



SERMON NOTES

US N°. 153

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Title: How to cultivate spiritual hunger

#6 in the series on the Spirit Filled Church

1. Review

- a. The greatest commandments: love God with everything and love our neighbors
- b. The Spirit is absolutely required for us to lead holy & pleasing lives for God, to lead lives of abundant life.
- c. Know who the Holy Spirit is; no matter denomination or theology, He is the presence of God.
- d. God has had a plan since the beginning and to fulfill it He has placed His Spirit within each disciple so that they (*each one*) may be equipped for every good that His Kingdom may advance.
- e. Two objects cannot occupy the same space, there we must forsake all and follow Christ. Our growth is hindered by: opinion of the others, corruption within our own hearts and souls, a vibrant self-life, bad reception of God's will and word, strong belief in self-reliance, and refusing the path of Christ-like humility in our lives.
- f. Who is in the driver's seat of our lives? Is the Spirit only a paying passenger, or is He driving?
- g. The blessing of the Spirit is not a result of being a Super Christian, just our hunger. How desperate are we really? Open the floodgates to the full life and power of God through you to the world.

2. Spiritual hunger.

- a. *"To be honest, the word [hunger] has been lost on me in recent years. Haven't we all heard sermons on the topic of "spiritual hunger" ad nauseam? Only after hearing that word repeatedly, tonight, did I yield to ask, seek, and knock what Father might be saying. Holy Spirit began to fire off a list of words that "hunger" has been construed to mean. See if any of these translate into "spiritual hunger" for you. stirring, motivation, passion, craving, desire, desperation, discomfort, yearning, gnawing, searching, etc... These are sophisticated notions. While these words describe hunger, I believe they do not grasp hunger's true nature and definition. Hunger is primal. It is inherent to the nature of any living being. Hunger is a natural response to a living being's requirement for nourishment. In the physical realm, hunger happens more than once a week. It happens daily, and multiple times daily in healthy circumstances. It is one of the basic survival drives of life. To preach a message on spiritual hunger is moot. Since it is not externally triggered, it cannot be created by trying to stir people to action. Most of what we witness in meetings focused on spiritual hunger, is a whetting of the appetite. An appetite has to already exist before it can be whetted. Could this explain why people can sit in a service where the Lord visits with amazing power, only to return home just as empty... or even emptier than when they came? If spiritual hunger is primal for every living creature, why do some seemingly have no appetite for the presence of God? May I suggest, there are some "Christians" who are not alive in*

Christ? Such a one is receiving nourishment from another source. If they sit at Father's banqueting table only to push away the plate, their spirit has already been satiated. You cannot force them to eat, nor can you whet their appetite at this point. They sit at the table digesting the fodder of this world. It begs the question, to whom do they live?" [Melissa Flores]

- b. The Westminster Catechism (c. 1646) starts by stating that *"the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."* This was re-stated by John Piper as *"the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever."* Enjoying God is for many Christians a foreign concept, either because of their short-sighted view of Him or because we've quenched our hunger.
 - i. *"If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great."* [John Piper, A Hunger For God]
 - ii. *"The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night."* [John Piper, A Hunger for God]
- c. Humble, Hungry and Hopeful. Dt. 8:2-3, *"And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."*
- d. What we ought to truly hunger for.
 - i. God Himself and His Presence.
 - 1. Ps. 63:1, *"O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water."*
 - 2. Ps. 27:4, *"One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple."*
 - ii. His word.
 - 1. Amos 8:11-13, *"Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord GOD, 'that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it. "In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst."*
 - 2. Ps. 19:10, *"More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."*
 - 3. 1 Pet. 2:2, *"...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,"*

- e. God Himself is working at drawing us to Him.
 - i. Jer. 31:3-4, *"The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice."*
 - ii. Hos. 11:4, *"I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them."*
- 3. Cultivating and increasing that hunger.
 - a. Matters of the heart. *"It's not that I don't love you, it's just that I love myself more."*
 - i. **Desire.** The lover's prayer; Song 1:4a, *"Draw me away! We will run after you."*
 - ii. **Watchfulness.** As our desire increases we become more watchful, actively looking for greater communion with Him. This requires setting aside time and earthly desires in the expectation of that greater intimacy. Prov. 8:34-35, *"Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the LORD;"*
 - iii. **Capacity.** As we become more hungry and watchful, the Lord responds by inviting us *"further up and further in,"* and expanding our capacity to commune with Him. Ps. 42:7-8, *"Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and billows have gone over me. The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me."*
 - iv. **Sensitivity.** Increased watchfulness and capacity therefore increase our sensitivity to His movement and voice. Song 5:2, *"I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, "Open for me, my sister, my love, My dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, My locks with the drops of the night."*
 - b. A garden set aside for the Lord.
 - i. **Planting.** Gardening is utilitarian, we either plant to eat the produce or to rejoice in the splendor of its beauty. Both feed us.
 - 1. Parable of the sower; Mark 4:14, *"The sower sows the word..."* and the intention is that *"those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."* (Mark 4:20)
 - 2. Hos. 10:12, *"Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you."*
 - ii. **Nurturing.** Feed and water what is growing; neglect kills.
 - 1. Meet together;
 - a. Ps. 16:3, *"As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.""*
 - b. Heb. 10:24-25, *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."*

2. Listen to reading and teaching; 1 Tim. 4:13, *"give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching."*
 3. The spiritual gift within us; 1 Tim. 4:14, *"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership."*
 - iii. **Protecting.** There are natural and frankly, unnatural, enemies that seek to rob us of the benefit of the planting.
 1. Jesus in the parable of the sower cites us several enemies:
 - a. Satan; *"Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts."* (Mark 4:15)
 - b. Hardship; *"[because] they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time.... [when] tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble..."* (Mark 4:17-18)
 - c. The World; *"the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."* (Mark 4:19)
 2. Beware of unbelief, especially the unbelief that quenches a hunger and expectation for God and His power.
 - a. Mark 16:13-14, *"And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen."*
 - b. 1 Thess. 5:19, *"Do not quench the Spirit."*
 - iv. **Harvesting.** All the work without finally harvesting is only a pointless existential experience.
 1. Ex. 23:16, *"[Celebrate] the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field."*
4. Practical advice
 - a. Change your menu.
 - b. Be discerning.
 - c. Make the time.
 5. Take-aways
 - a. Hunger is primal.
 - b. Beware of the apple pies of this world
 - c. God is the only One who can satisfy
 - d. God is actively wooing and drawing us to Him
 - e. Express your desire, then increase your attentiveness, capacity and sensitivity.
 - f. Plant good seed, nurture, protect and then harvest a hundred fold.
 - g. Choose to change your diet for the good of your spiritual health.