



## How to Pray Matthew 6:9-13

We're asking the Lord to make us a praying church, that we would not only attempt great things but ask God to do great things in us and our city. We're in the second of three sermons on the Lord's Prayer. Last week we looked at why we pray. Now we're looking at how to pray. I want you to look at three things in this portion of the prayer. Jesus teaches us to ask in three ways: give us, forgive us, deliver us.

### Give Us

Give us this day our daily bread. Give us. I've noticed that when my kids pray, this is where they often begin. Dear God, please give me a great day and let me have fun at school. Amen." If we're honest, this is where most of our prayers begin. Give us. Give me...a job, a spouse, get me well, give me better finances. We skip right over "hallowed be *your* name," and go straight to give *us*. We place the "us" prayers above the "your" prayers: "[Hallowed \(revered\) be \*your\* name. \*Your\* kingdom come. \*Your\* will be done.](#)" In the words of theologian David Wells, "[We have turned to a god we can use instead of God we must obey.](#)" This reminds me of an angry, frustrated husband who kept coming in for counseling. His wife was distant and cool to him but he wanted more intimacy. He told me he was reading the Word, coming to city group, and praying, asking God to change her attitude, to draw her close. He was more concerned with using God to get a close wife, than obeying God, which would attract his wife. He skipped right over "your will be done" to his will be done. **We have unwittingly embraced a wrong view of prayer.** We have bought into the idea that prayer is the way we obtain our agenda with God, instead of how we join God's agenda for us and the world. We even think prayer is initiated by us, as if it is cold start communication with God, as if he is waiting for us to put the key of prayer into the ignition before he can act, and that by praying we jump start some kind divine engine to get our way. Prayer isn't a cold start communication that begins with us. Prayer is continual communication that begins with God. God is always communicating through his Spirit. When we desire to pray, it's in response to his Spirit stirring us to join his will, his gospel agenda for the world. This is why we are repeatedly instructed to "pray in the Spirit" (Rom 8:26-27; 1 Cor 14:14; Eph 2:16; 6:18). The Spirit joins our thoughts to God's thoughts: "[For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thought except the spirit of that person...so also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely give us by God](#)" (1 Cor 2:10-12). In other words, to know someone, we might say we know their "inner person"; in the Spirit we have been given access to that inner person of. The Spirit draws us to the will of the Father. So prayer is not cold start communion with God. The engine of God's activity is always running, and when we pray, we join the Spirit who is getting us into get into the vehicle of God's will. ***Prayer is not trying to persuade God to do something he would not do; it is being caught up what he is already doing. Prayer is an invitation to join God's agenda not manipulation for Him to join our agenda.*** Prayer is God-centered. What then should we do with the "give us this day our daily bread?" We should heartily pray it. Bread

in the ancient world was made and consumed daily. It was a need. Daily bread stands for all our necessities—our food, rent, clothing. So pray for needs and pray **specifically**. Christians are notorious for vague, generic prayers. “Lord, I pray that you would bless Mary.” How do we want Mary to be blessed? With holiness, with faith in Christ, with a job, bold witness? The Lord’s Prayer is specific. Don’t be afraid to ask for specific things. Just because God is sovereign in prayer, doesn’t mean we aren’t responsible to ask. Several months ago I asked you to begin praying with me every day, at 10:02, in memory of Luke 10:2 that God would raise up leaders in our church to go into the harvest of our city. Since then we’ve had a number of leaders stepped up. Tim Gillen taking lead on our City Groups and we have 34 people enrolled in our Missional Leader Program. God has answered our specific prayer. Second, pray **continually**. Don’t give up. George Muller twenty-five years for the salvation of five friends. The fifth turned to Jesus the day after his death. For six years, I have prayed for an executive pastor, a downtown building for our church (LeBare), and the salvation of my neighbors. I have not seen God do these things but like the widow who continually pleaded with the Judge in Jesus parable, we must continue to pray. Finally, we should pray **dependently**. Interestingly, the word “daily” doesn’t actually appear in the original text. Instead, it reads: “[give us our necessary bread today](#).” Daily bread stands for all our necessities—yes—but it means something more. Necessary bread, daily bread, reminds us that we *require* it, that it is necessary for us to go on living. It reminds us that we need food; we need water. God does not. God does not need. He is not a god that is served by human hands as though he needs anything (Act 17:25). So, by all means pray for daily bread, but recognize your desperate need for his Bread, his will, his Spirit. **God wills us to pray for our needs, but teaches us to subordinate our needs to his will.** His kingdom come, his will be done, in our lives as it is in heaven.

