on my way home from worship, Raye Jeanne called me and asked me to look for her bracelet; sometime that morning between 6:30 and 10:30 it came off her arm. I looked carefully everywhere she'd been and didn't find it. We didn't find it Monday. Throughout the day I prayed, “Lord you know where it is...would You be kind to show us...” Monday night at 9:00 we broke out the flashlights and began looking at home; and after 20-30 minutes, laying half under some pea gravel in the back yard, we found it! A “small” gift, but a gracious gift from the Lord for us — to lead us to gratitude for His grace.
 - ***Pray for needs, not greeds***. The request is for daily bread not daily cake. He provides the staples and basic needs of your life (peanut butter) and sometimes He gives jelly too. But He does not provide for us so we can wastefully indulge our selfish and sinful lusts.

➤ **Pray specifically** (make lists) —

- ... Pray for food (“staples” — incl. job, transportation, strength, shelter, covering, etc.)
- ... Pray for health (implied many places but explicit in 3 Jn. 2) — and spiritual lessons of illness
- ... Pray for spiritual strength to obey Christ and resist temptation (Mt. 26:41)
- ... Pray for the needs of others (notice He says, “give **us**”) — cf. Paul’s prayers (**Col. 1:9ff**)
- ... Pray for ministry (both yours and others) — might make a list of missionaries, church ministries and leaders, unbelievers that need the gospel, etc.

2. The Kind of God Who Provides for Our Needs

- **He is gracious.**

- ✓ He is inclined to care for us. He loves to care for His own. He is not reticent to provide.
- ✓ For Jesus to tell the Twelve and us to go to God in prayer and to ask for help means that He is willing to help. He is a prayer-hearing God (**vv. 5-8**). “The Most High [is] a Prayer-Hearing God” (Edwards).
- ✓ When you pray, He is listening and He is compassionate and disposed to meet your needs (**Ps. 65:2**).

“One of the sweet realities of our prayer life is that God cares about the simple, day-to-day needs of life. He cares whether his children are warm, fed, and housed. He is concerned for our well-being, including those things necessary to maintain a whole, happy family.” [Hughes]

- ✓ I was about 10-years-old when I started realizing family economics. Dad was the only one who was working (also attending school full-time) but if we went out to eat, he had to pay for everyone else. He couldn’t keep his money for himself. My ten-year-old self saw it as unjust. My 30-year-old self as a dad saw the delight and joy in caring for those entrusted to me. God is all the more gracious (**v. 13**).
- ✓ You may have had an earthly father who was mean and miserly. Go to your heavenly Father with confidence that He is infinitely better than your earthly Father and He delights when you and I come to Him with the simplest and most basic of needs.

- **He is sovereign and powerful.**

- ✓ He holds everything in the world in His hands and in His control at all times (I can’t even walk and read my phone at the same time without bumping into a wall). He is fully attentive to all things at all times and is keeping everything moving towards its appointed purpose (**Col. 1:16-17; Is. 40:12-17**).
- ✓ Nothing of God’s power has diminished from Genesis 1:1. He is still able to do all things.
- ✓ And that means He is able to do all things in your life. Do you need lunch? A job? Transportation? A restored relationship? Eternal life and forgiveness? He does it all. He is powerful.

- **He is dependable** (trustworthy).

- ✓ He wants us to learn to trust Him. For everything. And so He reminds us to pray daily, “will you give me the bread I need to eat today?”

- ✓ And sometimes He makes us to pray and live particularly dependently — like when the Israelites were in the wilderness and He provided daily manna every day, but no more (except on Friday).
- ✓ Cf. **Exodus 16:4-7, 13-21**. And the daily provision was a test of their hearts (**Dt. 8:2-3, 16-20**).
- ✓ God was much more concerned with the state of their hearts than the comfort of their bellies. That was still true when they entered the land of Canaan and the manna stop
- ✓ Did they trust God? Who did they believe was responsible for their wealth? Who do we believe is responsible for our wealth? Do we trust God? “We live under His care, one day at a time.” [France]
- ✓ When you don’t get a raise but inflation rises, or you have a car repair, or an August electrical bill, and more month than money, it is wise to ask, “Is God testing my affections and desires? Is He helping me to see the condition of my heart and whether I love and trust Him?”

