

The Disciples' Prayer 04 – Our Daily Bread

10/11/2026

Scripture 1: (Matt. 6:9-13 ESV)

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. 104. *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

A. In the fourth petition, which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*, we pray that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

Sermon:

My mother has a metal biscuit dish that is engraved with a picture of gathered bundles of wheat. My mother-in-law has a similar one, but hers is engraved with the image of a farmer. Jodie and I also have one. Each dish is engraved with the prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread”. I expect that many of us have seen a dish like and some of us probably even own one. There is just something comforting and comfortable about it because there is something unusual about the Lord's Prayer fourth petition. There is something strange as regards its character or, perhaps its seeming strangeness is more because of our own sinful character.

Remember, the first three petitions were most concerned with the LORD's requirements and our obligation to meet them, praying:

- that God's name would be hallowed;
- that God's kingdom would come; and,
- that God's will would be done, on both Earth below and in Heaven above.

Meanwhile, the fourth petition is the first of three which are primarily concerned with our own needs, asking God:

- to give us our daily bread;
- to forgive us our debts, trespasses, and sins; and,
- to lead us away from temptation and, to rescue us from all evil.

Unlike the first three, there is something unique about this fourth petition that feels inoffensive to both the regenerate Elect and the wicked reprobate. Yet, as dangerous and terrifying the second and third petitions are, the fourth one actually should be considered on the same level and to the same degree.

The Shorter Catechism asks, “What do we pray for in the fourth petition?” and answers, “In the fourth petition, which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*, we pray that of God’s free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.” This answer should be considered unobjectionable and reasonable by everyone but, its implications stretch further than one would initially think; notably, its acknowledgment of our dependence upon God's free gift of grace for our daily provision and not just for our salvation.

Contrary to what seems obvious, the core “ask” of this petition is not principally concerned with food. John Calvin explains, “...by this petition we ask of God all things in general that our bodies have need to use under the elements of this world [Galatians 4:3], not only for food and clothing but also for everything God perceives to be beneficial to us, that we may eat our daily bread in peace.¹” Thus, this petition is not simply concerned with food: whether the fullness of our daily meals or just the simple component of bread; but with everything. This petition concerns the entirety of our daily provision; everything that is necessary or required for our existence and survival. So, really, when we pray “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, we truly are asking God to give us everything that is needful. We are really asking Him to give us everything.

Even more so, this petition is a prayer that everyone prays, whether they know it or not. Everyone prays this petition because it requests both God's “special provision” and His “common grace”. While Christians ask for His special provision, common grace is why everyone should pray this petition. However, it is also why most people do not.

¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* III.XX.44

The doctrine of common grace includes all of the different kinds of provision that God provides universally to all humanity. The following are examples of common grace because they are graces that are commonly, freely, and universally given by the LORD and are made available for everyone.

- We first identify God's provision of common grace after He gave the “dominion mandate” to Adam, our federal head, in Genesis 1, *“And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’”* (Gen. 1:29-30 ESV). Thus the LORD freely offered and promised His gracious provision of “our daily bread” to Adam and Eve, as well as to every beast, bird, and “creeping thing”; promising it to *“everything that has the breath of life”*.
- Next, we are aware of God's common grace in Genesis 9, shortly after Noah released all of the animals from the ark. *“Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ‘Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’”* And God said, *“This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”* God said to Noah, *“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”* (Gen. 9:8-17 ESV). Thus the LORD promised everyone and everything that He would not use a flood to destroy all of life on earth, again.
- The Psalmist likewise draws our attention to the LORD's provision of common grace, writing in Psalm 104 *“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.”* (Ps. 104:24-29 ESV). This same idea is expressed by the author of Hebrews when he describes how Christ, *“...upholds the universe by the word of his power.”* (Heb. 1:3 ESV)
- Most especially, Jesus reminds us of God's common grace. He uses it to differentiate the godly response generated by the “sons of God” from that of “the Gentiles”. Jesus said, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* (Matt. 5:43-48 ESV). Jesus explained that, although not everyone are “sons of God”, nevertheless, God the Father still sends sunshine and rain for the good benefit of everyone. God provides for everyone: whether they are good or evil; whether or

not they are obedient to His Word; whether or not they have faith in Him; and, whether they even believe that God is.

