

**Tuesday, August 25, 2020**

**SERIES: REWRITING JESUS**

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**TITLE: Submission in Prayer Pt. 2**

Yesterday we began studying “The Lord’s Prayer” as a model, and we discovered that the first petition, “give us this day our daily bread” contains 5 key elements for requesting God’s daily provisions in our lives: #1 The substance; #2 The source; #3 The supplication; #4 The seekers; and finally #5 The schedule. Let me go back to the seekers for a moment and give you a real-life example of what it means *to seek* after God’s daily bread.

My wife and I have had anything but normal pregnancies. Let me rephrase this: My wife has had anything but normal pregnancies. But what's interesting is, when my wife was pregnant with our oldest son - after about six months, she ended up going on bed rest. We were young in our marriage and honestly didn't have many resources. Her income was essentially half of our income. Things were really tight! Now, I don't remember asking for any help, but I do remember us praying and trusting God to provide. Over the course of the next 2 1/2 months, we would receive checks, and cash, and various blessings to meet all of our needs.

Well, when my wife was pregnant with our second son, she ended up going on bed rest for almost 5 months. I remember talking to the doctor, who said, “Yep, Tiffany needs to go on bed rest again.” And I said, “What do you mean by bed rest? We have a kid! Do you mean she shouldn't work, or what?” The doctor said, “Look stupid, when I say bed rest, I mean bed rest – that’s it! That means she doesn't work, and she doesn't get up to chase after your toddler. She does nothing.” Well, I was beside myself. I was starting a new career. Again, we didn't have any extra resources. We were dependent upon her income like we were before. And yet, the Lord provided. Again, without seeking help, we began receiving cash and checks and gift cards. We didn't solicit. We just prayed and trusted God. We never missed a mortgage payment.

God promises to meet our needs and he does so in natural ways and in *supernatural* ways.

So now let’s look at the 5<sup>th</sup> key element of requesting God’s daily bread in our lives. **This is the schedule.** So often, we ask and expect God to provide for our daily needs, but what we’re really talking about, are our long-term needs for health and wealth. Each day, He has promised to meet our needs, and our willingness to believe it is a testimony to our true belief in Him and His ability to keep His word.

As I said earlier, the idea of a daily provision is very foreign for us. But I think another way we can think about this and apply it, is to submit to *God's timing* for our lives and *not our own*. Now, you've probably heard that phrase, God is always on time and never late. The problem from our perspective is He isn't on *our* timeline. Many people view God as an "11th hour God". But there's nothing 11th hour about it, because He meets our needs in the time that He so chooses to accomplish *His purpose*. Does it keep us dependent upon Him? Absolutely it does. And it should! But we never need to worry about His *ability* or His *willingness* to fulfill His promises. He will do it at *just the right time*. The question is, do we trust Him?

**He is the source of the substance through the supplication for His seekers on His schedule.**

Yes, that's a mouthful, so let me repeat it! He is the source of the substance through the supplication for His seekers on His schedule.

Jesus continues in Matthew 6, verse 12 (ESV): and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. The first 3 petitions we looked at last week were independent from each other. The 3 today are connected by "and". I think this is telling us how important and interconnected each desired outcome is for good living. Not only that, but it is here in verse 12, we find the main theme of this prayer: *forgiveness*. In verses 9-15, we see that forgiveness is mentioned 6 times. Okay, so what is Jesus saying here? This has been an area of debate and confusion for many Christians. I'll give you my opinion on this:

There are some who read verse 12 and say, "you see, forgiveness is conditional." So you may be forgiven by Christ, but the moment you don't forgive someone, you lose your forgiveness and aren't saved. I don't think this is *at all* what Jesus is saying. If it was, Jesus would be contradicting His own teaching. Jesus said in John 3:36 (NET), "[The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.](#)" What does eternal mean? Temporary? Conditional? No it means *forever*. Once you are saved, you are always saved.

Okay, so how are we to use this as a model for prayer? Two ways, I believe. First – you and I as Christians are to be *daily and continually* confessing our sins to God. This is largely not talked about in the church today. That is tragic because it's biblical and necessary. Confession isn't about being "re-forgiven" for your sins. Christ's death paid for ALL your sins: your sins in the past; your sins in the present; and your sins in the future. Confession is all about agreeing with God that that the sin you've committed is wrong, offensive, and it grieves you too. You also grieve; you mourn the fact you've sinned against your Heavenly Father.