### Forgive Us

If you’ve been awakened to your self-centeredness in prayer, the next line of the prayer comes as good news: “[forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors](#).” Sometimes “debts” is translated as “transgressions” or “sins,” both accurate translations given verse 14, which refers to debts as transgressions. We are in debt to God. We cannot pay the bill for sins with good deeds or money. Later in Matthew Jesus tells a story of king who called his slaves to settle accounts with him. There was one who owed 10,000 talents but could not repay. He was to be sold into slavery, along with his family, until he threw himself on the ground and begged for *mercy*. The king *forgave* his debt. In the play *Les Mis*, we meet Jean Valjean, jailed for 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread for his starving niece. When he is released, he is taken in by a priest, where he devours his dinner like an animal starved of hunger. Destitute, Jean steals the priest’s silver and slips away in the night. The police catch him the next day and bring him back to the priest. Instead of banishing Jean to prison yet again, the priest insists that the silver was a gift. It is a moment of jaw-dropping mercy and forgiveness. Jean deserved prison but received priest’s favor—forgiveness of the debt. Now, in that exchange, someone had to absorb the debt. Jean Valjean could absorb the debt by serving a sentence OR the priest could absorb the debt by giving up his silver. The king or the servant, the priest of the thief, someone has to pay. So it is with God. We are all thieves and have stolen God’s praise. We turn attention to self. We insist on our will. We are

all in debt to an infinite God. Someone has to absorb the debt. **We can absorb the debt in banishment from his presence or Jesus can absorb the debt of banishment from the Father's presence in the dark hours of the cross.** Turn to Christ and he will forgive you debts; he will give you his silver. That's "forgive our debts," but what about *as we forgive our debtors*? Have you ever held someone in your debt, held a grudge, refused to forgive? [Robie's story] Behold our wrongs and we will become unforgiving. To not forgive someone who has hurt you, wronged you, is to do the unthinkable. Later on in *Les Mis*, Jean Valjean is given the opportunity to pay the debts of one of his former employees, Fantine. She was fired from his company and turned to prostitution to provide for her daughter. A caller beats her and she spins into sickness. Jean is given an opportunity to intervene at risk of being sent to prison yet again. Not prison, not after he has gained so much. What would you think of him if he refused to help Fantine, if he left her to die? How could a man who was shown so much mercy refuse to show mercy to others? Behold mercy and you will become merciful. Jean takes Fantine to a clinic, pays for her care, rescues her daughter, and tends to Fantine. "Be merciful as your heavenly father is merciful." – Jesus. Forgive 70 x 7. Behold the forgiving one, and you will become forgiving. **Because there is no end to our forgiveness there should be no end to others forgiveness.** So what do we do with lingering judgment, discord, and bitterness? Matthew 18: go and be reconciled to your brother or sister. Do not bring a gift of worship to the altar. Reconciliation before worship. Seek forgiveness and extend forgiveness. **But once a hurt is forgiven, are we supposed to forget?** Does the pain disappear? Not necessarily. Counselor Tim Lane points out that forgiveness is both an event and a process. In the moment of reconciliation we can experience a genuinely forgiving event and still wince at the memory of our injury. What should we do when that memory surfaces? Forgiveness continues to work itself, like a process, in our hearts. When the memory surfaces, we gain yet another opportunity to contemplate the forgiveness of Christ. Because we are forgiven so much, we can forgive others. Don't bring up past grievances with yourself. Don't run the videotape of your wrongs. Watch the footage of God's faithfulness and mercy. Don't behold their sins; behold their Savior. Also, try not to gossip about your wrongs. Gossip about God's undeserved forgiveness. Tell everyone, not about how you've been wronged but how you've been given more than you deserve. Your debts for the debt-absorbing life of Jesus. Forgive your debtors, as Christ has forgiven your debts.

### Deliver Us

Finally, "[lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.](#)" **Christianity is wonderful not only because it forms a firm ground of forgiveness beneath our feet, but also because it promises to transform us from head to toe.** When Jesus teaches us to pray "Deliver us from evil," he is not only thinking of the present temptations of the Evil One but also the final deliverance of his Kingdom Come. At the time of this prayer, Christ has not yet died or risen from the dead. How can he teach give us, forgive us, and deliver us? Jesus teaches us to pray on the basis of what establishes prayer with the Father—his own life and death, his debt payment. **So Jesus teaches us to ask based on the future.** But he is not thinking only of his future death. He is also thinking of his future **return**. Jesus will return. He is coming back. Jesus is coming on a white horse, and deliverance follows with him. He



will cast sin, death, and Evil into the Lake of Fire and guide us to drink forever of the River of Life. He will gather in saints who will behold him fully and become fully like him, right on the spot! Never a sin again. Forgiven sinners will become glorified saints. When we cry out to the Lord to deliver us from evil, it is for his kingdom come. His will be done, that we might happily hallow him forever.