

## **“Praying With Jesus: Give Us Today The Food We Need”**

**Matthew 6:11**

[www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:11)

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October 3, 2010

**“Pay off your credit cards each month!”**

### **Jesus’ prescription for a joyous life!**

God’s will is that we live an abundant life. Jesus declared God’s desire for us when he said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (**John 10:10**) ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+10:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+10:10))

The New Testament message is clear! Jesus came into this earth so that we might know that God cares about our earthly needs. When Jesus included praying for God’s will to be done on earth as in heaven, he was focusing our attention on an important Divine Truth. God wants the best for us. God loves us. God desires that we know and live an abundantly full life.

The theological word for this portion of Jesus’ prayer is incarnation! Read with me the scripture that teaches us about incarnation. **John 1:10-14** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+1:10-14](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+1:10-14)) says:

**“Jesus was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.”**

Jesus was fully human and fully divine. And, Jesus told us how to pray keeping both aspects of his life in mind. I believe Jesus intentionally chose the order of his prayer. Jesus chose for us to pray for God’s will, then to pray for our daily needs to be met. Jesus knew that the one followed after the other. Our focus upon living and doing God’s will brings us to the question of how can we do that? Jesus’ answer to the question is one day at a time.

When Jesus prays for each of us to be blessed with God’s abundant life, he is bringing into our prayer consciousness an ancient Divine Truth. Before we can understand what God means by blessing us with abundant life we need to be very clear about what is a need and what is a want. Can you make a list that defines needs and wants? Do you need a microwave? A cell phone? A computer?

God’s abundant life is based upon different assumptions than our western consumer oriented world. God’s abundant life is about beauty, goodness, diversity of life, and unconditional love. God’s abundant life is not about increasing our technology or our material goods. Perhaps a short story can help us know the difference between want and need.

One day a wealthy city man took his son on a trip to the country, supposedly to visit a relative; in actuality, however, the trip was to show his son how poor country folks live. They stayed the weekend in the home of a relative who was a very humble farmer. At the end of the trip, as they were en route back home, the father asked his son, “What did you think of the trip?”

The son replied, “Very nice, Dad.”

Then the father asked, “Did you notice how they lived?”

The son replied, “Yes.”

The father continued, “What did you learn?”

The son responded, “I learned that we have one dog in our house, and they have four. Also, we have a fountain in our garden filled with goldfish, but they have a trout stream that has no end. And where we have

imported lamps in our garden, they have the stars! And while our garden goes to the edge of our neighbor's fence, they have the entire horizon as their back yard!"

At the end of the son's reply the father was speechless. The son then said, "Thank you, Dad, for showing me how poor we really are." ("The lesson," Reprinted in *Vanguard*, [vanguardmae.com](http://vanguardmae.com))

### **Greed, an over active "wanter", breeds anxiety!**

Our unending list of wants breeds anxiety, stress, and ultimately a fearful death.

- Are you anxious about not having enough money for Christmas?
- Are you anxious about virtual money that has disappeared in the stock market?
- Are you anxious about losing your job?
- Are you anxious about what other people will think of you because you don't have everything other people have?
- Are you anxious about your food running out?
- Are you anxious about getting sick when you have no health insurance?

Anxiety robs you of life. Anxiety is based upon fear that is the antithesis of faith in God. All of us struggle with fear and anxiety from time to time, and God challenges us to let it go. Jesus' prayer teaches us how to let it go. We are called to live our lives on a day-by-day, step-by-step basis letting God take care of our needs. Don't get out into the future that you cannot control. Don't get lost in yesterday that is gone and cannot be recovered. Don't lose your life struggling with an over active 'wanter' that robs you of the joy of each day. Today is the day God gives you. Today is the day for abundant living with the Risen Christ as your Savior, Friend, and Teacher. Today is the day Jesus teaches you to request what you need from God and be assured that God will provide!

### **Jesus' Good News Prayer Restores Life**

Jesus' Good News prayer summarizes God's message of life, now and for all eternity! Jesus Christ our Incarnate, Risen Lord teaches us that God is interested in our physical needs as well as spiritual life. Step away from the daily anxiety of a fear filled life and meet Jesus who will provide for you what you need. When you pray with Jesus, "Give us today our daily bread" you are affirming your faith in God who will answer your prayer.

- When Jesus needed money for taxes, a fish with a coin in its mouth was provided.
- When Jesus needed transportation into Jerusalem, a donkey was provided.
- When Jesus needed a place to sleep and food to eat, Martha and Mary issued an invitation.

Jesus stands beside you waiting to provide for your every need each day. The daily provision is available and waiting for you. William Barclay tells us about this section of Jesus' prayer, "It is not simply soul salvation, it is whole salvation, the salvation of the body, mind, and spirit at which Christianity aims."

