

The Prayer Request that Goes to War

Luke 11:3

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When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He emphasized that we should talk to our Father God about the big things in life and the small things. We pray about big topics—like the eternal nature of God’s coming kingdom—but also about the matters of life we often take for granted: where we live, what we drink, and what we eat. By modeling this attitude for us, Jesus teaches us that God is so intimately involved in our daily life that even something as seemingly insignificant as a loaf of bread is divinely provided for us by our loving God.

One of the reasons I love to hear children and new believers pray is they pray with fresh simplicity. They haven’t learned formality; they approach it as if it were a conversation.

The trouble is, we too-quickly outgrow that fresh simplicity.

I remember discipling a young man who’d come to faith; he had no religious background at all, and the first time I asked him to pray, he said, “I don’t know how.” I said, “It’s a conversation between you and the Lord.” He said, “Okay,” and he started out by saying, “Dear Lord, this is Mike.” My wife Marsha remembers a little boy praying, “Lord, this is Jeff, Sue’s son.”

I love that.

Frankly, part of the problem in growing older in the faith is that we lose that kind of simplicity. Perhaps younger believers and children outgrow it because they’ve been listening to us.

I can’t help but wonder: how do we sound to them? What are they picking up from us?

Reminds me of the little 5-year-old girl who was just learning to pray at the dinner table. Sunday dinner rolled around and there was a dining room full of guests from church. Her mother decided this would be the perfect time for her little girl to show them what she was learning, so she said, “Honey, why don’t you pray before we eat.” And immediately she shook her little shy head no. The mother insisted—now she was a little

embarrassed herself—she said, “Honey, you can do it; look, why don’t you just pray what you have heard me pray.” Her daughter said, “Okay,” bowed her head and said, “Lord, why did I invite all these people over for dinner.”

That’s not necessarily worth repeating.

Chuck Swindoll wrote some time ago about a conversation a pastor was having with a mother and her little boy after church. He said to the little boy, “So, your mother says your prayers with you each night?” “Yes sir.” The pastor said, “Well, what does she say?” He replied, “Thank God he’s in bed.”

Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* (Word Publishing, 1998), p. 456

That might be your favorite prayer these days.

The truth is: we can all pray better, more transparently, more gratefully, more biblically, more expectantly than we typically pray.

We’re always learning how to pray.

In our last study, I told you about Martin Luther’s friend and barber there in Wittenberg, Germany—a man named Peter. Peter had asked Luther to teach him how to pray. And Luther wrote out a lesson for him entitled, “A Simple Way to Pray.”

It would be published in 1535; I was able to purchase a reprint of that edition and just this past week I read in the introduction where Luther wrote: “Dear Master Peter: I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. May our

dear Lord grant to you and to everybody to do it better than [me]!”

Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray* (Westminster: John Knox Press; originally published in 1535; reprint, 2000), p. 1

Even Luther wanted to learn how to pray better.

No matter how old you are in the faith, prayer is always a convicting subject; in fact, it’s that one, unique subject that always seems to need more study, gives us more homework—more pop quizzes—and needs more correction than any other subject in the university curriculum of discipleship.



Is prayer easy or difficult for you? If it is difficult, how so? What makes it hard to make prayer a regular part of our daily lives?

And part of the problem is that we get stuck on cliches and religious jargon. We learn to pray without thinking; we use a few words without heart, rather than speak from our heart a few words.

Robert Cook, an evangelical leader from the last generation, made this interesting statement on prayer, “All of us have one routine prayer in our system; and once we get rid of it, we can really begin to pray.”

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Matthew: Be Loyal* (Victor Books, 1989), p. 43

If you have your copy of the New Testament, we’re now in chapter 11 of

Luke's Gospel, where the Lord is teaching the disciples a model prayer. It's a prayer unlike any prayer they've ever heard before. They had memorized formal prayers since they were children, but this one was entirely different; it wasn't so much to be memorized as it was to be modeled after.

It began with this family association where the disciples were taught to approach the God of the universe as their personal Father. And they could—and we can—when God's Son becomes our Messiah.

