

VII. The Lord's Prayer in Biblical Perspective
"Petition #4: 'Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread'"

Matthew 6:11

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This is the word of God. Matthew 6:5–15.

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **6** But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **7** "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. **9** Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

(For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen. – this is omitted in some manuscripts)

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of God abides forever.
May God bless this His Word to the heart of His people.

"Pastor, I know I shouldn't bother you with this. This is just too insignificant. In fact I don't think I should even bother God but could you pray about ..." I have heard that kind of statement on many occasions. I hope and pray after this study that you will be relieved of any notion that there is anything too small to bring before God for two reasons. One reason is He cares for you. The second reason is I do not care how small it is you cannot handle it without Him. An "Amen" belongs right here. When we say that we can only bring to God the important things that is hidden pride because we think we can handle everything else. But in reality we cannot even handle one piece of bread a day without God's hand.

Here is a brief summary of what has been covered in this Christ centered study on the Prayer of Prayers, how Christians are to pray. There is no better text to learn how to pray than from this text where Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. He says, "When you pray, pray this way..." He knows we are going to be praying so He tells us to put off how the world has disciplined us to pray. Do not pray like religious hypocrites who use their personal prayer life to be seen publicly and do not pray like Gentiles, pagans who think it is their ritual and their many words that will get God's attention. There is a place for public prayer but Jesus tells His disciples, "I want to teach you how to pray privately in your closet, when you pray to Me."

The first thing Jesus teaches them is how to talk to God by the invocation of adoration...“Our Father who art in heaven...” There is intimacy by the words “Our Father” and there is reverence by the words “who art in heaven.” Secondly He gives them the petitions. Here are six basic petitions to build one’s prayer life from. The first three have already been covered. The first petition is “Hallowed be Thy Name.” Our number one desire as a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ is the honor, glory and worship of our God throughout all the world. The next five requests actually work out that principle of honoring and declaring holy the name of God. How does one declare holy the name of God? The only way God’s glory is going to spread throughout all the world is if His Gospel Kingdom spreads throughout all the world.

So the second petition which He says to pray is “Thy Kingdom come.” That is the rule and reign of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior would spread throughout all the world. It will come in fullness when the King comes again but until He comes again it is spreading through His people as we make disciples for the Kingdom throughout all the nations. If the Kingdom comes then that leads us to the will of the King to be done.

The third petition is “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” It is that here on earth we will receive the unfolding of His secret will with celebration and contentment and we will follow each step of life through His revealed will. So this day I want to challenge you not to get caught up in all the books that somehow think they can read the “tea leaves” of God’s secret will. We are not to obsess on God’s secret will but we are supposed to follow God’s revealed will. If we stay in the channel of God’s revealed will then we will stay in His secret will. God’s calling upon us is to stay in His revealed will as His secret will unfolds before us.

Now is the subject of this study which is the fourth petition. This prayer is so high and lofty. “Your Name is holy, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done” and then “Give us our daily bread”? I thought something pretty big would come next, like “give us crusades all around the world that bring people to Jesus” or “give us glorious insight for all our strategic thinking for the Kingdom.” No, it is “Give us our daily bread.” Not only is bread mentioned in this prayer but it is emphasized. In the first three requests we are utterly desirous of God’s glory and now God brings to us “Give us our daily bread” challenging our humility, our contentment, our focus and reminding us that from the very basic essentials of life up we are absolutely dependent upon our God.

We translate this phrase as “give us this day our daily bread” but in the original language the word “bread” is at the beginning. That is the way in the Greek language that importance is shown, by putting it at the front. It literally reads this way in the original language, “Bread, daily, give us.” This is the order we will walk through this petition. “Bread” what does He mean? “Daily” what does He mean? “Give” what does He mean? “Us or Our” what does He mean?

Bread – All the early church fathers, when they got to this term “bread” could not believe that God meant the kind of bread we eat. They felt it had to mean something else. So some of them said “Give us this day our daily bread” actually meant “Bible bread.” Does not the Bible say, “Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” so they

said He is really talking about spiritual bread, the Word of God. Then some said that it was not only that but that He was talking about the sacramental bread, the bread of the Sacrament. Those believed that so much that some of the early church fathers in their churches promoted daily communion because it says in this text, "daily bread." Then others said that was true but "bread" is really Jesus because did not Jesus say, "I am the bread of life" so it is really meaning Jesus. I think these are all wonderful applications of analogy to this but it is not what He is saying here in this text. It is just talking about the bread a person eats regularly. "Lord, give us our daily bread."

