

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

### **Reflection 3**

**"Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we also forgive those who sin against us."**

Give us today our daily bread. With these words we begin the first of the three petitions that relate to us, the children of God, as we participate in family life with him.

The use of the word 'us' reminds us that this is a communal prayer. We are not just praying for ourselves here.

'Bread' reminds us that we are dependent on our heavenly Father for even our most basic needs. Without 'bread' (food), we won't have life. In John 6:35 Jesus says, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."* It is Jesus who gives us life.

When we ask God for our daily bread we express our confidence that our heavenly Father can and will give us what we need. We are also shown that it is OK to ask for what we need, but the implication is we are not to ask for more than we need. We're not to get our weekly dose of God at church on Sundays and ignore him for the rest of the week. Our dependence on God needs to be daily.

**"And forgive us our sins as we also have forgiven those who sin against us."**

This is the second petition that relates to our need for pardon. Jesus did not need to ask for forgiveness for his sin as he never sinned. Yet he knows that we have sinned and continue to sin. He also knows that our sin creates a barrier between us and our heavenly Father. So we need to ask daily for forgiveness for our sins, which will be granted as we forgive those who sin against us.

This is a double barreled request and it is the only one that Jesus qualifies in Matthew 6:14-15: *"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*

This is probably the most difficult petition we can make because all of us will have been badly hurt at some time and we know how hard it is to forgive. But we best show that we understand the mercy and grace of God when we offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us.

It's when we understand the magnitude of the cost of our sins that Jesus bore on the cross that we are able to freely offer forgiveness to others. When we fully understand that vengeance belongs to God and not to us then we will be able to forgive others who have hurt us.

There is probably no better way to display to others the mercy and grace of God than to offer them forgiveness for the pain they have caused us and to ask for nothing in return. We can only give this gift of love because the Spirit of God lives in us. It is the Spirit that gives us the strength and courage and degree of kindness we need to forgive others. And it is the Spirit that will work in the hearts of these others to reveal Jesus and his loving kindness to them as we are obedient to God's will and forgive them.

If we choose not to forgive then our sin will cause our fellowship with the Father to be broken. We will not enjoy the intimacy we long for as we will have created a wall between us and the Father. This doesn't mean that he no longer loves us. It means that the closeness that we once enjoyed is no longer available. We have drawn away from our God he has not drawn away from us.

""What to do? The answer, of course, is to be found in the story of the Prodigal Son. As we repent and ask for forgiveness we will find that our heavenly Father is already on his way to embrace us and return us to the fellowship of his family.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

1. "Give us today our daily bread" reminds us that we are absolutely dependent on God for all we need. Every good gift comes from him, including the gift of our salvation. How comfortable are you in depending on God for everything? What aspects of your life do you continue to want control over? How do you work this out with God?
2. This is a family prayer. We are praying for more than ourselves. Sometimes our heavenly Father is very generous with his gifts for some of us. Is it enough that we just pray that God supplies the daily bread of others or do we in our abundance need to be part of the answer to that prayer? If so how can we go about this work? What is the best way for us to share our abundance responsibly?
3. "Forgive us our sins **as** we forgive those who sin against us." I always find these words quite confronting, particularly as they are linked with verses 14-15 "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." How do these words challenge you?
4. Do you fully understand the grace and mercy that our heavenly Father has poured out on you through Jesus? How can you share this with others?