The LORD's provision of common grace is something that everyone receives but most receive it without recognizing it, or understanding it, or appreciating it. They do not give God the gratitude which He deserves for it. They do not thank Him for it. They ignore the grace of His providence and perhaps give all of the credit to “Mother Nature” instead. They are oblivious to it, as provision, and instead, feel entitled to receive this grace. They expect it, anticipate it, and demand it as “their due”, just because they simply exist. Therefore, they are entirely without excuse. Such people tend to deny God's existence, along with His power and authority, and yet, they still expect and insist that He “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, even if unconsciously. They are ungratefully blasphemous. But Christians, when we pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, we are intentionally asking our heavenly Father to continue giving us His grace and we also do so thankfully/gratefully, without projecting a sense of entitlement for it. When we ask God with thankfulness in our heart, we are gratefully acknowledging God and the merciful character of His provision. We confess that we need Him to provide for us and also, that we do not deserve to be provided for.

Just as when we pray “*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”, praying “*Give us this day our daily bread...*” is a sign of our active and total submission to the LORD, to Christ, as our benefactor and King. It is a sign of our desire and our willingness to live totally dependent upon God. It is a sign of our desire and our willingness to accept everything and anything that the LORD gives to us, does for us, or allows to be done to us because we trust that it is, somehow, for our ultimate good. It is also an expression of our desire and our willingness to be satisfied and content with whatever we have (Philippians 4:11).

Calvin understood it like this, writing “Briefly, by this we give ourselves over to His care, and entrust ourselves to His providence, that He may feed, nourish, and preserve us.²”. Thus Calvin taught that, by praying “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, we demonstrate our willingness and desire to trust God in all things, for all things. So, when we pray the Lord's Prayer, not only do we cede and surrender our sense of sovereignty and authority over ourselves and our lives to Jesus Christ, but we are also repenting and surrendering our covetousness.

- By praying and asking God to give us what we need and trusting Him to do so, we abandon our felt need to gather, acquire, or “horde” everything that we can get our grubby little hands upon (10th Commandment).
- By praying and asking God to give us what we need and trusting Him to do so, we deny our selfish hubris and reliance upon our own effort and the treasures of this world (Luke 12:16-21).
- By praying and asking God to give us what we need and trusting Him to do so, we repent: turning away from our idolatry of the creation and turn to worship, honor, and glorify the Creator, instead.
- By praying and asking God to give us all that we need and trusting Him to do so, we reject the glory that our sinful nature tries to claim for itself and instead, give it to the LORD to whom it rightfully belongs.

Ultimately, Christians rely and depend upon God's good Providence for everything. But, what do we really mean by Providence?

The Westminster Confession explains that Providence is the consequence of “the foreknowledge and decree of God, the First Cause” whereby “all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet...he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.³” and that, while God will ordinarily work through some “means”, He is also “free to work without, above, and against them, at his

²John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* III.XX.44
3WCF 5.2

pleasure.⁴”. This explains that everything that is and, everything that happens, is an instance of God's Providence; both what we might consider to be good or bad. Furthermore, it is through these second causes that “the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.”⁵”

We further understand that Providence includes both what God does and does not do. It even includes what God may even permit to happen to His people such as leaving “for a season, his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.”⁶” (consider the Babylonian exile). Providence also includes His Electing grace of predestination: His sovereign election unto both salvation or condemnation. “As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous Judge, for former sins, doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his grace whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasions of sin; and, withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.”⁷”

So, by praying “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, we understand and reasonably expect that our needful, daily provision will be provided through an appropriate secondary cause and not directly through a divinely spontaneous, miraculous intervention. Therefore,

- Christians do not expect that our refrigerators will miraculously be filled by God every day.
- Christians do not expect that the gas tank of our cars will remain miraculously filled with fuel, so that we may drive to and from work.
- However, Christians do ordinarily expect that when we lay down to sleep at night, we shall wake up in the morning, through no direct effort of our own, but solely through God's gracious provision.
- And, Christians expect that the Earth will continue spinning just as it should; that the atmosphere will continue to be breathable and that the temperature will continue to be “just right” for us.

