

BREAKING BARRIERS TO INTIMACY WITH GOD:
Overcoming Materialism
A Study of Matthew 6:11

Characteristic of Completeness: Prayer

Big Idea: Adopt a daily-bread mindset.

Related Scriptures: Exodus 16:1-36; Deuteronomy 8:10; Proverbs 30:8-9; Matthew 6:31-33;
Acts 20:18-24; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 9:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Hebrews 12:1

Introduction:

- A. These are turbulent and troubling times for our economy. Just last week, the stock market took us on a nauseating roller coaster ride, losing 7% of its value. Banks are buckling. Some businesses are going under. Credit is tight. Retirement accounts are shrinking. People are losing their jobs. Some families are losing their homes. Others are cutting back.

And Moon Valley Bible Church is not immune. We feel the pinch.

- B. And apparently God wants to say something to us about this whole economic situation. I say this because, well before all this financial turmoil, we began a study of Matthew, Chapter 6, where Jesus teaches His followers how to pray. Prayer ► is our general topic—our Characteristic of Completeness for the week. And today we come to ► Matthew 6:11, where Jesus prays,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:11 “Give us this day our daily bread.”

That’s sounding pretty good right about now. “Give us this day our daily bread.” I want to show you that this simple prayer can give us a fresh perspective on our financial situation. It can help us look at these economic times in a new and helpful way.

- I. First, we’re going to consider the meaning of the individual words of this verse. Then, we’ll stand back and try to figure out what this whole request means to us.

- A. First, let’s consider the term, ► “bread.” What kind of bread are we talking about here?

1. The word “bread” here comes from the Greek word, *ARTos*. It’s the Greek word for common, ordinary bread. Nothing fancy.

In first century Palestine, bread was commonly considered the main course of a meal to which other foods might be added.

The bread was most commonly made from barley or wheat flour mixed with water and baked into loaves. The loaves were like thick tortillas or pitas, not like the bigger, box-shaped loaves we find at the grocery stores today. As such, the bread back then was broken, not sliced.

And bread was often used as a pouch or a wrap for all the other foods that might be included in a meal, such as meat, cheese, raisins, or olives. So, because bread was a staple, and because it was often used to wrap all the other foods at a meal, it was natural to use the term, “bread” to refer to food in general. Indeed, I believe Jesus uses the term, “bread” that way in our text.¹ So, to ask God to give us our daily bread is to ask Him to provide the food we need.

2. And, I think the request may even be broader than this. Many Bible scholars believe that the bread in our text is a metaphor symbolizing that which meets our physical needs in general. That would certainly include ► food, but would also include things like clothing, shelter, money, health, and protection. This more comprehensive meaning of the term, “bread” in our text makes sense in that this is the only part of the Lord’s Prayer that touches on our physical needs.
3. And, I believe the term, “bread” refers to that which satisfies our ► basic *needs*, not our every wish. It relates to the fulfillment of needs, not greeds. It’s about necessities, not niceties.
4. So, it seems clear that God cares about the details of our lives, including our basic physical wellbeing, because Jesus teaches us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

B. Now, let’s consider the term, ► “give” in our text.

1. It comes from the Greek word, *DIDomi*. It means to give, to grant, to allow, or to permit.²
2. So, is asking God to give us our daily bread—is it like saying, “Lord, I’m looking for a handout because I don’t want to work for a living”? No. That would be inconsistent with other parts of Scripture that tell us that work is expected from those who are able.³

¹ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev.ed., vol. 1, s.v. “bread,” A. Van Selms, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), hereinafter referred to as ISBE.

² Barclay M. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “δίδωμι,” (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1971), hereinafter referred to as UBS.

³ 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

3. Rather, to ask God to give us our daily bread is to humbly recognize that everything we have comes from God, even as we work for it. It is God who gives us the ability to work, and it is God who grants us the fruit of our work. This is the repeated teaching of Scripture. For example, ► Deuteronomy 8:10 says,

^{NKJ} Deuteronomy 8:10 “When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.”⁴

So, when we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” behind the word, “give” is the humble recognition that God is our ultimate Provider.

- C. Now, let’s consider the terms, ► “this day” and “daily.”

1. The word translated “daily” comes from the Greek word, *epiOUSios*. The word can mean either, “daily” or “for tomorrow.” Indeed, a number of English translations provide a footnote, indicating both are possible renderings.⁵

Either way, we can be confident that Jesus is talking about asking God for day-to-day provision—that which is needed to keep us going. The term, “this day” seems to underscore this. It simply and clearly means today.

