

# Petition

## 'Give us today our daily bread'

**Phil Lauder**

Matthew 7:7-11

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When I was growing up my parents didn't have much money, so holidays were never outside the UK. When I was 21, I decided it would be a good idea to change that. Being that All or nothing person that I am I booked a 12-month ticket to go to Australia. I had I had never even been on a plane and also not been away from my parents this long I decided to further jump into the deep-end, to have two nights stop-over in Singapore.

You can imagine the cultural shock. Up until this point my family holidays were going Northeast of England to see my Nana and Granda in Shields near Newcastle. I was in a country that was completely alien to me and I was very overwhelmed. I spent probably 2 days in my hotel room, very upset and crying "what on earth have I done!?" Also, at the end of those 2 days I had to go on another plane and further away from home and family.

My friend James came to mind. He had been travelling 3 months before me. James and I have been friends for about 4 years - we met at college and spent a of time together along with his other friends from the local village he was at. He wasn't just some acquaintance. I didn't know where he was, but I knew he was in Australia.

I prayed to God because I needed to see someone I knew well. I needed reassurance that I was going to be okay. I was so distraught, being in such a different place, and my realisation of my small geographical pond life, now realising how little I knew about the world. And wondering how an earth I'm going to get through this. All I wanted to do at this point was just to go back on the plane and go home with my tail between my legs.

I'd already pre-booked my next flight to arrive in Perth, Australia and also pre-booked my hostel, of which I arrived at 1:00 a.m. I managed to get a bit of sleep. In the morning I left my dormitory to get my breakfast and the door opposite me opened at the exact same time.

Yes, you guessed it, it was James.

It was an amazing answer to prayer that's been answered - better than any parking space prayer. I mean Australia is, I'm sure you know it's a pretty big place!

I was so grateful. At the time I had just recently come back to my faith after 5 years of just doing it on my own. This was just what I needed to help me grow and understand this Kingdom and, later to try and start to understand this power of prayer: to ask, to seek and to knock.

This doesn't stop hardships. There are times when there are agonising circumstances. I've had times in my life which have been very hard and overwhelming.

You may or may not know, that in a previous life in my mid 20s I was married before. My ex-wife had a very rough start to our marriage, and it never got really much better.

On top of this, within the first year of our marriage my father had been diagnosed with throat cancer. He made a good recovery, but then 5 years on, it came back and it was terminal. My dad was only given 6 months to live due to his cancer being next to the main arteries in his neck and when he was going to pass it would just be an aneurysm. It was actually 4.5 years of wondering when his aneurysm was going to happen. It was a long time, those 4.5 years. Wondering when this time-bomb was ever going to go off for all of us. It was so hard. I couldn't bear to answer any phone call just in case it was going to be the inevitable news.

One thing that was amazing and unbelievable to see, was seeing my dad's peace and trust. He had a real understanding of the truth, that we never know which minute we're going, and he was able to practise it – knowing, ultimately, that he was going to heaven.

You wouldn't think things could get much worse, after my Dad passed. But the day after my dad's funeral, my ex-wife said that she was leaving, and heading back to Australia where she was from originally.

It's in times like this, in this pain and suffering, when we really wonder 'what on earth is going on?'

What I have come to know is, **God is the one that's got me to this point and he's the only one I can hold on to.** That He is my true reality. There have been many times I have come to him with requests for guidance and understanding in my prayer life. Each morning, I come to him with petitions and requests.

The first thing that came to mind when Tom asked me to do this talk - which is on petition in prayer - it reminded me of one of those emails I get from *change.org* or the like, asking me to sign a petition to lobby against the government for something they don't like, or a new law coming in.

In worldly terms this is exactly what a petition looks like. A petition is usually a formal document signed by multiple people, appealing to a specific authority about a particular cause. It's a way to draw attention to an issue or make a formal request. In my head it's like a big fight, a group of people pushing against an organisation until they break and change it! And as you know, sometimes it's not always for the right reasons. In this world this is what we need to do to get ahead of life push to fight to get everything we want.

But what Paul speaks of in the Kingdom of God, is that we **need** to do completely the opposite!

So, **what is a petition when we call to God? Our daily bread!** A petition to the Lord is usually a humble request made to God, often through prayer, asking for guidance, help, or provision.

**Philippians 4:4-7 | <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

And that's it in verse 7. This is what I want to concentrate on - the word 'peace.'

What gives us peace? What truly gives us that moment when we know everything's okay?

I genuinely think it's when we **trust**. Trust I think is the fundamental thing of this petition. We won't ask if we can't trust. If you think about some people and voting. Why some people don't vote is because they don't see the point. They don't trust the system. **If we can't trust, we can't have peace.**

I think this is the fundamental reason for petitioning to God.

It also shows great vulnerability - to ask. People of power and those in great stature want to rule their power over people. But Jesus taught us it is okay to ask. **It's okay to be vulnerable and it's okay to rely on him.** And remember it's about God's kingdom and within it working with him it's not asking for a Ferrari. Remember we're asking for our daily bread and asking for guidance. Remember in the desert, manna that came down from Heaven every day.

