
Nourishment for the Soul by Clay Smith

**Youth Summer Mission
Union Gospel Mission
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This summer I did something that I have always wanted to do. I drove,. Really far away from home. And it was awesome. I spent a week and a half driving across this beautiful country, around five thousand miles, and driving through more than half of the states in the continental U.S. It was an experience that I will never forget. I did and witnessed things I will have with me forever. I had the pleasure of almost being mauled by a buffalo in Yellowstone National Park and bearing witness to the absolutely gorgeous Teton mountain range in Wyoming, driving through the Badlands in South Dakota. Again, things that I will have with me forever.

I could tell you about Gillette, WY and its quaint charm and the laughs that I had with my friends trying to race up a waterslide tunnel, yes I am going to college, and the good pizza that I ate at a little pizzeria next to Wal-Mart but really, while the pizza, which was covered in all kinds of cheeses and pepperoni, that meal is long gone. That was two months ago. I'm pretty sure it's not satisfying me anymore.

But what does still put a smile on my face is thinking about messing around in the over-the-top pool intended for kids with two of my closest friends. I loved every minute of it. Not only did I get to visit some of the most amazing places on this continent, I got to do it with some of the people I care most about.

I feel like that is exactly what Jesus is trying to get through our skulls today. When the people went to Capernaum looking to Jesus to perform yet another miracle he simply,,, and clearly told them "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." But what does he mean by this?

Maybe, he wants us to consume Him in a more literal form, While he is the son of God, I'm pretty sure Jesus doesn't want anyone actually eating his flesh,. We're not cannibals. But! That is not to say we shouldn't eat. There are things in life that spiritually can not prevent or make happen. We can pray all we want, but if we don't put in the work at our jobs we will not get the promotion.

But if he's not saying to dig in or to feast solely on spiritual substance than what in the world is he talking about? People came to Him seeking miracles to build their faith and He simply told them that by performing miracles their faith can not grow. The people were puzzled by this and asked "what signs are you going to give us then?" and then Jesus explained "very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

God was providing the manna for his followers, but they would not see their faith beyond their next meal. They were blind to true spiritual growth. Much like the people traveling to Capernaum couldn't develop their faith beyond Jesus' next miracle. The people needed to learn that if they had faith, true faith, they would be provided for, no matter how difficult the trials they faced would be. While the manna may be delicious it is not the food which we should work for. The food that we should work for is the food that does not fill our stomachs, but that which feeds our souls. That spiritual nourishment allows us the confidence that we will be provided for.

We live our lives in this world being the best people that we can be. But, like the manna, life is something that perishes. However, our souls live on. And, while I am still young I have come to realize that knowing that my soul will live on has allowed me to work very hard for the food that feeds the soul. And that realization of what is truly most important to work for in life is what has allowed my faith to grow.

For me, these church trips feed my faith. By watching this group of high school kids from Atlanta help others, my faith truly grows beyond measure, It is an experience I will always have. It is the food that truly nourishes me. But over the past few years I have learned to see my faith beyond the next church trip. My faith has grown beyond the bounds of my next meal.

What I think that the people who traveled to Capernaum failed to realize was that Jesus, while he is the son of God, is not simply a crutch on which you place your faith. As children of God we must be willing to trust that God will always provide. It may not fill our stomachs, but feeding our souls is the most important meal for us, it even trumps breakfast. As the people told Jesus after being denied another miracle we must ask god to "give us the bread always" and do not fear when or where our next meal will come, simply trust that God will provide.