2. This day-by-day provision is further supported by the use of the term, “bread.” Back in the first century, bread was typically baked every day because it would quickly become dry and crusty, and there were no *Ziploc* bags or plastic containers to keep bread fresh for longer periods.⁶
3. So, it seems that to ask God to give us this day our daily bread is to ask only for that which we really need, one day at a time. There is no hint of extravagance here, not even surplus. Just enough for today.

- D. That brings us to the final pair of words: ► “us” and “our.”

1. Conspicuous by their absence are the terms, “me” and “my.” They are nowhere to be found in the entire prayer. The perspective here is of a team,

⁴ The Apostle Paul gets in the faces of some arrogant Christians when he says in 1 Corinthians 4:7, “What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own? (NLT)”

⁵ This Greek word is very rare. It is used in the Bible only here and in Luke 11:3, which is a repetition of the Lord’s Prayer. Moreover, apart from quotations of these verses, no other piece of Greek literature is known to contain this word. There may be one exception. In 1889, an ancient fragment of Greek papyrus was discovered containing what appeared to be a grocery shopping list that had this word, *epiOUSios*, next to one of the provisions. But, it still doesn’t clear things up for us. It could have meant to buy it daily, or to buy it today, or to buy it for tomorrow (Metzger, 277).

⁶ ISBE, s.v. “bread.”

not just an individual. To pray “Give *us* this day *our* daily bread” is to ask God to satisfy the needs of a certain group of people.

2. But, to whom do the terms, “us” and “our” refer? Well, you may recall that back in ► Verse 9, the Lord’s Prayer starts with,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:9b “. . . Our Father in heaven . . .”

So, it seems that our text is referring to those who can call God, “Father.” That would be those who have been adopted into God’s forever family through faith. It’s the children of God. Today, that would be defined as all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.⁷

- E. So, ► we can stand back now and consider how all the words work together. To pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” is to pray . . .
 1. “Lord, You are our Provider, and we’re asking You to provide Your people with the basics we need for today.”
 2. “Give your children enough to enable us to take the next step.”
 3. “Grant Your team what we really need to perform now.”
 4. “Give us the fuel we need to get us where we need to go today.”

II. This sounds pretty good. But, it still leaves us with an important question: Why pray this? What’s the purpose? What are we trying to accomplish by praying this way?

- A. Some of you may be thinking, “Isn’t it obvious? We pray to get our needs met. Isn’t that what this is about?”

The answer is “yes” and “no.” Yes, we pray to get our needs met. But, no, that is not our primary goal. The crucial thing to recognize here is that we are praying as a means to an end. The satisfaction of our needs is not the end; it’s the means to the end.

- B. Well then, what is the end? What is the legitimate goal behind asking for our needs to be met? Why should we be asking, “Give us this day our daily bread?” The context makes it very clear.

1. Remember the first request of the Lord’s Prayer? It’s in ► Verse 9. It says,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:9 “. . . Hallowed be Your name. . .”

⁷ John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”

We learned that to pray, “hallowed be Your name” is to ask that God’s reputation would overshadow every other competing concern on earth. To pray, “hallowed be Your name” is to ask that God would be honored above all else, beginning in your own heart.

2. The second request comes in the first part of ► Verse 10. It says,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come. . . .”

We learned that to pray “Your kingdom come” is to pray, “God, reign over Your creation. Put down the kingdom of Satan. Settle once for all the issue of Your right to rule. Build Your kingdom by adding citizens who enter through faith in Christ. And, God, reign in me.”

3. The ► third request flows logically from the second. In the last part of Verse 10, it says,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:10 “. . . Your will be done. . . .”

To pray “Your will be done” is to pursue God’s will for His kingdom, including getting people into the kingdom of God, growing up in the kingdom, and guarding against Satan’s efforts the thwart kingdom purposes.

So, ► if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the advancement of God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will should be your top priority in life. And the only legitimate reason for praying, “Give us this day our daily bread” is as a means of advancing His name, His kingdom, His will.

Don’t miss this. The satisfaction of our own needs is only a means to an end. The problem is, for many, the means have become the end. I’m afraid many Christians—maybe most—have deceived themselves into thinking that the fulfillment of their own needs is the goal of Christianity. I’m sorry to disappoint, but it’s not. We don’t pray “Your name,” “Your kingdom,” and “Your will” as some kind of token religious warm-up for what we really want: “Give us the bread.” No, we pray “Give us the bread” so that we can do what God really wants: hallow His name, build His kingdom, do His will. I call this a daily-bread mindset. And ► the big idea of my sermon is this: Adopt a daily-bread mindset.

