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SERIES: REWRITING JESUS

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

TITLE: Submission in Prayer Pt. 1

There was a young Christian woman who lived a pretty quiet life. She had a quaint little house, but she absolutely loved it! Every morning she would go out to her front porch and have coffee and her morning prayer. She loved her neighbors. She loved her neighborhood, but as we know, neighborhoods change; neighbors come, and neighbors go. Such was the case with this woman. Eventually, her favorite next-door neighbors moved out and were replaced by a young, rather rough looking guy. Well, one morning as she was out on her porch doing her morning prayers and drinking coffee, this new young man came by and caught a glimpse of her as she was praying. He could see that she was talking to God, and he came over and asked, “What exactly are you doing?” And she said, “Well, I’m talking to God. I’m praying.” And his response was, “Are you kidding me? You’re praying?? Aren’t you a little bit old for fairytales?? I mean, don’t you know that there is no God!!” Well at first, she was kind of taken aback, but she pulled herself together, and asked, “So, are you an atheist?” He said, “Well, yeah, I’m an atheist. I don’t believe in God.” “Ok,” she said, “I’m going to pray for you then.”

So, she kept on praying. Well, week after week, she’d pray on her front porch. And as the man observed, he’d laugh and kind of dismiss it, saying things to himself like, “You know, she’s just a fool.” But one morning, she came to God in prayer with a very specific need: She was out of money! It was almost the end of the month, but she was out of money AND FOOD! So she came to God, and said, “Dear God, it’s me. And you know, I have this need. You know I don’t have any money, and it’s going to be a few days before I get paid. I just need some food. Would you provide for me?” Well, the young man had heard her prayer that day, and he thought, “I’m going to teach this girl a lesson. I’m going to show her something.” So he went to the grocery store. He bought bags full of groceries and brought them back to the house. He put them on her front porch. Then he rang the doorbell and he ran back to his front porch to observe. So as he watched, the woman opened the door, saw the groceries and *she was amazed*. She was in awe! She fell on her knees and she began thanking God. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Father. You heard my prayer. You provided the groceries I needed.” It was at that point that the man started laughing. He started laughing and walked over to her and said, “I knew it. I knew you would think it was God, but it wasn’t. It was me. I went and I bought the groceries, and it was me who put them on your front doorstep!” Well, she went from crying to laughing. She started laughing hysterically. She couldn’t control herself. And he goes, “What is your problem? Didn’t you just hear me? I destroyed God.” She looked at him and said, “I prayed. I prayed that God would

provide me groceries. And I knew He would. And He did. I just didn't expect that He would make the devil pay for them.”

Now on the surface, that is funny! But honestly, don't be surprised if God acts through someone you would least expect. And He might do that not only for your sake, but for theirs as well! After all, the Lord works in mysterious ways!

Well, speaking of prayer – as a pastor I've been asked many questions about prayer. I've asked the very same questions, and will continue to do so: Questions like “Why doesn't God answer my prayers?” “How should I pray?” “Or is it okay to pray for my favorite sports team to beat our rivals? I mean, it's been years!” What we've come to realize, is prayer is all about motive. Why are we praying? Is it a chance to show off? Is it a religious duty to check off for us? Is it all about me? If the answer is yes to these questions, our motive is wrong.

In our last message, we came to discover that what we call the Lord's Prayer really is the disciple's prayer, or a model of prayer for us. It's not a “what to say” prayer. It's *how* to pray. This model of prayer is in two portions. In our last message, we learned that the first is all about God and His will. Jesus showed us a key element of prayer is to worship God and recognize Him for who He is in our lives, and in the universe. We learned that we should desire His name be revered in our lives and in the lives of others. We should desire and pray for the expansion of His kingdom through the lost coming to faith in Jesus. We also learned that our desire and prayer should revolve around our obedience to King Jesus in our daily lives.

Well today, we'll look at the *second portion of this model for prayer*. It's not really a focus on us, but rather a *focus on our need for God* in all aspects of our lives.

Well, let's now begin hearing from Jesus as He continues teaching on prayer. Let's pick it back up in Matthew 6, beginning in verse 11 (ESV).