The prayer addressed the Father; Matthew adds “in *heaven*;” His name is to be *hallowed*—treated with reverence—and his will is to be *honored*.

And now today we arrive at *verse 3* where the disciples are taught to pray with childlike simplicity:

Give us each day our daily bread.

Luke 11:3

This is a rather stunning shift in focus. Suddenly, we're praying about dinner.



Why do you think Jesus encourages us to pray about something as small as our daily meals? What message is He trying to get across to us?

Early church leaders such as Origen and Tertullian couldn't imagine this prayer including something so mundane as food, so they “spiritualized the bread here to refer to the bread served at communion.”

Adapted from David E. Garland, [Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke](#) (Zondervan 2011), p. 463

I mean there's no way you're going to be praying about the glory and transcendence of God in Heaven, the sacredness of His name and the universal sovereignty of His will and suddenly shift gears and talk to Him about lunch. No way.

But that's exactly what Jesus is teaching them to pray.

And the key word here is “**daily**.” The disciple's prayer here in Luke 11 and the other teaching of this model prayer back in Matthew 6 are the only two times you find this word “**daily**” in all of Scripture.

In 1889, a papyrus fragment was found that was nothing more than a grocery list dating to around the first century. Next to one of the items, this same Greek word was scribbled; they were buying just enough for that day.

So evidently, our heavenly Father, as one author put it, moves from the clouds of heaven down to the dusty streets and into the busy kitchens of everyday life.

Adapted from R. Albert Mohler Jr. [The Prayer that Turns the World Upside Down](#) (Nelson Books, 2018), p. 110

Daily bread represented the daily needs of life.

Now this kind of prayer request does more for the disciple than put bread on his plate, it engages us in a battle. This kind of praying is a call to war against our own flesh, our own perspective, our own agenda.

Let me show you where this prayer request for **“daily bread”** battles against four issues in our daily lives.

This prayer request for *daily bread* battles against anxiety.

This phrase is delivering a very simple, yet profound principle to the believer: trust God one day at a time.

One of the challenges in our own prayer lives is that we want God to solve tomorrow’s hunger, next week’s problems, and next month’s needs.

Give us daily bread battles anxiety because it effectively says, “Lord, I’m going to trust you for tomorrow, but I’m going to depend on You for today.”

Luke’s present imperative construction of this prayer request indicates that we are continually praying for God’s provision [for each day].

Darrell L. Bock, [Luke: Volume 2](#) (Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1054

One day at a time.

Have you ever thought about the fact that God’s ***mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23)***, as if to say, they are new every morning because they run out at the end of the day. And that’s why the promise is given that they are new again the next morning.

It arrives in daily deposits, not weekly, biweekly, or monthly. You’ll never have enough mercy and grace and wisdom and strength for more than one day at a time.

Which is why Jesus Himself preached against worrying about tomorrow and let me tell you, Jesus had things He could have worried about tomorrow. But He said in **Matthew 6:34**:

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Can you believe Jesus said that? I face troubles every day?! How realistic was He! Every day has trouble, here’s the point: so don’t pull tomorrow’s trouble into today’s.

Nobody’s strong enough to live two days at a time.

Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, [On Earth as It Is in Heaven](#) (Baker Books, 2010), p. 98

Long time pastor Warren Wiersbe once wrote, “The average person is being crucified as it were between two thieves: the regrets of yesterday, and the worries of tomorrow.”

Ibid, p. 100

The average person is being crucified between two thieves: the regrets of yesterday, and the worries of tomorrow.

That’s like living three days at a time, you can’t do it. You can only live one day at a time.

But if you're like me, you will say, "Then I wish I had more time today! I didn't solve the problems of today; I can't get everything done in one day."

Warren Wiersbe went on to write that on one occasion he was complaining about the lack of time and his busy schedule. He was complaining to a friend who then quietly said to him, "You will always have enough time to do the will of God."

As you follow Him, whatever you got done today, was all He wanted you to do.

This prayer battles against anxiety.

This prayer request for *daily bread* battles against arrogance.

Don't overlook the fact that the Lord is teaching us not to pray for something amazing, something unbelievable, but something ordinary and basic.

