

What I Learned At Pastor's Camp  
Rev. Mark Robinette

I learned that when you slow cook prime rib at 300 degrees for four hours with a little water in the bottom of the pan to keep it moist, good things happen. I learned that if you fresh bake buns, split them, pull the steaming white inside out and fill them with sausage, onion and peppers, men will be happy.

Honestly, when asked to share what I learned at Pastor's Camp, my mouth began to water and I was immediately inundated with a flood of memories I was eager to share. I was eager to share them, because it gave me the pleasure of reliving them again.

With a schedule that read more like a menu than a pastor's conference, the good men of God of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church "set a table before us" and served up much more than meat for the body. The whole 4-day experience was a feast for the mind and mouth I will not soon forget.

You have to understand, in my little corner of the Simple Separate Deliberate world, I am the father, the host, the teacher, the wise man who often doesn't feel so wise. I do not find myself weary in well-doing, but I do get tired, hungry and a little lonely.

R.C. Sproul Jr., Laurence Windham, Mark Dewey and Eric and Lindsay Owens lightened my load, lifted my heart and sent me home with provisions for my flock. I was reminded of what it is to be joyfully served by those who find it a privilege to serve their savior. My prayer is to be found working like these men for those God has given me, with a standard of diligence worthy of my calling.

One of the themes running throughout the camp was that all too often teachers act like servers giving "information downloads" to their subscribers. The way the topics were brought to us was more like conversation than lecture and more like homeschooling than public education. They gave a good example in their method as well as in their words.

The way something is given is often as precious as the gift. A thoughtful card and careful wrapping enhance the meaning of the offering.

Knowing the great sacrifice R.C. made to attend the camp amidst great difficulty at home as well as all of the many important things these elders could have been attending to, gave our time together with them a greater depth and richness. Thank you.

Jeff Brownfield, one of my sons in the faith, drove me out to Hungry Mother State park to the lodge where we would be staying during Camp. As we came into the park, the sun was shining and the air was crisp. The fall foliage from the mountain trees reflected their brilliance across a picturesque lake. We were quieted by a symphony of beauty as we wound our way up the narrow road to the lodge. Once we arrived at the lodge, we found it hard to believe we were at the right place. It was so lovely I instantly felt the need to call my wife and promise to bring her there someday.

As the other men were arriving Laurence Windham and I threw horseshoes and caught up on the news I usually have to share with him via cell phone. I think I even made a ringer or two while he helped me think my way through an issue I'd been dealing with back home at my church. Truth be known, he may have let me win as a confidence builder.

Monday morning, after a long night of eating and laughing with the other campers, R.C. joined us and began our day with a vision of the lovely lady espoused to our savior, the bride of Christ. He challenged us as Scripture does to be mindful of her purity and beauty and to look at our work with Christ's betrothed as we prepare her for that great day. He admonished us to find our models for ministry organic and covenantal and called us to quit the business models now in fashion among modern evangelical Christians.

Laurence Windham then showed us our worship should give us glorious glimpses of the first wedding in the garden and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb as we find God teaching us between the two weddings of Genesis and Revelation.

And later, after learning more from both these men, Mark Dewey taught us through the book of Titus and began a vigorous discussion of church discipline which I wish could be played in its entirety in every church.

All the while the teaching and discussions were going on, these same men were cooking and working on other meal preparations. Feasting takes a lot of work. And I might add here that feasting and hosting, as these men did, takes a lot of money. A lot more money than they got from the campers. From session to session, from meal to meal, from discussion to discussion and from glory to glory, this time brought godly transformation and sanctification to my heart. Learning is often being reminded again of what you haven't thought about for a while. One of the things I was pleased to learn again was that there are men of God everywhere contending for the faith. I met some wonderful men I would have never met. Seeing Christ's work in their lives was like having the chance to read a lost epistle. I pray God grants me other opportunities to know them better and be part of their work in the Kingdom.

The more I enjoyed my time with the elders and other campers, the more I longed to home loving my wife and children and serving my sheep in a more excellent way.