

The Lord's Prayer: Our Daily Bread

by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle

Prayer of Illumination

Loving God, you provide for our every need.
You feed our bodies and our souls,
yet we hunger to know and love you more and more.
Nourish us with your Word today.
Through Jesus Christ
and in the power of the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Scripture Readings:

Proverbs 30:8 (NRSV)

Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.

Matthew 6:11 (NRSV)

Give us this day our daily bread.

*The grass withers and the flower fades,
but the Word of God endures forever.*

SERMON – The Lord's Prayer: Our Daily Bread

We've made our way through the first part of the Lord's Prayer—praising and honoring our heavenly Father's name and praying for his kingdom to come and will to be done. Now in the second half of the Lord's Prayer we make requests on our behalf.

One of the ways that we honor God and recognize him as our heavenly Father is to trust that God does and will provide our food, drink, clothing, and our most basic needs. Jesus also says:

*"Seek first the kingdom of God and
all these things will be added unto you ..."*

Praying for our daily bread reminds us that God sustains us in every way—physically and spiritually. And so it isn't trivial to ask God for and thank God for meeting our needs. A way for us to have hope that God will provide for our needs today is to remember God's faithful provision for his people in the past.

In Exodus 16, the Lord said to Moses,

"I am going to rain bread from heaven for you ... and you shall have your fill of bread; *then* you shall know that I am the Lord your God."

Morning by morning, day by day, the Israelites gathered their daily bread along their wilderness wanderings. Do you remember how many days' worth of manna the Israelites were to collect each day? One day's worth. On Friday they collected two days' worth so they wouldn't have to work on the Sabbath. But if they tried to horde the manna and get more than their daily bread, it would rot the next day.

One Rabbi applied the lesson of manna for us: "The one who possesses what he can eat today and says, 'What shall I eat tomorrow,' is a person of little faith."

Or as Jesus says,

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Matthew 6:34 (NKJV)

Pace yourself. Trust God in this moment. Trust God each and every day.

Praying for our daily bread reminds us to live one day at a time. But often times we aren't content with our daily bread—we expect from God our weekly, monthly, and yearly bread ... *all right now*.

The Lord's prayer teaches us to be satisfied with enough, to be thankful for this moment, this meal, to be grateful for what God is doing for us right now. Praying "give us this day, our daily bread" teaches us to be content, not greedy. Don't be consumed with consuming. We pray for God to give us the discipline and the wisdom to say "no" when we want too much.

Trust in God little by little, day by day. Live one day at a time—don't get ahead of yourself. Don't worry or obsess about the distant and uncertain future.

When the psalmist says, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet," the lamp used at night was held by a long string, with the light very close to their feet—hanging right over it. A person's way was literally illuminated step by step— not 100 feet ahead. In the same way, daily bread keeps us daily focused on God.

The Lord's Prayer reminds us we never pray alone, even if we're by ourselves. Just as we pray not "MY" Father, but "OUR" Father, we now ask for not just "MY daily bread" but "OUR daily bread."

This is important—as Christians we’re a people who are mindful of not only ourselves, but we care about others. Remember Jesus said to the disciples about the hungry multitudes “you feed them,” NOT “send them away.” Jesus teaches us not to be selfish in our prayers or selfish with our resources. Be thoughtful and generous towards those less fortunate—this is fundamental to our Christian faith. We don’t just receive our daily bread, we share our daily bread.

When you kneel in prayer and pray for our daily bread—bring the hungry with you—literally or in your imagination. Kneel alongside them. Pray on their behalf. Help as you have been helped. Living in a prosperous country, most of us are accustomed to food. Many of us don’t think about or worry about our next meal. A lot of us get stressed about *what* we will make or maybe how to fit all our groceries in the fridge. So we need reminders of our fragility—that God is God and we are not.

Try this—hold your breath for a while right now. The world record is 24 minutes. See how long you can go without oxygen. Pray silently as you hold your breath, give us this day our *daily breath*. That’s how dependent we are upon God—always.

But to pray “give us this day our daily bread”—when the cupboards are bare and there’s a lot of the month left before the next paycheck is in sight—or when the person you pray “give us this day” with is no longer with you, but has entered the Master’s joy—that’s when we most understand this prayer and our utter dependence upon God. It’s a prayer of trust and dependence, that whether living or dying, we belong to God and are part of the communion of saints. It’s important to note that prayer not only deepens our faith, it empowers us to live out God’s will.

There’s a story of a man who had some land and he decided to cultivate it. He cleared away the stones, uprooted the weeds, fertilized the ground, and planted a garden. And it produced beautiful flowers and vegetables. Later, he showed a friend his garden. His friend happened to be very spiritual and commented, “Isn’t it wonderful what God can do with a bit of ground like this?” “Yes,” said the man who had poured his blood, sweat, and tears into the garden, “but you should have seen this plot of land when God had it to himself!”

To quote Bishop Desmond Tutu again:

*Without God—we cannot.
Without us—God will not.*

James says, “faith without works is dead.” That can be expanded to “prayer without works is dead.” Prayer goes hand in hand with work—as long as our bodies have strength. Prayer inspires us to trust and to work. Prayer reminds us part of our work is to share with others because what we have is shared.

Whenever Jesus was involved with bread, he seemed to do these things: He would take it, bless it, break it, and then give it. We in the same way receive our bread from God, give thanks for it, break bread together, then share bread with others. We need to copy Jesus.

We always pray the Lord's Prayer at the Lord's Supper with the people of God. So when we pray for our daily bread, let's also think of the bread and the cup. When we pray for our physical need for food, we also reflect upon our need for spiritual food:

*Man does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceeds
from the mouth of God.*

When we think of our daily bread, we also think of Jesus who called himself the "Bread of Life," who gave of himself and the world daily, nourishing our bodies and our souls.

Amen.

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