

# PRAYING FOR AVOCADO TOAST

SERIES: TEACH US TO PRAY



Catalog No. 20210829  
Matthew 6:11  
Third Message  
Dan Westman  
August 29, 2021

*Matthew 6:11*

What an amazing thing it is to gather together and declare the beauty, wonder, and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we have not yet met, my name is Dan, and I am one of the pastors here at Peninsula Bible Church.

As we get started this morning, I wonder, and I want you to think for a moment, about the most COVID thing you have done over the last 18 months. Something that you did this last year that you would never have dreamed of doing before, and yet you found yourself doing it during the pandemic.

I thought we could take a little informal survey here. So, by a show of hands, let us know if you have done any of these things during COVID. For those of you watching online, feel free to comment in the chat.

How many of you have done “business on the top, pajamas on the bottom” during a Zoom call?

How many of you have “worked from home” while at the beach?

How many of you have started making sourdough at home?

There are a number of COVID things that we have done related to church as well. So let’s really pull back the curtain here.

How many of you have watched church from bed or are watching church from now?

One last one—and I might be going out on a limb here: Have any of you used avocado toast for your communion bread?

Full transparency: I have not done this, but I have wanted to. Maybe some day. If you have, I’m guessing you are a Millennial. Us Millennials have a thing for avocado toast. I totally get it. I love myself a good piece of avocado toast. Throw a little goat cheese on there with a poached egg and some paprika—oh, so good!

Millennials get a bad wrap when it comes to avocado toast, though. It’s long been noted that more millennial would own homes if they saved more for a down payment instead of spending their money on things like avocado toast. Just for kicks, I did the math. Assuming that you pay \$18 for your avocado toast, as you probably will at your favorite boujee brunch place, you would have to forgo 33,000 orders of avocado toast to put down a down payment for a modest home here in Palo Alto. That’s a lot of avocado toast.

So, what does this have to do with The Lord’s Prayer? We are in the third week of our four-week deep dive into the most famous prayer ever prayed. This is the prayer that Jesus gives to his disciples when they ask him to teach them to pray. It is a prayer that is meant to shape not only our prayer life but our whole life. It is a prayer that teaches us how to think about God, ourselves, and how to relate to God and our world.

The line that we will look at today is, Give us this day our daily bread. Give us this day our daily bread. This is the prayer where we ask God for avocado toast. Or is it? What exactly does Jesus mean when he teaches us to pray for our daily bread? We are going to unpack these deep and powerful words together this morning.

Before we do, let’s stand together and pray The Lord’s Prayer. As a reminder, as a church, we are trying to pray this prayer every day throughout this series. Each Sunday, we will do this together during worship. Pray with me:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever.  
Amen.

## The starting point: Ask God

The Lord's Prayer comes from Matthew 6 and Luke 11. The two prayers are very similar. Matthew's is a little bit longer, and it is the version that we are looking at together.

If you have been looking in your Bibles, you may have noticed that the ending of The Lord's Prayer isn't actually in the text. The traditional ending that we have been praying together—"For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."—is not part of the prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples. It does show up in some manuscripts that come much later, and it became incorporated into church tradition. The theology of these words is excellent, but they didn't come from Jesus. I think they are great words to pray, and I pray them when I pray this prayer, but that's why you won't find them in your Bible.

The words we are looking at today are found in Matthew 6:11.

### Matthew 6:11:

#### Give us this day our daily bread.

Seven words in English. Eight words in Greek. Yet, these words help us define our relationship with God. These words help keep God in his proper place as the giver of bread and all that is good, and they keep us in our proper place as those who depend on God and bring our requests to him.

This request, or petition, is the fourth of the six petitions that make up the bulk of The Lord's Prayer. With this petition, we have reached a turning point in the prayer, which is marked by a change in prepositions. The first three petitions are about God, and they use the pronoun "thy," or "your." "Hallowed be *thy* name. *Thy* kingdom come. *Thy* will be done." Now, we are shifting to the pronoun "our," and we are asking God for things that we need. "Give us this day *our* daily bread. Forgive *us our* trespasses. Lead *us* not into temptation, but deliver *us* from evil." You can see the shift.

