

No 12
November 17th 2012

**Our Father, I dunno what
this is all about, but....**

Give us today our daily bread

As we pray our focus changes. But, actually, it's still a prayer for God's will to be done. For you see: *it is God's will that we should have 'daily bread'*.

A very key point that many don't understand is that when something is God's will we have to pray for it in order for it to happen. God will only act on earth when at least one person agrees with His will and asks Him to do it.

So we need to pray that God's desire to supply all our needs actually happens. And we must not be limited in what we think He wants to give us.

This is not just about Hovis.

The Bible uses the word 'bread' to describe physical food, scripture, and Jesus.

Bread, or *manna*, was the very stuff of life that got the children of Israel through the desert. Without it they would die, and it came every day....after they asked for it.

In Deuteronomy God said that 'man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD' (8:3). Life proceeds from God.. He created through words and He sustains through words. We need to agree that we need to hear Him, and ask that we shall, as we read scripture and live our lives. As we pray this line of the prayer we are agreeing that we need to be people of His Word, daily. One of Scripture Union's reading plans is called Daily Bread for this very reason.

Jesus declared Himself to be the Bread of Life, and said that anyone who comes to Him shall not hunger. (John 6:48-51). It is God's desire that everyone should know Jesus, but only those who ask to know Him can.

We have to agree with God's word and then ask Him to fulfil it...it's always been that way.

God's will is that *every day* we will be filled with good things: good food, good words of life and good revelation of His Son.

As you pray this line, do you also commit to agreeing with Him that you should receive His provision?

If you are in a land of famine and the government says it will supply bread today you have to do something. You have to line yourself up in the place of supply to receive. If you don't, you won't get any.

Line yourself up in the place of God's supply. Know His word well, and know His Son well. For He said: *seek first my Kingdom and my righteousness and all these other things will be given to you too* (Matthew 6:33, my paraphrase)



Helping God's Men use Their Loaves
FOR GUYS

Bible Study

this week: Colossians 4:7 - end of letter
Brief, short instructions but still bread for life in
this passage!

You'll find it at

www.tfgministries.org.uk/podcasts

All back issues of these sheets are there too.

More on Prayer please....

Ok, as long as we're not just talking about it...!

Way back in Genesis (have you noticed how often I start there? It's quite a key few chapters the Bible starts with...). Anyway, way back in Genesis God gave Adam *Dominion* over the earth. I like the following analogy to help to explain this:

In a family there's a teenage lad who gets sat down by his parents one day and told: "From now on, your room is your own responsibility. We won't go in it unless invited.



You can do what you want with it. But that also means if you want the sheets washed you'll have to strip your own bed and put clean sheets on yourself. We only get involved if you ask us to".

The room remains part of the family house, and so it remains *owned* by the parents. But the room is no longer *ruled* by the parents, but by the lad (let's call him Adam since this is an analogy of what God said to Adam in Eden). Adam has *dominion* over the room.

Humanity was given that status over the earth by God, as descendants of the original **Adam** (I'll use red ink whenever I mean the **Adam** in the Bible).

So, if Adam wants to paint his room in the colours of Accrington Stanley he can do that. But if he either does not know how to decorate a room, or does not know what has to be done to get it prepared, or wants to borrow the

family stepladder and equipment, then he has to ask his parents for help. Or maybe he can ask his dad to do it for him completely.

Point One about Prayer

We have to ask God before He will intervene in the world. What happens here is our responsibility. We can get on with it on our own or we can bring God into the situation and then work with Him to bring about the desired results. We do this through prayer.

But what if Adam wanted to do something that he knew his parents disapproved of? He can't then ask for their help if he gets stuck. He has to do it alone. The only things he can ask them for are things that either they want to see happen themselves (eg...keeping it tidy, re-decoration, etc) or are at least neutral about. If we assume that Adam's parents are good parents then on the whole the things they want are things that are beneficial for him and good for him.

Adam is in a much stronger position to get help if he is able to say "You would like me to keep my room tidy -- would you come in to help me to put up new shelves?"

Point Two about Prayer

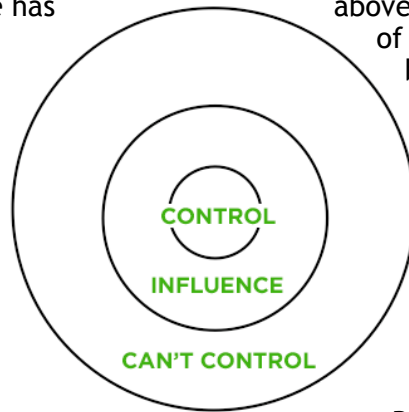
God wants us to ask for things 'according to His will'...things that He wants to see happen too.

