

How hungry are you?

Introduction

So here we are at the Hungry for God conference thinking hmm I was hungry, and that breakfast is going to hit the spot. The question that leads me to is ask is well is this hunger that I experience for food in any way comparable to the 'Hunger' for God we are talking about this weekend. Well I guess that might depend on the last time you had a meal.

Hungry can be defined as:

- feeling or showing the need for food.
- having a strong desire or craving.

So I think that is clear that we are going to be investigating the later this weekend. So what does it mean to have a strong desire or craving?

I once heard a story of just how passionate Hansie Cronje was about batting. There was a day he was batting, scoring an unbeaten 100. After walking off the pitch for the day he went to the nets for some throw downs. You hear about how great athletes will do more than the next guy in order to make sure that they have an edge. I was talking to a friend recently who had the chance to have breakfast with Louis Meintjies (professional cyclist for team UAE, finished 8th in the Tour de France in 2016 and 2017). He said he asked Louis if there was anything he thought he could do from a training perspective to beat Chris Froome (4 time winner of the Tour de France and winner of this years Vuelta Espana). Louis said that he is training as hard as he possibly can, but that Chris Froome is just in another world. Back to cricker, legend has it that Barry Richard would go into the nets and bat with a stump. Why, because it made it more challenging.

What's the point I'm trying to make. Often we will observe when watching sport that one team just seems to be more hungry to win, they seem to have a burning desire to do whatever it takes (within the rules) to win.

Mohammed Ali once said' "He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life."

So the question is what has you so passionate you are willing to do what others won't. From a Christian perspective there is one thing that should catch our attention. One thing that should matter more than anything else. One thing that we should wake up for. We need to be like David when he writes in

Psalm 42:1-2

'As the deer pants [longingly] for the water brooks,
So my soul pants [longingly] for You, O God.
My soul (my life, my inner self) thirsts for God, for the living God.
When will I come and see the face of God?'

Psalm 27:4

'One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord

all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.'

We all know that we need that's what our desire should be, we all want to be hungry for God in this way. We all want to live lives that demonstrate out Hunger for God. The question is how do we do that. We have many good examples.

Heb 12: 1

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who by faith have testified to the truth of God's absolute faithfulness], stripping off every unnecessary weight and the sin which so easily and cleverly entangles us, let us run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us.

There a few key things we need to identify when we are wanting to 'run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us.' These are beautifully spelt out by Paul when he writes to the Philippians.

- 1) We need to distinguish between being hungry for religion and being hungry for God.

Philippians 3:2-7

Look out for the ^[a]dogs [the Judaizers, the legalists], look out for the troublemakers, look out for the ^[b]false circumcision [those who claim circumcision is necessary for salvation]; ³for we [who are born-again have been reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, set apart for His purpose and] are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory *and* take pride *and* exult in Christ Jesus and place no confidence [in what we have or who we are] in the flesh—⁴though I myself might have [some grounds for] confidence in the flesh [if I were pursuing salvation by works]. If anyone else thinks that he has reason to be confident in the flesh [that is, in his own efforts to achieve salvation], I *have* far more: ⁵circumcised when I was eight days old, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews [an exemplary Hebrew]; as to the [observance of the] Law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to my zeal [for Jewish tradition], a persecutor of the church; and as to righteousness [supposed right living] which [my fellow Jews believe] is in the Law, I proved myself blameless.

⁷But whatever *former* things were gains to me [as I thought then], these things [once regarded as advancements in merit] I have come to consider as loss [absolutely worthless] for the sake of Christ [and the purpose which He has given my life].

You see Paul was already willing to do what no one else was willing to do when it came to what he perceived to be the will of God. He was extremely zealous, he went above and beyond, but his focus was on his ability to meet the requirement of the law. Our desire for God cannot be based on what we can do to earn God's favor. Paul acknowledges this fact and in fact goes on to say I count it all as loss. So no amount religious duty you have performed will result in you drawing closure to God, why? Because it is entirely self-centered. It's entirely about what you can do. That not got anything to do with being hungry for God.

In summary what I am saying is if you want to be hungry for God you need to look at why. If the reason has anything to do with recognition or ambition or position then God is not the focus of what you are pursuing. You are. That being said, if your desire is to get to know God, you will like Paul no longer attach any value to those things. You will rather turn your focus to God and not what you can do in your strength for recognition.

