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Recognizing God's Hand

IN OUR DAILY BLESSINGS

Asking for and receiving daily bread at God's hand plays a vital part in learning to trust Him and in enduring life's challenges.

Luke records that one of the Lord's disciples asked Him, "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 (see Luke 11:2–4; see also Matthew 6:9–13).

Included in the Lord's Prayer is the petition "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11; see also Luke 11:3). We all have needs each day for which we turn to our Heavenly Father. For some, 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 a less tangible need, such as something related to one's obligations or

activities that day—teaching a lesson or taking a test, for example.

Jesus teaches us, His disciples, that we should look to God each day for the bread—the help and sustenance—we require that particular day. 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 eager 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.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DANE HAYDEN



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Looking to God Daily

After their great exodus from Egypt, the tribes of Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness before entering the promised land. This massive host of well over a million people had to be fed. Certainly that number in one location could not subsist long 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. Through Moses, the Lord instructed the people to gather enough manna each day for that day, except on the day before the Sabbath, when they were to gather enough for two days.

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 (see Exodus 16:24–26). Again, however, some could not believe without seeing, and they went looking to gather manna on the Sabbath, but “they found none” (see Exodus 16:27–29).

By providing daily sustenance one day at a time, Jehovah was trying to teach faith to a nation that over a period of 400 years had

lost much of the faith of their fathers. He was teaching them to trust Him. In essence, the children of Israel had to walk with Him each day 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.

Once the tribes of Israel were in a position to provide for themselves, they were required to do so. Likewise, as we plead with God for our daily bread—for help in the moment that we cannot provide for ourselves—we must still be active in doing and providing that which is within our power.

Trusting in the Lord

Some time before I was called as a General Authority, I faced a personal economic challenge that persisted for several years. It ebbed and flowed in seriousness and urgency, but it never went away. At times this challenge threatened the welfare of my family, and I thought we might be facing financial ruin. I prayed for some miraculous intervention to deliver us. Although I offered that prayer many times with great sincerity and earnest desire, the answer in the end was no. Finally, I learned to pray as the Savior did: “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). I sought the Lord's help with each tiny step along the way to a final resolution.

There were times when I had exhausted all my resources, when I had nowhere and no one to turn to for help to meet the exigency before me. With no other recourse, more than once I fell down before my Heavenly Father, begging in tears for His help. And He did help. Sometimes it was nothing more than a sense of peace, a feeling of assurance that things

would work out. I might not see how or what the path would be, but He gave me to know that, directly or indirectly, He would open a way. Circumstances might change, a new and helpful idea might come to mind, some unanticipated income or other resource might appear at just the right time. Somehow there was a resolution.

