

GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU

Matthew 6:11

Matthew 6:11 marks a transition in the Lord's Prayer. The first three petitions, recorded in verses 9-10, teach us to pray focusing on "Your." These petitions address God's name, kingdom, and will. The remaining petitions, recorded in verses 11-13, teach us to pray focusing on "us" or "our." These petitions address our need for bread, forgiveness, and deliverance. But this transition from "your" to "our" does not suggest that there are competing or conflicting priorities in prayer. It does not suggest that we come bowing before God's throne to address his priorities and then God, as it were, changes places with us to address our priorities. This model prayer is meant to teach us how to approach God in prayer. In all of these petitions, God occupies the place of priority.

When we pray about God's name, kingdom, and will, we are expressing our devotion to God. And when we pray for bread, forgiveness, protection, and deliverance, we are expressing our dependence upon God. When our needs become the subject of our prayers, God remains the object of our prayers. So, when we move from praying about God's kingdom to praying about our kitchens, we are still praying about God's priorities. Our bread is God's priority. The model prayer teaches us to make God's priorities our priorities. But in the process, we learn that we are one of God's priorities. What the late CARDINAL BASIL HUME said a few days before he died is absolutely true: "What God wants is always what is best for us." As we are now permitted to focus on ourselves in prayer, the Lord still sets the agenda. And the first thing he leads us to pray for is daily bread.

There are those who reject and ridicule Christianity because they view it as not being practical, relevant, or helpful. Because we are so preoccupied with spiritual things, they regulate our faith to being a "private matter" and leave faith out of the conversation of "real world" issues. What should our response to that be? We respond by praying, "Give us this day our daily bread." I am not denying that Christians are fixated with heavenly, eternal, and supernatural things. We are unabashedly spiritual people. Yet we insist that our faith will ultimately not allow us to make divisions between the spiritual and the secular, the eternal and the temporal, the biblical and the practical. As spiritual people, we pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." But we also pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Christianity is not just about pie in the sky. It is also about bread on the table. The one that saves our souls puts food in our stomachs. The divine hand that clothes us with righteousness also clothes us with clothes. The God who gives us eternal security gives us our evening meal. This petition teaches us to

approach God in prayer trusting that he is ready, willing, and able to meet all of our needs. **1 Timothy 5:8** teaches us that a man who will not feed his family is worse than an unbeliever. If so, how much more can we trust the heavenly Father, who is the object of our faith, will take care of us.

In 1904, W. Stillman Martin and his family spent several weeks at the Practical Bible Training School in Lestershire, New York. President John A. Davis invited them to help prepare a songbook for the school. While there, Stillman intended to keep a speaking engagement that was quite some distance from the school. But on that Sunday morning, his wife Civilla became suddenly ill. If he went to preach, he would be a great distance from his wife for an extended period, and he would not be able to take care of her. Rev. Martin was confused about what he should do. Should he stay with his wife or go preach. But while he was deliberating, their young son made an insightful remark. "Father," he inquired, "don't you think that if God wants you to preach today, he will take care of mother while you are away?" Chastised, Martin went to preach. And God did indeed take care of her while he was away. As she regained her strength, she began writing words to a song. She showed him the words when he returned. And he set them to music that same evening. The next year, the hymn was published in the school's new songbook entitled, "Songs of Redemption and Praise." But the song blew up way past the school's hymnal. It soon became a favorite hymn of Christian people everywhere. In fact, we still sing it today.

BE NOT DISMAYED WHATEVER BE-TIED
GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU
BENEATH HIS WINGS OF LOVE ABIDE
GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU

THROUGH DAYS OF TOIL WHEN HEART DOES FAIL
GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU
WHEN DANGERS FIERCE YOUR PATH ASSAIL
GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU

NO MATTER WHAT MAY BE YOUR TEST
GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU
LEAN, WEARY ONE, UPON GOD'S BREAST
GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU

What are the things in your life that are distracting you from your spiritual priorities? I want you to know that the God of the hallowed name, coming kingdom, and sovereign will, is also the God of the daily bread. **Matthew 6:8** and **6:32** tell us that God knows what we need, even before we ask. In **Matthew 6:33**, Jesus commands, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." God will take care of you. And the implications of this petition teach us to live in light of the divine provisions of our heavenly Father. This is a great petition. Every word in this verse is significant.