2) Once we have put aside our selfish motives we need to recognize the position of Jesus.

Phil 3: 8-9

But more than that, I count everything as loss compared to the priceless privilege *and* supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord [and of growing more deeply and thoroughly acquainted with Him—a joy unequalled]. For His sake I have lost everything, and I consider it all garbage, so that I may gain Christ,⁹ and may be found in Him [believing and relying on Him], not having any righteousness of my own derived from [my obedience to] the Law *and* its rituals, but [possessing] that [genuine righteousness] which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

Heb 12:2

[looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfector of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity], who for the joy [of accomplishing the goal] set before Him endured the cross, [b]disregarding the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [revealing His deity, His authority, and the completion of His work].

Once we have set aside our selfish nature we can truly recognize the value in knowing Christ. Its only when you find value in something that you will actually be willing to pursue it. It's like the parable of the man who found a pearl in a field, when and sold all he had to gain it. We need to realize that in order to prioritize Christ we need to be humble enough to acknowledge that I am not longer the one that is in charge but that He is center, that he is my source, that he is all that really matters.

How often do you reflect on what Christ has done, how often do you reflect on his Glory and how much he loves you. You see when Paul encounter that love he was like I've been wasting my life pursuing the wrong things. I need to get my head in the game. I need to fix my focus on that which is true, that which is everlasting.

3) In acknowledging where our affection should be placed, we need to get to know him.

Phil 3: 10 -11

And this, so that I may know Him [experientially, becoming more thoroughly acquainted with Him, understanding the remarkable wonders of His Person more completely] and [in that same way experience] the power of His resurrection [which overflows and is active in believers], and [that I may share] the fellowship of His sufferings, by being *continually* conformed [inwardly into His likeness even] to His death [dying as He did]; ¹¹ [d]so that I may attain to the resurrection [that will raise me] from the dead.

This is where your desire to get to know Him will truly come through. Why? Because if we want to get to know him, our whole focus in life changes. We eat sleep breathe Him. We binge time with Him. He consumes our thoughts, our time, and our actions. It becomes our lives. Everything else doesn't matter. We train harder, wake up earlier, and have a net after scoring a hundred batting with a stump.

You see to be truly hungry for God is a change in gears, we are not sitting in first drinking milk, we are swimming in the deep end.

Getting to know Him is a daily effort. Just look at those that had great relationships with God. They spent time with Him. Enoch for example, we look at the prophets. Jesus spent 3 years with the

disciples, Paul didn't convert and start preaching. Jesus himself took time in preparing for His ministry. This is the part that counts.

In Matt 7:21

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Why? Because they didn't take the time to get to know Him.

Conclusion

The Rev. Frank Bartleman was a leader in the 1907 visitation of the Holy Spirit on Azusa Street in L.A. He said, "Men love the spectacular. What we do not understand is 'wonderful.' God's fire falls on sacrifice, as in Elijah's case.

The greater the sacrifice, consecration, the more fire. God's fire falls only on sacrifice. An empty altar receives no fire."

"It is not the man who can build the biggest brush heap, but the one who can set his heap on fire that will light up the country.

"The devil has no conscience, and the flesh has no sense. Many have never learned submission, courtesy, nor anything else, even in the way of common manners. A spirit of self-importance is one of the most disgusting things in the world.

"The oil (the Holy Ghost) ceases to flow, as in Elijah's time, when there are no more empty vessels to be filled. People do not sense their need of God. But wherever there is a hungry heart, God will fill it. 'The rich (full) He has sent empty away.'"

I know sometimes in our walk with God we will experience Wobblies, but despite that, it remains important to pursue God with all your heart, soul and strength. We need to make sure we know what/who it is we are pursuing. We can't let ourselves be caught blindly following religion, or letting our pride drive our decisions. We need to acknowledge the greatness and majesty of Christ and in doing so we need to get to know him. The consequences of not getting to know him are dire.

My challenge to you this weekend is how hungry are you? If you are not hungry yet 'taste and see that the Lord is good', be like the Samaritan woman that wanted to drink the water that would allow her to never thirst again. Get involved in the desperate and earnest search of getting to know Him and all of Him.