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# PRAYING FOR OURSELVES



*What's the best thing you've tasted that was made from scratch?*

**QUESTION #1**

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE **93**

## THE POINT

*Take your needs to God daily and trust Him to answer.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I love homemade bread. A dear lady in our church knows this and regularly brings me a loaf of delicious bread she makes from a starter mix that has been in her family for over one hundred years. She even slices the bread before she delivers it. How awesome is that?

As much as I enjoy her homemade bread, it's a luxurious treat, not a necessity. But bread—or rather, food in general—is something we all need *daily*. Many of us don't give a second thought about where our next meal will come from. What we need is always readily available. That's not true of everybody, however. It certainly wasn't true in the first century. The average man worked for a daily wage, which essentially covered his family's expenses for that day only. If he missed a day of work, he might miss feeding his family.

We all have things we need, but where do we look for those needs? God knows we have physical needs, and in His Model Prayer, Jesus encouraged us to go to God with those needs.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## **Matthew 6:11; Isaiah 38:1-3**

**Matt. 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread, ... Isa. 38:1 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover.”<sup>2</sup> Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,<sup>3</sup> and said, “Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.**

This is our fourth session from the Model Prayer, and we’re just now getting to the part where most people start: praying for ourselves! This does not mean praying for ourselves is not important, because Jesus wants us to come to Him with our needs. But to get in the right frame of mind to come to God with our own needs, we focus our prayers first on honoring Him, seeking His kingdom, and desiring His will.

Jesus urged us to pray for ourselves: “Give us this day our daily bread.” *Daily bread* clearly refers to food, but it can also represent myriad other needs we face every day. We obviously need more than bread in life, but our daily need for food naturally symbolizes our need to look to God and depend on Him for all He provides—physically, financially, emotionally, and spiritually. Whatever we need, we can pray about it. God uses our needs in life to train us in prayer. Our emptiness drives us to the One who can fill us.

As some have said, we are to look to God to “meet our need and not our greed,” but how can we know the difference? Sometimes we may not immediately recognize the difference between a genuine need and a pursuit of self-interest. Even if we unintentionally pray amiss, our heavenly Father can gently correct us. For this reason, it is best to pray about everything and let God determine the results of our prayers, as well as the motives of the heart. As we mature spiritually, we will grow more attuned to our own intentions in prayer and sense when we are praying for things God never intended us to pursue. A key factor toward that end is to present our needs in light of what we’ve already learned from the Model Prayer in Matthew 6:

***Why pray since God already knows what you need?***

**QUESTION #2**

- ▶ **Seek the honor of God.** “Hallowed be your name” (v. 9b). Will what I’m asking for bring honor and glory to Christ?
- ▶ **Seek the kingdom of God.** “Your kingdom come” (v. 10a). Am I asking from a position of living under His lordship?
- ▶ **Seek the will of God.** “Your will be done” (v. 10b). Am I placing God’s will before my own?

We turn to King Hezekiah, who reigned over Judah in the early part of the 7th century BC, as an example of praying for ourselves. When the prophet Isaiah broke the news to the dying king that he only had a short time to live, Hezekiah immediately turned to God in prayer. Hezekiah wanted to live.

God never promised to prolong our lives indefinitely. God doesn’t always give more years of life on earth, but as we will see, God gave King Hezekiah fifteen more years. No matter how much time we are given, we all know we will leave this earthly life someday. But God does promise to meet our daily needs. He will give us what we need for today.

## Isaiah 38:4-6

<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: <sup>5</sup> “Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. <sup>6</sup> I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.

Surely Hezekiah’s faith soared and he was filled with praise when Isaiah came back and reported God’s answer to his prayer. We rejoice when we hear such reports, but we may wonder why God doesn’t always answer our prayers for healing.

*When has God answered your prayer in a way that was evident it was from the Lord?*

**QUESTION #3**



God does not always reveal the big picture to us or let us know why He answers the way He does, but He seemed to do that with Hezekiah. Hezekiah neither asked for fifteen more years of life nor for Jerusalem to be protected from attack but God's response included both. God's answer took into account not only the needs of Hezekiah but also the people he led.

God may not reveal to us the reasons for His answers, but that's where faith and trust come in. God always answers out of His love and His gracious plan for our lives; He answers in light of the big picture, which we cannot see. Incredible things happen to our faith when we pour our hearts into prayer and then witness the occurrence of the very thing we prayed for.

When we pray, God will hear us, and we will experience answers to our prayers. Of course, we don't always see immediate responses to prayer. Some of our prayers were only answered after the one who prayed them died. Sometimes we pray for years with no apparent answers, but we know God is at work. Jesus instructed us to pray for our daily needs; if we don't allow God to work in our prayers, we are missing one of the greatest opportunities He has given to us. Keep praying! God hears and He does answer.

## ***Isaiah 38:15-17***

**<sup>15</sup> What shall I say? For he has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. I walk slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul. <sup>16</sup> O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh restore me to health and make me live! <sup>17</sup> Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.**

It doesn't require much spiritual depth to rejoice when things are going well, but the person who can praise God in the midst of difficulties is a role model for us all. Hezekiah stands out as a hero of the faith because he walked with God, prayed, and praised God through his suffering.

When we feel emotionally empty or defeated by circumstances, bitterness can creep over us and leave us angry or hopeless. When my neighbor's wife left him suddenly, I promised I would pray for him. He responded, "I gave up on prayer a long time ago." He clearly was bitter. Hezekiah didn't let his unpleasant circumstances push him away from God; instead, he turned to God.

Hezekiah not only sought God through his illness, he praised God! Hezekiah acknowledged it was for his own good he was able to experience such a bitter reaction to his illness, for only then was he able to see God's deliverance. I often hear praise reports like this. For instance, a man in my congregation had a sudden spike in his blood sugar, leading his doctor to treat him for diabetes. In the process of treating his diabetes, the medical team discovered something far more life-threatening. Fortunately, since the doctors made the diagnosis early and were able to treat him immediately, he recovered in just a few months.

Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread—not because we are full, but because we are so frequently hungry. Our emptiness on any level can drive us to despair or lead us to prayer. But we can always turn to God, trusting Him and even praising Him before we receive the answer.

***When has answered prayer changed your perspective toward life?***

**QUESTION #4**

***How has answered prayer been an encouragement to our group?***

**QUESTION #5**

# PRAYING FOR OURSELVES

*Answer the following questions and write a prayer to the Lord.*

## **My Needs**

What would you say are your five greatest needs?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How could God meet those needs?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."*

— ROMANS 8:28

## LIVE IT OUT

We have daily needs and God wants us to seek Him in prayer so He can meet those needs. How will these truths affect how you pray? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **List your requests.** Make a list of your needs—both daily and long-term. Pray through that list and trust God to answer.
- ▶ **Evaluate your requests.** In light of God's honor, will, and kingdom, evaluate your list of prayer requests to the questions on page 99. As needed, modify what you're asking or how you're asking to ensure your requests honor Christ.
- ▶ **Share God's answers.** Share with someone the specific ways God has answered your prayers.

Whether it's our physical needs like food, or our emotional, spiritual, or relational needs, God provides. We are to take our needs to Him on a daily basis and trust Him to provide what is best for us.

My thoughts