Many of you have shared with me that during this recession Jesus has provided for you in amazing ways. You did not know how you could survive on so much less! But, through the power of Jesus you have found that you can thrive with less and actually enjoy life more! When we get our 'wanters' under control, we can celebrate life with Christ! Because we know that this prayer speaks God's truth! God will provide for our needs.

Let us carefully look at this portion of Jesus' prayer that applies to our physical needs. Once we are centered in God's will, once we are ready to help expand God's influence, once we are ready to acknowledge God and honor God's name in our living, then we are ready to focus upon Jesus' three key words: "Us", "Bread", and "Today".

### **Jesus prayed: Give us this day our daily bread!**

I remind you that this prayer is not for an individual. Jesus did not take each disciple aside and individually teach them a private prayer. Jesus knows nothing of American individualism. Jesus speaks heaven's truth: we are all related. Jesus knows that the basic unit of creation is relationship. Therefore, Jesus

teaches us to pray for our needs and the needs of others. If we are only praying for ourselves, we pray a lie. If we are only praying for others, our prayer is a lie. Jesus teaches us to pray “us”.

We belong to a family of faith. The needs of the family are important. The relationships within the family are important. There is no room in Jesus’ prayer for self-righteousness, self-centeredness, self-absorption, and self-reliance. Jesus’ prayer is about the family of God. Brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, South America, and Central America are all to be lifted up in prayer. Our prayers and the focus of our work are the global needs of others. We are related! We are family! We are the “us” Jesus teaches us to pray about when Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father”!

### **Jesus prayed for bread!**

When Jesus uses the word bread, he used a symbolic word that has multiple meanings. There is physical bread of all sorts, shapes, sizes, and tastes. There is also spiritual bread that nourishes the soul.

- **God will provide for your physical needs. (Exodus 16:1-21)**

[www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=exodus+16:1-21](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=exodus+16:1-21)

Bread, as a physical, nourishing substance is Biblical. In the Exodus story the children of Israel complain about having no food while they travel through the Sinai desert. God freed them from Egyptian slavery, but they forgot that miracle. God saved them from an Egyptian army, but they forgot that miracle. All that counts is that they are afraid of not having food and they are hungry. God comes through with bread. Each morning and afternoon manna, bread from heaven, is provided for them. They are commanded to only take what is needed for the day—no more! God will provide. God will bring an abundance mentality to them through demonstrating that God is faithful and God can be trusted to daily meet their needs. When Jesus teaches us to pray for daily bread, Jesus is reaching back to Exodus to remind us that God will provide!

Martin Luther summarized the amazing provision of God promised in this prayer by saying that bread means “everything necessary to the support and comfort of existence; food and raiment, house and land, money and goods, a kind spouse, good children, faithful servants, righteous magistrates, good weather, peace, health, honor, true friends, good neighbors and the like.”

- **God will provide for your spiritual needs. (John 6:35)**

[www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+6:35](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+6:35)

Jesus uses bread as a symbol of spiritual needs. Jesus tells us, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry...” An Irish prayer from the Eleventh Century picks up on Jesus’ prayer and says, “Give us today for bread the Word of God from heaven.” On the Emmaus Road following the resurrection Jesus’ disciples did not recognize him until he offered them bread.

Do you sometimes feel spiritually hungry? Do you feel no one cares if you live or die? Do you think people are talking about you? Do you wonder what will happen if you publicly fail in business, in your marriage, or in your school? What if you succeed in business but lose your family and friends? Are you sometimes lonely, depressed, and inwardly hurting? All of us know spiritual hunger at sometime or another.

In Jesus Christ we meet God’s amazing grace. God’s grace is the miraculous reality of God’s unconditional, no strings attached love demonstrated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When you sing the hymn Amazing Grace you are singing about spiritual bread. Judy Collins’ explanation of what the hymn “Amazing Grace” means is quoted in *Critique*, April 2000, 15. “Amazing Grace is a song about letting go, bottoming out, seeing the light, turning it over, trusting the universe, breathing in, breathing out, going with the flow; timing is everything, trust your instincts, don’t push the river, ease on down the road, get on your knees, let your guard down, drop your defenses, lighten up, like angels they know how to fly, don’t be afraid, when all else fails, pray; there are a million ways to say Amazing Grace. If we don’t say it, then we crack up and the world breaks our heart.”

Bread is the physical/spiritual food from God. Bread—delivered daily. You cannot store it! You can only thank God for it when it comes your way each day.

## **Jesus prayed: Give us today.**

People question me on a continual basis about the way we have supposedly changed the Lord's Prayer by using the words sin and testing. We will deal with that issue later, but let me share with you that the major change that needs to be made in the English version of the prayer is right here.