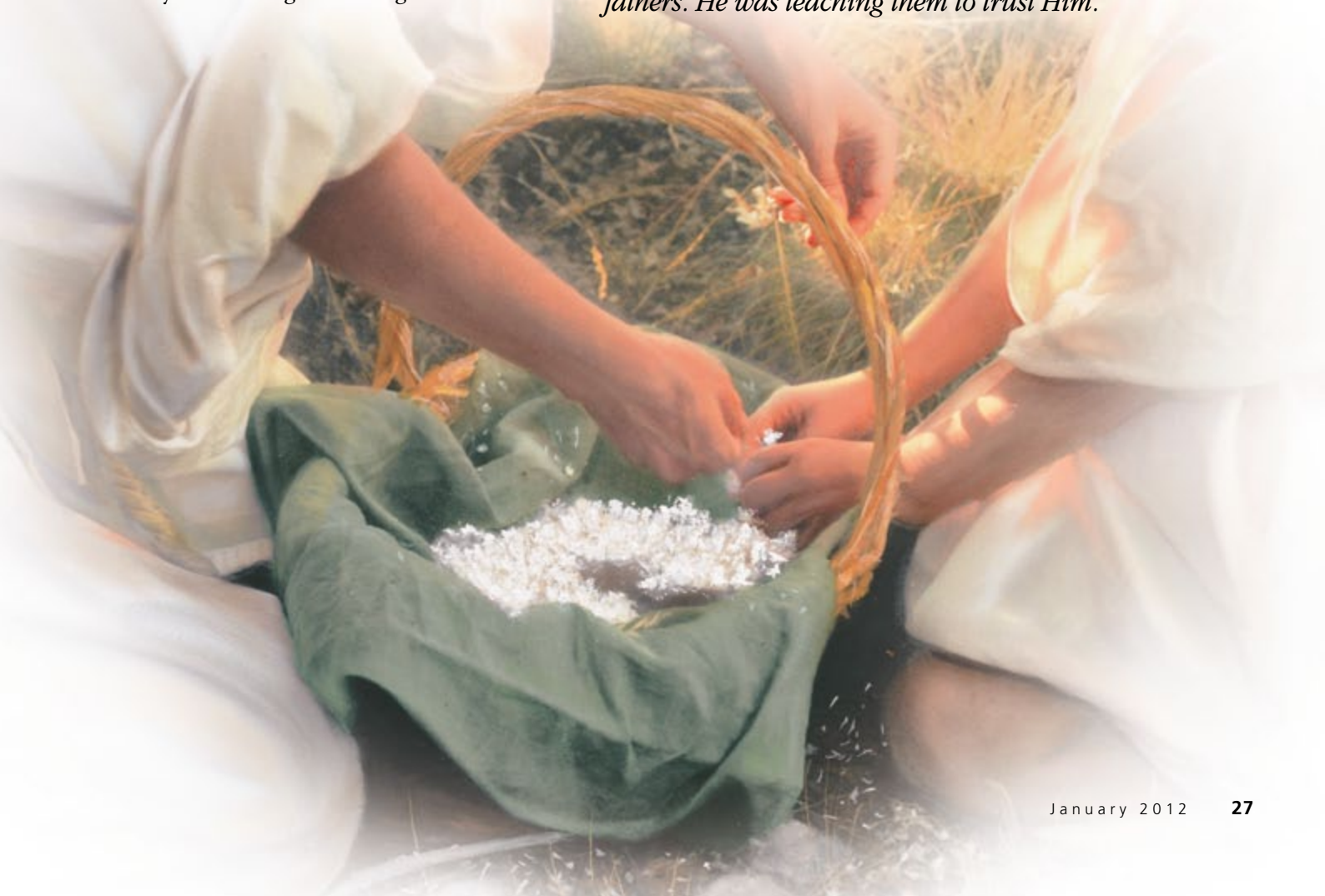
Though I suffered then, I am grateful now that there was not a quick solution to my problem. The fact that I was forced to turn to God for help almost daily over an extended period of years taught me how to truly pray and get answers to prayer and taught me in a practical way to have faith in God. I came to know my Savior and my Heavenly Father in a way and to a degree that might not have

happened otherwise or that might have taken me much longer. I learned that daily bread is a precious commodity. I learned that manna today could be as real as the physical manna of biblical history. I learned to trust in the Lord with all my heart. I learned to walk with Him day by day.

Working through Problems

Asking God for our daily bread rather than our weekly, monthly, or yearly bread is also a

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way for us to focus on the smaller, more manageable bits of a problem. To deal with something big, we may need to work at it in small, daily bites. Sometimes all we can handle is one day—or even just part of one day—at a time.

In the 1950s my mother survived radical cancer surgery, which was followed by dozens of painful radiation treatments. She recalls that her mother taught her something during that time that has helped her ever since:

“I was so sick and weak, and I said to her one day, ‘Oh, Mother, I can’t stand having 16 more of those treatments.’

“She said, ‘Can you go today?’

We also need a daily portion of divine bread to become what we must become. To repent, improve, and eventually reach “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” is a step-by-step process.

“‘Yes.’

