

Petitioning God

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Matthew 6:11-15

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:11–15

The comprehensiveness of these petitions is like the colors of the spectrum into which light divides when it shines through a prism. The whole light of life is captured in the rainbow of these petitions, taking into account our every need. Great things, small things, spiritual things, material things, inward things and outward things – there is nothing that is not included in this prayer.
Kent Hughes

PRAYING FOR GOD’S GLORY (v. 9-10)

The first part of the Lord’s Prayer concerns our worship, adoration, and submission to God.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name”

“Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

PRAYING FOR OURSELVES (v. 1-15)

The second part of the Lord’s Prayer concerns our neediness as frail, dependent creatures. Some of the early church father’s (Jerome) spiritualized this verse to mean the bread of communion. They had a hard time making the transition from the upward petitions of verses 9-10 to creaturely necessities. The doctrine of transubstantiation flows out of this incorrect interpretation. One fundamental rule of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) is: When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek not other sense. In other words, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise. This verse means exactly what it says! God wants us to pray for our physical provision.

DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR PHYSICAL PROVISION (v. 11)

“Give us” – What does this say about our dependence upon God?

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing. Psalms 145:15–16

Give who? Give “us.” This is a broadening petition. We not only depend on God for our practical provision, but we commit ourselves to be part of God’s answer for others in need.

“This day” – What does this tell us about tomorrow?

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” Exodus 16:4–5

“Our daily” – How much should we expect God to provide for us?

This is the only occurrence of this word in all Greek literature. (Found on a papyrus fragment)

If prayed in the morning it means today’s bread...

If prayed in the evening it means tomorrow’s bread...

This is a petition that God would meet our daily needs.

“Bread” – What should we expect God to provide for us?

The necessities of life.

This isn’t a Psalm 37:4 free for all...

He whose eye encompasses in its boundless reach the first day of creation and the last hour of judgment, reflecting all the eternities; He whose outstretched arm enfolds the oceans, islands, and continents, because all authority in Heaven and earth has been given to Him, He occupies Himself with the trivialities of humankind. Herman Thielicke

Physical provisions are among those things that occupy the majority of our worry...

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by

being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:25–34

Not only is this a petition for today's bread, but it is also a petition for the bread of eternity!

Don't forget about the Marriage feast!

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Revelation 19:6–9

The ultimate bread is Jesus Himself!

This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. John 6:50–51

DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR PARDON (v. 12)

When we pray we should be asking for forgiveness as well as requesting a forgiving spirit! This is an *explicit* prayer for forgiveness and an *implicit* prayer for a forgiving spirit. The "ideal" prayer contains a petition for both.

"Forgive us our debts (sins)"

There are two kinds of forgiveness, judicial and paternal. Which type is Jesus referring to here?

Jesus' prayer teaches us that we are engage in daily, ongoing confession of sin.

Confess your sins... 1 John 1:9

"As we also have forgiven our debtors"

This assumes two things in our responses to other people's offenses against us:

1. That we do forgive.
2. That God expects us to forgive others.

This is not a new teaching. The New Testament says this very thing multiple times:

Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. Matthew 5:7

Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. James 2:13

We see it again in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant:

Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." Matthew 18:32-35

John Wesley was serving as a missionary to the Colonies had was particularly burdened by the unbending nature of General Oglethorpe. One day Oglethorpe said, "I never forgive." Wesley replied, "Then I hope sir, you never sin."

Thomas Watson the great puritan once said, "A man can as well go to hell for not forgiving as for not believing."

Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death warrant when you repeat the Lord's Prayer. Charles Spurgeon

No part of this teaching is clearer: and there are no exceptions to it. He doesn't say that we are to forgive other people's sins provided they are no too frightful, or provided there are extenuating circumstances or anything of that sort. We are to forgive them all, however spiteful, however mean, however often they are repeated. If we don't, we shall be forgiven none of our own.

C.S. Lewis

What other verses that we have looked at have to do with bitterness, forgiveness or peacemaking?

Blessed are the meek (5:5)	Leave your gift at the altar and go (5:24)
Blessed are the merciful (5:7)	Come to terms quickly with your accuser (5:26)
Blessed are the peacemakers (5:9)	Turn to him the other (cheek) as well (5:39)
You are the salt of the earth (5:13)	Let him have your cloak as well (5:40)
You are the light of the world (5:14)	Go with him two miles (5:41)

Why do you think Jesus expands on this issue again? If we refuse to forgive, we are not Christians. This is a frightening truth. When the grace of Christ comes into our hearts and God redeems us from sin's bondage, it makes us forgiving. One of the best barometers to the state of our spiritual health is how quick we are to forgive others when they sin against us. Do you remember the instance of the Pharisee who rebuked Jesus for receiving worship from a prostitute:

A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little. Luke 7:41–47

We are never more like God than when we forgive.

DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR POWER OVER TEMPTATION (v. 13)

"Lead us not into temptation"

Does God tempt us?

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. James 1:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

The idea here is: Lord, preserve me from temptation that will bring me under its sway and will cause me to fall. Here is something for you to ponder: Is temptation good or bad? God uses our temptation to mold us more into the likeness of Christ. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness before His public ministry began and then again in the garden just hours before His crucifixion. He triumphed over temptation and conquered the impulse to flee from the cross. If temptations helped to shape the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, they also do the same for us! It is through temptations rightly borne that we grow in moral character.

When we pray, "Lead me not into temptation," we are to pray with a keen awareness that we are profoundly weak and liable to fall. We are dependent on God's grace to stand. There is great danger in the pious thinking that assumes we are too strong to stumble and fail.

"But deliver us from evil (evil one)"

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

Our prayers should reflect an understanding that Satan is powerful. He is the tempter, he is the liar, He is a murderer – and has been since the beginning. Paul refers to Satan as the "Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" Ephesians 2:2. We are powerless, in and of ourselves to deal with temptation. But just as praying "deliver us from the evil," acknowledges that power of the evil one, in the same breath it should also acknowledge that God's power is greater!

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Romans 12:9

Abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. Hebrews 3:12

As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. James 4:16

CONDITIONAL PROMISE (v. 14-15)

The prayer lesson concludes with a reminder that follows the teaching of forgiveness in verse 12. This is the Savior's own commentary on our petition to God for forgiveness, and the only one of the petitions to which He gives added insight. Thus its importance is amplified.¹

¹John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Chicago:

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