But, Christians do not expect spontaneous miracles to ordinarily occur, despite us frequently asking for them in relation to healing. Perhaps this lack of expectation is why we also lose our appreciation for or recognition of God's “less surprising”, “non-spontaneous”, and “ordinary” miracles of Providence. But, although we do not expect our fridge to be spontaneously filled as a daily miracle, through our understanding of secondary causes:

- the fact that the weather was “just right” to cause food to grow;
 - the fact the sun shone often enough;
 - the fact that it was warm enough; and,
 - the fact that it rained enough;
- the fact that a farmer prepared a field, sowed seed, and then harvested the growth;

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- the fact that someone transported, packaged, labeled, and again transported the farmer's growth to the store;
- the fact that we have the aptitude, ability, and appropriate education to be employed and to earn a paycheck;
- the fact that we have some available means of transportation to take us back and forth from work;
- the fact that we have some place that we call home: a place to store our food, a place to eat and, a place to sleep;

are each providential secondary causes that stem from the original, miraculous, primary cause of God, our Father in heaven; our Provider. This understanding about Providence was partly what prompted the Apostle Paul to admonish the Thessalonians, telling them *“If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”* (2 Thess. 3:10 ESV). Paul was warning them against sinful idleness or “sloth”. He was warning them against laziness, both physical and spiritual. He encouraged and commanded them to work and to earn their own living, not as a denial of God's provision but as their participation with all of the many assorted means of provision which He had already given to them.

But also, when we pray *“Give us this day our daily bread...”*, beyond merely receiving God's provision: the sufficiency of needful things for life; we also hope to “enjoy [God's] blessing with them.”. Therefore,

- We pray and hope for the LORD's continuing favor in our lives.
- We pray and hope for the LORD's providence to continue being good for us, in our own eyes.
- We also reject the idea of and expressions related to “luck”: whether “good luck” or “bad luck”; because obviously, there is no such thing as “luck”. While we reject anything attributing such circumstances to mere “chance”, we may appropriately hope for and wish others “Good Providence”.
- But, most especially, when we pray *“Give us this day our daily bread...”*, we pray for our continued preservation and perseverance in faith unto the end of our earthly lives (Hebrews 3:14, 6:11).

So, how might our other prayers and prayer lives be improved by meditating on, *“Give us this day our daily bread...”*?

First, this petition is a reminder that we should begin all of our prayers with a sense of gratitude.

- Gratitude that we are able to go to the LORD to ask Him for what we need.
- Gratitude for the certainty and assurance of knowing that God, our heavenly Father, hears all of our prayers and is attentive to them.
- Gratitude for the knowledge that the LORD shall answer our prayer and give us whatever is needful and best for us.

Second, this petition is a reminder for us to be grateful and content with all the many blessings that we have already received. Once we are properly grateful to God and allow ourselves to trust Him, and rely upon Him to provide and satisfy our needs, then we unlock the secret of contentedness.

We remember that Paul was a walking example of the contentedness generated through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He wrote, *“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* (Phil. 4:11-13 ESV). He knew what it was to have plenty and he knew what it was to be in need. Scripture tells us that, for the cause of Christ, Paul

was repeatedly beaten and stoned. He suffered rejection and being run out of town, slander and false accusations, snake bites, shipwrecks, imprisonment, and finally execution. Yet through it all, because of Christ (because he knew that he belonged to Jesus and because he had entrusted himself to the LORD), he was able to remain content in all circumstances. Paul was able to be satisfied because, having Christ, he knew that he had everything he needed.

Third, this petition is a reminder that should help us to become and to remain more humble.