Let's think about what Jesus means when he teaches us to ask God for our daily bread. Some have understood this simply to mean *bread*. We are to ask God for bread. This view becomes problematic for those on the Keto diet because you can't eat bread on the Keto diet. I experimented with Keto for about a year a few years back, and my prayers usually went more like this: *God, don't let me look at, or worse, smell, that heavenly looking bread because if I do, I am seriously going to want it in my belly!* But I don't think Jesus is just asking us to pray for bread. And it is not because I am Keto, because I am not anymore.

From the Reformers to today, most Biblical scholars understand bread to represent not only bread itself but all things that are necessary for life. In Luther's *The Small Catechism*, he writes this:

*Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.*<sup>1</sup>

Understood in this way, Jesus is not just teaching us to ask God for bread. In a much more Keto-friendly fashion, he is teaching us to ask God for *everything that we need*. So this prayer is meant to shape our prayer lives by teaching us to Ask God to provide. Ask God to provide you with the things that you need.

Asking is an incredibly relational thing to do. God is our father who is in the heavens. We are his children whom he loves and loves to care for. We ask him for things. We ask him to provide for our needs. This is what children do to their parents. This is how children relate to their parents.

I am tempted to think that perhaps this is just how my children relate to me. Can I have some water? Can I have a snack? Can I watch a show? If you have young children, I know you can relate. But then I also think back to my days in college, and I was still asking my parents for things. One year for spring break, I had made some plans with my friends to go to Mexico. Our bright idea was to drive from Los Angeles down to Mexico and camp on the beach. Just find a beach and pitch a tent, and surf for a few days. My parents thought this was a terrible idea, and I couldn't figure out what in the world they were talking about. However, eventually, my friends and I decided to call off the trip. In the meantime, my

parents had planned a trip to Hawaii for the same week, so when my trip fell apart, I called them and asked, “Do you want to take me with?” Probably to keep me from changing my mind about Mexico, they let me come.

Children ask their parents for things. It’s what they do. When the request is reasonable, and sometimes even when it’s not, parents are happy to say “yes.”

Do you ask God to provide for you? When you need something, do you ask God for it? When you want something, do you ask God for it? In John 14, Jesus says to his disciples, “If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14). Now, this does not mean literally that you can ask Jesus for whatever you want and he will give it to you. When Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread, that is not a blank check to get whatever we ask. However, the more that we have prayed, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,”—the more the kingdom of God has invaded our hearts so that we desire the things that God desires, so that our will has become aligned with God will—to that extent, when we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” our prayers will be answered. God loves to give good gifts to his children (Matthew 7:11). He loves it.

Ask God because that is what children do. Don’t demand even though children do that sometimes too! Don’t demand, ask. But ask boldly. Ask God for a job that you love. Ask God for a spouse, if that is what your heart desires. Ask God to provide food. Ask him to provide a feast at times. Ask God for community. For friendship. For companionship. Ask God for an “A” on your exam. Ask God to help you get into the school of your dreams.

Ask God for what you want and what you need, but do not ask God out of a place of greed. We are praying in line with the kingdom. We are praying in line with the will of God, so we must be ready to accept that if we do not get what we have asked God for in prayer, then we didn’t really need it. Maybe we wanted it. Maybe we thought we needed it. But if our Father who is in the heavens—who owns the hills and cattle on them, the seas and the fish in them, who makes Google and Apple and Facebook look like little ants on a hill—if our Father decides not to give it to us, then we must be ready to accept that we did not truly need it.

But we won’t know unless we ask. So Jesus teaches us to ask. He teaches us to ask God to provide.