3. Some Spiritual Provisions in Our Material Needs

- ***Though we ask for bread, we also work.***
 - ✓ Notice **12:24ff** — the birds don’t grow crops, but they do search for food and pull up bugs and take them back to the nest to feed themselves and the young. “In the same way that birds must search for their food, and that flowers must extend their leaves to the sun for sunlight, and their roots into the soil for moisture and nutrients, so we must expend ourselves. God does not drop grubs down the gullets of young birds nor does He give handouts to indolent people who simply sit in the shade and do nothing.” [Phillip Keller]
 - ✓ And Paul also reminds us of our duty to work even while we trust God (**2 Thess. 3:10-12**). We work because we trust that God will use those labors to provide for and sustain us.
 - ✓ Lack of faithfulness to work when God has enabled us to work reflects a belief system that God is indebted to me — it is a presumption on grace that demands He give what is a gift.
 - ✓ When we work and draw a paycheck, that resource is from the Lord; when the paycheck is not enough, it is an opportunity to pray and trust that He will provide the next meal.
- ***Though we ask for bread, we do know that sometimes in His providence and wisdom He withholds it.*** And some even die from lack of bread. God is still good and gracious and sovereign (**Job 40-42; Heb. 11:35ff**).
 - ✓ He uses sparse circumstances to make us trust Him (**Phil. 4:11-12, 19**; **Ps. 37:1-4**).
 - ✓ He uses sparse circumstances and death to take us Home where we will never lack (**2 Cor. 4:16-18**).
 - ✓ There is an infinitely disproportionate disparity between what we will have in Glory and what we give up here. We essentially give up nothing and get everything. No one in Heaven is complaining that he was burned at the stake in order to get to Heaven.
- ***Whether we have just enough or lavish amounts of bread, we are grateful.***
 - ✓ God is teaching us through our basic needs to trust Him and not ourselves.

- ✓ That's why the writer says what he does in **Prov. 30:7-9**. We need some food and shelter, but not too much. One tempts us to despair and anger and one tempts us to self-sufficiency and forgetfulness.
- ✓ So, don't be envious if you don't have as much as others.
- ✓ And don't trust yourself (or be prideful) if you have plenty. This prayer is for every believer; when we have plenty (and that is most Americans and most in the western world), it would be tempting to be disgruntled to pray this prayer and have the Lord literally provide for us only the next meal. But if we have even only the next meal, that is enough to make us content (**1 Tim. 6:7-8**).

No other line in the Lord's Prayer so directly challenges the times in which we live. The average person worries too much about achieving financial security. There is nothing wrong with planning for future rainy days, but it is wrong to allow such a goal to consume us. For some a fitting obituary would be, "He died financially secure and independent with no need of anything or anyone, even God!" This is a spiritual tragedy. Jesus is telling us, whether rich or poor, that God wants us to depend upon him daily. He wants us to pray for our daily material needs, and he wants us to thank him daily—"Give us each day our daily bread." [Hughes]

