



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR GOD, PT. 1

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 42:1-2 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Psalm 34:8; 51:10 | Isaiah 43:7, 21 | Revelation 3:15-16

► SUMMARY

Have you ever stood in front of an open refrigerator looking for something to satisfy your hunger?

Chances are you eventually ended up eating something that tasted good but had very little nutritional value. And before long you might have found yourself going back for something else because you weren't completely satisfied yet. Maybe you spent the entire evening snacking, and then wondered why you tried to find pleasure in non-nourishing junk food. Instead of asking, "What's good for me?" you opted for food that was merely pleasing for the moment.

There's nothing wrong with the appetites that God gave us. We need food to sustain our lives. But the most important desire we should have is for the Lord, who created us with a need for Him. But too often we turn to temporal, worldly pleasures to find our satisfaction, when the only One who can satisfy the empty place in our souls is the Lord Jesus Christ.

► SERMON POINTS

The book of Psalms is filled with expressions of desire for the Lord. Psalm 42:1-2 says, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

David wrote many of the psalms and often cried out to the Lord in his troubles and turmoil, seeking deliverance. Even in the midst of his despair, he meditated and sought the Lord with all his heart.

The problems and disappointments of life are still with us today, but instead of seeking the Lord, many people hunger for the other things, thinking that's where they'll find their fulfillment. They have no appetite for the Lord, but are seeking satisfaction in earthly pleasures and pursuits that provide no permanent or eternal value.

This can even happen to believers who don't cultivate an appetite for the Lord. He's formed us for Himself and desires our praise (Isa. 43:21). We exist for His glory (v. 7). That means we need to nourish a desire for God. If we neglect Him, we'll naturally seek whatever the world has to offer that appeals to us.

Two Menus

Keeping with the food analogy, we have two different menus from which to nourish ourselves. Satan's menu is long and offers many choices such as wealth, power and authority, recognition and approval by others, sexual pleasure outside God's parameters, and the accumulation of material goods. All these are spiritual junk food, which tastes good in the moment, but provides no genuine nourishment for believers. Those who indulge in this menu are always searching for satisfaction but eventually find only disappointment, emptiness, and disillusionment.

In contrast, God's menu is very short with only one item—Jesus. When we feast on Him, He gives us His peace, joy, contentment, and security. He's the only one who completes us and gives us fulfillment and unfading satisfaction in Him.

Hungering and Thirsting for God

We only have one trip through life on earth, so we must choose wisely and develop a hunger and thirst for God

rather than the things of the world. We need a deep longing and abiding desire for an intimate relationship with Him because that's what really matters in life. When we hunger for the Lord, we seek to know and understand more about Him, and as He reveals more of Himself to us, our thirst for Him increases. The paradox is that the Lord continually satisfies us, and at the same time, creates a longing for more of Him.

If you truly hunger for the Lord, you won't allow the pleasures and pursuits of this world to become competitors with Him. There are so many tempting pleasures that could easily grab our attention and sidetrack us. Many times we seek to find our fulfillment in people, but no person can possibly satisfy us because we were created for the Lord. Or maybe we think an experience or accomplishment will make us feel whole, but these bring only temporary satisfaction. Only God can fill the empty places in our lives.

The focus of our lives should be on our love and devotion to Christ—to desire Him above all else. Human relationships can be lost, but the Lord will never walk away from us if we belong to Him, because He loves us for all eternity. Devotion to Jesus is essential. Without it we could easily become lukewarm toward Him like the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:15-16.

Most people think that satisfaction and fulfillment are based on circumstances. So, if they don't feel satisfied, they decide the solution is to change the situation. But when the Lord is our greatest love and delight, we'll be content and satisfied in any circumstance.

Characteristics of Hungering and Thirsting for God

When the Lord is the greatest desire of our hearts, it affects every area of our lives.

- **Greater interest in God's Word.** This is the only source of accurate information for knowing Him—His character, works, and ways.

- **More desire for prayer.** Communication is the way all relationships are developed, and this includes our relationship with God. Through prayer we deepen our fellowship with Him.

- **A longing to understand the ways of God.** You'll want to know how He operates and what He thinks. There's no knowledge in the whole world as satisfying as knowing the Lord—His character, thoughts, ways, and desires.

- **Greater yearning for God's will and way in your life.** Your goal will be to follow His direction for your life and live as He desires. Whenever a difficult situation occurs, and you have no answers or solutions, you'll cry out to Him for guidance, seeking to know His will. Whatever He wants is what you want.

- **Increasing faith in the Lord.** The better you know Him, the more you'll trust Him with everything in your life.

God's plans and desires for His people are always best. He draws us to Himself, and places in our hearts a desire for Him. To cultivate hunger for Him, we may have to give up something else in order to pursue Him. But the benefits we derive from a deepening relationship with the Lord are far greater than anything we give up.

► RESPONSE

- What have you been pursuing to find satisfaction and fulfillment in life? Are any of them sidetracking you from cultivating a hunger for God? What changes should you make?
- Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that the LORD is good." Stimulating an appetite for God begins with a satisfying taste. How faithful are you to open God's Word and feed yourself with the knowledge of Him? How has prayer deepened your fellowship with Him?

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