## Beyond just asking: depend on God

Notice, though, that Jesus does not simply teach us to ask God for bread—for our needs. He teaches us to ask God for our *daily* bread. He teaches us to ask God for enough bread for today. Not for next week. Not for next year. Not for retirement. For today.

The image of daily bread brings to mind the story of the Exodus and the wilderness wandering in the Old Testament. After the people of Israel we freed from Egypt and God parted the Red Sea to deliver them, they found themselves in the desert. There is not a lot of food in the desert, so God provides manna. Bread. It wasn’t actually bread. The people didn’t know exactly what it was, but I’m sure it was Keto-friendly. When God provided manna, he provided it every day and exactly the amount they needed for that day. He told them not to collect any more than they needed, or else it would go bad overnight. Every day he sent fresh manna because he wanted to remind the people daily that he is the one who provided for them. He wanted to teach them to depend on him for their needs. Every day. Monday: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Tuesday: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Wednesday: “Give us this day our daily bread.” January: “Give us this day our daily bread.” February: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

As Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread, he teaches us we must depend on God for our needs. Every day. *God, give me what I need for today. Give me the food I need for today. Give me the energy that I need for today. Give me the peace that I need for today. Give me the hope that I need for today. God give me what I need for today.*

You see, in this prayer, we are not only praying against hunger. We are also praying against self-sufficiency. We are praying against a spirit that says, *I can provide for myself today, thank you very much. I’ve got this, God. I’ve can handle today on my own.*

There are some of us in the Silicon Valley for whom the prayer for daily bread is a literal prayer against hunger. We are going to come back to that in a moment. But the far greater danger for most of us here is a spirit of self-sufficiency. Many of us here could miss our next paycheck and be just fine. Maybe we have to give up our avocado toast for a few weeks, but we will be just fine. Some of us here could never work another day in our lives and be just fine. It is so hard to depend on God when we are just fine. It is so hard to depend on God when we feel like we don’t need anything. Or worse yet, when we feel like we can provide for ourselves.

We can't. God is the one who provides. We don't provide for ourselves. God provides for us. You may have graduated from Palo Alto High School. You may have gotten into Stanford University. You may have founded a start-up company. Or you may have immigrated here from another country and created a better life for your family. But you are not the one who provides for yourself. God created you. He has given you every talent that you have. He has opened every door that you have ever walked through. He has put every dollar in your bank account. God is the one who provides.

Ironically, the more God has given us, the harder it is to recognize that it came from him. And the harder it is to depend on him.

That's why we pray this prayer every day. "Give us this day our daily bread." *God, give me what I need for today, for I recognize that everything I have is a gift from you, and everything I need is yours to give.* It's a prayer of dependency. It's a prayer of reliance on God. And it's a prayer that we need so desperately here in Silicon Valley.

Just because God is the one who gives us everything does not mean that we don't have to work for it also. Mark Batterson, an author and pastor in Washington, D.C. says, "Pray like everything depends on God. Work like everything depends on you."<sup>2</sup>

After the service a few weeks ago, I had someone come up to me and ask me how I preach without notes. I actually do preach with notes. I have them right here. Some people might take this message and ask, Why write a sermon? Why prepare at all? Why not just get up here, depend on God, and let him do the rest?

Because that is not how it works. God asks us, and he expects us to work. He expects me to prepare for my sermons. He expects you to work hard at whatever it is that you do. Hard work is deeply honoring to God.

But here is the thing. When I get up here, no matter how hard I have worked or how prepared I am, nothing good will come of this sermon unless God makes it happen. God must take my words coming from his Word, by his Spirit, and give you ears to hear them and enlighten your mind to understand them and soften your heart to receive and enliven your body to go and live them out. Nothing good will come of this morning apart from God. And nothing good will come of all of your hard work unless God blesses it and makes it fruitful.

God is the one who provides. So we must depend on him.