Now, Adam has complete dominion in his own room. But he can't expect to get anywhere if he goes to his parents and says "I want your help in making changes in my sister's room". He has no authority about what happens in that room.

The place where he has authority is in his own place. What does that mean for us as we pray? I think it can be thought of in a few contexts:

- i] We have authority in the places and people-groups we live and work in. Your street/block of flats; the place where you work or study; your church; town/city/country you live in;
- ii] We have authority in our families, especially over our dependants;
- iii] We have authority in areas that interest us:(eg football, music, crochet club, etc);
- iv] I'm sure you can add other areas that are part of your 'sphere of influence'.

However, in most of the



above we don't have the same amount of authority as Adam has in his bedroom. In most cases it is either shared with other people or we are not the authority in that situation at all, we just work there or live with others there. So when we pray we have to do so knowing that we cannot force other people - and God won't force other people - without their consent.

But if there are areas where you have absolute authority (such as parents over their children) then praying for God to help should be greatly effective. Where you have shared authority with others, and can agree on what you are praying for, Jesus promises to act on their agreement (Matthew 18:19,20)

Point Three about Prayer

Our prayer is more effective where we are able to speak with authority.

But that does not mean we should not or cannot be praying about things that are not directly in our own sphere of life.

Let's suppose that Adam's sister (she needs a name... I'll call her Ermintrude)...let's suppose that Ermintrude has been asking her parents for a new bed. What Adam *can* do is stand alongside her and agree with her. "I think Ermintrude's request is a good one, please let her have a new bed and if that means I can't have something then that's ok, I'll wait".

Ermintrude's room is not in Adam's dominion, but he can stand with his sister in agreement and lobby for her cause.

So when we pray for situations in the world that are outside our influence, we can do so by praying alongside our brothers and sisters in that situation. This week, for example, there is shelling going on between Israel and the Gaza Palestinian territories.

I have no authority in that region, I don't understand the issues or live with the consequences. But I do know that there are Godly people there. So I can pray that God will hear the prayers of my brothers and sisters in that situation, and that as He hears the cries of the people He will intervene on their behalf.

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photos this week sourced from the internet

Point Four about Prayer

We can pray to God in support of others who pray in situations we hear about but are not directly involved in.

The final thing based on this analogy is just a reminder that Adam is not limited to his room (though many teenagers seem to think that they are!). He still has complete access to the shared areas of the house.

He can make full use of the bathroom, the kitchen with all it's supplies, and the living room. In all these areas he can relate with his parents and other members of the family and also get provisions to take back to his room (or enjoy outside it) as required.

For me, this is the 'Give us today our daily bread' part. The supplies of the household are available - all that is necessary is to go and get them.

Whilst we live on earth, and pray for God to intervene in the parts of earth we are responsible for, we still have access to the whole of the Father's house and resources.

In a family that works well the teenagers do not stay in their room but enjoy relating with the rest of the family and their parents.

Our main focus on prayer should be this relationship. Being intimate with the Father and enjoying the full provision of life with Him....then taking that knowledge and supply into the places we go on earth.

Point Five about Prayer

It is primarily about a relationship with God, not about asking Him to do things

Just to finish for now....I've used an analogy. All analogies are flawed. I haven't mentioned the fact that after God gave Adam dominion the serpent usurped it (a squatter in Adam's room). I'm sure there are various places you could take the analogy that would not work at all regarding prayer.

But hopefully something here helps us to see both what God intends of our praying and also why so often it seems not to be effective.

In Nehemiah 3 the workers were divided into teams to restore and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. They had to work on their own section. No good if they went off to watch or even help someone working at the other end of the city...their bit was their responsibility. Find out what God wants you focussed on then stick to it!

Explain the phrase 'free press'.

When your mum irons
trousers for you.

We've come to the end of Colossians...which is an appropriate time to reflect on what is useful about the weekly *Training for Guys* stuff and what isn't.

Have a think about these questions and please email me answers to any you feel you can:

1/ How often do you look at the *Training for Guys* Facebook page?
once a week or more often; every few weeks; less often; never

2/ How often do you listen to the *podcasts*?
I make sure I listen to all of them..... occasionally..... never

3/ How often do you read the pdf sheet?
once a week or more often; every few weeks; less often; never

4/ How helpful do you find what you look at/listen to?
very helpful; sometimes helpful sometimes not; of little help

5/ Do you have any questions you'd like us to look at?

6/ Do you have anything to contribute to previous topics...or that you feel generally would be of use to other Christian men?

Please email your answers to geoff.lumley@tfgministries.org.uk this week