

Praying for Our Good

Heidelberg Catechism #57

Matthew 6:11–13 | Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 125–129

THE Pew Research Center recently did a survey that says 86% of the highly religious in America rely a lot on prayer when making major life decisions. My question is what about normal decisions and daily life?

Let's turn to prayer again this evening.

We serve a great God, Amen? “Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great” (Ps. 104:1). Our Lord teaches us to pray to this great and infinite God who has become **our Father**, adopting us by his tender grace. This truth is so wonderful that there's no feeling strong enough from our hearts, no idea big enough in our minds, and no words fitting enough from our tongues that can express our gratitude for the Creator of the universe embracing us as his children! Our Lord teaches us that we get to ask this great God to provide for our daily good in prayer.

GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD

We don't only rely on prayer when making major life decisions, but for our daily provision. We come to our Creator who is **our Father** and beseech him to **provide for all our physical needs** for another day: **give us *this day our daily bread***. We do so in utter dependence upon him **so that we**

may recognize that you are the only source of everything good. Just like the Israelites in the wilderness, our Father provides us just what we need while we depend upon him entirely.

Psalm 104 recounts the six days of creation in beautiful, poetic language, all to the praise our Creator for his greatness. After saying the Lord is “very great” (v. 1), “clothed with honor and majesty,” we read of his work on *day one*: “who cover yourself with light as with a garment” (v. 2). God doesn’t need nor does he wear clothes but clothes himself with light *as* with a garment. It’s a simile. What is the point? To show us how majestic God really is. Light is so small, so insignificant to God that he throws it on like a coat—it serves his needs. Verses 2b–4 portray *day two*: He “stretches out the heavens like a garment.” This is another simile to portray God decorating his “upper chamber” with drapes. The support beams of his upper chamber are “in the waters,” that is, the cloudy firmament. He is so high above us that the foundation is way up in the sky. God doesn’t literally live in a palace in space but this teaches us to look to him to **provide for all our physical needs.**

Day three is laid out in verses 5–18: he causes rivers to flow in order to supply water for animals; he causes rain to fall to quench the earth’s thirst; he causes grass to grow and plants so that animals and humans may eat; he

causes tress to grow for homes for the birds and the mountains to rise up to provide shelter for goats; his providence is over all things. **Give us this day our daily bread.**

FORGIVE US

We don't only rely on prayer when making major life decisions, but for our daily provision. We come to our Creator who is **our Father** and beseech him for daily spiritual provision: **forgive us our debts**. I love our morning prayer of confession from the *Book of Common Prayer*. It's so honest; it's how I feel: "O Lord, have mercy upon us, *miserable offenders*." You and I are not just miserable offenders because of **the transgressions we do** but also because of **the evil that constantly clings to us**. We need to come to grips with the fact that we're not only sinful in thought, word, and deed, but by nature. We need to confess not only what we do, but what we are.

Brothers and sisters, there's also an exhortation here: don't pray **forgive us our debts** unless you are willing to pray **as we forgive our debtors**. When you pray this petition to your Father you are asking him **forgive us just as we are fully determined, as evidence of your grace in us, wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbors**. Look at Colossians 3. We "have put on the new self" (v. 10)—Christ himself. Verse 12 says we're to

constantly put on the following virtues: “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” You’re praying to be enabled for difficult work. We are to bear “with one another,” putting up with and enduring with each other as members of a family. You know what that’s like in your family. As members of the household of God you’re to be patient and endure each other’s faults and sins. Note why: “as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive” (v. 13). Paul says the same in Ephesians 4:32: “forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” Then he says, “Therefore be *imitators* of God, as beloved children” (Eph. 5:1). This word, *mimetai*, is where we get the idea of mimicking someone. In this case, it’s our heavenly Father. The church is a real, living organism where we bump into each other.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

We don’t only rely on prayer when making major life decisions, but for our daily provision. We come to our Creator who is **our Father** and beseech him for daily spiritual provision: **lead us not into temptation**. You’ve been clothed with Christ for justification, but in your sanctification the clothing Paul commands is often sullied in what our Catechism calls **this spiritual fight**. Therefore Paul gives you another metaphor to describe what you are to put on: the armor of God. You have three **sworn enemies** who **never**

stop attacking: the world, your own flesh, and the Devil. *The world* seduces you with its philosophies: have it your way, it's all about you. *Your own flesh*, that is, your sin nature, rises from the depths of your being, saying, "Just one look, just one touch, just one more time." *The Devil* disguises himself as an angel of light, leading you astray with false doctrine. In this struggle cry out, **"We are so weak that we cannot stand on our own for a moment."**

Hear Paul: "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand...therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand, therefore" (Eph. 6:10, 11, 13, 14). In doing this, cry out, **"uphold us and make us strong by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that we may not be defeated in this spiritual fight, but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory."**

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM

We don't only pray these petitions for our good when making major life decisions, but daily. Why? **Our Father** is **our all-powerful king** and is **both willing and able to give us all that is good**. We say, **"for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever"** so that his holy

name, and not [ours] gets **all the praise, forever**. Pew, again, said 79% of Protestants and 74% of historically Black Protestants say regular prayer is essential to their Christian identity while only 49% of mainline Protestants and 48% of Catholic agreed. Do you know what that says about us? That we want the glory!

AMEN

And we end with that little word “**Amen.**” Brothers and sisters, after every prayer in this church and even during it, I want to hear you say, “Amen” with gusto! The ancient theologian Jerome said the church in Rome said “Amen” so loudly that it sounded like thunder making the gods of Rome shudder! Let’s end our journey through the Catechism with Q&A 129:

This shall truly and surely be! For it is much more certain that God has heard my prayer than I feel in my heart that I desire such things from him.