

## **Peanut Butter and Bologna Sandwiches!**

Don't let me throw you by the title. No, we haven't been eating a mixture of peanut butter and bologna between two slices of bread. Barbara, my wife ate the peanut butter; I ate the bologna. Our missions conference ended Wednesday night and as usual we took our missionaries to some really fantastic eating venues. And as usual, we heard missionaries say they had never eaten anything so good. Without diverting from my intent in this article, I need to share with you a conviction of mine. I want our missionaries to be spoiled and hopefully create a lifetime memory of appreciation from a sponsoring church. When I was a boy and my minister father would travel to present and do the actual activity of missions, we were often not taken care of. A lasting "not-so-so-precious" memory of mine is when our family (and this happened more than once) went to a preaching event for my dad and no one invited us out to eat or over to a house. Dad did not have the wherewithal to take us to a nice eating establishment, so we got the best deal on chicken, went to a public park, ate our meager meal and played on the swings, and warned not to get too dirty and when it was time for church, we went to services again. After services, we drove into the night to make it back home. Therefore, when I began to pastor, I was determined to make those who served the Master feel like celebrities and victors, not like losers and victims. I am so thankful to pastor a church that allows and even encourages the preachers and missionaries better than any church I know./font>

After eating richer than we usually eat, Barbara went home from the church this past Thursday evening and prepared herself a peanut butter sandwich and I went on to Deacon's Meeting where our fine deacon's wife, Patti Corn had prepared for us some delicious bologna sandwiches and assorted chips. This morning Barbara and I shared how good our meal of peanut butter (for her) and bologna (for me) really was! This may sound like an awkward segue, but I want to share some thoughts on the blessings that come with eating peanut butter and bologna sandwiches.

### **1. We remember the simplicity of a good life.**

Life can become very busy and complex. Before you know it, you come to the end of your day thinking about things that did not get done. Sometimes before I retire to bed I will write in my planner all the things that must get done, should get done and what would be nice if it got done. Usually, I get done the things that must be done. I often do not finish that things that should be done and as of late, my things that would be nice to get done are not even attempted. Many of the things that it would be nice to get done are the things of personal enrichment and blessing to me. For instance, I have a book that I have never finished - when I tell you, you are probably going to laugh - it is Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. It was one of those books that we had to read portions of for a class back in school, but like many of my peers, anything which was required reading was taboo for personal enjoyment reading. But in all honesty, it is a remarkable classic. It gives you insight to the anti-bellum times of the American Civil War like few books ever will. It shows you the way people thought and talked in those days gone by.

I have read the puritan Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity* and his *Ten Commandments* twice. I have read Bancroft's and Theissen's Systematic Theologies. I have read every word of Dwight Pentecost's massive treatise on his eschatological, *Things to Come*. But alas, I have kept Tom and Huck waiting for over forty years. As I caught the whiff of mustard and bologna, my mind went back to those schoolboy days and the lunches we ate. I had plenty of time for Dell's comic book heroes of every ilk and sort. I often read my Sunday School and Baptist Training Course lessons ahead of time. I have been captured by the sense of obligation to things I consider urgent. In life, important tasks can usually wait while the urgent (which often are not important at all) demand our time and enslave us to their power. In Charles Hummel's book, he defined it as *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. Let us never loose the value of the simple life.

Jesus said, “*Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?*” (Luke 12:24). A couple of verses later our Lord remarked, “*Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these*” (Luke 12:27). Our Lord has given us a command to go out into the fields and look at the birds and flowers. We sometimes are tyrannized on the urgent things and lose glimpse of the important lessons on trust and provision the Lord will teach us if we will revert to the simple life of perhaps taking the walk in the woods with our bologna or peanut butter sandwiches. As we approach our summer reading program, I plan to be a child again and finish reading Huck Finn.

## **2. We are re-acquainted with our dreams.**

I couldn't resist it. It was lunchtime while I wrote these words, so I ate a peanut butter sandwich. I mixed it with one of my favorites - honey! And as I raised the sandwich to consume it, I caught the whiff of peanuts and fresh bread. And suddenly I was eleven years old again. My life was filled with dreams. In one bite I was fighting with Rudyard Kipling's Gunga Din. In the next bite I was returning to the Philippines with General Douglas McArthur. And the next, in the Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit preaching with Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Have you gotten too busy to dream? Have the dreams you once dreamed now become something that you now only mock as childish mental gibberish, something to out-grow rather than seize? In the words of Joseph's jealous brothers, “*And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh*” (Genesis 37:19). According to the great Bible story of Joseph, we see that he dreamed these dreams in his youth. He lived to see every one of them come to pass. Don't write off too quickly those dreams of your youth. Some of them we should never give up. It may not be too late to seize the day! Hang on to those noble, worthwhile dreams. Then watch for the moment when God allows you to intersect your dreams with opportunity. Jesus said, “*...behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name*” (Revelation 3:8). Our Lord commends faithfulness and the investment of hanging on even with little strength. Christ's goal for us is to take what little strength we have left and invest it into all of His mighty strength. “*It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect*” (Psalm 18:32).

## **3. We are pre-occupied with greater things.**

Whenever I eat bologna or peanut butter sandwiches, I usually have greater things on my mind. Eating a simple sandwich is not the end; it is a means to the end. I pause long enough for refreshment and then it's back to work, like a marksmanship contest that begins with, “Ready, aim...” and ends with “Fire!” We get hung up with “...aim, aim, aim...” and never fire. Why, what some of you need is a good bologna sandwich to fuel you to fire! The famous coach Vince Lombardi said, “Winning is a habit, so is losing.” I don't know who said it first, but it's true, “Most of us do not plan to fail, we fail to plan.” Let us break the losing habit and win! I rarely find what I am looking for in a panic. It is usually when I slow down, relax and concentrate that I find the lost item. When I used to play tennis, it was not when I was super tense that I won, it was when I was relaxed that I could land a power serve or return a volley with finesse.

Henry David Thoreau, with whom I do not agree on many points, made a couple of statements before he died some 146 years ago which are quite provocative and well worth quoting in light of this article. He said, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them. I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation,

unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life....” I love these words! I, too, wish not to come to the end of this life only to sadly discover I never really lived.

Jesus promised us a life that was anything but mediocre. He said, “*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10). I think the truth is before our very noses – Christ wants us to live this wonderful, victorious, overcoming life. Why are we missing it? We may be missing it, not because we are not intense and busy enough. Our problem may be we have not slowed down long enough to hear what He is saying or envision His vision. Thus the peanut butter and bologna sandwich analogy. The power is in the peanut butter or bologna; it is the casual, calm atmosphere that is associated with the consumption.

- Pastor Pope -

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