1 John 1:8-9 (NASB) says, "[If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.](#)" Daily, we need to confess our sins to God - not generically: "God I'm sorry I sinned today." No, it's important that we pause and we recognize what we did. "God I am sorry I was angry, mean, rude, and condescending to my wife today. I am sorry." We also need to confess sincerely. Let's be honest, sometimes we don't feel remorse,

but the pain of our choices. This isn't true confession. Again, true confession is agreeing with God that we were wrong, and we recognize that.

## **DISCUSSION:**

N: Let's get some feedback now from Cara Whitney and Arnie Cole. Cara, I'm curious from your perspective, how have you integrated confession into your daily ritual and your conversation with God?

C: Okay. So like you said, confession isn't about being re-forgiven for your sins. My goal daily is to try to stay in agreement with God. And I have this thing called the Holy Spirit in my life. The Holy Spirit, with all due respect, is a nag. And so when I do something, think negatively about something, act negatively towards somebody or some situation, the Holy Spirit is telling me I'm out of agreement with God. So, and I feel yucky about it - I don't - I want to love God, and I want to be more like Christ, so I confess those things. I'm like, "I'm sorry, I need to knock it off". And I try to make a change. That's my daily life, you know, fall down, get back up, fall down, get back up, all the way to Heaven.

N: Yeah. There are some days I think I could probably have a full time job in my confession, with all the things I do, and it's pretty embarrassing. But there's a key element of our confession that I want to talk to you, Arnie, about. Talk about the difference between true confession, and just being sorry.

A: Yeah. You know, I think there's two elements to that. One is very, very complicated, and I'll just peruse it, and save it for another show. But there are Christ followers, good people, who believe that they can reach a state of perfection where they don't sin. I've talked to people like that. And to me, they are in need of confession. Okay, it's just my bias and that's a tough group, but there's another group that I've had tons of experience with: Those are men who struggle with pornography and they get caught. And we've done a lot of research, and sadly and tragically, I would say 90%, maybe 95% of those are sorry because they got caught. And if you look over time in their lives, I've come to the conclusion - matter of fact, we've done work for a ministry that works with helping men get out of pornography, and they have, I think it's even higher than 90% of the guys that are in there, were caught by their wives - so in order to save their marriage. So you've got both ends of the spectrum: One that thinks they've never sinned, or they don't sin anymore. And then you've got the other that's caught, and they're sorry because they're caught. And you know, all I can do, is look at my own life, and it's easy to say you're sorry, but you need to mean it. And for me, it's the behaviors. It doesn't matter if you say you're sorry or not. Is there some transformation? Did the behavior change? And I don't mean that in a legalistic way - I mean, in a life transformation way.

N: Well, I think what you just described there on both spectrums, it really is an issue of the flesh, because on one hand you think you can really, you know, perfect your lifestyle, so you're not going to sin on Earth. On the flip side, I mean, you're really just managing behavior, and not really dealing with a heart issue - so you're still just struggling with the flesh there. And I think so many of us, if we're honest, our initial response is to say, "I'm sorry", to get out of the consequences. We really enjoy that sin. And so whether it's pornography or whatever it is, we go through that "I'm sorry", but we're really not confessing, because we're really not in agreement that what we've done is offensive to God - aggrieves the Holy Spirit. And so what you're promoting is, truly following Christ, and letting the Holy Spirit shape us from the inside out. And

when that happens, when we do sin, we recognize it. We have true remorse. And then there is that life change, but it flows from the heart.

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Confession is a key component in your relationship with God. Jesus taught about confession at the Last Supper. Jesus modeled humility as He washed the disciples' feet in John 13, but He also taught us about forgiveness and confession. Listen to the exchange between Peter and Jesus in John 13:5-11 (NASB):

“Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. **6** So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” **7** Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.” **8** Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” **9** Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” **10** Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all *of you*.” **11** For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

Jesus says, **He who was bathed needs only to wash his feet but yet is still completely clean.**

Jesus, is saying, you've been cleansed. I, Jesus, have forgiven you of all your sins. I don't need to wash you again, but here's the deal – your feet still need *daily* washing. You see, after a long day of working and walking, my feet are stinky, sweaty, and not fit for human presence. The dirty feet are symbolic of daily sin we are engaged in. When we ask for forgiveness, we are not being totally bathed again, simply cleaned from the daily filth. That's why He talks about the washing of the feet.