Bread.

This request certainly covers all our daily needs, everything we need to survive.

Charles R. Swindoll, [Insights on Luke](#) (Zondervan, 2012), p. 290

But I don't want us to miss the fact that Jesus didn't teach His disciples to pray for everything they needed to survive.

He doesn't say, "Pray for daily bread and daily water and daily shelter," those items will be brought up in other teaching sessions from the Lord.

But this is humbling; He's asking us to acknowledge that we are this needy; that we are this dependent on our Father for a piece of bread.

You must shelve your arrogance to pray for a piece of bread. You're not even asking for butter, certainly not cake; you're asking for bread.

Now, during the days of Christ, bread was the common staple of life, you couldn't get any more fundamentally basic than bread.

Now don't think that the ancient world was bland in any sense of the word when it came to food—even bread.

During the days of Christ, the Middle East was renowned for fifty-seven different types of bread; loaves were baked in a variety of shapes: oval, crescent, triangular. Some loaves had holes created to hold different garnishes; others were sprinkled with a variety of seeds.

Ibid, p. 695

For the extremely fortunate, some were round, filled with crème and covered with chocolate icing. Okay, I made that one up!

During the days of Christ, day laborers were often paid in loaves of bread.

The Talmud, a Jewish commentary on life and law, refers to a poor man going home after work to eat his supper, his loaf of bread sprinkled with salt.

Edwin M. Yamauchi & Marvin R. Wilson, [Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity](#) (Hendrickson, 2017), p. 705

A poor home would have some vegetables along with their bread, usually made from bran, the cheapest kind of flour.

Even the wealthier people of our Lord's day ate breakfast soon after sunrise, consisting of bread dipped in vinegar.

Ibid, p. 697

Listen, beloved, this prayer request admits we are this needy—at the very basic level of life—we are trusting God, who is our provider.

Adapted from Mohler, p. 106

“So Lord, teach us to trust you not for our greeds, not for great things, but just for our daily needs.”

That leads me to another battle in our hearts and lives that is addressed in this prayer request:

This prayer request for *daily bread* battles against independence.

This prayer request admits dependency on your heavenly Father.

You're depending on Him in the final end for provision. You're recognizing He gave you that job; He gave you that strength; He gave you that creativity; He gave you that ability.

Not to mention that you wouldn't have that loaf of bread without the farmer, the rancher, the mill worker, the baker, the scientist, and the engineer who invented food processing; that clerk who stocked the shelves, that banker that managed the funds, the supply chain and the truckers that brought it to the store.

We got a taste of that supply chain recently didn't we when we all ran out of

paper towels? Bounty truly became a bounty!

I mean, we went from saying to each other, “Where'd you find that job; where'd you find that house?” to “Where'd you find that toilet paper? How lucky are you!”

This prayer request erases any sense of proud individuality, the sense that you're a self-made person.



What are some things in life that we think we can do on our own, but actually require a team? How does the awareness of our dependence on others humble us in our own pride?

No, you can't even get a piece of bread without other people.

But then again, on a deeper level, you can't get a piece of bread without the providence of God. One author wrote, “without the cooperation of the universe to produce a piece of bread.”

Wiersbe, On Earth as It Is in Heaven, p. 93

Bread is a reminder of your Creator God moving heaven and earth to produce what you need in life.

Several years ago, a study was done by an agricultural school in in the Midwest.

It reported that producing 100 bushels of corn from one acre of land required 6,000 pounds of oxygen; 5,000 pounds of

carbon, 160 pounds of nitrogen, 125 pounds of potassium, 75 pounds of yellow Sulphur and then a list of many other minerals and elements too numerous for me to read through.

And of course, in addition to these ingredients was rain, at the right time and in the right amount.

Although many hours of the farmer's labor were needed, it was estimated that only 5 percent of the produce from that acre could be attributed to something any person did.

Now don't misunderstand: unless that farmer invested 100 percent of his 5 percent ploughing and planting, no corn would be harvested.

After the farmer did all he could do, so much depended upon what God supplied in His creation.