- “Give” speaks of the sovereignty and providence of God.
 - “Us” speaks of community and generosity.
 - “This day” speaks of total confidence for today and freedom from worrying about tomorrow.
 - “Our” speaks of industry and integrity.
 - “Daily” speaks of dependence on the unfailing faithfulness of God.
 - “Bread” speaks of all of our physical and material needs.
- To pray this petition is to...

I. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU NEED DIVINE PROVISIONS.

There are various interpretations of what Jesus means when he teaches us to pray for bread. For instance, this request for bread is sometimes read as a request for spiritual renewal. In **John 6:35**, Jesus says, **“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”** This petition for bread is also read as preparation for the Lord’s Supper. And that’s fair. Praying this petition before the Lord’s Supper reminds us that we have not earned the right to be at God’s table. We receive the bread of the table as a grace gift from God. This petition for bread is also read as an expression of love for God’s word. Throughout the Old and New Testament, God’s word is viewed as a meal, as food, as bread. This petition for bread is also read as another way of saying, “Your kingdom come.” Many of the prophets, and Jesus himself, depicted the coming of the kingdom as a celebration at God’s table. But as beautiful these pictures are, they are spiritualizations that ignore the plain reading of the text. In this petition, bread means bread. Bread means food. It means the physical and material things we need to sustain us.

“Daily bread” is the food we need day by day in order to survive. At the same time, bread covers more than food. Bread symbolizes all of our physical needs. It represents what food produces – strength to walk, work, drive, and type. Bread gives stamina to close that business deal. Bread keeps our minds clear to think and plan. Bread gives the teacher energy to handle restless children. Bread is food, and then some. It stands for the results we get from eating food. It stands for all the physical things we need in life. Bread is also a symbol for the material things we need. We eat bread, it gives us strength to work, and thus get compensated. Bread symbolizes money, time, a job, and other material things. Bread stands for a car to give us basic transportation or money to get on the bus. Bread stands for heat in the winter and air condition in the summer. Bread stands for physical healing so we can work and a raise so that we can support our family. Bread stands for all the material things we need.

It is offensive enough that “bread” covers all these kinds of things. But the most offensive thing about this reference to “bread” is that it is a petition. We are to pray about bread. Praying, “Give us this day our daily bread,” forces us to acknowledge that bread does not automatically show up on our tables. Bread

comes from a source outside of us. And if bread is not provided, we will die. In praying this petition, we acknowledge that we need divine provisions. When we pray this prayer, we confess our humanity. It forces us to admit that we are not self-sufficient. "Give us this day our daily bread" forces us to deal with the fact that we need God. Our physical needs are met not because we work, plan, and save. Our needs are met because God keeps putting bread on the table. Go ahead. Work hard. Save your money. And plan wisely. But do not forget you need God! You need divine provisions to get to heaven. You also need divine provisions to get to work in the morning. We need God! In fact, the fact that daily bread covers all of our physical and material needs says that we ought to pray at least as often as we expect to eat. We need God!

Let me put a footnote here.

The petition teaches us to pray for bread not cake. It is about our needs not our "greeds." We are instructed to pray for necessities not luxuries. It is significant that Jesus instructs us to pray for something as basic as bread. In so doing, he is bidding us not to be addicted to the things of this world. We live in a culture that instills within us a spirit of greed, worldliness, covetousness, materialism, and overindulgence. We are ungrateful people. We do not know how to tell ourselves no. We always want more than what we have. With this attitude, it is easy to forget God. So Jesus insults our desire to be big shots by telling us to pray for bread. This means that Christians ought not to desire to be rich and wealthy. To be more offensive, Christians should not desire anything that would tempt us to forget that we need God. We pray for bread in order to learn how to be content with what we have. We pray for bread to remind ourselves that the abundant life Jesus offers us is not health and wealth. It is a relationship with God that transcends health and wealth. We pray for bread to acknowledge that no matter where we live, we need God. In **Proverbs 30:8-9** Agur prays, "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God." Jesus teaches us to pray the same way. This petition asks God to keep us in a place of dependence upon him.

II. AFFIRM THAT YOU ARE TRUSTING IN DIVINE PROVISIONS.

Often, my family and friends ask me for books on certain subjects, confident that I will have something to help them in my library. However, none of my family or friends ever ask me for a million dollars. They know I do not have it! They do not believe I could get it. They do not trust that I am able. Likewise, when you boil it down, this is the reason why many of us do not pray. On the other hand, prayer affirms that we are trusting God to meet the need.

