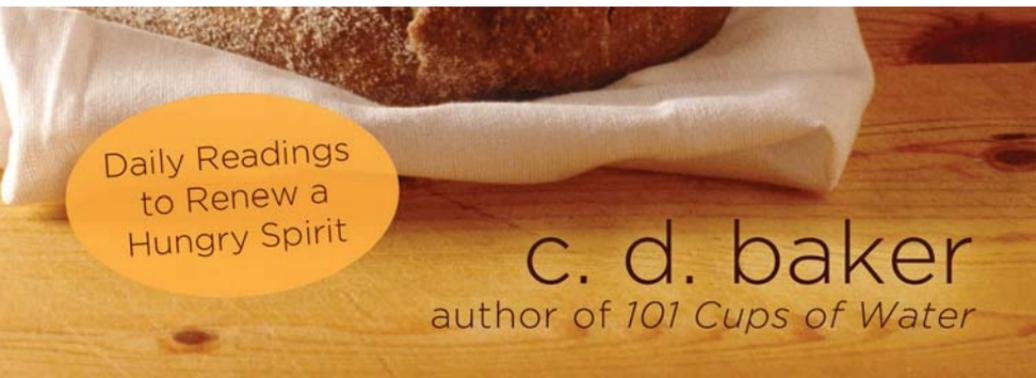
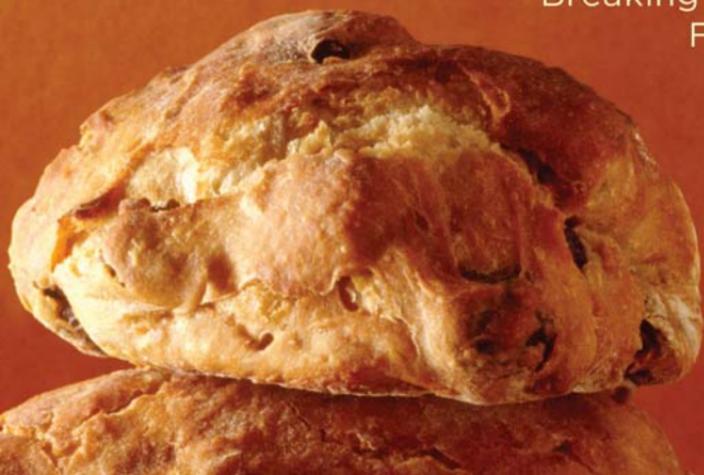


40 loaves

Breaking Bread with Our
Father Each Day



Daily Readings
to Renew a
Hungry Spirit

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Why is my life such a mess?

Art was the favored twin growing up. So ever since he was a child, Art had been accustomed to having all that he wanted.

He was good-looking and smart, clever and personable. As an adult he married his sweetheart, succeeded in business, and was important in any number of life categories.

Ultimately, what he wanted was to feel respected, important, and comfortable. To do that, he began trying to impress others with his cars, house, and expensive parties. He ran up his credit cards and re-mortgaged his house to the max. His marriage felt the strain. In time and for lots of reasons, Art divorced his wife, lost his job, and eventually declared bankruptcy. Panicked and suffering anxiety, he sought comfort in red wine—gallons of it. By the time he was fifty he was broke, alone, and diabetic. Art's life was a mess.

Individual lives can be messy for all sorts of reasons. The prom queen turns into a junky; the top salesman goes bust; perfect marriages crash and burn. Sometimes it's about our choices or our reactions to

circumstances. Sometimes it's about our assumptions and beliefs. Sometimes it's all the above.

But underneath our lives lay our hearts...home for a tricky thing called *desire*.

Our hearts tell us what we want.

Unfortunately, all too often the things we want are at cross-purposes with what's good for us and for those we love. That's when we end up with a mess...like Art.

It's *critical* that we pause from time to time to take a heart test—to ask ourselves what it is we really *want* out of life.

How our hearts answer will tell us what we love.

And what we love determines how we live.

So how do we test our hearts' desires?

We might want to begin by asking the Spirit to show us our hearts. "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psalm 139:23). If we do, we better brace ourselves. It might get real ugly real fast!

And we also should pay attention to how God made us. We are created with four primary needs that motivate us every day. They are:

- significance—the need to matter
- identity—the need to know who we are
- security—the need to feel safe
- relief of pain—the need to feel well

When we find ourselves in some sort of life mess, we can be pretty sure that at least one of these needs has impacted our desires. The need for significance can make us obsessive achievers. Identity crises can lead to unhealthy associations. Security concerns can create

chronic fear. Pain relief can drive us to addictions. All these things put us at cross-purposes with the kind of healthy living that God wants for us.

But we do have ways to keep these natural needs in check:

- We need to rediscover Cross-purposes.
- We need to want what he wants for us.

Of course, we are not created with the power to change our own desires. But we can ask the Spirit to begin changing our wants. And, importantly, we can ask the Spirit to help us better appreciate how it is that the things we need *are already provided for* in Christ!

In him we are *already*:

- Significant: we are promised the kingdom (see James 2:5). What could be more impressive than that!
- Identified: we are declared “children of God” (Romans 8:16). Talk about a title!
- Secure: “The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37). Need I say more?
- Relieved of pain: Actually, no. But we are *not abandoned* to pain. “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5).

Yes, I am a mess.

You may be a mess.

But praise God, Jesus is not and we are in him.

