

## Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14

*I made all of this out of nothing. Trust me: I can take care of you! —God.*

**O**ur topic for today is bread. I mention this because this coming Thursday, Americans are going to eat a lot of bread — in the form of hot dog and hamburger buns.

We like bread in other forms, too. We love breakfast pastries like croissants and cinnamon rolls. We enjoy a piece of toast for breakfast as well.

The Bible says, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4).

Yet, bread *is* the staple of life. Bread and water are two things we need to live. But we can’t live on bread alone; we need something even more important.

Generations ago, mothers baked bread every week in the family kitchen. And in doing so, they taught us about life. Flour needs to be sifted, and the dough needs to be kneaded. Then the dough must sit patiently before it’s ready for the oven. The dough is then subjected to heat. All these steps are required before anyone can be nourished by bread.

Hundreds of years ago, bread-making was primitive. According to *Ye Olde English Sayings*, visitors to Anne Hathaway’s cottage in England (near Stratford-upon-Avon) were given this explanation while looking at the bread oven beside the fireplace in the kitchen: “The bread was put, as a raw lump of dough, straight into the bread oven. No bread tin, it just sits on the floor of the oven. The oven is heated by the fire and is very hot at the bottom. When the bread is done baking and taken out to cool, the base of the loaf is overcooked, black and also dirty. The top of the loaf is done just right, and still clean. The bottom of the loaf is for the servants to eat, while the upper crust is for the master of the house.”

This is how the common reference to the “upper crust” came into our language. The upper crust of the loaf was the premium and most desired part of the loaf.

The bread that Jesus ate was probably not prepared in the same way. But Jesus described himself as the “bread of life.” In Jesus’ day, bread occupied a more crucial role in one’s everyday life than it does now. Jesus is telling us that he is our nourishment. He is our source of strength. He also described himself as the “living water.”

In other words, even as we require bread and water to stay physically alive, so, too, do we need Jesus, the bread of life and the “living water,” to stay spiritually alive and healthy.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are my nourishment! Thank you! Amen.*