### **Jesus wants us to ask!**

I believe this is because he knows who we are and he knows how we respond. We always need to keep looking at our maker and where we come from in order to move us and guide us on with the projection of our lives that he wants for us. God has a plan for each of us, but we have free will working with God in petition.

Praying is one of the great practices that Jesus commands us to do.

**Colossians 4:2 | <sup>2</sup> 'Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.'**

**1 Thessalonians 5:17 | <sup>17</sup> 'pray continually,'**

In our home, I'm generally the cook. I'm sure she won't mind me saying, but my daughter Eva (who is nine), knows that, every day, breakfast, lunch and dinner will be provided for her. She doesn't need to ask - there'll be food coming. However, there are times when she will be hungry or thirsty. She doesn't wait until breakfast or dinner comes, just like us in our human lives. Eva will come and talk to her father and ask "Daddy. I'm thirsty. Can I have a drink daddy?"; "I'm hungry." And, occasionally, "Daddy, do we have any sweets?!"

Which brings me on to my next point. Because remember when we're asking, just because it's not 'Yes', doesn't mean it's not an answered prayer. If Eva always asks for sweets and I keep on saying 'yes', I know that wouldn't be good for her. And to steal a great quote from Nicky Gumbel (from the Alpha course we're currently doing). If Eva asked me, 'can I drive the car?' The answer would be no 'Not yet.' It's not the right time.' It would be dangerous, Eva can't do that yet. **God our Father knows what is good for us.** And eventually Eva will learn to and be able to drive a car.

So, remember it's okay to ask and keep asking. Just like in our verse in Matthew:

**Matthew 7:7-11 | <sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>9</sup> "Which of you, if your son or daughter asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"**

If flawed humans are capable of that kind of love, God's generosity must be infinitely greater. He isn't a cosmic prankster; He is a "Father in heaven."

This isn't about the *mechanics* of getting what you want; it's about the *character* of the one you are asking. The passage invites you to trust that God is inherently "pro-you" and won't give you something harmful (a snake) when you are asking for sustenance. So, keep persevering. Keep petitioning to the Lord keep asking your requests. For you, in him, to grow his Kingdom; to help you with your desires of your Spirit-Filled heart.

So, when they happen, enjoy the 'Yes.' Accept the 'No's' - they are still an answer to prayer. But it also still could mean a 'Not yet'.

But these 'Not yet's' can be really tough - really hard and difficult.

I want to draw attention to a passage on petition to help us understand the spiritual realm we live in. It's in Ephesians. It's where we're talking about the armour of God and where there is such a spiritual battle going on and where we learn about praying in the Spirit. Just when Paul finishes the full armour of God in Ephesians 6:18. He ends with this (remember, he is in prison):

**Ephesians 6:18-20 | <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. <sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.**

They're doing this all the time. And every time they do, the 24 Elders are falling down and casting off their crowns and saying:

I think that sometimes it's this deeper level of understanding of the mysticism of the world. When we're praying, we're entering God's spiritual realm. We're asking things into existence that haven't happened, remembering we're in this world but not of it.

My wife (Katherine) and I prayed with friends recently who are going through a hard time. I said to them "I was talking about prayer and petition of prayer". They wanted to share this testimony of our prayer and petitions - our requests to God.

*“We are in the most difficult times we have ever experienced in our lives. When we came to You and Kat for prayer, you immediately made space for us and then you did exactly what we needed: you invited the Holy Spirit and, in waiting on God, tried to discern with us what was happening in the spiritual realms. Sometimes life is just hard because we live in a broken world. But sometimes we are part of the huge spiritual battle going on. And we need to get a glimpse of that and the part we have in God’s story – to know how to pray. Rather than just asking him for what we want in our own story. You both gave us pictures to hold onto in this time of waiting on him, that gave a glimpse into what God could do in this situation – including one that came even before you knew what the issue was or even that we were in trouble. That showed us God was on the case and he knew. You helped us know God’s presence in the midst of our weeping and find hope, through your love, through verses that showed God knew what we are feeling and just by sitting in God’s presence together.”*

In the ‘not yet’ time of prayer, this was such an amazing support – and continues to be so. These verses from Ephesians tell us to pray ‘in the Spirit’ on all occasions with ‘all kinds of prayers and requests.’ That comes at the end of the passage about the spiritual battle and the armour of God. You show us what we all need to learn – how to pray in the Spirit as we put our requests and petitions to God.

The point in our discipleship is to trust him in all our requests in our petitions. Each day we have a choice. I have probably said this many times before, But one day we’ll not have a choice but to trust him - the moment when our life on this planet is at its end.

**Christ is the only one where we can cling on to for the next step, our next breath.**

**It is ok to ask** in the same way I delight in helping and providing for my daughter. He delights in doing it for us. **It's ok to be vulnerable**, not because it puffs up God's ego because it helps us realise our dependency on him with our directions and our choices. It's a good thing. **And, ultimately, what binds us all together is our trust and peace in our father in all circumstances, which transcends all understanding.**



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