

1 **G-Rations**

- If we had only died in Egypt!

2 **Introduction**

- Every soldier since the beginning of time has complained about his or her field rations, whether it's C-Rations, MREs, Long Range Patrol Meals (LRPs) or manna and quail.

3 **Introduction**

- During the American Civil War, an aspiring poet from a Union regiment wrote about his daily field rations:
- The soldier's fare is very rough,
The bread is hard, the beef is tough;
If they can stand it, it will be,
Through love of God, a mystery.

4 **Introduction**

- At that time, the army marched rather uneasily on its stomach with rations consisting of
 - thick hard crackers called hardtack (which troops only half-jokingly considered to be hard enough to stop a bullet),
 - some salt beef or pork, beans, sugar, salt and coffee.

5 **Introduction**

- Fast forward in United States military history and you'll hear veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam talking about their K or C-rations -- meals contained in tin cans that were legendary for their ubiquitous blandness and need of a can opener.

6 **MRE**

- In the 1980s, the Army began to experiment with vacuum sealing its rations to make them lighter to carry and more nutritious for soldiers on the march.
- The result was the MRE (Meal Ready to Eat) that is still used by American troops.
- Although they are a vast improvement over the iron-sheeted crackers and leather-tough meat rations of their 19th-century forebears, they're still the bane or complaint of the soldier's existence.

7 **MRE**

- Each MRE features entrees like spaghetti, tortellini or beef stew packed in vacuum-sealed pouches along with a side dish and pound cake or cookies, which also get their own pouches.

- However, it is not unheard of for a soldier to carry around a bottle of Tabasco sauce as a way of adding to (or killing) the flavor of a MRE.

8 **Annual Cooking Contest**

- Nowadays the bottle of Tabasco is included and soldiers have gotten more creative at doctoring the 1,200-calorie meals into something worthy of the Food Network.
- In fact, at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Virginia, there's now an annual cooking contest that challenges participants to transform the MRE into something approaching tasty.

9 **Annual Cooking Contest**

- In fact, the winning recipe may make it into future MREs.
- Contestants can only use those ingredients that can be carried in a cargo pocket and only utensils available to soldiers in the field, like metal canteen cups and small cans of sterno.
- The results are, well, better than the regular MRE but not something you'd put on your table at home.

10 **Gold Canteen Cup Trophy**

- "The bottom line is, even with the effort they put into it, it was still an MRE," said Sergeant First Class Mark Friend.
- "It tastes like it has a shelf life of 10 years."
- This year's winner of the coveted Gold Canteen Cup trophy was a pulled pork and Sloppy Joe sandwich featuring -- you guessed it -- plenty of Tabasco sauce.

11 **Food is not an End**

- What soldiers always have to keep in mind, however, is that these meals weren't designed so much with taste in mind as utility—things that can be eaten while on the move while, at the same time, sustaining the necessary energy to keep moving.
- In other words, it's less about the meal than it is about the mission.

12 **Longing for Egypt**

- Once the Israelites—like an army on the march, reached the Sinai desert—after God's stunning victory in Egypt, the first thing they did once danger passed, was to start thinking about rations.

- Just like an American soldier stationed in Afghanistan—dreaming about home and Chipotle burritos, the Israelites remembered and longed for their menu and meals back in Egypt.
- “If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” (Ex 16:3 NIV)

13 **Fast Food**

- What the Israelites forgot, however, was that the menu, or meal, was less important than the mission.
- God was leading them to a promised land, to a new home and freedom, and that journey had begun with a meal—a meal prepared and eaten in haste—Passover.
- The Passover meal, like an MRE, was designed to be eaten in a hurry while in biblical combat dress, which should have given them a clue that they were going to the field (Exodus 12:11).

14 **Bread from Heaven**

- The menu was going to be expedient and sometimes sparse, as it often is for armies moving toward an objective, but God promised to provide a steady supply chain for the march.
- "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you," God said to Moses, "and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day" (Exodus 16:4).