A translation of this phrase in our everyday Birmingham language would be "give us this day our daily groceries." There is a reason they call bread, "the staff of life." It was the most essentials of all the essentials. When He gives us this essential He is not just saying we can only pray about bread. When He goes to the bottom of the pyramid of what we need to live for His honor, His Kingdom and His will then He says "Let's start from the bottom up." Now that He has given us those three big vertical requests He wants to then deal with our most personal request and the most basic thing one needs is bread. One cannot not to the first three is they are not breathing and one is not going to breathe without some bread so we need to ask Him for the bread. We do not come up with the bread in our life, God comes up with it for us. He is the One who give us the bread.

Bread comes from God by creation. God taught the seed to put a tap root down everyday. God then taught the seed to send a shoot up. God taught the seed to suck the water out of the ground when He brings the water to the ground. God taught the seed to bare grain. God provided the health of the people that were able to plant all this stuff. God also provided the health and the ability of the people who were picking it for you and then those people who made it for you. If God pulls His hand out of this process on any one day then you starve. This all comes from God from beginning to end. By the way when the fall happened God brought a curse upon the earth so that when we go about this harvesting, planting there is sweat, thorns, thistles and if it is not by His hand there is no way one can keep this up. God gives us the strength to overcome the curse of sin upon this earth. God is also required to be involved because if God is not involved sin will bring it all to a catastrophe. God also gave a covenant to this guy named Noah and He told him that He would promise until the end of the age that He would keep him with seed time and harvest. So all of this is here by His hand every single day. God gives us the bread.

Give – We are utterly dependent on God's hand as He upholds His created order, as He overcomes the fall to sin. We need God to give us our bread. Everything that is in your refrigerator, freezer that is way beyond your daily bread is in there because He has given you the ability to work, others the ability to plant, to harvest, to make. It is all there by the hand of God.

Daily – Even though God will give us more than we need He does not want us to live by anything in life but daily. Day by day is the way God wants us to live as for tomorrow that is if the Lord wills. Each day has enough challenge of its own. God wants us to live every single day for Him. When Tyndall translated

Greek into the English Bible many centuries ago he got to the Greek word “epiousion” and said to himself, “Where else in the Scripture can I find ‘epiousion’?” He looked and looked and looked. “Epiousion” is not found anywhere else in the Bible. This is the only time that word is ever used in the Bible. So Tyndall went to study some Greek literature and he could not find the word “epiousion” in any Greek literature anywhere. So after much laborious study he said, “It has to mean ‘daily.’” So he put that word in there. Ever since then people have been telling Tyndall he was probably wrong and then in 1925 they found two parchments in Egypt where they saw the word “epiousion” two times. Those parchments were the “daily” grocery lists. So everybody says, “I guess Tyndall was right.” “Give us *this day our **daily** bread.*” The last part of this petition deals with us/our.

Us/Our – While this pray is teaching me how to pray personally, when I begin to pray I do not pray with singularity I pray with plurality. “Our” Father and not just “my” Father is used. Remember always this is a family prayer and you never pray singularly even though you are praying personally you always praying with intercession. You are always praying for the family, for one another.

Here I want to give you five lessons from this petition and a life takeaway for each one. So what does this petition reveal to me as a Christ centered disciple in terms of my prayer life? The first thing this teaches me is that God cares for us, holy and wholly. Your God cares for you holy. Your God cares for you that you can stand before Him without any condemnation. Your God has made you holy. He has sent His Son to a cross and paid for all of your sins. His Son has provided the righteousness that when He looks upon you He sees nothing but the perfection of His Son that wrap you up to take you up to glory. God cares for you that you would not only be holy through the blood and righteousness of Jesus but that you will love to pursue holiness as a gift back to Him.

This God who cares for you concerning holy that you are set apart made acceptable and loving to serve Him, also care for you wholly. He cares all the way from that slice of bread to everything else you need in all of life. When the Apostle Paul was asked about what to pray about, “You know Paul I think this is too small to pray about.” Paul answered in Philippians 4:6, “*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*” Paul did not come up with that because he was trying to give some encouragement and therapy to the church at Philippi. Paul is bringing into a letter what Jesus had already taught in this passage. Jesus said, “Here is the most basic essential of life, a piece of bread. Start your prayer life from right there.” Your God cares about you not only spiritually but also physically.

