

Fed to Feed

Much of life is spent eating. We are fed by others, we feed ourselves and we feed others. We eat to live, although at times it seems like we are living to eat. Yet there are many who are seriously malnourished and others who are starving.

But being fed refers not only to eating literal food. It refers to the information which we voluntarily or involuntarily consume; the information to which we are willingly or unwillingly subjected; that information which we use to build up our knowledge bank. And it is that knowledge bank that we draw upon so often to chart the course of our lives.

“Man shall not live on bread alone ...”, Matthew 4: 4; Deuteronomy 8: 3.

Therefore we should exercise great care when feeding ourselves not only with the right bread, but also with the right information. That information has great impact on our thoughts; and we are what we think:

“As he thinks in his heart, so is he”, Proverbs 23: 7 (NKJV).

But even as we work through the process of acquiring food (information/knowledge), we need to recognize more and more the role that we should be playing in feeding others: with real bread, and with that which is not bread.

This was a concern of Jesus as expressed in his discourse with Peter in John 21. Peter and other disciples of Jesus had just finished fishing and were having breakfast on the beach with Jesus. Peter had been a fisherman and by all accounts loved that trade; and so as is recorded in John 21: 15 (NIV),

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, Son of John, do you love me more than these?’

‘Yes Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you’.

Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’

Jesus asked the question two more times. Peter repeated his affirmative answer; and in verse 17 Jesus said,

‘Feed my sheep.’

In at least one way we are like sheep. We get attached to a leader, a provider, indeed a ‘shepherd’. We spend a great part of our lives following this leader. Peter had found his leader, his shepherd. To Peter that shepherd was Jesus.

Many of us can identify with Peter, in that, we have also found Jesus as our shepherd: the one who feeds and leads us. He came to give us a full life (John 10: 10). He is the good shepherd (John 10: 11), the great shepherd (Hebrews 13: 20), and the chief shepherd (1 Peter 5: 4).

We appreciate his feeding us (leading us). We want to express our love for him as Peter did. Jesus knew that Peter loved him; and he needed to let Peter understand what was required in order to show love for the shepherd. It is by feeding his sheep.

Peter was obedient to Jesus. The task of feeding the lambs and sheep was not a mere natural one. If it were so, then the preparation and equipping to carry out that task would involve simply natural processes: identify the source of food, obtain the food, and distribute the food.

However this task of feeding the lambs and sheep involved a significant spiritual component. In the Scriptures it is sometimes equated to a war – *“Fight the good fight of the faith”*, 1 Timothy 6: 12 (NIV); *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood”*, Ephesians 6: 12 (NIV).

Hence to be effective, it was necessary that Peter be fed spiritually from God’s bountiful supply. As a disciple of Jesus, Peter was fed by God through Jesus the Son of God. After Jesus returned to Father God, Peter was fed with the blessed Holy Spirit, as the Father had promised. In Acts 2 it is recorded that Peter and one hundred and nineteen others were filled with the Holy Spirit. With the continuing empowerment of the Holy Spirit Peter undertook the feeding task with confidence (see Acts 2-5, 10-12, 15).

As Christians we are being fed by God the Father, Jesus the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This feeding takes place through several means, including the Holy Bible, the fellowship with fellow believers, prayer and praise, worship and other channels of God’s own choosing. We have to pass that food along to the other sheep. We are being **fed to feed**. Jesus’ command to Peter is a command to us all. “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep”.