## **Provide for the needs of others**

We might be tempted to stop here. We've looked at the whole prayer, after all. "Give us this day our daily bread." If we stop here, however, this prayer becomes individualistic. It sounds more like, "Give *me* this day my daily bread." But Jesus says, "Give us this day *our* daily bread."

The plural pronoun is significant for two reasons. First, it turns the prayer from a simple petition to an intercession. That is, it turns it from a prayer that God would provide for my needs into a prayer that God would provide for the needs of others as well. Yes, God, give me what I need, but also give my sister in the next row what she needs. Give my brother back home what he needs. Give the men, women, and children fleeing from Afghanistan what they need. Give the firefighters fighting these flames what they need. Give our politicians and our leaders what they need. Give our doctors and nurses, our epidemiologists, and our cancer researchers what they need. Give our professors and teachers what they need. Give our CEOs what they need. Give our students and our direct reports what they need. God, give *us* this day *our* daily bread. This is a prayer of intercession.

But it is also a call to action. It is a call to love our neighbor. It is a call to provide for our neighbor. We cannot pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" and then walk past an unhoused person without feeling an ounce of compassion. We cannot pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" with no regard for those who lack the ability or the opportunity to buy bread for themselves. And we had better not pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" while we preach a gospel that would deal with people's spiritual needs and have nothing to say about their physical needs.

If we are going to pray this prayer—and we must pray this prayer—then we must also look for ways to provide for the needs of others. Look for opportunities to take what God has given to you and give it to someone who needs it.

God doesn't need you to do this. He could provide directly for everyone's needs, just like he has provided for your needs. But that's not the way that God chose to do it because he wants us to do this together. As wonderful as

it is to receive something directly from the hand of God, it is even more wonderful to receive something from a brother or sister who is functioning as the hand of God.

When I was in seminary, a couple who was a few years further down the road than us invited Linzy and me to join a small group with a few other couples our age and a few mentor couples. They hoped to encourage us in our marriage and help us walk with Jesus together, which they did. This couple's love language was spaghetti and really good wine. We were all seminary students with no extra room in the budget for much wine at all, much less really good wine. But each time we met, we enjoyed delicious spaghetti (or some other fantastic meal) and shared some really good wine. This couple was pretty well off, but you would never have guessed looking at the house they lived in, the cars they drove, or the vacations they took. But you started to get a sense of how much they had when you saw how much they gave away.

Their attitude was simple: We have way more than we need, but it's not ours. God gave it to us so we could share it with others.

What has God given to you so that you could share it with someone else? Has he given you more than you need? If so, who does he want you to share it with? Where are the needs that God has given you the opportunity to meet?

There are a number of ways here at the church where you can share what God has given you with those who need it. If God has given you extra time, we have a shower ministry where you give our unhoused neighbors access to our shower here at the church. Every Sunday evening, there is an opportunity to cook a meal for those who may need one and serve it on our patio. Every Friday, our Recovery ministry provides a meal to those struggling with addiction, and they could use some volunteers. We have a Compassion Team who puts all of this together, and you can find out more about all of these opportunities at [pbc.org/compassion](http://pbc.org/compassion).

There are plenty of ways to do similar things beyond the walls of this church. Second Harvest Food Bank is a great place to donate time or resources to help people get access to food. You can sponsor a child through one of any number of organizations. You can buy groceries

for someone that you meet on the street. There are so many opportunities to help meet people's needs if we are looking for them and ready to meet them.

Give us this day our daily bread. In this one short sentence, Jesus calls us to bring our requests to God and depend on him to provide while also looking for ways to share that provision with others.

Let's circle back to avocado toast. When Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread, is he telling us to pray for avocado toast? Yes! I think he is. If you enjoy avocado toast, then that is a great prayer to pray. However, if you pray that prayer, you had better be ready to give your avocado toast away to someone with no toast at all, and you had better also be prepared to eat stale bread and water if that's what God sends your way.

## Endnotes

1. Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism*, <https://catechism.cph.org/en/lords-prayer.html>.
2. Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).