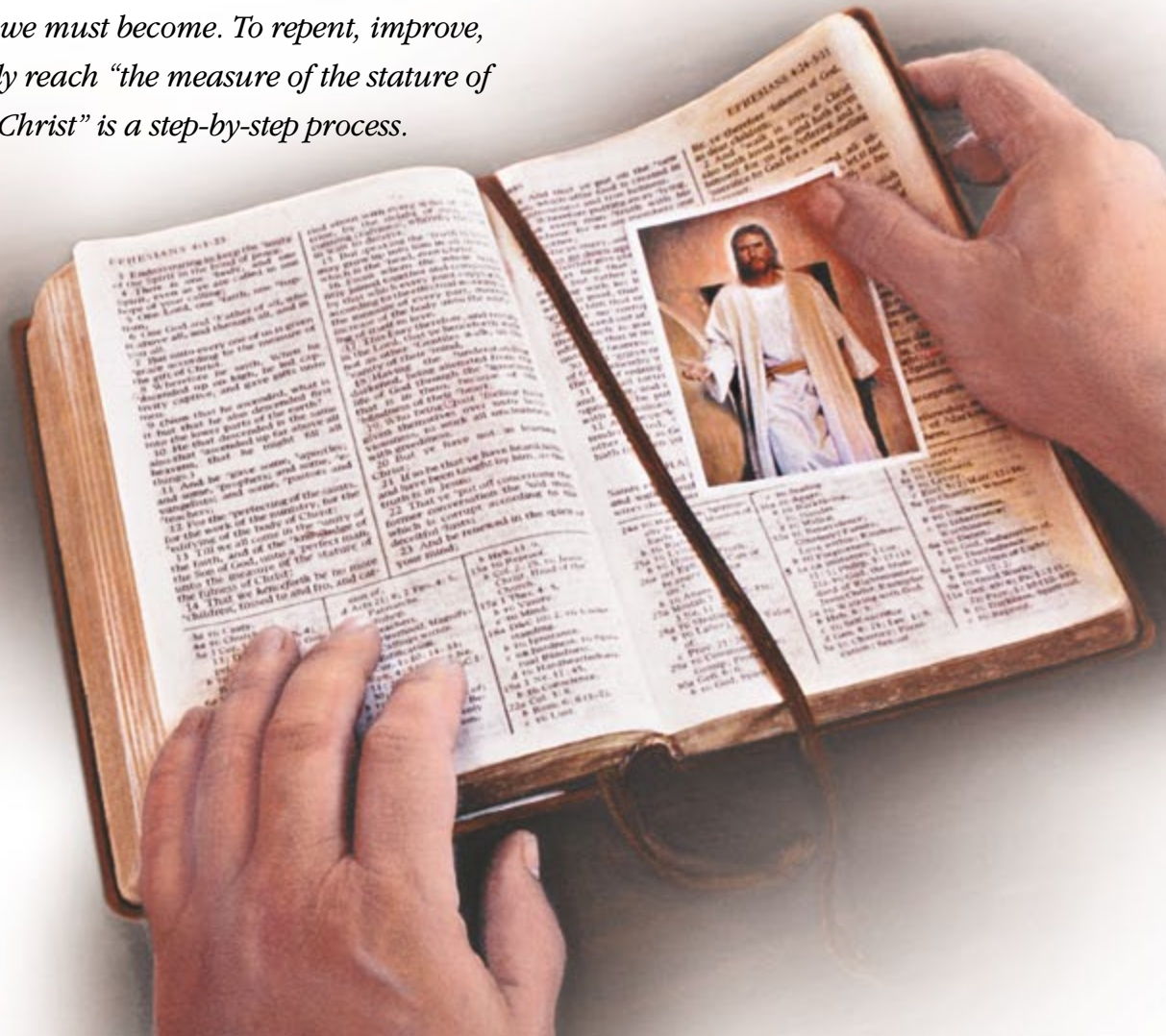
“‘Well, honey, that’s all you have to do today.’

“It has helped me many times when I remember to take one day or one thing at a time.”

The Spirit can guide us when to look ahead and when we should deal just with this one day, with this one moment.

Reaching Our Potential

Asking for and receiving daily bread at God’s hand plays a vital part in learning to trust Him and in enduring life’s challenges. We also need a daily portion of divine bread to become what we must become. To repent, improve,



and eventually reach “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13) is a step-by-step process. Incorporating new and wholesome habits into our character or overcoming bad habits or addictions often means an effort today followed by another tomorrow and then another, perhaps for many days, even months and years, until we achieve victory. But we can do it because we can appeal to God for our daily bread, for the help we need each day.

