

Prayer: Finding Contentment

Discussion Guide for Matthew 6:11

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Give us this day our daily bread.

Matthew 6:11

If there is ever a topic that we can certainly relate to in a life group discussion, it is the topic of contentment.

We live in a time and place that has more wealth for every citizen than any society in the history of the world. Yet, at the same time, we contend with greed, stress, the effects of poverty, and inequality as much as any other country ever has. We need to pray Jesus' way because we need to be able to see the stuff of everyday life from the perspective of our heavenly father.

One of the first things I was taught as a child was that our family is supposed to give thanks to God every time we sit down for a meal. This is often viewed as a quaint ritual of good manners that helps children to behave better at the dinner table, but it is actually one of the most powerful spiritual lessons that any of us can ever learn. The things that I have that keep me alive and make my life enjoyable only exist because God has chosen to give them to me today. This is what Jesus refers to as "our daily bread."

- How does the simple act of blessing a meal teach us about God's sovereignty and providence?
- How aware do you feel of the blessing of God for your basic needs?
- Does asking God for daily bread make us more aware of our dependence on Him for everything?

Nowhere in the Bible does it tell us not to ask for things that we would like to have. If I would like a new house, there's no place that God tells me I am not allowed to ask for it. He's our father,

he wants us to ask. But at the same time, think about the role of a father.

My children ask me for all sorts of things over the course of a day- new toys, Happy Meals, videos, access to my phone, a trip to Chuck E. Cheese, etc. Sometimes I might give them those things when it's within my control and if it's something that will make their life better. However, if I always said yes to those things every time my children asked, I would no longer be a good and loving parent because I would be giving my children things in quantities that will actually destroy their lives instead of make them better. We should all understand this as parenting 101.

There are other requests that my kids make that they can depend that I will always provide for them as long as I have it to give: Food, water, clothing, shelter, and love. My kids don't even ask for those every day because they know that they will get them.

So why does Jesus teach to ask God each day for our daily bread?

I had an English teacher in high school, Sam Rasnake. He viewed his role not as simply teaching facts and mechanics, but as actually teaching students how to think critically. Plato's perfect chair was always drawn on the whiteboard as a reminder. Everything that happened in his classroom was a teachable moment.

One day before class I was one of the first students to arrive, sit down, and throw my book bag on the floor. A few moments later Mr. Rasnake asked me whose book bag was on the floor. Puzzled because I was the only person near the book bag and I hadn't done anything wrong, I dutifully replied "that's my book bag."

His response was memorable. "No, it's not. That's God's book bag."

I suspect that Jesus is wanting us to pray so that we can understand that we are indeed children and that God is our father.

It is a daily struggle in my life to remember that even though I work, even though I serve people, even though I earn a paycheck, and even though I try to be a good steward of that paycheck, my daily bread did not come from me. It didn't even come from my employer.

My daily bread is a gift directly from the hand of God. Everything I create and everything I possess belongs to God.

God's goal for our lives is for us to be truly content with what we have because we are satisfied with Him. I know very few American Christians who can say they have reached a place of contentment. I am certainly not one of them.

I have never been part of a well-off family (by US standards), but neither have I ever missed a single meal in my entire life.

I was reminded recently by talking to someone who is struggling financially that not everyone is

so privileged, even in our own community. It seems the more God gives me, the less content I sometimes feel.

Every single day I need to be in a community that prays “Give us this day our daily bread.” At some point of praying that, we will begin to see our hearts change and actually believe that God is the one who provides every single thing for us.

When we believe that, it will dramatically transform the way that we live.

Discussion Questions

- What does it mean to be content?
- Why does the Bible identify contentment and godliness so closely?
- How does your life change when you are truly content?
- Is it wrong to have more than we need to survive?
- How can having more than we need potentially lessen our dependence on God?
- Why does God often not give you everything that you ask him for?
- Would you say that God has been faithful to give you daily bread?
- Can you enjoy nice things and still find contentment in God?
- How has this created tension in your life?
- How has prayer helped you to place your finances in the right perspective?