Unconfessed sin is a sign of living in the flesh - Our tendency to gravitate back to playing God. Unconfessed sin is one of the things that hinders God's answer of our prayers. King David wrote, **“If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear”** (Psalm 66:18, NASB). Unconfessed sin creates distance in our relationship with Him. So daily – specifically and sincerely - confess our sins!

But what about the rest of Jesus' words: **“As we have also forgiven our debtors.”** (Mat. 6:12b)

You see, friend, as God's spiritual children, evidence of authentic salvation is found in our willingness and ability to forgive others. Let's stop for a moment and think about our sin – when we are honest with our assessment, we should think God is nuts for offering us forgiveness, by faith alone, through grace alone. *This is exactly what He has done and it doesn't make any sense, humanly speaking.* And *thank you* Father! It is not religion that can or will save us! It's about what He has done! We have accumulated an infinite amount of sin debt in our lives against the holy and perfect God. When we think about this and keep this at the front of our minds, we have no excuse but to forgive anyone and everyone who harms us. When we forgive others, it is evidence that we have received forgiveness from Jesus! So, this request reminds us of the depth

of our sin, the unending forgiveness of God, the necessity of daily confession, and the forgiveness of others.

This leaves us with one last request Jesus teaches us in verse 13: **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** This is another request that has much discussion and debate. I read many interpretations of verse 13 and all had their merit. The discussion seems to be reconciling this verse with other verses like the writings of James. James 1:13 (NASB), says, **“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.”** And other verses, like James 1:2-3, **“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”**

So, we are to pray with a desire to not be led into temptation and know that God won't tempt us to sin. But, we also know that testing and trials are good for us. That's what matures us – it causes our faith to grow. So, what is the heart of this request in verse 13? It is the request that God would put in us a desire, or a heart, to avoid situations and temptations that we cannot combat. It's a request for God to watch over us, and shepherd us away from sinful situations, and ultimately sin.

The Apostle Paul wrote this to the Corinthian church: **“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it”** (1 Cor. 10:13).

This is essentially what Jesus is saying: God, keep me from the situations, keep my eyes, ears, feet, all of me, from situations where I will fall into sin. Instead, put in me a desire to avoid these situations, because I know I am weak. This is why Jesus finishes this request with **“deliver us from the evil one.”** (NIV) That's the better translation. It's not just to avoid evil, but it's to be kept out of the presence of the devil, and it's the prayer and desire to escape his company when present.

James said, **“resist the devil and he will flee from you”** (James 4:7, ESV). Satan prowls like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us. God knows, and we need to start believing, that Satan is no joke. He is real. He is seeking to destroy us, our witness, our lives, and our faith. You cannot take him on by yourself. It is Christ who is our protector and can help us! This request is really an affirmation of God's necessity in our lives, and the need for protection and deliverance that only God can provide.

So now what? We pray. We know that Jesus' lesson on prayer is not a list of phrases to recite, empty of mind and heart. There's nothing wrong with reciting it, but that's not the point. This is a model built on our motives and heart. Our prayers are an intimate and honest conversation with the God of the Universe. We are to pray with a heart of worship to our King. We should have a desire to see His name respected and revered in our lives, and in the lives of everyone around us.

We should pray with a heart for His return; for an expansion of the Kingdom through conversion – by praying for the lost by name. We should pray with a heart for His will to be made reality in our lives, by daily obeying King Jesus. We should pray with a heart recognizing Him as the sustainer and provider of all we have. We should confess with sincere and broken hearts. We should pray for a desire to forgive all who harm us. And we should pray for protection and deliverance from Satan and the situations we cannot combat.

No matter where you are or what you are doing, I encourage you to pause and pray. Jesus gave us a model for prayer: Not *what* to pray, but *how* to pray. What's beautiful is that each of us will commune with God in our own words, with our own experiences – just like Jesus intended.

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N: And now let's turn to Arnie and Cara. I'd like to hear from each of you what you've learned through Jesus' teaching on prayer, that has helped you see prayer in a new light.

