

# Meeting Your Needs through Prayer

Read [Matthew 6:9-13](#)

Let's look at the second characteristic.

## A PRAYER THAT MEETS NEEDS ASKS SPECIFICALLY

*"Give us today our daily bread"* is a *specific* prayer. It is specific in two ways:

It is specific in terms of the object that is needed: *"Give us today our daily bread."* It is a request for food.

It is specific in time: *"Give us today our daily bread."* It is a request for food today.

A prayer that meets needs asks *specifically*. Just as people often wander around in prayer without really asking anything, they often ask too generally. God wants to know exactly what you want.

We see this in a story from Jesus' ministry. Jesus was traveling on the road, a crowd attending him, when a blind man called out to him, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* ([Luke 18:38](#)). Now it might seem obvious what this blind man wanted Jesus to do for him with his miraculous powers.

But look at Jesus' conversation with him:

[Luke 18:40-43 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> "And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him,

<sup>41</sup> "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, *I want to regain my sight!*"

<sup>42</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."

<sup>43</sup> Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God."

When Jesus brought the man to him, he asked the man what he wanted. Certainly Jesus already knew, but he required the man to put it into words—to make a specific request. A prayer that meets needs asks *specifically*. God wants to know exactly what you want.

There's a story of the church deacon who had a parrot that would only say, "Let's kiss." He tried to teach his parrot other words, but all it would say was, "Let's kiss. Let's kiss." It embarrassed him. After all, he was a deacon.

The church's pastor also had a parrot, and the only thing it would ever say was, "Let's pray. Let's pray." The deacon thought, *That's more like it. That's how the parrot of a good Christian should talk.* And the deacon had an idea: *I know what I'll do. I'll lend my parrot to the pastor for a while, and his parrot's good manners will rub off on mine.*

The pastor agreed. So they put the deacon's parrot in the cage with the pastor's parrot. Sure enough, the deacon's parrot said, "Let's kiss!"

The pastor's parrot replied, "Thank God, my prayers are answered!"  
Well, there was a parrot that knew what it wanted!

In all seriousness, God wants to know exactly what you want. He wants you to make a specific request.

There is more power in a specific prayer. "Lord, bless me at work" is a good prayer, but "Lord, help me get a raise at work" is a better prayer. "Lord, please bless our troops" is a good prayer, but "Lord, please send an angel to protect my brother as he goes out on patrol today" is a better prayer.

A specific prayer is more powerful for a couple of reasons:

**First, a specific prayer is from the heart.** God said through the prophet Jeremiah, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*" ([Jeremiah 29:13](#), emphasis added). God pays attention to what comes to him from our heart. The "**heart**" refers to our inner person, who we really are. That's the part of us God is listening to. When a prayer comes from our heart, he knows it and responds.

And it is specific prayers that come from the heart, because they express what we really want and need. There's no beating around the bush in a specific prayer.

At the stem of your brain is something called the *reticular activating system*. It is basically a filter. Every day you're bombarded with millions of stimuli—from things you hear, see, touch, think, etc. If you had to consciously respond to everything your senses picked up, you'd lose your mind. The reticular activating system filters out the inconsequential stimuli, and forwards to your consciousness only what matters.

When it comes to prayer, it seems that God has his own reticular activating system (after all, the Bible calls him the *Head* of the church—[Ephesians 4:15](#)). He filters out the inconsequential prayers—empty ones, merely religious or ritualistic ones. He listens to prayers from the heart.

**1 Samuel 16:7 (NASB)**

**<sup>7</sup>“But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”**

A specific prayer is more powerful because it comes from the heart.

**Second, a specific prayer is more powerful because it requires faith.** The Bible is clear that it is faith that moves the hand of God. Jesus said, *“Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.”* ([Matthew 17:20](#)). And the Bible is clear that it is faith that pleases God: *“And without faith it is impossible to please God...”* ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).

God is looking for faith. A prayer like “Lord, bless me at work” is too general. It may not be obvious whether that prayer is answered or not. That prayer doesn’t require much faith. But a prayer like, “Lord, help me get a raise at work” is specific. It *will* be obvious whether that prayer is answered. That prayer takes faith. A specific prayer is more powerful because it requires faith, and faith moves “mountains.”

Pray specifically. Dallas Theological Seminary is one of the largest and most influential schools in the world. Thousands of its graduates serve as Bible-believing ministers throughout the United States and in about one hundred other countries. But the school almost folded before it got off the ground.

Shortly after its first class of 13 students arrived in 1924, for all practical purposes the school was bankrupt. Creditors were calling for money that wasn’t there, and the lenders notified the school that they would foreclose at noon on a certain day. That day the school’s board of directors met in the president’s office to pray. They believed it was God’s will to launch the Bible-believing seminary, but as the minutes ticked toward noon it looked impossible.

In the prayer meeting was Harry Ironside, who would later serve as pastor at Chicago’s Moody Memorial Church. He was known for his down-to-earth preaching and praying. When it was his turn to pray, he said, “Lord, we know that the cattle on a thousand hills is thine. Please sell some of them and send us the money.”

About the same time, a tall Texan in boots and an open-collar shirt strolled into the business office of the seminary. “Howdy!” he said to the secretary. “I just sold two carloads of cattle over in Fort Worth. I’ve been trying to make a business deal go through, but it just won’t work. I feel God wants me to give this money to the seminary. I don’t know if you need it or not, but here’s the check.”

The secretary took the check, looked at it twice, then went and knocked on the president’s door. She handed the check to President Chafer, who also did a double take—because the check was for the exact amount they owed the creditors. President Chafer turned and said, “Harry, God sold the cattle.”

The power of a specific prayer. It comes from the heart. It requires faith.  
What do you need? Ask for it specifically.