Have you ever wondered why you say "*Give us this day our daily bread*"? This old English translation repeats the idea of daily. What's up with this? The word we translate as daily was translated into Greek from the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke. It is only used in this one place. Even the early Biblical scholars did not agree on the definition of this word. The old English translators just repeated daily. Dr. Kenneth Bailey suggests that we need to translate this word not as daily, but as a word that means 'does not run out'. So the phrase as written in the old Syriac version of Matthew's Gospel is translated, "Give us today the bread that does not run out." By the way, the old Syriac translation is the world's oldest translation of Jesus' prayer.

This way of translating the central petition of Jesus' prayer means that we are praying for enough bread for today; and bread that will keep us alive tomorrow; and bread that will continue to meet our needs for ever. Today is the day God is giving you. Today is the day God will provide for your needs. And, you do not need to be anxious for anything in the future, because God has the future taken care of as well.

In **Matthew 6:25-34** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:25-34](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:25-34)), Jesus points to the flowers in the fields and the birds in the sky, to remind us that God cares for all creation. Jesus teaches us not to be anxious about tomorrow. God has tomorrow in the palm of God's hand! Let tomorrow take care of itself! In this prayer, Jesus teaches us to let go of life's anxiety and trust in the goodness of God. Remember the wonderful promise in **Romans 8:28** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=romans+8:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=romans+8:28)) that God can and will redeem any circumstance. God can take even the most awful circumstance and create something good. We can trust God with tomorrow. We can plan, prepare, and work as best we can today, but tomorrow belongs to God. Jesus knows this spiritual truth so Jesus teaches us to pray for bread daily.

## **Jesus prayed: "Give us today the bread that does not run out."**

When we come to the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come as brothers and sisters of one great worldwide family ready to partake of Jesus' symbols of God's goodness: bread and juice.

Jesus invites you to set aside your anxiety about things. Jesus is enough for you.

Jesus invites you to set aside your stress about tomorrow. Jesus is enough today.

Jesus invites you to silence your inner "wanter". Jesus will provide for your needs.

When you pray, "Give us today the bread that does not run out", you are saying to God our Father, we trust you, we love you, we will follow you. Thank you for your promise of abundant life. We will enjoy today, Lord Jesus and we will with your help:

Do more than exist---We will LIVE,

Do more than touch---We will FEEL,

Do more than look---We will OBSERVE,

Do more than speak about Jesus---We will ACT like Jesus,

Do more than read---We will ABSORB,

Do more than hear---We will LISTEN,

Do more than be kind---We will LOVE,

Do more than listen----We will UNDERSTAND,

Do more than talk about Jesus---We will WITNESS that Jesus is alive,

Do more than live---We will CELEBRATE LIFE,

Do more than be thankful---We will WORSHIP, PRAISE, AND PRAY!

## LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

For Sunday, October 3, 2010's Sermon

Foundational Scripture: Matthew 6:11

**Featured Scripture Reflection:** "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11 NRSV)

**Opening Icebreaker:** When in your life have you ever been physically hungry? When have you been spiritually hungry?

### Scripture Questions

#### What is the scripture saying?

- How do you think the truth shared in John 1:10-14 connects with Jesus' prayer for today's bread?
- When you think of Jesus' proclamation that he came for us to experience God's abundant life (**John 10:10**) what does abundant life mean to you? What do you think Jesus means by abundant life?
- Jesus uses "us" in this prayer. What do you think Jesus means by praying in the plural?
- Bread can have two meanings: physical and spiritual. Which one do you think Jesus meant?

#### How is your life touched?

- What does it mean to you that you belong to the family of God? How does it feel to you when Jesus invites you to pray: "Give us..."?
- Bread is basic to human life. Jesus proclaims himself to be the bread of life (**John 6:35**). What do you think Jesus means by that statement? How does Jesus' self definition relate to this prayer?
- The definition of the word "daily" in Greek/Aramaic language is unclear. What do you think of Dr. Kenneth Bailey's suggestion that word be translated 'does not run out'?
- One of the great anxieties of human beings is to run out of food. Jesus' prayer assures us that God will provide for us as God provided for the people of Israel in the Sinai Desert. (**Exodus 16:1-21**) When you pray Jesus' prayer do you find yourself actually believing that God will provide for your needs? If not, what reasons do you not believe?

#### What is God's invitation to you?

- Jesus invites you to pray in community asking for your needs (not wants) to be met. What do you or your family need this week? Is it actually a need? If so, then ask the entire group to pray with you.

#### What can you pray for?

Pray that Chilson Hills will be a joyous, faithful, praying community of God's incredible resurrection power celebrating Jesus Christ's transforming hope and love in order to help grow God's Kingdom on earth.