President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), First Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “As we reflect on the value of resolving to do better, let us determine to discipline ourselves to carefully select the resolutions we make, to consider the purpose for making them, and finally to make commitments for keeping them and not letting any obstacle stop us. Let us remind ourselves at the beginning of each day that we can keep a resolution just for that day.”¹

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recently taught that consistency in simple daily practices such as family prayer, scripture study, and home evening is crucial in building successful families. “Our consistency in doing seemingly small things,” he said, “can lead to significant spiritual results.”²

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), speaking of repentance, gave this counsel: “We must be careful, as we seek to become more and more [Christlike], that we do not become discouraged and lose hope. Becoming Christlike is a lifetime pursuit and very often involves growth and change that is slow, almost imperceptible.”³

Seeking the Lord’s Help in Serving

Remember that we should not be looking only inward when we seek a daily measure

of divine bread. If we are to become more like the Master, He who came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Mark 10:45), we will seek His help in being of service to others day by day.

President Thomas S. Monson lives this principle better than anyone I know. There is ever present in his heart a prayer that God will reveal needs and means for him to assist those around him in any given day or moment of the day. One example from his time as a bishop illustrates the fact that sometimes even a little effort may, with the workings of the Spirit, yield remarkable fruit.

“One to whom [President Monson] reached out was Harold Gallacher. His wife and children were active in the Church, but not Harold. His daughter Sharon had asked Bishop Monson if he would ‘do something’ to bring her father back into activity. As a bishop, he felt prompted one day to call on Harold. It was a hot summer’s day when he knocked on Harold’s screen door. The bishop could see Harold sitting in his chair, smoking a cigarette and reading the newspaper. ‘Who is it?’ Harold asked sullenly, without looking up.

“‘Your bishop,’ Tom replied. ‘I’ve come to get acquainted and to urge your attendance with your family at our meetings.’

“‘No, I’m too busy,’ came the disdainful response. He never looked up. Tom thanked him for listening and departed the doorstep. The family moved without Harold ever attending services.

“Years later . . . Brother Gallacher phoned

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the office of Elder Thomas S. Monson and asked to make an appointment to see him.

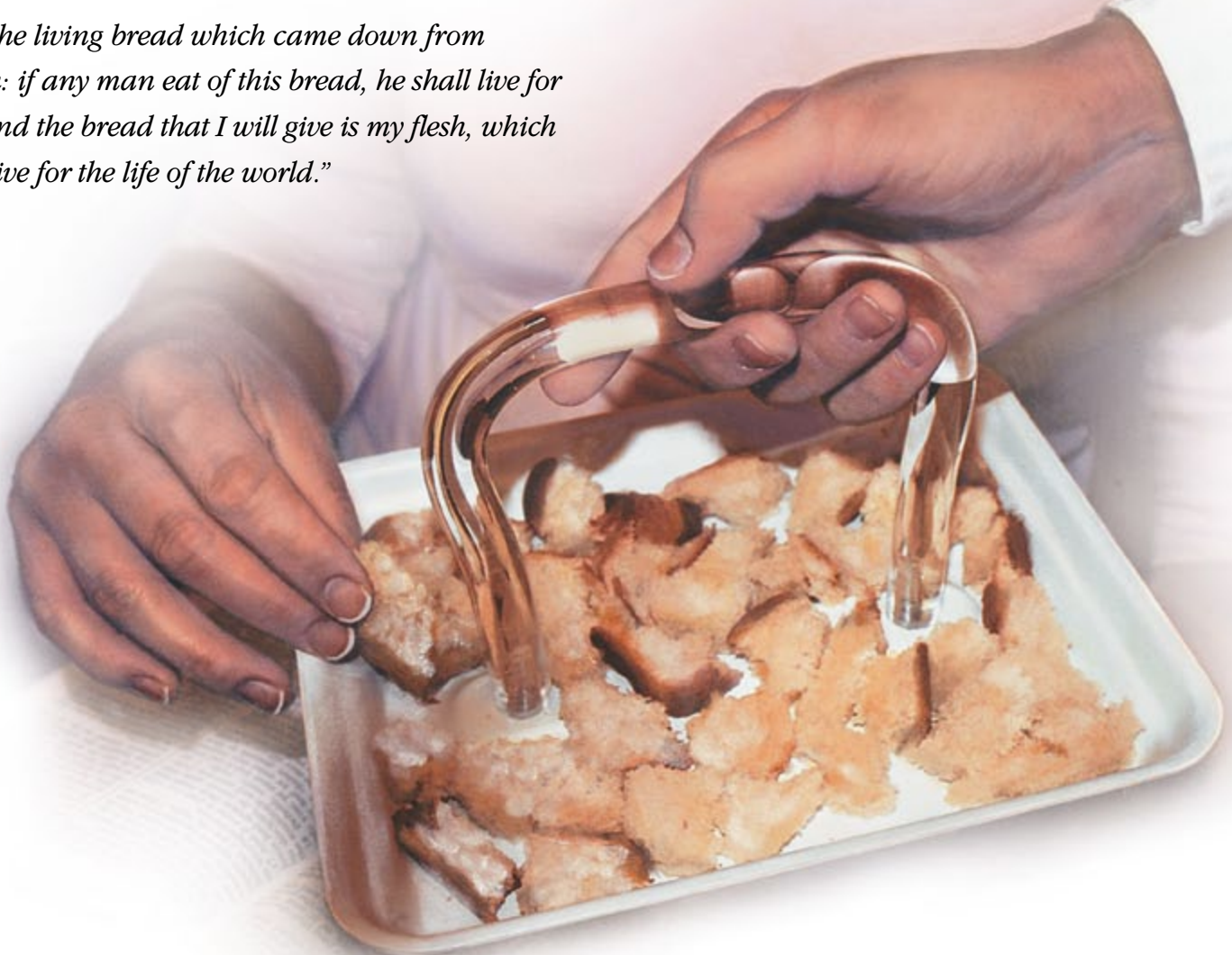
“. . . When the two met some time later, they embraced. Harold said, ‘I’ve come to apologize for not getting out of my chair and letting you in the door that summer day long years ago.’ Elder Monson asked him if he [was] active in the Church. With a wry smile, Harold replied: ‘I’m now second counselor in my ward bishopric. Your invitation to come out to church, and my negative response, so haunted me that I determined to do something about it.’”⁴