One may say to me, “Harry do you believe every Christian is going to be healed of all of their diseases?” I would say, “Absolutely! But not now necessarily. One will get a new body for the new heavens and the new earth. God has got a perfect healing waiting for you.” God may give you a temporary recovery healing on the way. God is not only saving your soul but He will raise this body and the corruptible is going to put on the incorruptible in that Day. God

cares about you all the way from now into eternity, from the basics all the way up to the glorious and the majestic, every single part. He cares about His people. As the song *You Have Been Good* so fitly says, "For by Your hand we have been fed and by Your Spirit we have been led." It is our God that feeds us, leads us and sustains us so do not fall into some trap in Christianity that says "the physical is bad." God made everything spiritual and physical and He said it was "good." Appetites are not bad. The idolatry of the physical is what is bad. The idolatry of appetites and the body are bad.

We are so consumed with our bodies. We need to be in shape and we need to be fit. We need to have our bodies ready to serve the Lord. It is a temple of the Holy Spirit but do not worship the "temple", the body. Some get too carried away with what they think they need to do to their bodies; operations, regiments, etc. Here is a clue. Gravity is going to win one day. You are going down. In fact you will go six feet under. That is how far we are going. Then God will give you a perfect body for the new heavens and the new earth. So the one that you have now keep fit and in shape to serve the Lord with but do not worship it. This says "no" to physical idolatry and "no" to physical abuse. Some think if they abuse their body then somehow Jesus loves them more. No, He has given you this body and every good thing to enjoy except you never enjoy it more than Him. Praise God from Whom all good things flow.

Here is God caring for us holy and completely. This is also seen in Jesus' life when He spiritually ministered to the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13–21). They were on top of the world for Jesus. They were taught unbelievable things by Jesus and Jesus says in the midst of His teaching, "This place is desolate. Let's get some food for these people." He did not say, "Just go hungry I'm teaching you the Bible." He says to them, "I'm going to give you something to eat." Notice here how He cares for them holy and wholly. He did the same thing with the 4,000 also (Matthew 15:32–39). The text says He felt "compassion on the crowd" because He had been with them three days. He wanted to get them something to eat and He fed them. God loves you holy and God loves you wholly.

So the takeaway for this point is the essential of bread is not a limit on one's prayer life but the beginning of one's prayer life. This is where you might request of God all you need to serve Him. So if that is true we ought to have confidence that God will supply our needs in Christ Jesus. And if that is true we ought to give thanks when He does. This bears out in the Bible in 1 Timothy 4. Paul said, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything give thanks" and he builds on this in 1 Timothy. Paul did this not only because of this request but Jesus also taught His disciples not to be anxious about food, shelter or clothing in Matthew 6:25–34. Here is an excerpt from that passage; **25** *"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? 26* *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? 27* *And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28* *And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field,*

*how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”*

God gives us those good gifts. You say, “I won’t idolize them but I will use them so that I may lift up His name, His Kingdom and to do His will on this earth.” Here Paul emphasizes that as he trains Timothy in the ministry. 1 Timothy 4:1–5 says, **1** “*Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,* **2** *through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,* **3** *who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.* **4** *For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,* **5** *for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.”* Someone may sinfully use something but nothing is evil in and of itself. As God cares for you wholly you refuse to idolize it but you do sanctify it. You make prayer, “God, give me my daily bread” and when He gives it you give thanks.

In fact look at 1 Timothy 6:6–8; **6** “*Now there is great gain in godliness with **contentment**,* **7** *for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.* **8** *But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be **content**.”* With humility I will depend on Him for my daily bread, with gratefulness I will give thanks for it and with contentment I will use it but God, do not let me idolize it. I came into the world with nothing and I will go out with nothing. The question is, what do you do with what He gives you while you are here? That is the first dynamic now here is the second lesson.

