Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

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Elder D. Todd Christofferson, "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread"

CES Fireside for Young Adults • January 9, 2011 • Brigham Young University



We older adults, including parents and Church leaders and professors and friends, often admonish you to plan for the future. We encourage you to pursue education and vocational training as preparation for life in the years ahead. We urge you to lay a foundation for marriage and family and to act on those plans. We caution you to think of possible consequences down the road when making decisions about what you do today (for example, what you put on the Internet). We counsel you to think about how you will measure success in your life and then to establish the patterns and practices that will lead to that success.

All of this expresses a wise and prudent course in life, and in what I say tonight, I do not minimize in any way the importance of thinking and planning ahead. Thoughtful planning and preparation are key to a rewarding future, but we do not live in the future—we live in the present. It is day by day that we work out our plans for the future; it is day by day that we achieve our goals. It is one day at a time that we raise and nurture our families. It is one day at a time that we overcome imperfections. We endure in faith to the end one day at a time. It is the accumulation of many days well-lived that adds up to a full life and a saintly person. And so I would like to talk to you about living well day by day.

Look to God for What Is Needed Each Day

In Luke it is recorded that one of His disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). Jesus then gave a pattern for prayer that has become known as the Lord's Prayer. The same is recorded in Matthew as part of the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 6:9–13).

Included in the Lord's Prayer is the petition "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11) or "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). I believe that we would all readily acknowledge that we have needs each day that we want our Heavenly Father's help in dealing with. For some, on some days, it is quite literally bread—that is, the food needed to sustain life that day. It could also be spiritual and physical strength to deal with one more day of chronic illness or a painfully slow rehabilitation. In other cases it may be less tangible needs, such as things related to one's obligations or activities in that day—teaching a lesson or taking a test, for example.

Jesus is teaching us, His disciples, that we should look to God each day for the bread—the help and sustenance—we require in that particular day. This is consistent with the counsel to "pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul" (2 Nephi 32:9).

The Lord's invitation to seek our daily bread at our Heavenly Father's hand speaks of a loving God, aware of even

the small, daily needs of His children and anxious to assist them, one by one. He is saying that we can ask in faith of that Being "that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given" (James 1:5). That is, of course, tremendously reassuring, but there is something at work here that is more significant than just help in getting by day to day. As we seek and receive divine bread daily, our faith and trust in God and His Son grow.

Looking to God Daily for Our Needs Nurtures Faith

You will remember the great exodus of the tribes of Israel from Egypt and the 40 years in the wilderness before entering their promised land. This massive host of well over a million people had to be fed. Certainly that number in one location could not long subsist on hunting game, and their seminomadic lifestyle at the time was not conducive to raising crops or livestock in any sufficient quantity. Jehovah solved the challenge by miraculously providing their daily bread from heaven—manna. This small edible substance which appeared on the ground each morning was something quite new and unknown. The name *manna,* in fact, was derived from words meaning "What is it?" Through Moses, the Lord instructed the people to gather enough each day for that day, except on the day before the Sabbath, when they were to gather enough for two days.

At the beginning, despite Moses's specific instructions, some tried to gather more than enough for one day and store the balance:

"And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

"Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank" (Exodus 16:19–20).

As promised, however, when they gathered twice the normal daily quantity of manna on the sixth day, it did not spoil:

"And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

"And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to day ye shall not find it in the field.

"Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none" (Exodus 16:24–26).

Again, however, some could not believe without seeing, and they went looking to gather manna on the Sabbath.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

"See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:28–29).

It seems that even in ancient times, as today, there were some people who couldn't resist shopping on the Sabbath.

By providing a daily sustenance, one day at a time, Jehovah was trying to teach faith to a nation that over a period of some 400 years had lost much of the faith of their fathers. He was teaching them to trust Him, to "look unto [Him] in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36). He was providing enough for one day at a time. Except for the sixth day, they could not store manna for use in any succeeding day or days. In essence, the children of Israel had to walk with Him today and trust that He would grant a sufficient amount of food for the next day *on* the next day, and so on. In that way He could never be too far from their minds and hearts.

We should note, by the way, that 40 years of manna was not meant to become a dole. Once the tribes of Israel were in a position to provide for themselves, they were required to do so. After they had crossed the Jordan River and were prepared to begin their conquest of Canaan, beginning at Jericho, the scripture records that "they did eat of the old corn of the land [that is, the previous year's harvest] on the morrow after the passover. …

"And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (Joshua 5:11–12).

Likewise, as we plead with God for our daily bread—for help in the moment that we cannot ourselves provide—we must still be active in doing and providing that which *is* within our power.

Trust in the Lord—Solutions May Come over Time

Some time before I was called as a General Authority, I faced a personal economic challenge that persisted for several years. It did not come about as a consequence of anyone's wrongdoing or ill will; it was just one of those

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