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we are saying that God is able to do just that. This petition is a statement of trust. When we pray this petition, we are affirming that God is able to supply whatever we need. God is able to help you get and keep a job. God is able to heal your body. God is able to mend broken relationships. God is able to give you wisdom to make the right decision. God is able to protect you in dangerous situations. This petition teaches us to take our needs to God in prayer and trust that he is able to meet our needs. Have you learned to pray like that? "Lord, I have a need, I am coming to you because I trust you. I do not know what to do, but I trust you. I do not know how I am going to pull this off, but I trust you. This situation is overwhelming, but I trust you." Jesus teaches us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," not only to teach us that we need God, but also to teach us that he is able to meet our needs.

Notice the time references in this petition: "this day" and "daily."

"This day" says that WE ARE TO CONFIDENTLY TRUST GOD. We do not pray that God will give us bread tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year. We are just concerned about today. As we pray specifically about today, we are expressing our confidence in God's faithful ability to take care of the rest of the days. In teaching us to pray about "this day," Jesus is introducing a point that he will deal with in verses 25-34 of this chapter. Don't worry about tomorrow. This is not to say that we should not plan for tomorrow. **Proverbs 30:25** says: "the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer." Ants do not sit around doing nothing, assuming that God will bless their idleness. This says that there is a place for industry. We are to be good stewards of the opportunities, resources, and information God gives us. But we must not become anxious, worried, or troubled over how our needs are going to be met.

The African Impala is an animal in the antelope family of animals. They can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than thirty feet. Yet these magnificent creatures are kept enclosed in zoos with walls that are no more than 3-feet-tall, with nothing on top of the enclosure. How is that? They will not jump if they do not see where their feet will fall. If you do not want your life to be limited, you must confidently trust God today, even if you cannot see what tomorrow is going to bring.

"Daily" says that WE ARE TO CONSTANTLY TRUST GOD. "Daily" means that we are to regularly and repeatedly come to God trusting that he is always able to meet our needs. Have you ever had a big debt to arise just when your funds were low? Have you ever worked for a company or business that one day had to close down? Have you ever gone to friends or family for help, only to find that when you needed it they didn't have it? Well, thank God that there is an account that never has insufficient funds. There is a friend who is never broke. There is a business that is never in danger of closing down. Our God is able to daily meet

our needs. **Psalm 68:19** says, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation." **Philippians 4:19** says, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT TOMORROW, I JUST LIVE FROM DAY TO DAY
I DON'T BORROW FROM ITS SUNSHINE , FOR ITS SKIES MAY TURN TO GRAY
I DON'T WORRY OVER THE FUTURE CAUSE I KNOW WHAT JESUS SAID
AND TODAY I'LL WALK BESIDE HIM, FOR HE KNOWS WHAT LIES AHEAD

MANY THINGS ABOUT TOMORROW, I DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND
BUT I KNOW WHO HOLDS TOMORROW, AND I KNOW HE HOLDS MY HAND

III. ACCEPT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AMID DIVINE PROVISIONS.

VANCE HAVNER used to say that God feeds the birds every day, but he does not put worms in their nests. That line expresses a thoroughly biblical concept. Study the miracles of Jesus recorded in John, for instance. Even though Christ alone performed the miracles, often Jesus made the recipients responsible for some role: In **John 2** he turns water to wine at a wedding in Cana. But Mary tells the servants to do whatever he says. And Jesus orders the servants to fill the water pots, and then he orders them to go take it to the governor of the feast. In **John 5**, Jesus heals the man who lay by Bethesda's Pool for 38 years. But he tells the man, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." In **John 6**, Jesus multiplies the fish and loaves. But he makes the disciples inventory the crowd and gather what they had. Then he made them have the crowd sit down, pass out the food, and pick up the leftovers. In **John 9**, Jesus heals a man who had been born blind. But he orders the man to wash his face in the pool of Siloam. In **John 11** he resuscitates Lazarus from the dead. But he tells the sisters, "Show me where you laid him." "Roll the stone away." "Loose him and let him go."

This affirms for us that even though God provides, that does not mean we do not have any responsibilities. What are our responsibilities amid divine provisions? **Ephesians 4:28** says, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." This verse summarizes our threefold responsibility. First, we must have INTEGRITY. This petition teaches us that Christians do not eat stolen bread. We do not lie, cheat, steal, or manipulate to get our needs met. It is "our" bread in the sense that we do not take bread that rightfully belongs to someone else.

- You don't have to lie to get your needs met.
- You don't have to cheat to get your needs met.
- You don't have to hurt people to get your needs met.
- You don't have to burn bridges to get your needs met.
- You don't have to use others to get your needs met.

