

MATTHEW 6.9-15

THIS IS HOW YOU SHOULD PRAY

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

AND FOR OURSELVES WE PRAY . . .

You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

JAMES 4.2c-4a

- ▶ In the second half of this prayer, the words “us” and “our” are as prominent as were the “Your” references to God in the first part. Jesus wants us to understand that our Father is deeply concerned about the wholeness of our lives here on earth: physical, relational, and spiritual. But he also wants us to understand that the *what* and *how* of our prayers for ourselves must also reflect God’s will for us.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD . . .

- ▶ First and foremost, Jesus wants us (and we need!) to understand this priceless truth: our Father is deeply concerned about the everyday issues that affects His children, and His awareness of us extends to the smallest details of our individual lives.
- ▶ “Do I have enough this week?” “Will I have enough when I retire?” These are questions that we continually ask as we look at our needs and then at our resources. Most often, our sense of “enough” requires “more”—whether driven by insecurity, uncertainty, a desire for better, or by discontentment and greed.

- ▶ Our Father knows that we have both a sense of inadequacy and a self-driven desire for more. So Jesus teaches us to pray in this manner:
"Give us this day our daily bread."
- ▶ This petition is based on Israel's need to depend on God's daily provision of food while they were in the Desert of Sinai. God wanted them to trust His ability to take care of their *every* need. That daily trust would be necessary for building their faith for other challenges.
- ▶ Abundance (or the desire for enough) produces a sense of self-sufficiency and independence. I strive for control of my life and I, not God, determine the provision and adequacy. In a society of easily accessible abundance, dependence must be intentionally cultivated if we are to live as children who really trust our Father in heaven.

*Two things I ask of you;
deny them not to me before I die:
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.*

PROVERBS 30.7-9

FORGIVE OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OTHERS . . .

And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

LUKE 6.34-36

- ▶ The rabbis taught that every sin created a debt that built a barrier between oneself and God. Conversely, every righteous act added to accumulated assets and connected one with God. Jesus would have us understand that forgiveness is more profound than we imagine.

- ▶ In contrast to the teaching of the rabbis, and in response to a question from Peter, Jesus taught that we can come to God and experience Him graciously wiping out our unpayable debt (Matthew 18.21-35), but that grace comes with a relational or social expectation—

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ . . . So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” (vss. 33, 35)

- ▶ Like the unmerciful servant, we are inclined to deal with others on a different basis than God has dealt with us. In doing so, we don’t act like true children of the Father in heaven. We need the love and grace of God: love that does not keep a record of wrongs and grace that freely erases the debt of another against us.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

1 CORINTHIANS 10.13

- ▶ Instructed by the inspired testimonies of David and Jeremiah, we understand that no one is capable of discerning his hidden faults or the susceptibility to sin within one's own heart. That knowledge is available only to God. Thus, Jesus instructs us to daily pray that God would guide us away from temptation and deliver us from evil.



What does the sixth petition mean?

Answer: *“And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one”* means:

By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.

And our sworn enemies—
the devil, the world, and our own flesh— never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat in this spiritual struggle,
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.

- ▶ No one can achieve an acceptable righteousness before God—that requires faith in the atoning work of Christ. And no one can live a life of victory over sin and self without the help of the Holy Spirit. We need the Spirit to help us even as the Son did (see Hebrews 9.14).

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

ROMANS 8.12-13

- ▶ An awareness of our own susceptibility is a necessary deterrent to pride and self-righteousness, and if truly present, will lead us to be gracious and merciful to others who sin (Galatians 6.1-3). And so we must pray.