III. But ► how? How do we apply all this? How do we adopt a daily-bread mindset?

I’d like to illustrate this. I want to present an analogy or word picture from which I want to draw three specific applications—three ways to adopt a daily-bread mindset.

A. First, let me present the analogy.

1. Over and over again, the Christian life is referred to in Scripture as a race to be run. It is to be run with endurance. It is to be run with the goal of finishing well.
2. For the Christian, finishing well means to run the entire race of life in a way that honors God's name, builds His kingdom, and does His will.
3. Perhaps we could compare it to the Ironman Triathlon race of our day. The Ironman Triathlon is an ultra-endurance event involving a 2.4-mile ocean swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2-mile marathon run, back to back to back.

Because the race can take well over 10 hours to complete, and because the human body stores only enough energy resources for several hours of high-intensity exercise, Ironman runners must eat and drink during the race to sustain the energy needed to finish.

Food consumed during the race is mainly provided by race organizers at aid stations along the way. Aid stations provide things like bananas, oranges, high-carbohydrate sports bars, and sports drinks containing carbohydrates and electrolytes.

4. I'd like to suggest that we who are believers in Christ are runners in the race of life. And the aid stations represent the provision of our basic material needs to run the race.

B. With this analogy in mind, I'd like to present ► three applications.

1. The first application has to do with how we think as runners. A one-word description would be ► refocus. As runners, we need to refocus on our purpose. Here's the idea: Runners eat in order to run and not the other way around.

No Ironman runner says, "I run to eat. I'm in this race for the food. The running part hurts and it makes me perspire, so mostly I just hang out at the aid stations and eat."

No! Aid stations are not campsites. Ask any serious runner and you'll hear variations on the same theme. "I eat to run well." "I eat only what I need to get me to the next aid station, where I can be replenished and move on." "I eat just enough and just often enough to sustain my energy to the finish."

That's a daily-bread mindset. And, I believe it's very similar to the mindset Jesus is calling us to have when He teaches us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." It's saying, "Lord, all I want is what I need to finish well; that's all. I'm sold-out to finishing this race for You—to honor Your name, to build Your kingdom, to do Your will—so please give me what I need to run. And, do the same for Your other runners."

This daily-bread mindset is reflected in ► Proverbs 30:8-9, which says,

^{NLT} Proverbs 30:8 . . . Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. 9 For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name.⁸

Let ► me ask you a hard question. Are you focused on the means or the end? When you look at how you invest your time energy and resources are you doing it with the focus of satisfying your own material needs, or are you doing it with the focus of advancing His name, His kingdom, His will? Have you confused the means with the end?

The Apostle Paul invites us to refocus our lives in ► 1 Corinthians 9:24. He says,

^{NKJ} 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.⁹

⁸ God has tried to teach this daily-bread mindset to His people for many years. About 1446 years before Christ came, God liberated His people from Egyptian captivity through a man named Moses. God led them on a journey through the wilderness to the land He had promised them.

But, God's people had to be fed along the way. So, God provided bread from heaven. The account is recorded in Exodus 16. The bread from heaven was called manna. Each morning, the ground looked like it was covered with a thick frost. But, it wasn't frost. It was the bread God had given to meet their needs.

God's instructions were very clear. Each person was to gather and eat only enough bread to sustain him for the day. Then God would supply a fresh batch the next morning. God gave them their daily bread. Essentially, God said, "Trust me on this. *You* focus on doing my will in going where I lead you. And, *I* will give you the daily bread you need.

It's kind of like the Ironman race. God is saying, "You focus on finishing well. I'll give you the food you need at the aid stations. Don't try to take more than you need, it'll just slow you down. Trust me."

What did the people of God do? They had trouble with the daily-bread mindset. Some of them didn't get the daily-bread mindset from the beginning. Others lost it along the way. They did a couple of things that the people of God still do today.

First, some of them tried to hoard more than they really needed. The surplus became worm infested and stank. It became a hindrance to their progress toward God's goal.

Second, some of them began to complain about the food. The manna was simply a means to an end. But, they began to lose sight of the end, and they focused on the means.

⁹ And, not only does Paul remind us with his words, but he also reminds us by his example. In Acts 20:18-24, Paul addressed the elders of the Ephesian church. As you read the passage below, ask yourself the question: Do I have a focus like this guy?

Acts 20:18 . . . "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept

Perhaps it would be good for you and me to take a day and devote it to some serious soul-searching and prayer, asking some questions. What am I doing with my life? What is my focus? What race am I in? Is it the rat race, or is it the real race? Lord, help me to refocus.

2. The ► second application relates to what we do as runners. A one-word description would be ► release. Release every possession or pursuit that is not contributing to God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will. That's part of a daily-bread mindset. Runners don't wear backpacks. Runners don't carry luggage.

