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Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

by Ken Vanden Hoek

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11) is the fourth of the seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer. (The first three address God and the second four are prayers related to our needs and concern). We need God in all areas of our life (physical, spiritual and mental), on a daily basis. We have a need to address God each day – if not many times each day, because if we don't, we can quickly become independent and self-seeking. Jesus reiterates this daily dependency when He exhorts us to *"not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* Matthew 6:34



How easy it would be to gloss over this seemingly simple straightforward phrase of The Lord's Prayer. At first glance, it has the appearance of a plea, "Please God, don't let me starve to death today." That interpretation would sell God's sovereign intent for his people short. After study and reflection on what Jesus' intent in these words is, we realize it is about so much more than just physical hunger.

GIVE US this day our daily bread...

This first word Jesus directs us to pray in The Lord's Prayer is "give." Give is a wonderful word! It is synonymous with "gift," to provide, furnish or award. Unlike the word "earn" which refers to someone's ability to make, produce, deserve or merit, the word "give" in this scripture is an acknowledgment that we don't earn what God gives us, rather it is gifted to us by Him. It is a present that He wants to give us. James 1:17 says: *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father."* We can never earn the provision of God, however, we can be thankful and appreciate these provisions as we live in communion with Him.

Give us **THIS DAY** our daily bread...

The continual presence of the provider is the gift only God can give. Keeping our focus on the here and now helps reduce a myriad of potential problems, such as a need to compare ourselves with others, anxiety and depression. We need not be distracted by what we needed yesterday or what we think we might need tomorrow, but to stay focused on the gifts of God in the present. This brings joy and peace. When we abide in the presence of God we become keenly aware of God's provision, and then it is impossible to worry or be anxious about today or tomorrow. Joy is found in living in the present. Our presence in the present is one of the greatest presents there is!

Give us this day **OUR DAILY BREAD**

Bread! Wonderful freshly baked bread! It smells and tastes great! Recently I drove a bus load of second grade students to the Franz Bakery in Portland. I was still five blocks away when I first caught a whiff of baking bread. What a wonderful smell that immediately brought to mind memories of my mother baking bread. The fresh aroma and taste of bread directly out of the oven still tantalizes my taste buds.

Bread is literally and figuratively one of the world's most common forms of nourishment. Bread is referred to as the "staff of life" and we refer to people

who financially support their family as "the bread winner," and when something is amazing we say, "Wow, that's the best thing since sliced bread." Although we enjoy these idioms, God does make it clear that *"People do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."* Deuteronomy 8:3b. Fast forward to Matthew 6:11 where it seems paradoxical that Jesus taught us to pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread."* However, the word bread as used here, means much more than just the bread we eat. Bread is indicative of all of life's resources. I believe what Jesus is teaching us is that it is right and expected of us to ask Him to supply our earthly needs. His desire is to supply our basic needs rather than our never ending list of wants.

So I want to encourage you today to remember that God loves supplying what we need. We all have practical earthly needs and this request covers all of them and more. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son."* John 3:16. He wants us to rely upon Him to meet our needs as they arise and to enjoy His gifts. These gifts are nurturing and nourishing.

Questions:

1. When you say the words of the Lord's Prayer, do you feel yourself praying for the community or only for yourself? How is this prayer about community? How is this phrase "give us this day our daily bread" about others and not yourself?
2. Why is it important to expand the prayer beyond praying for self only?
3. Beyond food, what does "bread" mean to you?
4. Could there be a spiritual meaning beyond meeting the needs of the body? (John 6:48) How might Jesus be seen as the sustenance for life?

If you've not already done so, you might want to watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLVzV9n69UY>

**A wonderful musical rendition of "The Lord's Prayer"
can be found here:**

<http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=WPY7GGNX>

Prayer:

Our Father and God of all blessings, source of all life and giver of all grace, we thank you. For the gift of life, for the breath that sustains life, for the food of this earth that nurtures life, for the love of family and friends without which there would be no life, we thank you.

We thank you for setting us in communities. Thank you for families who nurture our becoming, for friends who love us by choice and for companions at work. We thank you for those who share our burdens and daily tasks and for strangers who welcome us into their midst.

We thank you for this day and for life which gives us one more day to love. Thank you for your grace and one more experience of your presence. Thank you for your promise to be with us, to be our God, and to give salvation.

Our Father, we give you thanks for these and all blessings. Amen.

Adapted from a prayer by Vienna Cobb Anderson

Confessions:

4.125 (from the Westminster Confession of Faith)

Q. What does the fourth petition mean?

A. "Give us this day our daily bread" means - do take care of all our physical needs, so that we come to know that you are the only source of everything good, and that neither our work and worry nor your gifts can do us any good without your blessing, and so help us to give up our trust in creatures and trust in you alone.

Supporting Scriptures:

Psalm 145:15; 104:27-28;
Matthew 6:25-34;
Acts 17:27; 14:17;
1 Corinthians 15:58;
Deuteronomy 8:3b;
Psalm 37:16-17; 62:11; 55:23