

What Should We Pray For?

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
- [Matthew 6:33](#)

Prayer, no less than the rest of the Christian life, is to be governed by the Word of God and the commands that He has revealed therein. “Whether [we] eat or drink, or whatever [we] do, do all to the glory of God” ([1 Cor. 10:31](#)) is the Apostolic guidance given to us, and we can be sure that we are bringing glory to God even in our piety only if we are following His rules for us.

So, we need to know what the Lord commands us to pray for if we are to glorify Him as we speak to Him. Question and answer 118 of the Heidelberg Catechism offer guidance here, telling us to pray for “everything that we need, spiritually and physically, as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.” The catechism is referring to the Lord’s Prayer, but there are other things in Scripture that instruct us to ask God for whatever we need. We also learn from today’s passage, which is one of the proof texts for question and answer 118 of the catechism, to beseech the Father for everything we need in every area of life.

Although [Matthew 6:33](#) focuses more on our need to pursue God’s kingdom above all else than on what we should pray for, this word from our Savior comes in the context of His teaching us not to worry about whether we will have the basic necessities of life, a worry that often leads us to pray. It is easy for us to believe that we are in final control of our well-being; thus, we get anxious, because we know it is hard to earn a living, care for our families, and meet our basic needs. We know life is fragile, that significant problems can throw a wrench into our plans and our ability to provide for ourselves.

Jesus’ answer is not to “let go and let God,” to be unconcerned with the basic necessities of life. Instead, He calls us to place our needs for such things in the proper perspective. We need not worry about the basics when we seek His kingdom, for the Lord will make sure that His children are supplied with everything they need to fulfill their roles in this kingdom ([Matt. 6:33](#)). A chief way we seek the kingdom is in prayer (vv. 8–13), so asking God to supply our

needs is entirely consistent with this seeking. Thus, we should pray for what we need to serve Him faithfully, including food to give us energy and clothing and shelter to protect our bodies. As we receive such things, we gain the physical and spiritual strength to fulfill our calling as kingdom citizens.

Application of God

Our compassionate and gracious God is far more concerned about our essential needs than we can ever know. That is why we should not be afraid to mention even those needs that we consider the most insignificant whenever we talk to the Lord in prayer. Certainly, we must define our basic needs according to what He says that they are, but we are still free, even commanded, to bring all the needs we can think of before His throne of grace.

Passages for Further Study

[Exodus 17:1–7](#)

[Ephesians 3:14–21](#)

[Philippians 4:6–7, 19](#)

[Colossians 4:2](#)