- By asking the LORD for “*our daily bread*”, we remind ourselves that we are a “kept” people.
- By asking the LORD for “*our daily bread*”, we remind ourselves that we have needs that cannot be satisfied on our own.
- By asking the LORD for “*our daily bread*”, we remind ourselves that we did not create or produce any of all that we already have (1 Corinthians 4:7). Therefore, we remind ourselves that we have no just cause to boast in ourselves but should only boast in the gracious goodness and love of God that He has given to us (Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:31).
- By asking the LORD for “*our daily bread*”, we remind ourselves especially that our salvation comes entirely from the LORD. We remind ourselves that we can do nothing to save ourselves because both our faith in Jesus Christ and the eternal redemption He has secured for us, are God's good and gracious gift of providence (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Fourth, this petition is also a reminder of our obligation to be engaged with the LORD in His work of provision. The popular proverb of, “The Lord helps those who help themselves.” is categorically FALSE. Instead God does help us, so that we may help both ourselves and others. The LORD does not give those who are successful, faith. But rather, He gives those who are faithful whatever they need to be successful, if they choose to apply themselves.

It is critical for us, as Christians, to remember and remind each other that God is constantly working through people. We need to understand this because, since God ordinarily works His providence through secondary causes, we ourselves are often one of those causes.

- The Christian wheat farmer who prays, “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, unless he first does the hard work of plowing and planting, he will never reap a harvest. But, since he has no means or ability to command or change the weather, he must still trust God as the primary cause.
- Paul used such a farmer and his work, as an illustration to explain the growth of faith; for the growth of the Church; and for the growth of Christ's Kingdom. He wrote, “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*” (1 Cor. 3:6-7 ESV). So, like how the farmer works as a secondary cause, God remains the primary, principal cause of faith.
- Neither the farmer, nor Paul, nor Apollos could do anything unless the LORD had first given them the aptitude and ability to perform their roles.
 - The farmer first had to be given the knowledge about how to prepare the soil and then the wisdom to understand when to plant what.
 - Paul first had to be given his knowledge of Torah (his knowledge about the things of God) and then the wisdom to understand how it all points to Jesus Christ. Then, Paul had to be given the conviction and courageous ability to proclaim the Gospel to the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles.

- Likewise, Apollos first had to be given his knowledge of Scripture, as well as his oratory ability. But then, he still had to be correctly taught concerning Christ and the Gospel (Acts 18:24-28).
- Ultimately, through the farmers efforts, using what God had given him, a crop grows until it is ready to be harvested. And likewise, through the efforts of Paul and Apollos, and other faithful men (and women) throughout history, the fields of faith have been planted and are waiting for the bountiful harvest.

Truly, God always does give us what we need to provide for ourselves and sometimes, the LORD will use us by giving us what we need to help others. Just as we know that God has provided for us, especially providing His Son as a sacrifice of atonement for us, we also believe that God is providing us (using us, as both individuals and the Church) for the benefit of others in the world: believers and unbelievers alike; our neighbors whom we are commanded to love as we love ourselves (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

Finally, when we pray “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, we need to remember that our Christian reliance and dependence on God's providence is not a sign of weakness, but of strength.

- It requires far more courage for a person to trust in God, and to trust God, than it does to try and do everything yourself.
- It requires far more courage for us to “let go”; especially to let go of our selfishness, our autonomy, and our sovereignty.
- It requires far more courage to release these spiritual and emotional chains that keep us bound to the things of this world; that keep us tied to our many idols.
- But, when Jesus Christ gives us the courage, desire, and the ability to let them all go and to totally trust God instead, then we will have received true freedom and discovered contentedness.

Ultimately, when we pray “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, that is our ultimate hope and expectation because freedom and contentedness are the natural/supernatural consequence of a having received all that is truly needful:

- grace through *pisteuo*, faith in Jesus Christ
- the forgiveness of our sins
- justification before the LORD
- adoption as sons and daughters of God
- the love of God the Father
- the indwelling, sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit
- and, the promise of resurrection unto eternal life in the world to come

Therefore, pray “*Give us this day our daily bread...*”, and know that God, our heavenly Father, shall provide for all your needs in this life and for the world to come.

Let us pray...

AMEN