11 Give us this day our daily bread,
12 and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Three verses, and here we also find 3 petitions or requests from believers to our heavenly Father. **Verse 11 is the first request. “Give us this day our daily bread.”**

As American Christians, doesn't this seem a bit foolish? We've prayed this prayer so many times, we coast through it. The American Christian's inclination is to bypass this petition. We are self-sufficient. I once heard a successful businessman tell me, “If it's meant to be, it's up to me.” In other words, the key to success is all up to you. Now, for the non-believer, this is largely true. God sustains all things. He is in sovereign over all. But He is under no obligation to provide for those who are not His spiritual children, so it is up to them to provide for themselves.

DISCUSSION:

N: We'll talk more about how verse 11's petition applies to us today, but right now let's turn to my discussion partners, Back to the Bible CEO Arnie Cole and author Cara Whitney, for a little feedback on asking for daily bread. What does "daily bread" look like for each of you?

C: Well, whatever those needs are for that day, so not just in physical form, but emotionally; so my peace for the day.

A: Yeah. Give me my nourishment for today, and it can be a multitude of things. And the nice thing is God knows better than me what I need.

N: Yeah. That bread can be so many different things that we would need. But the good thing is regardless - physical, emotional, food, clothes, whatever it is - God will meet the need. I think again, one of the key things we have to remember is the difference between our wants and our needs. And that's a hard thing for us all to learn.

Using "The Lord's Prayer" as a model, how does the petition "Give us this day our daily bread" apply to us? Well, I believe there are **5 key elements in requesting God's daily bread** for us today: **the substance, the source, the supplication, the seekers, and the schedule.**

Jesus says, "Give us this day our daily bread." **Bread is the substance.** Bread here reaches far beyond just literal bread. I think Martin Luther was right when he suggested that bread encompasses all that we need to live; so that includes food, life itself, a place to sleep, clothing, peace, etc. I think this is a very hard prayer to understand for many of us today. We have pantries filled with canned goods and boxes of mac and cheese. We open our fridges, and they're overflowing. Even so, for many today in the United States, and for sure around the globe, this prayer is vital. *Give us this day Our Daily Bread.* Each day, God give us our daily provision: our food; a place to sleep; a place to wash; clothes that cover my body. *Give us this day Our Daily Bread.* Bread is the substance.

But listen to me. Did you know that God has promised to meet all our needs? It's true! God is under obligation as our Heavenly Father to provide for us our needs, *but not our wants*. There is no doubt that many of us live with discretionary income, and that's a huge blessing. It is evident that God does bless us above and beyond what we deserve. That's called grace. But what God has promised is to meet our *needs*. Everything above that is grace upon grace upon grace. But the "name it and claim it" version of the Gospel is a FALSE gospel and a LIE. Nowhere in Scripture do we find the guarantee - nowhere in Scripture does it give you monetary blessings, or blessings of a physical kind. Now maybe you're wondering, "Is it okay to make requests for the wants in my life?" Of course. There is nothing wrong with asking our Heavenly Father for additional blessings. The key is for us to be like Paul, who learned to be content in *all situations*. So if all

we have is enough for today, then we need to be content. Also I think we need to remember the difference between our needs, our wants, and our problems.

Here's what I mean. There are times when we get ourselves into situations that cause us great frustration and anxiety. For example, you racked up a bunch of credit card debt and now you are paying 15% of your income to paying off that debt, so you don't have any extra cash to do those extra things you want to do. Or maybe you're spending 10% of your income on eating out, and you're paying \$200 a month for Internet, cable, Netflix, and Hulu, and you don't have enough. *Those are examples of a **problem**.* I think it's common for us to get angry with God when we don't have surplus, but the reality is we DO have surplus – we're simply misappropriating the blessing He's given us. So I think we need to discern our needs, our wants, and our problems. So, *give us this day Our Daily Bread:* Provide for us what we need. Thank you for anything above and beyond. And Father, please don't let us abuse the blessing, but never let us confuse a want for a need.

Give us this day our daily bread. Who is to give us this provision? Our Heavenly Father. **The Giver is our source.** James 1:17 (NASB) says, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” Every good thing, all things, totally everything good comes from God - Even to the non-believer, yes. That’s common grace. So does this mean as Christians we can all retire young and retire now? Hardly. Deuteronomy 8:18 (NASB) says, “**But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.**” God gives us the ability to work and to create progress financially and in our physical lives. Paul wrote this in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV), “**For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.**” So on one hand, God has given us the desire and requirement to work. And on the other hand, God is the provider of the health, the ability to work, and is the true source for meeting all of our needs.