For instance, just the right amount of sun, just that one element is critical along with a thousand other elements.

Marsha and I have a flower arrangement on our back patio, and we've noticed that as the sun is shifting to another angle with the coming fall, those flowers are bending around and leaning over to catch its rays.

Life on earth depends upon the right amount of sun.

Just that one star in God's created universe—placed in the center of our solar system—has staggering implications.

We now know that one single flare from the sun's surface that sends warmth our way is equivalent to several nuclear bombs exploding at the same time.

John MacArthur, [The Battle for the Beginning](#) (W Publishing, 2001), p. 111

Fortunately, the sun is 93 million miles away—at just the right distance away—because billions of nuclear bombs so to speak, are essentially exploding on the surface of the sun every single second.

Ibid

Comparative studies have shown us that it would take Duke Energy 5 million years to produce the energy the sun produces in 1 second. And the sun never charges us for it. How great is that?!

Add to that the mystery of gravity that keeps that seed in the soil at the right amount of pressure and then allows it to be pulled upward toward the sun.

One scientist wrote recently, "There are so many mysteries in our universe. For instance, we can't account for the gravity in our galaxy or in the rest of the cosmos; we have no clue where the hidden matter holding it together lies."

In other words, we don't know the source or the identity of whatever it is that's holding the universe together.

Yes, we do; here's the invisible power holding it together. Paul writes to the Colossians:

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible

... all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:16-17

The universe, which He has created and designed for life, is cooperating by His creative design in ways we cannot know or imagine.

When you pray, **“Give us this day our daily bread,”** you are acknowledging your total dependence on Creator God, and the amazing cooperation of His created universe to produce that loaf of bread.

And that leads me to the final battle that takes place daily as we pray this kind of prayer:

This prayer request for *daily bread* battles against ingratitude.

Praying this prayer is an admission, as simple as it is: “Lord, I’m going to be hungry today; you actually created me to become hungry today.”

Now this is where it’s easy to start spiritualizing this text. Jesus calls Himself the bread of life so what He’s really saying here is that we need Him daily.



How does Jesus use bread to signify that He satisfies both our physical and spiritual needs?

Yes, we do, but that’s not what He’s referring to here.

This is a literal, physical, tangible prayer request for a literal physical tangible answer.

God made you to become hungry every day. Adam and Eve were eating before they fell in sin. Food is a wonderful gift from God. And He designed us to get hungry.

But God didn’t just design us to become hungry or to eat food, He designed hunger to give us one more reason to talk to Him. To need Him. Every time we satisfy our hunger, we have one more reason to thank Him.

So, this prayer request is a daily invitation to talk to your Heavenly Father.

And just imagine the fact that the Creator of the universe cares about what you have for lunch. He’s that close, that involved, that caring; He’s your Father.

William Barclay, in his commentary on this text, recorded an event from the empire of Rome. A Roman emperor came back to Rome in triumph. He was marching his troops through the streets of Rome—streets that were lined with

cheering people, and soldiers stationed in Rome were stationed at the edges of the streets to keep people in place. At one spot along the route was a platform where the empress and her family were sitting to watch the emperor go by. On the platform with his mother was a little boy, the emperor's youngest son. And as the emperor's chariot came near, the little fellow jumped off the platform, wriggled through the crowd, and tried to dart between the legs of a soldier and run out to greet his father's chariot. But the soldier was quicker than the little boy and he scooped him up in his arms and said, "You can't do that, boy; don't you know who that is in the chariot? That's the emperor. You can't run out to his chariot." But the little boy just smiled and

announced, "He might be your emperor, but he's my father."

Quoted in Dale Ralph Davis, [Luke: The Year of the Lord's Favor](#) (Christian Focus, 2021), p. 197

Let me remind you, this prayer is given to the children of the Emperor.

This prayer request is an open invitation to bring every need to Him, even something as basic as your lunch.

But this prayer request also goes to war; it equips you to do battle against anxiety, arrogance, independence, and ingratitude.

As we recognize that God is literally moving heaven and earth to produce a piece of bread and meet your every need.

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