



[Matthew 6:11](#)

(11) Give us today our daily bread.

New International Version

This is apparently the only material request in the entire model prayer; all the other requests are for spiritual aid such as forgiveness, protection, and guidance. With this in mind, is [Jesus](#) telling us to ask for physical food every day? A literal meaning is often the most likely understanding, yet the continuing context of the chapter suggests He had more spiritual matters on His mind. Just a few verses later, in [Matthew 6:25-26](#), 31, He teaches:

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? . . . Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or, "What shall we wear?"

The close proximity of these instructions makes it clear that, in telling us to ask [God](#) for our daily bread, Jesus does not have physical food foremost in His mind. What, then, is this "bread" that we are to ask for? [John 6:35](#) provides an answer: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'"

The Bible uses the word *bread* to mean "that which is taken into the body and provides nourishment." Scripture presents two basic types of bread, leavened and unleavened. Leavening consistently symbolizes the corruption of sin (for instance, [1 Corinthians 5:8](#), "the leaven of malice and wickedness"). Thus, a Christian has a choice of spiritual

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nourishment that he can take into himself: He can choose sinless, healthful bread or sinful, corrupting bread. This latter bread comes in a range of varieties from sinful and unhealthy to evil and downright poisonous bread.

The manna with which God fed the Israelites while they journeyed through the wilderness was symbolic of Christ, the Bread of Life ([John 6:49-51](#)). The account of the giving of the manna in [Exodus 16:4](#), 14-21, 26 shows that the Israelites had a part to play in receiving nourishment from it. They were required to rise early and gather their daily amount before the sun "became hot" and melted it away, or they would go hungry for that day—and perhaps for the next day, if it were a Preparation Day for the Sabbath.

In "the Lord's Prayer," Jesus is instructing His followers to rise early every day and ask God to send the unleavened, sinless Bread of Life to dwell in them. Without the indwelling of Christ through God's Spirit, there is no spiritual life in us ([John 6:53](#), 55-58).

Why is it important that we ask each and every day for this? It is important because God, in His concern to preserve our free-moral agency, will not enter in and live in us uninvited. God is not like an evil demon that will possess us and take control of our lives against our will. He wants us to choose willingly to believe and obey Him and to seek a relationship with Him.

Like a boat trying to dock against the tide, if we do not actively pursue God, then we will slowly drift away from Him ([Hebrews 2:1](#)). The cares and pulls of [the world](#) seem to distract us easily, and we lose our focus on God. If we are ignoring Him, God may soon become unsure whether we are still choosing to walk with Him. He will try to get our attention back where it should be—on Him and His righteousness—through trials or other circumstances.

Yet ultimately, in order not to override our choice in the matter, God will allow us to slip away unless we [repent](#) and actively seek Him and ask for His Spirit. Without God's Spirit in us, we are trying to live and overcome on our own. If Jesus Himself says, "I can of Myself do nothing" ([John 5:30](#)), what chance does an individual have to overcome without Christ in him?

— Staff

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