Give us our daily bread. **That giving is the supplication.** Give acknowledges our need. This rightly acknowledges God’s provision in the past, in the present, and rightly has us depending on it for the future. I think this is one of the hardest parts of prayer for us today: Because it recognizes our need for God. It recognizes that we are not self-sufficient. It recognizes that we are not the secret of our success. We are the clay and *He* is the Potter. We are the creation and *He* is the Creator. When we turn to God and say “Please give,” what we are recognizing is our fragility and His sufficiency. Please, Father, give.

Give us our daily bread. **We, as His children, are the seekers.** This model of prayer is for His children. In the ancient church, just like Communion was only allowed for Christians, so was the adoption and saying of the Lord’s Prayer. It’s for you and I as His followers. God will provide for our needs, sometimes through supernatural ways.

N: Now, I'm guessing that Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney have seen God work His provision in many ways throughout their lives. Cara, tell us why it's so important to be paying attention to what's going on in the lives of other people.

C: Well, when you pay attention, then you can pray for them and you can find ways to bless them. You're being obedient to God by serving others. So pay attention and figure out how to put a smile on their face.

N: Well, Arnie, it's not always about asking for money or food or shelter, is it?

A: No, it's certainly not. Well, when I became a believer in a storm off of Alaska, you know, I begged Him to save me. And then when He did, I already started to turn my back on Him. And then I asked Him to save me again shortly thereafter. And so, yes, it's just amazing how He provides in His own special way. And that doesn't mean that later on down the road, you're going to be in the emergency room with your kid, and you're going to be screaming to God to save Him, and He doesn't. I mean, it's just sharing your heart, but being braced and brave for the consequences, knowing that God is in control over everything.

N: Yeah. You've definitely experienced this in your life. Well, I would love to hear from your perspectives about the balance between asking God for something, and yet being open to His will. I mean, how tricky is it?

C: Well, sometimes the answer's no, and we've all experienced a no, probably more than one time. I guess I've just had to learn to be okay with that. You know, I trust God. He knows more than I do. So I trust Him with whatever circumstance is going on in my life. And I mean, that's just - it's a faith thing. You just have to have faith and trust God, and you don't have to like it.

N: Mm-hm. Very true.

A: And you know, I learned from my mom and dad - you know, they were missionaries in Indonesia with the Dani people, you know, the last known cannibals - and I wasn't a believer at the time, and I knew I'd never see my parents again. They'd come home on what they call furlough every five years. And I just knew I would never see them again. And the one thing my mom always told me each time that they left, and they always came back, was, you know, the safest place is in God's will - if you're doing what God's called you to do, and you're in touch with Him regularly, tell me a safer place in the world there is. And that always resonated as a nonbeliever - I thought, well, she's got her faith. And then now as a Christ follower, it's yeah - yeah, I mean, if you're doing God's will, what else could happen, you know?

N: Well, it's a posture of truly trusting God, no matter the timeline, and no matter the consequences. I remember a few years back, when my mother needed a car, and she didn't have the excess money to buy a car. And so I said, "Go get a loan". And she goes, "I'm not going to

go get a loan. I'm going to wait for God to tell me when it's time to get a car.” And I thought, well, that's one way of doing it. And she prayed, and she waited, and she had a need to get to work. And so guess what? She took the bus for a while and she prayed. And I said, “Mom”, I mean, after a year, I'm like, “Mom, it's time to get a car, you know; go out there and get a car loan if you need to.” She goes, “Nope, I'm not going to get a car until God wants me to have a car”. And I thought, that's really cool and that's really weird, but sure enough, after I think about six more months, a client of hers said, you need a car, I've got a car. And he got her like almost a brand new car, free and clear. It was just incredible.

C: It wasn't a Prius was it? Because I'd give it back.

N: Okay, it was not a Prius, but that's funny. It was a Toyota. But it was just crazy that she was so committed to waiting on God's timing; that she was obedient.

C: That is awesome Nat. [It is.] That is amazing faith, because I mean, we'd have went and got a loan. That's crazy. [Right. Exactly]. Boy, I can learn something from that.

N: Oh my goodness. So can I, and I think it's just so important to pay attention to that, to the stories around us, like what Arnie was talking about with his family. What a great example, again, of trusting God in a very challenging, uncomfortable circumstance. I mean, being with cannibals, I'm sorry. That's not a priority on my list, but yet they were in God's will. And what a safe place to be.