- **While we ask for bread we also cultivate gratitude** (**1 Thess. 5:17-18**).
 - ✓ In the wilderness, even while God was providing, the Israelites were ungrateful. "If only we had some cucumbers and leaks...or some quail..." And lack of gratitude became grumbling (**Num 11:1ff**).
 - ✓ They stopped thanking Him; they stopped asking Him; and they started grumbling about Him.
 - ✓ They still had exactly what they needed with manna — they just forgot how amazing it was that God provided miraculously for them every day — "It is a lesson easily forgotten when wealth multiplies and absolute self-sufficiency is portrayed as a virtue." [Carson]
 - ✓ All the sinful actions of Israel reflected a lack of trust in Him (cf. **Ps. 78:17ff**, 22ff, 32).
 - ✓ And despite their grumbling, He was gracious to them (**Ps. 78:38-39**).
 - ✓ "Every physical thing we have comes from God's provision through the earth. It is therefore the sin of indifference and ingratitude not to daily recognize His gifts in thankful prayer." [MacArthur]
 - ✓ Before you get to grumbling, rebellion and distrust, cultivate gratitude (**Ps. 100:4-5**). Ideas:
 - Keep a thank list as part of your prayer list and pray that every day.
 - Write at least one thing on your thank list every day.
 - Make one day a "day of Thanksgiving" — the only prayer you pray is a prayer of gratitude.
 - Actively cultivate a heart of Thanksgiving to God who gives you daily bread and so much more.

CONCLUSION: Prayer (including a few adaptations from a prayer in *A Way to Pray*) —

Our Father, we still are amazed that we can come to You as Father. You, who are enthroned in the Heavens, who is eternal in time and infinite in all Your attributes, who is immeasurably holy and unwaveringly just in all that You do — have extended unaccountable grace to us by adopting us as your children, enfolding us into the fellowship of the Triune godhead, and lavished us with grace upon grace. Thank you for the honor of calling You "Father."

We also recognize Your holiness and sanctity. You are wholly other than us. You are distinct in Your glory, and pure in all Your affections. Because You are great, we long to delight in that greatness and long for others also to delight in Your glory. To that end, we also pray for the coming of Your Kingdom. You do even now rule over all things and You scoff at the vain rebellion of the nations; but we desire for Your Son and our Savior to rule on His Davidic throne and manifest His sovereignty over the nations so that at His name every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord — to Your glory and honor.

This morning we come to You as Father, as holy, as King. And we lay before You our needs. Would you provide for us? As we make our requests we are acknowledging that we cannot ultimately provide for ourselves. While we want to be faithful to work, we recognize that You are the One who provides for us through that work. Every paycheck and every distribution from our retirement funds and everything we create and sell for profit is a gift from You. So we thank You and we ask for your continued provision for us.

Would You continue to meet our needs for food — even for our lunch that we will enjoy in a few minutes — and would You help us to recognize it is from Your hand? Some of us seem to have plenty — would You not give us so much that we forget You. Some of us have little — would You not withhold so much from us that we are tempted to be angry against You? Would You give us just what we need so that we trust You and honor You.

We also affirm that all our “staples” come from Your hand. Would you continue to provide us jobs that we might serve You and experience provision from You? Would You give us transportation to get to our jobs and care for the needs of our family? Would You give us physical rest and physical health so that we have the strength to labor for You? Would You give us shelter and clothing sufficient to care for us and our families? Would You keep us from pride if we have much and would You keep us from grumbling as Israel did in the wilderness when we have what we think is “little?”

Father, keep us from craving for delicacies — for cake instead of bread — since that kind of food distorts the true nature of the godly life. Let us never long to live in luxury, wrongly reasoning that we have not yet received our rightful share of good things in our lifetime. Instead, help us to simply pray for bread that is enough to sustain our life. And would You give us hearts that pray not for our needs alone, but also the needs of our brothers? Give us eyes to see the needs of others around us — and humility so that when we receive two loaves of bread from You that we willingly and joyfully share one with someone else.

To the degree that we have not prayed, or prayed greedily, or prayed selfishly (ignoring the needs of others), or prayed without trusting You, or prayed with discontentment for what You have already given, would You forgive us of that sin and would You give us hearts of gratitude for all that You have already given us?

Finally, our Father, we do not ask for bread that would be enough for a long time in the future. We only ask that we may have for this day our daily bread. For we would learn not to take any anxious thought about tomorrow. Keep us from worrying about what we shall eat or drink, or what we shall have for clothing. Let us trust that You will feed us, we whom You have deemed to be much more valuable than many little birds. In the name of Christ our Savior, we pray. Amen.