

August 12, 2016 **Whole Wheat or White Wonder?** Milepost 104

I didn't come from heaven to do what I want! I came to do what the Father wants me to do. -Jesus of Nazareth (John 6:38)

Each culture has its own unique bread. Modern technology brought us a “new and improved, enriched with vitamins” bread: light, white, sliced just right and appropriately called “wonder bread.” I wonder what they were thinking!

Bread can be life extending or life shortening. Life giving bread is made from living food in its natural state. 3,000 year-old grain from Egyptian tombs will grow when planted. Life shortening bread is made from processed to death food.

It is ironic that many of the things we call improvements have literally taken the life out of our foods. That which enables whole grains to reproduce, the germ and the cellulous walls, are removed to make them look nicer, last longer and cook quicker.

God designed our bodies to burn complex carbohydrates (e.g. whole grains, lentils) to produce energy. Complex carbohydrates help regulate blood sugar levels. Much of what is called “bread” today is primarily simple carbohydrates (refined sugar, processed white flour, etc.). Consuming simple carbohydrates causes blood sugar to rise quickly and then fall.

Have we inadvertently removed Life from our faith? We want our faith convenient, attractive, light and fast. We want the option of storing our faith for a while when it gets in our way. But we don't want our faith to spoil: we want it to be fresh even though it's been on the shelf. We like fast food and fast faith! Have we been deceived in thinking that the additives (things we do in church which unknowingly distract us from biblical faith) are enriching our faith?

John 6 is packed with Living Food. Jesus presents himself as “the Bread that gives Life.” He invites his followers to eat this Bread. Of

several Greek words for eating, Jesus uses one referring to taking time to really chew. Taking Jesus into our lives daily, like eating whole grain bread, takes time and energy.

The chapter ends on a sobering note: *many of his disciples... stopped following him*. The cost was too high. Those who left preferred the addictive white wonder bread miracles that gave a quick burst of feel good spiritual energy, but left them in poor spiritual health, without sustained energy. A few chose the less traveled road of chewing on the natural whole grain bread of Jesus' words which provided sustained, Abundant Life.

Our transitional period is a time to sit down together and chew carefully on Living Food. Five congregational objectives were discerned by congregational leadership in December:

- 1) experience healthy closure of the last chapter
- 2) clarify current identity (mission)
- 3) discern future direction (vision)
- 4) evaluate the organizational structure
- 5) prepare to call long term leadership

Emily Kauffman (Zion Mennonite, Archbold, OH), describes both the challenges and rewards of a life transition experience, in The Mennonite (August, 2016, p. 38): *I am grateful for the safe spaces I found and the leadership roles I filled that not only helped me discover who I am but what I can and cannot do*. Her transition story mirrors that of a congregation in transition (copies available by mailboxes).

-Gary Martin

Looking Ahead:

Aug. 14 9:30 a.m. *That they may be one* John 17:20-26

11:00 a.m. Congregational Dialogue #3: Transition overview

Aug. 21 9:30 a.m. *Oaks of Righteousness* Isaiah 61:1-4; 65:17-25

Sept. 11 11:00 a.m. Congregational Dialogue #4: Mission Statement

Gary's projected in town schedule: Aug. 15; 21-22; 28-29