

A couple of weeks ago I mentioned a lesson learned while taking a 30 mile endurance hike in the Great Smokey Mountains. It concerned our 'inner strength'; that which remains after our 'quick energy' supplies have been exhausted. Tonight I would like to follow up this idea with a look at how that strength is replenished.

The selection of food that we take on a trip like this requires some thought. We carry only a small pack which straps around our waist, and do not have much room. So in our last minute shopping we pick up our favorite junk food, thinking how good it will be on the trail and how that 'quick energy' will surely help us to walk all the way. My personal favorite is Hershey's special dark chocolate. We also try to get a little variety by taking along a little cheese and crackers or something like that.

But a great shock comes when our body begins to need real nourishment; this usually happens about half way through the trip. After eating Hershey's special dark chocolate for 6 or 7 hours, the body begins to demand something more substantial; something of real value. We begin to dream of a great big juicy steak. Even ElRod has been known to long for something that has a little fat on it! When we undergo this kind of stress, then the food which seemed to be so wonderful when life was easy just cannot give us what we need. It even becomes revolting to us, and we begin to throw it out as an unnecessary burden.

The parallel to our Christian life is simple. When life gets tough, there is only one spiritual food that is sufficient for us: the living bread and water of Jesus Christ. Christ wasn't just saying in the gospel of John that he was a better source of nourishment than anything else: he was saying that he is the only real source of it; the only source capable of strengthening the inner man. We must take that nourishment at all times, so that we can be strong in the tough times. We must depend on Christ instead of the 'junk food' that gives strength only for a very short time. How can people live without the strength that enables us to do all things, the peace that passes all understanding, or the joy that cannot be taken away? They can't be really living! But Christ gives all these things. If for any reason you need to express your need for His strength tonight, won't you come now as we stand and sing this song...