

Hunger after God

³² Jesus told them, "Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ Then they told him, "Sir, give us this bread all the time."

³⁵ Jesus told them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never become hungry, and whoever believes in me will never become thirsty. ³⁶ I told you that you have seen me, yet you don't believe. ³⁷ Everything the Father gives me will come to me, and I'll never turn away the one who comes to me. ³⁸ I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything that he has given me, but should raise it to life on the last day. ⁴⁰ This is my Father's will: That everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him to life on the last day."

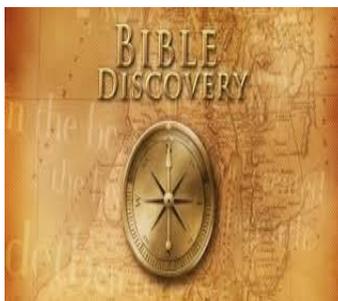
⁴¹ Then the Jewish leaders began grumbling about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

⁴² They kept saying, "This is Jesus, the son of Joseph, isn't it, whose father and mother we know? So how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

⁴³ Jesus answered them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him to life on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'And all of them will be taught by God.' Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned anything comes to me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who comes from God. This one has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, the one who believes in me has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I'm the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness and died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. ⁵¹ I'm the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he'll live forever. And the bread I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

⁵² Then the Jewish leaders debated angrily with each other, asking, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³ So Jesus told them, "Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you don't have life in yourselves. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I'll raise him to life on the last day, ⁵⁵ because my flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ The person who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will also live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not the kind that your ancestors ate. They died, but the one who eats this bread will live forever."

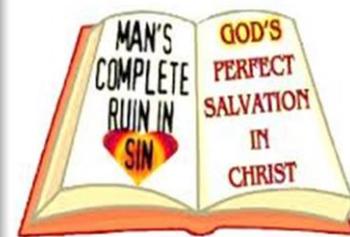


How do you know when you're hungry? I mean when you're really, gnawingly hungry? Your stomach aches, grumbles; you feel weak, distracted; everything looks good enough to eat. **Man you're hungry!** So too with our souls – truly hungering after God takes serious seeking to meet acute need rather than simply our scheduled menu. If we'd hunger after the righteousness of God, be blessed, be welcomed into His family; enjoy close fellowship with the Lord, it'll be because of acute awareness of hunger for our need to be met. Life itself becomes all about the necessity *to have that need met* which God alone supplies.

How do we fill our hunger? We've a choice – we can be like so many in the world who fill up on spiritual "**junk food**" making us feel good, filled with worldly definitions of right and wrong, worldly pursuits for religious encounters, worldly acceptance of what's righteous; **or** we turn to the Bread of Life. Christ presented Himself as the Bread of Life promising, "*He who comes to me will never go hungry*". [John 6:35] Portraying Himself as bread, the staple food of Palestine; a symbol of life itself, Christ promises to meet every spiritual need – satisfy spiritual hunger – overcome the gnawing emptiness of the soul, **if** we put our trust in Him. But Jesus wants the crowd – and us today – to understand something much greater than miracles of bread in the desert, miracles of feeding 5,000 with loaves of bread and a few fish. He's established the work God's chosen for us as this: "*To believe in the One He has sent!*" [vs. 29]

Unfortunately, we don't always see **HIM!** When we've prayed for an outdoor event and we get sunny skies, do we concentrate on the absence of rain – or do we give **HIM** praise and glory for His wonderful presence with us? Are we crying out for His presence or settling for outward demonstrations of His presence? Really hungering after God means being unsatisfied with mere demonstrations, satisfied only in following after the Master; sitting with Him, talking with Him, hearing from Him! There's wonderful affirmation of His presence in all He does for us but friends our hearts are only truly blessed by having time with God. Therefore the first

We've a choice...



trait we want to explore as a church longing to be irresistible *is* a body of believers who hunger after God. An irresistible church longs for God's presence more than anything else. If we would hunger after God's blessing there are some components vital for our pursuit.

1. **A deeper realization of God's presence**. Yes, God's omnipresent – He's already present. **We** need to be more perceptive of His presence among us, to be conscious of Him in our gathering, in our worship, in our studying of His Word. We must find a greater awareness of Him as we draw near. James promises us, *"Come near to God and He will come near to you"* [James 4:8] calling for us, though sinners, to be washed, having pure hearts, not being double-minded, walking in Christ as only in Him are we cleansed, have our hearts purged of sin and made right before our Heavenly Father.
2. Then **longing to be filled to full measure**, our cup running over, filled with His Spirit; filled only when God occupies **every** part of our lives. When God's Spirit guides and controls us, when His power's exerted through us; revealing Himself in the fruits flowing out from us; when love, joy, peace, patience, kindness is there, **then** we're demonstrating we hunger after God.
3. Our hunger after **God leads us to seek after special anointing to specific tasks** as we pursue God, drawing near to Him, conscious of His Spirit within us. It's clear, visible increase in God's working in our midst during specific situations – the pursuit of life itself. It's recognizing our insurmountable need for God to direct our days, to show His purpose, to demonstrate His will. It comes as we pray for one another, seek revival, surrender our will to His, assured: *"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth."* [Psalm 145:18] Here we're cautioned, as Jesus taught, *"true worshipers worship God in spirit and truth"*. [John 4:24] While emotional response is natural as we worship – and encouraged, it's not our motivation, not the focus for gathering. People sometimes misuse, even abuse, the privilege of experiencing God's presence settling for erroneous, even dangerous spiritual experiences. Rather we must align ourselves with God's revealed will in scripture anointed, ready for work.