15 **Bread from Heaven**

- By providing this daily ration, God was going to test whether the Israelites were going to be good soldiers and trust God, doing what God instructed them to do, or if they were going to simply keep whining and pining for their Egyptian stockade.

16 **God's Faithfulness**

- The ration that God provided was bread and meat -- manna and quail. The bread would be softer than hardtack and the meat fresher than salt pork, but it would only last a day.
- That meant that there was no storing up for the future, no stuffing one's cargo pockets with more than anyone else in the unit had.
- It was a lesson to teach them that God is faithful and that they don't have to worry about tomorrow.

17 **What is it?**

- At first, the people didn't know what the manna was, kind of like no one really knows what's in Spam or what holds ham and chicken loaf together.
- Moses had to tell them that it was "the bread that the LORD has given you to eat" (Exodus 16:15).
- From that day forward, for 40-plus years, the Israelites had manna day after day, year after year (Exodus 16:35)

18 Manna Cook-off

- One wonders if the Israelites had any manna cook-offs?
 - Fried Manna,
 - Baked Manna, or
 - Manna fingers
- What we do know, however, is that after the novelty wore off the Israelites ramped up their complaining about manna to the point that God sent snakes to shut them up (Numbers 21:1-9)

19 The Point

- The point of the story, however, is that God provides for our needs.
- We might want something spicier, something richer, something that doesn't come in a "loaf," but God's more concerned about giving us what we need so that we might keep moving toward the larger objective that God has for us.

20 The Temptation

- It's always tempting to want to go back to Egypt, to go AWOL on our covenant with God and seek the easier and more predictable path—even when it's a path that leads us back into the slavery of sin.
- But the Christian life is all about trusting God for our needs.
- "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him," said Jesus (Matthew 6:8).
- "And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus," said Paul (Philippians 4:19).

21 Following God's Lead

- Some of us have very little according to the material standards of the world.
- Some of us have a lot.
- Some of us are rich in relational and spiritual resources, while most of us struggle.

- But the question isn't how big our cache is, how good it tastes, or how much we have stuffed in our pockets—the question is whether or not we're willing to follow God's lead in our lives.

22 **Keep Going Forward**

- The Israelites found that after all that hardship and manna munching, they were right where God wanted them to be.
- The same will be true for us if we stay faithful and keep following him no matter what we find in the pouch, on the plate or in our pocketbooks.

23 **Feeding of the 5,000**

- One of the high points of Jesus' ministry was the feeding of the 5,000.
- He took 5 small barley loaves and two small fish and used them to feed the people. (John 6:5)
- It was such a miracle that the people wanted to make Jesus king.
- Knowing their real motive (free food), Jesus takes off and hides himself—crossing the Sea of Galilee at night.

24 **The Bread of Life**

- Once the people find Jesus, He answers them by saying,
- “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.” (John 6:26–27 NIV)
- As if they needed another sign, they asked Jesus “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'” (John 6:30–31 NIV)

25 **The Bread of Life**

- Then Jesus declares, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35 NIV)
- I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, . . . (John 6:48–50 NIV)
- For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (John 6:55–56 NIV)
- Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever. (John 6:58 NIV)

26 The Bread of Life

- Now we all know that Jesus was not talking about his literal body.
- The words (teachings) I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. (John 6:63 NIV)
- The truth of the matter is that feeding on Jesus is feeding on His teachings—becoming His disciple.
- As Jesus Himself says, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:4 NIV)

27 Our Daily Ration

- In fact, the daily ration of manna in the desert was to teach that important lesson.
- As Moses tells the people, “He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (Deut 8:3 NIV)
- In other words, what sustains us in the wilderness of life is not the gratification of our sensual desires, but daily gathering up the bread of life—by putting Jesus’ words into practice.

28 Conclusion

- When Jesus told his disciples that they must eat his body and drink his flesh, many no longer followed Him.
- Turning to the twelve, He asked them what they wanted to do and Peter responds by saying, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68 NIV)
- And what are those words of life that His disciples are suppose to follow?
- Is it not to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow Him. (See Luke 9:23)