The second lesson from this passage is that God calls us to kill the “gimmees.” One may say, “What do you mean by this?” I mean, “Gimmee this, gimmee that, gimmee.” I am so vexed in my soul about churches who claim to be so evangelical and are teaching people that the atonement of Jesus Christ was given so that they could be rich, powerful, famous and idolatrous consumers. They teach that Jesus died so that you could get whatever you want in this world instead of teaching that Jesus died so that I could give myself in this world for all He wants to take out of it. I am also vexed in my soul about books that are being written on prayer where they tell someone how to get Jesus to do something for them. It is as if Jesus has become a cosmic genie in the sky where if we do the ritual right and rub the jar right in prayer then “poof” we get whatever we want. I am vexed in my soul when I hear, “confess it and possess it”, “believe it and receive it”, “name it and claim it”, “blab it and grab it”. I do not care how well meaning it is that is born out of the pit of hell.

Prayer has been given to us. The Lord’s Prayer has been given to us. The Lord’s Prayer has been given so that we can use it occasionally in worship but it has been given to be used consistently in private worship. But the design of it in teaching us in private worship is not a license to become self-obsessed in my personal quiet time. The Prayer does not say, “Gimmee my food.” It says, “Give us our daily bread.” So what is the takeaway for this lesson?

The takeaway is that my personal needs articulated in prayer (“daily bread”) are also a guide for my intercession of others. Do I want to be forgiven of my sins? Yes and I am going to pray for my brothers and sisters to be forgiven.

Do I need daily bread? The Bible tells us to love one another as you would be loved. If I know I need God to bring daily bread in my life then that ought to be a guide for me to pray that God would bring daily bread in your life. So personal petitions become guide marks for intercession for my brothers and sisters in the family of God. Death to the “gimmees,” then humility to call upon God for what He would give us and what I need I know I need to be praying for you.

The third lesson from this text is our daily portions are promised so why would some Christians be lacking? Go to Sudan with me. The next trip I take to Uganda go to certain places with me and you will see some brothers and sisters who do not have a bite to eat that day. Why is it that in some cases believers may not have what is necessary for the competent portion for that day? There are two reasons. One possible reason is sin; the sin of slothfulness and laziness. By the way, some people do not work because they are too spiritual to work. Here is what Paul said about that. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 6 that he worked and fed his team and I did not ask you for anything and he continues in verse 9 and 10, *“It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”* So there are some people who do not have a daily portion because they just will not go to work. They are waiting for their career offer instead of a job to do; feed their family. Whatever it takes to feed my family is what I have been called to do. God gives the daily portions by blessing my commitment to work in a way that will honor Him. The other part of this reason is that sometimes it is not the sin of the person but it is the sin of the world. It is oppression, injustice or sometimes it is a catastrophe. Some do not have their daily portion because they have not worked and some do not have their daily portions because other’s sin steal it.

The second reason why believers may not have what is necessary is because of providential opportunities for mercy ministries to His people. It is because God has withheld it from them giving it to us and called us to give it to them in His name. James 2:15–17 says, *“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”* Let me paraphrase this passage; “Don’t simply say, ‘I’ll pray for you, go in peace.’ Pray for him, bid peace to him and then give him something to eat.” Sometimes God has His people in need without their daily portion to give us an opportunity to minister mercy.

It can be started with an alms offering at communion. We can do it as we become aware of people in our family, extended family and the church family. We can do it to people who are in need outside the family, in a community, where we can show the love of Christ to a stranger and the alien. The whole mercy ministry, God calls His people to, is built upon the absence of someone’s daily portion. Now will we give it? We will give it redemptively. Maybe it will be because of a catastrophe. This is one of the reasons we can show the love of Christ to those who are in such a situation. So God has opened up the opportunity. Sometimes it is because of sin so we need to train people how to

work and how to live working for the glory of God. Sometimes it is because the sin of others that have oppressed them and so this becomes a providential opportunity for us to step into the moment.

The takeaway for this third point is that this prayer request calls us to faithfulness and to perform our responsibilities in feeding our family and sensitivity to the opportunity to redemptively feed and care for others. It is the cup of cold water given in the Name of Jesus.

Fourthly, if our daily portions are enlarged there is a reason for it. Now we are in a situation where we have more than our daily portion, food, shelter and clothing. Why would God allow that? I believe that is present again for two reasons. Sometimes beyond the competent portion that is need to serve within a culture has been amassed because of sin – greed, the idolatry of conspicuous consumerism. The idolatry of conspicuous consumerism can actually cause us to be amassing the things of this world as if they are going to give us joy and satisfaction. They never will. They are just like the false god Dagan, where they always fall down and break their arms. They can never deliver. All under the sun is vanity as the writer of Ecclesiastes put it. The other reason God may have given you more is that He has entrusted to you the resources that He wants to give to others. He may have given you room in your home that is beyond the need of your family so that in the right time for hospitality you will give it. He has given you those clothes not to hang and get moths but to start giving. He has given us more food so that we can give it to others.

