

Praying the Lord's Prayer

Jesus gave us a 'model of prayer' in response to his disciples' request that he teach them to pray (Lu 11:1). It is believed by some that Jesus is using a rabbinic formula of a series of topics that give us an easy-to-remember format. We will work from Matthew 6:9-13.

So far, we have looked at the first three topics which are all about God as our Father, whose name we are to revere and honour, and under whose reign we are to learn how to serve and obey, and through which he connects heaven and earth – as in heaven so on earth.

The next three topics are the ways in which he meets us in our embodied context, and the manner in which we are to respond to his gracious provisions for all our needs, starting with:

Topic 4 – Give Us Today Our Daily bread

This topic is the practical connecting hinge between 'Our Father in heaven' and 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. While we live in this present age, God has committed himself to supply our practical needs of physical sustenance on his earth, through the relational connection of our asking him, as our provider, to 'give us today our daily bread'.

This provides a beautiful picture of the reciprocal and collaborative nature of the relationship that God has always had planned for us his image reflectors. In this topic, we are being instructed to turn our attention to both our material and spiritual needs, which in fact, covers all our needs for every area of our lives to which he has committed to provide for us – this is where divinity and humanity meet, as they do in Jesus!!!

The phrase 'daily bread' in this prayer has had an interesting translational history:

The Greek word used for 'daily' in this instance is *epiousion*, usually translated as daily bread — bread for the day; bread that is part of our everyday-embodied-physicality.

The problem, however, is that *epiousion* was never used in any ancient Greek literature in the context of 'daily'. So, it had been a challenge to interpreters throughout the centuries to grasp exactly what Jesus meant. Mostly, the primary meaning was taken to be normal bread – the physical bread that we need today; or was it to be treated as purely 'spiritual' bread?

But all these translational challenges changed in 1897, when two British archaeologists were working on an archaeological excavation south of Cairo in the village of Oxyrhynchus. They discovered scraps of papyrus that had ended up in the local rubbish dump. They contained many of the throw-away words of everyday use; the ordinary 'street-words' used by workers, business owners, shopkeepers, and householders. These were not the highbrow words of the classics by Plato and Aristotle, or of government dignitaries and their agents.

Then, in 1910, Albert Debrunner, a German linguist and New Testament scholar, was examining some of these scraps of papyrus, and found among them a shopping list that had probably been put together by a mother and perhaps given to her son to go to the local baker to buy some bread for the family – the word used to describe the kind of bread she wanted was the Greek word *epiousion* – freshly baked bread; fresh bread that we will use

today. In other words, she was saying, I don't want any stale bread from the day before. Make sure it's 'daily bread' – the fresh bread just baked today for today's use!!!

This was the bread that Jesus was meaning – ordinary bread baked today for our needs today.

In other words, Jesus is teaching us that our heavenly Father is our eternal Source who is directly interested in meeting all the practical daily needs of our earthly lives, even down to the food we need today in order to maintain a healthy, productive, and enjoyable life.

Now, this life we live requires us to have the strength we need to do all the other things that need to be done today. This includes all the things required for provide adequate family care, appropriate clothing, and the schooling needs for the kids; strength and alertness to fulfil workplace responsibilities; sufficient recreational needs, etc. – everything we need to make life work well for us. This really is the hinge connecting 'as in heaven' with 'so on earth'.

Four things we need to know and keep in mind –

God knows our needs for each day and wants to provide those needs.

³¹ So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?"³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matt 6:31-33)

¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:18-19)

God has blessed us in Christ, not because we deserve it, but because he loves us.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (Eph 1:3)

Our earthly response to God is to submit our needs to him trusting him for his provision.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

We must be tenacious in our requests – Why? His timing is not always ours.

⁷ 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matt 7:7-8)

Our 'daily bread' encompasses far more than just our food for that day – it includes all the responsibilities we will be required to achieve on the strength of that food, in all the various settings that we will be required to carry out those activities in order to fulfil our responsibilities – that is quite a commitment our loving God has made to us so that we can bring glory to his name through living our lives under the gracious reign of our Father through his Son and his Spirit.