Hebrews ► 12:1 says,

^{NKJ} Hebrews 12:1 . . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

► “Every weight” includes every possession and pursuit that hinders us from running our best. I think God is calling us to simplify our lives. To overcome the snare of materialism. He's calling us to harness every resource, every activity for the advancement of His agenda, and to let go of everything that doesn't contribute to the cause.

Isn't this a lot like an Ironman runner? How much extra stuff does the runner take with him in the race? Nothing extra. Only what is needed to finish well. How much extra energy does the runner spend? Nothing extra. Only that which moves him closer to the finish line.

I encourage you to take inventory of everything you own and everything you do. Ask yourself the question, is this advancing His name, His kingdom, and His will? If not, release it.

I suspect this raises all kinds of questions. For example, you may be thinking, “Does this mean that I must eliminate all fun and recreation and rest in my life?”

No, far from it. But, even these serve a purpose that goes beyond your own satisfaction. They are to revive and refresh and renew us to run again for Him.

back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself [that is to say, I am unmoved by how hard the race is because I'm not running the race to satisfy my own needs, I'm running] so that I may finish my race with joy . . .”

How much is enough? I don't know. You must answer that before God.

You may be thinking, "What exactly do you mean by releasing my possessions?"

Well, if you happen to be sitting on some surplus, there are other runners in the race who have needs. Remember, the words, "us" and "our." Give *us* this day *our* daily bread. There are people all over the world and there are people in this church who are in the same race. Some of them could use some of the surplus that you have. You could give it away.

I mentioned earlier that Moon Valley is feeling the pinch. We're not meeting our budget. And last week we had to borrow from our Building Fund just to make payroll.

Now, if we're all running this race together, focused on the finish, and this is the hardship God has ordained for us as a team, I embrace it. Running is hard. I get that.

But I need to ask myself: Am I just camping out at the aid station? Am I just guarding a stockpile of supplies I've hoarded for myself? Am I just sitting on the Gatorade God has given me, while some others on my team are out there running and wilting?

I think God has given us plenty; it just needs to be released.

You may be thinking, "Does this mean I shouldn't have any savings?"

No. Saving some money is wise. How much is enough? I don't know. You must answer that before God with a daily-bread mindset.¹⁰

You may be thinking, "Well, I've got nothing to release—no savings, nothing left at the end of the month, and I'm in debt up to my eyeballs." If that's the case, perhaps releasing means you stop spending money on stuff you don't need. The Gatorade is for running the race, not for washing the car.

3. That leads us to the ► third and final application which relates to what we believe as runners. A one-word description would be ► rely. That is, to rely on God to provide what you need. Runners trust that there is an aid station ahead, even when they can't yet see it. They run by faith.

¹⁰ You may be thinking, "Aren't you describing a really hard life that God only calls some apostles like Paul to live?" Nope. Sorry. I can't find support for that in the Bible. Moreover, I happen to believe that running the race of life on purpose for God is the most fulfilling, most exhilarating, most deeply satisfying thing you can do on earth. It's not the easiest life in the world, but it's the most satisfying. I've tried it both ways.

This is important because, if you haven't sensed it already, refocusing on God's agenda, and releasing everything that doesn't serve it can be scary business. From the world's point of view, this is nuts, and the apparent foolishness of it grows year by year.

In 1968, 70% of college freshmen in America said it was important to them to develop a meaningful philosophy of life. Also in 1968, 42% said it was important to them to be "very well off financially."

Nearly forty years later, in the year 2000, the same question was asked, and the numbers were reversed. Those who said it was important to develop a meaningful philosophy of life dropped from 70% to 40%. Those who said it was important to be very well off financially, jumped from 42% to 70%.

Refocus on God and release your possessions? That's nuts in this culture.

No. It's a purposeful step of faith in the daily-bread mindset. It's a choice to run the real race. It's a determination to finish well. It's hanging it out there for God.

But, it's not suicidal. It's not, because we know that when we run, God provides. That's the deal God makes with us. "You run; I'll provide. I'll make sure the aid stations are there for you. You advance My name, My kingdom, My will; I'll make sure you get everything you need. Rely on Me. I'll do it. No good thing will I withhold from you if you'll just run the race for Me."¹¹

Jesus says in ► Matthew 6:31-33,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 . . . For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

That's exactly why Jesus invites us to pray,

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread."

Because God wants to provide it to those who have a daily-bread mindset: focused on God, freed from encumbrances, and faithful to run with endurance the race set before us.

¹¹ Psalm 84:11.