Making Daily Choices

Thinking of our daily bread keeps us aware of the details of our lives, of the significance of the small things that occupy our days. Experience teaches that in a marriage, for example, a steady stream of simple kindnesses, help, and attention do much more to keep love alive and nurture a relationship than an occasional grand or expensive gesture.

Likewise, in daily choices we may prevent certain insidious influences from entering our lives and becoming part of what

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”



we are. In an informal discussion that Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) and I had some years ago, we observed that one can avoid most pornography and pornographic images just by making good choices. For the most part it is simply a matter of self-discipline not to go where pornography is likely to be found—physically or electronically. We acknowledged, nevertheless, that because it is so tragically pervasive, pornography could assault a person minding his own business quite by surprise. “Yes,” observed Elder Maxwell, “but he can immediately reject it. He does not have to invite it to come in and offer it a chair to sit down.”

The same goes with other destructive influences and habits. Our attention each day to avoiding the very beginnings of such things can protect us from awakening some future day to the realization that because of inattentiveness, some evil or weakness has taken root in our soul.

In reality, there aren’t many things in a day that are totally without significance. Even the mundane and repetitious can be tiny but significant building blocks that in time establish the discipline and character and order needed to realize our plans and dreams. Therefore, as you ask in prayer for your daily bread, consider thoughtfully your needs—both what you may lack and what you must protect against. As you retire to bed, think about the successes and failures of the day and what will make the next day a little better. And thank your Heavenly Father for the manna He has placed along your path that sustained you through the day. Your reflections will increase your faith in Him as you see His hand helping you to endure some things and to change others. You will

be able to rejoice in one more day, one more step toward eternal life.

Remembering the Bread of Life

Above all, remember that we have Him of whom manna was a type and symbol, the Redeemer.

“I am that bread of life.

“Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:48–51).

I bear my witness of the living reality of the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, and of the infinite power and reach of His Atonement. Ultimately, it is His Atonement and His grace that is our daily bread. We should seek Him daily, to do His will each day, to become one with Him as He is one with the Father (see John 17:20–23). As we do so, may our Heavenly Father grant us our daily bread. ■

From a Church Educational System fireside address given on January 9, 2011. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. N. Eldon Tanner, “Today I Will . . .,” *Liahona*, Mar. 2003, 27–28; “Just for Today,” *New Era*, Jan. 1975, 5.
2. David A. Bednar, “More Diligent and Concerned at Home,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 20.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, “A Mighty Change of Heart,” *Tambuli*, Mar. 1990, 7; *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 5.
4. Heidi S. Swinton, *To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson* (2010), 160–61.

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