

BAKING SPIRITUAL BREAD

Ephesians 2:10 ... “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

I am the cook and baker in our family. That took on a special necessity when we relocated to the Philippines. There are no restaurants or bakeries where we are. If we want to enjoy good meals and baked goods, they have to be created in our own kitchen.

There is a similarity between baking bread, which I do at least twice a week, and becoming more spiritually mature. There are certain steps that must be followed in sequence to bake bread. You gather and combine ingredients in the correct proportions. You then mix them and let the dough rest. When the yeast causes the dough to expand, you punch it down and let it expand again, before kneading the dough by massaging it with your hands. You may also do this more than once before placing it in a bread pan. The dough must then rise again in the bread pan before placing it in a hot oven to bake. When the baking is complete, the bread is removed and allowed to cool. We always enjoy a slice or two of warm bread, as it is best when fresh.

In our walk with Christ we undergo similar steps to become more like him. Our ingredients for a righteous life are found in the Bible. We study and apply them in the correct proportions. Blended together, they fill our soul with the wisdom of God. As they rise-up within us to make us as God planned, he will occasionally have to discipline us to keep us on track because the world's temptations are strong. The discipline may be harsh if we detour into sin; he may gently punch us down to humble us. He urges and tugs on us to adhere to the plan he has for us, like we knead bread dough to perfect what will become bread. When we are properly trained, God will place us in the world – the heat of the world – to finish our preparation to feed others with the truth of God.

Only after we have been fired and baked can we be fully prepared to serve God. And, God loves to use us for that purpose when we are fresh, before discouragement and self-pity attack us, and before our faith slips from doubt and impatience waiting for God's perfect timing.

In what stage is your spiritual development? Every genuine, born again follower of Christ should be in one of the stages mentioned. Are you still looking for ingredients? If so, spend more time in God's Word where they are found. Are you trying to decide how to mix God's ingredients with your secular life? If so, ask Him to show you the correct proportions to please him. Are you fighting to rise and expand your work for him, but feeling beat down by his discipline? That is because you are still being trained. And if you are feeling mixed and trained, but still raw and not ready to serve, it could be because you have not yet been baked to finish the preparation God has planned for you. Do not be afraid of the oven of God's training program. It will produce a loaf of you that pleases God and is appealing to those with whom you share Christ. The effort is worth it.

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