

Matthew 6:11-13

The Model Prayer (Part 2)

Can you solve the following math problem: what is $3 \times 4 + 1 \times 4$. In January 2019, a 911 dispatcher in Lafayette, IN received a strange call from a little boy who was struggling to solve the formula. The dispatcher graciously showed the young boy much patience and kindness, but little has been said about the young boy. Would you be so bold as to call 911? I hope not! But at the same time, there is something incredible about what he did. He had a problem and he turned to the person he had been told could help him when he needed it. You have a heavenly Father who offers the same.

In the opening half of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus explored the components of adoration and thanksgiving in our prayers. The latter half explores two other important ingredients of prayer. The first is **Supplication** (vs. 11). The simple line, "Give us this day our daily bread" (vs 11) has two applications. The first is for *Physical Requests*. Jesus encourages us to bring all our needs, including daily sustenance, to God. Remember that Jesus was preaching to a culture that didn't take food for granted. Most citizens woke up not knowing if they would eat.

It is not an accident Jesus uses the word *bread*. It is generic and common enough to describe our physical needs in general, but at the same time, bread was perhaps the most common food source as demonstrated in the biblical narrative. Ultimately, Jesus wants us to genuinely trust the Lord will supply our needs. Through prayer, we learn to trust less in our own ability and his provision (see Matthew 6:25-26, 7:9-11). Notice the emphasis on the word "daily." Preachers have long suggested we should "pray for our needs, not our greeds." Living by faith means that God has taken care of everything and will take care of everything. Let us focus on the day.

Such requests do not, however, diminish the biblical requirement to work or to use wisdom. Ultimately, supplication is an act of humility. In prayer, we confess our own inadequacies. What we need is God's sovereign care to shine upon us.

The second application of supplication includes *Spiritual Requests*. Throughout the Bible, food in general and bread in particular are metaphors for our spiritual needs. Consider how often food is associated with temptation and sin (Eve and the fruit, Esau surrendering his birthright for soup, the Jews complaining in the wilderness, Jesus tempted to turn stones into bread, etc.). In each story, food reveals man's struggle to control their appetite.

For many of us, the hardest part of losing weight is not exercising (we can always go for a long walk), but dieting. The same is true with our spiritual lives. Outward acts of piety and ritual are easy, but self-control and godliness are difficult. Most are either spiritually starved or spiritually malnourished. Some are "hungering and thirsting for righteousness" but have been eaten an

unhealthy spiritual diet while others are starving but don't know where to look. Either way, what we need is for the Lord to provide for us spiritually.

The final component of prayer is **Confession** (vs. 12-13). This is a continuation of addressing our spiritual needs. If adoration properly orientates our prayers toward our Creator, confession orientates our prayers toward our Redeemer. Your greatest need in prayer is addressing sin. It requires us to do three things. First, we must simply *Confess Our Sins* (vs. 12a). Jesus assumes his disciples are sinners and will continue to struggle to crucify the flesh. Being the case, the proper response is to confess our sins and receive the cleansing work of Christ and then walk in freedom. Forgiveness is not a license to sin again, but liberty from the guilt and shame that comes with it. The only way to address our own evil and wickedness is to cry out to God for grace, healing, cleansing, and forgiveness.

Secondly, we must *Forgive Others* (vs. 12b). One of the main reasons we ought to seek God's grace is to practice God's grace. Notice that Jesus assumes that his disciples forgive those who sin against them (see Matthew 5:23-26, 6:14-15). Perhaps the best kept secret to spiritual renewal is learning to both receive God's forgiveness and extend forgiveness. Pray the Lord will guide you in our spiritual duty to forgive and reconcile.

Finally, confession involves *Acknowledging Our Weaknesses* (vs. 13). The language common in our translations is misleading. God does not tempt us (James 1:13-15). A better reading could be, "do not let us succumb to temptation." In sports, knowing your opponent is as important as knowing your own team. The reason coaches watch film and analyze their opponent is to prepare them. It is imperative we know ourselves (including our weaknesses) and our enemy. Notice that we are not praying to escape temptation but overcome it. Such a prayer acknowledges that only our Father is the one who can truly protect us.

Hannibal was the Carthaginian general that almost single handedly prevented the Romans from becoming a powerful empire. Despite their best efforts, the Romans couldn't beat Hannibal. His secret was elephants in battle. It wasn't until Roman general Scipio Africanus came that Hannibal was defeated. Among other strategies, General Africanus decided to startle the elephants during the battle by blasting trumpets causing them to retreat in fear. Our enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil) know it doesn't take much for us to retreat. What we need is for the God of Armies, the Lord of Hosts, to stand by our side and fight for us. What we need is prayer.