



Petition - February 9, 2020

OPEN

Have you ever signed a petition? What was it for? Was it successful in creating change?

Now...what does it mean to petition God? We might think that this is the simplest form of prayer. Yet even in asking God for our needs we need to grow and mature.

The Lord's Prayer challenges us to be on a journey...

- *from duty to delight*
- *from desperate to dependent*
- *from asking to adoring*
- *from flailing to focus*

DIG

When His disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray" His response was the "Lord's Prayer" which is set in the context of "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5,6,7). So the Lord's Prayer helps us pray according to the values of the Kingdom of God.

What can we learn about petition from the little phrase in Matthew 6:11 – "Give us this day our daily bread"?

We likely do not need the reminder that we should pray – but our prayers need to be spiritually calibrated. Let's dig into the phrase "Give us this day our daily bread" to see what God must teach us about petitioning Him.

[1] Two important expressions - Matthew 6:11

The **hierarchy of needs** was theorized by Abraham Harold Maslow, the 20th Century, American psychologist. Maslow taught that the most basic human needs can be presented as a five-tier model going from the bottom these needs are physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. He believed that lower needs must be satisfied first before needs higher up can be addressed.

What are your needs? It is hard to answer because what we have become accustomed to may not, in fact, be a basic need of our lives. Consider an important warning given to young pastor Timothy in Ephesus. Paul warned him about those who conclude that they can leverage their faith in God for financial gain. Instead, we must understand what true contentment is – rather than succumb to selfish desires – read I Timothy 6:6-10. With this in mind, let's note the two phrases found in Matthew 6:11

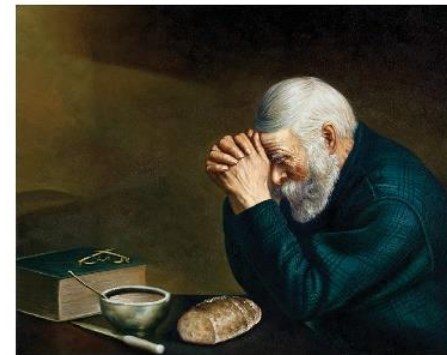
a. "this day"

What is the importance of this phrase? It points to a day-by-day *rhythm of depending upon God*. This reminds us of the journey of trust that Israel experienced in the wilderness when God nourished them through daily provision of manna (Exodus 16:4). Let's ensure that daily dependence is from the heart, not just a mechanical duty.

b. "daily bread"

Why do we need to ask God for our needs? Doesn't He already know? Yes – see Matthew 6:8! Even though God knows what we need He has designed for us to "articulate it to Him" (Pete Greig, *The Prayer Course*, 3). As Pete points out, because we are talking about "daily bread" we cannot expect to have Nutella on it all the time!

Just as we are called to a *rhythm of depending* we must also practice *realism of depending upon God*. In our consumeristic culture it will take diligence to discern what our true daily bread needs are, and what is not.



As a child I often remember seeing this painting. It was colorized by Rhoda Nyberg from a picture her father, Eric Enstrom, took in 1918. Pictured at the table is Charles Wilden, a poor peddler who was in Bovey, Minnesota when Enstrom asked him to pose for the shot in his studio. In 2002 the picture, known simply as "Grace", became the state photograph of Minnesota.

The simplicity of this picture points us back to what is our daily bread, and that we can be thankful because God will supply.

[2] Two important exchanges - Matthew 6:25-34

In order to deal with this need to articulate our prayers to God, just a little further in Jesus' sermon is this great primer on petitionary prayer. And it is expressed as an exchange – in two regards.

a. Exchange worry to receive Father care

It is not a complicated conclusion that Jesus makes. When you worry, you act like a pagan. When you believe God for your needs, you show yourself to be His child! And we are indeed His children. Do you pray in such a way as to leave worry behind and seek the care of your Heavenly Father? See Galatians 4:5-6 and 9

b. Exchange worry to become Kingdom centered

Timothy Keller writes, "Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him." (*Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy With God* (Penguin, 2014, 48) Now, how does this understanding of prayer square with petitioning God for daily needs?

When we exchange worry to be concerning for the Kingdom of God, our asking flows from the conversation that He began! Do you petition God with this perspective? Presenting our needs to God should be done in light of Kingdom values and priorities. We are to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry... (v. 33-34).

REFLECT

Let's allow God to recalibrate our understanding of petitioning Him – every day, for our daily needs.

"God in heaven will hear your prayers and will answer them. He has never failed, if a man has been honest in his petitions and honest in his confessions. Let your faith beget patience. God is never in a hurry, said St. Augustine, because He has all eternity to work." E. M. Bounds

Here are practical steps to put petition into practice in our lives and our church:

- Pray in unity – Matthew 18:19-20
- Pray specifically – Matthew 29:32
- Pray incrementally – Genesis 18:22-33
- Pray thankfully – Philippians 4:6
- Pray expectantly – II Corinthians 1:20
- Pray persistently – Luke 11:5-13

John Newton, wrote, "Thou art coming to a King, large petitions with thee bring. For His love and power are such, thou canst never ask too much"

Listen to [session three of the Prayer Course](#).