Our hunger after God always honours Jesus Christ, produces an increased hatred of sin – in our own lives as well as in the world around us, and creates in us a greater hunger for pursuing God's righteousness. One man's response a few years ago to pursuit of God was, "You could take the Holy Spirit out of half the churches in America and they would keep right on going as if nothing happened." Tragically true, if God's presence is not sensed in the midst of believers gathered as His church, what then?

Let me list 3 tangible ways we're able to respond to that question.



1. Recognize the vacuum

Resolving any issue begins by recognizing you have one. No one makes change without sensing need. To recognize illness, a doctor examines symptoms. Have we checked our pulses; taken our temperatures, identified our ailments to determine our health? Have we checked for symptoms such as:

- ***Fruitlessness*** – Is there little spiritual impact in our lives; do we suffer from a lack of love, a lack of joy, a lack of peace, a lack of patience and/or a lack of kindness?
- ***Wordlessness*** – Are we reading God's Word? Have we a hunger to know what God's saying to us with an emphasis placed on the Word in each week's service; in our daily devotions?
- ***Carelessness*** – Are we seeking spiritual discipline in our lives? Have our lives been aligned with God's Word; is our focus maintaining relationships with one another or in pursuing an eternal relationship with our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer?
- ***Missionless*** – Are we so consumed with "being" the church we've lost vision for mission God has placed on us? Have we worked equipping one another for service, sending them out – to their homes, to their community, to their workplaces – with concern for where souls will spend eternity?

- **Numberless** – Are we consumed with counting nickels and noses or are we concerned for lives changed, souls saved, children of God growing in Christ? Have we missed the big picture of eternity against the backdrop of our presence here, on this street, in this town – and in our families?
- **Purposeless** – Do we pursue the world, consumed by outward appearance, working to fit in “out there” or are we planted in the value of the heart, with faithfulness and obedience to God? If our values stem from performance - ***we’re using the wrong measuring tape!***

2. Recognize the Vacuum must be Filled



Do we, as the body of Christ, seek to sync our hearts with Christ much like technology designed to sync your I phone to your laptop or other gadgets? If we’d fill our hearts with Christ, see what God sees, value what God values, we’d prioritize what God puts first. Whatever matters to God must matter to us – praying, working; encouraging one another to reverse everything in our list above. We’d follow John Wesley’s edict, “I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity”. We’d ask “What does eternity’s heaven value?” Then we’d truly...

- **Overcome strained relationships** – Are there people who need to be reunited, are there families who need to overcome differences, are there perspectives that need to be surrendered to God?
- **Seek heavenly treasures** – a small fortune may impress here on earth but it has little value in heaven where the streets are paved with gold, “*shining with the glory of God, and its brilliance like that of a very precious jewel*” [Revelation 21:11]. Are we pursuing the building of righteousness, the development of Christ-like character, the living in the Word all by the presence of God’s Holy Spirit?
- **Be a welcoming environment** – Jesus welcomed sinners – personally I’m glad since that includes me. Have we welcomed the outcast, downtrodden, misled, disappointed, wayward son; the wandering daughter? Have we made each one feel at home? If not then ***what are we going to do about it?***

3. Recognize purposely exhibit tangible, visible signs of faith

It all begins in the heart of each believer – it’s the foundation of every believer’s transformation toward Christlikeness, laid for those who hunger after God:

- ✦ *In new birth*, as we’re given a “new self, created to be righteousness and holy” [Ephesians 4:24]
- ✦ *In the vital present union* with Jesus recognizing we’re raised with Him to experience a new life, offering ourselves to God using our bodies as instruments of righteousness [Romans 6:1-14]; and
- ✦ *In the Holy Spirit*, whose supernatural power gives life even to the mortal body, those who follow the Spirit’s prompting fully meet, “*the righteous requirements of the law*” [Romans 8:4&11]

In all this it’s clear as Christians we’re expected to live righteous lives equipped for righteousness by the work of God – that’s why Jesus carried His cross, taking our sins once and for all. The dilemma that exists in that though we’re to be righteous that we may be accepted by God, nothing we do makes us righteous, Thankfully this has been handled when God offered imputed righteousness in response to faith in the good news of Jesus’ death for sinners so God is now free to declare those believing in Him legally guiltless imputing to them His righteousness. Knowing Christ taught, “*Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*” [Matthew 15:19] we know God’s concerned with inner righteousness, a God-like character, without which a person “*will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven*” [Matthew 5:20]. To this life we hunger as we hunger after God.

You’ve certainly been given a full course meal today to satisfy your hunger after God. Something God honouring takes place whenever we hunger after Him! I believe beyond the scope of our limited visual acuity God is speaking to His angels,

“I have silenced all of heaven in order to hear them witness from their hearts a hunger for my presence.”

If that's what brings glory to our Heavenly Father, I suggest we do the same as we wait upon Him. Just how our church, and our lives, experiences God's presence is yet to be fully made known, yet it will unfold as we humbly surrender and direct ourselves to doing "business" **with God alone!** He is God. How He chooses to make Himself evident to us is up to Him. Our task is to follow.



Blessings,

Pastor Dave