C: I changed that perspective when - for people, you know those of us with kids - if your kids are going through something - especially right now, my kids are 12 and 14 years old - I want them to talk to me about things. [Yeah]. Especially when they're struggling, they're confused; they're afraid; they've screwed up - I want to hear from them. And Jesus wants to hear from us, because we're His kids.

N: What about you, Arnie? What have you learned?

A: I've learned it's been a long process. It's hard for me to talk about answered prayer. I've noticed that - and maybe it's because when you've been such a spiritual loser most of your life, you know, why would God bother with the lowest form of creeping thing to ever think of answering any prayer? - so I've kind of been the other way. In fact, I used to make jokes about answered prayer - just kind of, you know, like acknowledging, "Wow, that was an answer to prayer - ha, ha, ha!" or, you know, when that parking space comes up and "Well, God provided once again", just kind of pass it off, take it lightly. I've learned to stop doing that and really thank him. It's not a coincidence - it's not. God does answer prayer: acknowledge it; share it when it's appropriate. I feel I have to be very careful, because God's answered a lot of prayer in my life. And I know He will answer prayer in other people's lives, but it took me a long time to realize that those prayers five years ago were answered, but it may have taken me five years to figure it out - Oh wow, He's answered every one of my prayers. So in like going through cancer, when I was going through that; or the heart stuff - you hear about people - Oh, well, God has healed them. You know? Well it just - or maybe I didn't pray hard enough. It's just something that's very personal to me. I don't make light of it anymore. It's still hard to talk about, because I know there's so many Christ followers out there who think God didn't answer this prayer or that prayer, and they almost resent you for - He did for you and not me.

N: Well, I think you're exactly right that God does answer all of our prayers. It just may not be in the way that we think - but you had to come to a place where you were willing to see that He did. And I think that's probably where a lot of us get stuck. We only can see it from one angle,

and we don't really bow our knee to His authority in our lives. But I think what you've just described is right on the money. You know, speaking of prayer, and you even talked about healing, I remember when I was doing consulting work with hospitals, that we talked about faith, and the importance of faith and prayer in healing, for people who are going through treatments of all different kinds. Duke University has done studies on this - that prayer actually helps those who are going through recovery. So as a researcher, I know you've done research on prayer. What have you found in your research that impacts people's attitude about prayer?

A: Oh, I think it has a tremendous impact on the success of a Christ follower. I will say prayer without the Bible is different than prayer with the Bible.

N: Hmm. What do you mean by that?

A: Take two people who claim to be Christ followers - and I'm not making a judgment here, [okay] - but they make the claim. One reads the Bible once or twice a month. The other person reads the Bible every day. Both pray every day. You will see a significant difference between the person who gets fed from the Word, versus just doing prayer. We have seen such phenomenal things as the person who has an active prayer life and is engaged in the Bible - they can sense the Holy Spirit way, way more clearly than a person who just prays without any biblical foundation. Now I'm not here to say one's going to Heaven and one's not. I'm just talking about life transformation, and the transforming life that Jesus makes. One person really has it and the other doesn't. I've seen it thousands of times, literally, worldwide.

N: Great perspective. Yeah. You're simply strengthening your faith and strengthening your case for talking to God, when you are engaged in Scripture. I think that's a great point of clarification. Cara, you've had experiences where you've offered prayer -to pray for people who aren't Christians, even people that you barely know. And in most cases they say, "Yes, would you pray for me?" Would you mind sharing one of your experiences, and maybe some tips for praying for others?

C: Most of my experience and the absolute best advice that I can give, is that it should be a private conversation. So if you see somebody on social media, and they're kind of baiting - I mean, we've seen these people where they're like, "I've had the worst day ever", or maybe, you know that they're going through something, and they're sharing on social media or whatever. I've reached out to them privately, so Messenger, or a text message, or whatever. I will send them my heart for whatever situation they're in, or ask them what's going on. And I'll ask them if there's anything specific I can pray for. Most times though, if it's done privately, they're going to be super receptive to it.

N: I think privately, and I would maybe say organically. In other words, just don't make it awkward, right? I mean, that's kind of the main thing. And that's where I've mentioned before - with your eyes open, because sometimes you can't get away privately. But again, the more inconspicuous you can make it, the better it is for them. And I think sometimes it's better for us as well.