

The Problem with Manna

In Exodus 16 we read that after the Israelites had left Egypt they started complaining to Moses about the lack of food. In response God provided a food which they called 'manna', six days a week, for the next 40 years. It was not too long before they complained, even though it had a great taste – 'like honey wafers – they said: But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna.'

So we see that the problem was not that there was actually anything wrong with the manna, but with the human tendency to always want something new, and to complain, especially when we don't get what we want.

So what is the point? The point that I would like to make is that, in ministry, no matter how good the spiritual 'food' a pastor or anyone else in ministry provides, such as in their Sunday sermons, their congregations will get bored, sooner or later, and will either complain, retreat into a soulless state of being only physically present, or leave the church or organisation in search of a fresh pasture. We all need change, because we all become bored and even frustrated with the same spiritual 'food'. How can we counter this, one may ask? Let's see what the Bible says:

In Ephesians 4 Paul tells us that God has given each of us a special gift. I submit that the probable reason for each person having their own special gift, and no-one having them all, is so that we realise that we need to function as a team, and to guard against any person falling into the trap of pride through thinking that he can do it all by himself. Hence no-one should attempt to be the sole source of spiritual food to any group of believers. Paul in 1 Corinthians seems to have this in mind when he tells us that whenever we meet as believers the various gifts of singing (praise and worship) teaching, prophesying, speaking in tongues and interpretation must ALL be done.

Paul in Ephesians 4, in amplification of his earlier assertion that each one has been given a special gift, lists 5 leadership gifts – the 5 specific functions of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers - that Christ has given to the church, and not for their own benefit, but for the express purpose of 'building up' everyone in the church. When these gifts are all recognised and exercised, there will be a wonderful variety of spiritual food, and no more potential boredom in our meetings or in our spiritual lives.

Scriptures - NLT

Exodus 16:31 *The Israelites called the food 'manna'. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers.*

Exodus 16:35 *So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

Numbers 11:6 *"But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna!"*

Numbers 21:5 *and they began to speak against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!"*

Ephesians 4:7 *However, He has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 14:26 *Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you.*

Ephesians 4:11 *Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.*

Ephesians 4:12 *Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*

Dr Brian Drury