If you do what is right, God will take care of you. Put God first and God will provide what you need. If you acknowledge him in all your ways, he will direct your paths. David said, "I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his children begging for bread" (**Psalm 37:25**). Also, we must have **INDUSTRY**. It has been well said "without God we cannot do it and God will not do it without us." In **2 Thessalonians 3:10**, Paul says, "For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."

I read that there is one species of birds of which the mother bird does everything she can to get her growing babies out of the nest. When she is ready for them to go and is certain that they can fly, she begins to push them out of the nest. On occasion, there is one reluctant bird that refuses to leave the nest. So the mother does what a lot of human mothers ought to do when their children refuse to grow up. She actually begins to take the nest away. Piece by piece she picks the nest until it is completely dismantled. I can imagine a conversation going on between the child and the mother. "Mother!" the small bird shouts. "What are you doing?" "I am taking your nest away," she replies. "Why are you doing that?" "I put it up. I can take it down." "But don't you love me?" "Of course, I love you. But my love requires that you fly, and you can't fly sitting around in that nest all the time. So I am taking it away." The small bird suddenly finds itself sitting on thin air and begins to flap its wings. As it flies upward, surprised at its ability, it calls back over its shoulder, "Hey, Mom. Look at me. I'm flying. I'm flying!" "Of course, you're flying," the mother says. "That's what the disappearing nest is all about."

God wants you to fly. And if you insist on just taking advantage of his provisions without accepting responsibilities, God is going to start taking your nest away. If you want God to really bless you, do your part. God loves to answer the prayers of those who are willing to be a part of the answer to the prayer.

Likewise, we must have **GENEROSITY**. God gives us bread so that we may share with others. When we pray for our daily bread, we are reminded that Christians are to be concerned with the needs of others and not just our own needs. God gives to us so that he can give through us. And he will stop giving to us if he can't give through us. Mark it down. Many things that we hoard, God views those things as bread we are stealing from other people. It is disturbing how many of us feel like our lives are not valuable because we are not where we want to be, or we are not with who we want to be with, or we do not have what we want to have. Let me tell you. The value of our life is not about how many of your own selfish ambitions come to pass. The true value of your time on earth is based on the positive impact you make on the lives of others. If you really want to be someone significant, be a loving channel through which divine resources can meet human needs to the glory of God. That is, share your bread with someone else.

IF I CAN HELP SOMEBODY AS I JOURNEY ALONG

IF I CAN CHEER SOMEBODY WITH A WORD OR A SONG
IF I CAN SHOW SOMEBODY HE'S TRAVELING WRONG
THEN MY LIVING IS NOT IN VAIN

IV. APPLAUD THE SOURCE OF DIVINE PROVISIONS.

In his sermon on this passage, Haddon Robinson recalls playing with his kids when they were young. They would sit on his lap and work to get his fingers open. The rules were, once a finger was open, it could not be closed again. They would work at it, until they got the pennies from his hand. Then they would jump down and run away. Just kids. Just a game. Unfortunately, we often do God like that. Sometimes when we come to God, we come only for the pennies in his hand. "Lord, I need a passing grade. Help me to study." "Lord, I need a job." "Lord, my loved one is ill." We reach for the pennies. And when God grants our requests, we push the hand away. But more important than the pennies in God's hand is the hand of God himself. And that's what this prayer is all about. **Psalm 145:16** says, "You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing." **1 Corinthians 10:31** says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." And **James 1:17** says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

WHEN WAVES OF AFFLICTION SWEEP OVER THE SOUL
AND SUNLIGHT IS HIDDEN FROM VIEW
WHENEVER YOU'RE TEMPTED TO FRET OR COMPLAIN
JUST THINK OF HIS GOODNESS TO YOU.

THE WORLD MAY FORSAKE YOU AND THOSE WHOM YOU TRUST
MAY PROVE TO BE FALSE AND UNTRUE
THERE'S ONE YOU CAN TRUST, WHILE UNTIL THE END
JUST THINK OF HIS GOODNESS TO YOU

WHEN DEAR ONES ARE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU HERE
YOU'VE LOVED WITH AFFECTION SO TRUE
LOOK UNTO JESUS FOR STRENGTH TO ENDURE
JUST THINK OF HIS GOODNESS TO YOU

JUST THINK OF HIS GOODNESS TO YOU
JUST THINK OF HIS GOODNESS TO YOU
WHEN STORMS OVER YOU SWEEP, HE'S ABLE TO KEEP
JUST THINK OF HIS GOODNESS TO YOU