Does God entrust more at one time so that it can be given at another time? Yes, this is recorded in the book of Exodus 16. God taught His people to live by daily manna. My version of manna is homemade peach ice cream and then on the sixth day He would give a double portion. Then when God put His nation Israel in the Promised Land He would put cities where He would put storehouses so that God's people would be entrusted with something to give to the needy, the alien and the orphan. Do you remember Elisha and the widow of the prophet (2 Kings 4)? God gave canister and vase upon vase with oil so that it would be able to sustain her daily for the rest of her life. Proverbs 13:22 tells us it is okay to have an inheritance as long as you do not worship the inheritance nor setup moral failure for the next generation. Maybe we have more than we need for daily competency because God has entrusted it to us for someone else.

Cindy and I have been looking at this and we have been trying to do this with our clothes/closet and thinking about the food and our home and how it could be used. How did Jesus feed the 5000 (John 6:1–14) and 4000 (Matthew 15:32–39) people in the Bible? Somebody had five loaves and two fishes one time and the other time somebody had seven loaves and two fishes. Now that is more than someone needs for lunch. Why did God see to it that that little boy and the unnamed person had more than they needed? They had more than they needed that day because God was going to use it to feed 5000 and 4000.

So here is the takeaway for this fourth point. It is not necessarily sin to have more than your daily portion but it is sin if you depend on it and not God. It is also sin if you worship it and do not use it for God. It is sin if it is not available to serve God and His Kingdom.

Fifthly, while this is a very practical request it does have an inspiring analogy that goes to our spiritual life. In John 6 Jesus has done this feeding of the 5000 and the disciples ask Him a question. John 6:30–34 says, **30** “So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? **31** Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” **32** Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” **34** They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”” Now the point of this prayer request is to focus us on God caring for us physically and how that impacts us on serving Him in the Kingdom but it does have an analogy. It is if God gives us daily bread then would not we say to God “We need a permanent meal plan, Jesus.” I am the Bread of Life.

Join me in praying that there will never be a famine of God’s Word and lifting up Jesus from this pulpit. Please pray that those who are training our ministers would teach them what it means to lift up Jesus and feed God’s people God’s Word that causes them to live all of life for Jesus. Pray that we would no longer have a famine for the true preaching of the Gospel of Jesus upon our land. Pray we never have a silence. Also pray that this would teach us to bring all of life, even bread before our Father.

I have been to Uganda eight times and on my second trip I went to the killing field of urara where they was nothing hardly. I had the privilege for four days to teach two hundred pastors. Cindy and I had packed as much as we could into the suitcases so that when I was there I was just giving it out to everybody I could on the last day I was there. I actually came back with nothing except what I was wearing, my T-shirt and my pants. That was not all that easy because back in the 80’s there were not a lot of six foot one, 210 pound Ugandans running around. But they just took what I gave and used it. They were glad to get it. There was one in particular that was a deacon who would walk three miles everyday to get me an orange bottled drink because he did not want me to get sick on the water that was there. I saved a coat, tie, shirt and a pair of socks for him. I noticed he would wash the same clothes every night and wear the same thing everyday. When I gave him the clothes he told me, “No need, I have coat, tie, shirt, socks.” I said, “I want you to have two. While you wash one you can wear this.” He said, “Oh thank you.” I turned to leave but I did not leave because I stopped in the back to watch him. He walked up to the altar of his church, knelt by it and placed the clothes on top and said, “God you sent Pastor Reeder from America to give me this. Now God who do you want me to give it to?”

Prayer:

Father, You have given us so much and most of all Your Son Jesus Christ. If there is anyone reading this who has not received Him may they do so today. God please allow us to give away Jesus, the Bread of Life. Allow us to give the necessities of life that You have blessed us with redemptively not thoughtlessly, benevolently, appropriately. God there are so many examples of this in this

church that I stand in amazement before You but Lord help us to excel still more. Please hear us. We praise You from whom all good gifts have come but we want to seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness. As to things, just add them to us, we will use them for You. In Jesus name, Amen.