

This Thanksgiving, Cultivate Your 'Holy Hunger'

If you're like me, you're probably looking forward to enjoying some of your family's traditional dishes this Thanksgiving.

But the thing about the Thanksgiving meal is that no matter how large it is, no matter how full I feel immediately afterward, I'm always hungry again—usually later that night.

While I am blessed to be able to sate my appetite with food, there is another hunger that food will never satisfy: spiritual hunger. Or as I call it in my newest book, *From Survive to Thrive*, holy hunger.

I'd describe holy hunger as a yearning for God. As King David writes, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8a).

How can we taste God's goodness? By cultivating a holy hunger. Here's how:

We must partake of the bread of life.

In Exodus 16, we read about the Israelites wandering through the desert on their way to the promised land. They have been miraculously delivered from 400 years of slavery in Egypt, and they are tired, hot and hungry.

"Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full," they cry to Moses and Aaron, "for you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Ex. 16:3b).

We don't know how Moses and Aaron responded in that moment, but we know how God responded:

"Indeed, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people

shall go out and gather a certain amount every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall come to pass that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it will be twice as much as they gather daily" (Ex. 16:4-5).

True to His Word, God gave the Israelites bread from heaven, which they called manna, as well as quail. We know that some of the Israelites hoarded their provisions, which spoiled as a consequence of their disobedience to God's command to only gather what they needed.

While their meals were miraculous, they didn't last forever—the Israelites still experienced hunger. God was teaching them a greater lesson on relying on Him, but they confused their physical hunger with their spiritual hunger.

Many years later, Jesus shocked His hearers when He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh" (John 6:51).

By alluding to manna and declaring Himself living bread, Jesus was saying He was the true life giver, the only one who could eternally satisfy the soul's ultimate cravings.

To cultivate a holy hunger, we must come to Jesus not full, but empty, so that we might receive the bread of life.

We must get rid of our junk food.

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Over the decades, research has shown us that junk food negatively affects our physical, emotional and mental well-being. I'm not saying we can't enjoy treats, but a steady diet of junk food is detrimental to our health over time.

Considering our spiritual lives, we can think of junk food as those things we use to ignore or stave off our spiritual hunger: as the apostle John would say, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16b).

I encourage you to take stock of your spiritual pantry. Is it full of junk food or nourishing food? Is there room for the bread of life?

If we’re not hungry for God, then we’re full of something else.

Getting rid of junk food is difficult. It’s generally tasty, affordable and readily available. But we must exchange our junk food for the nourishing fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.

We can start this replacement process by meditating on Scripture and practicing confession and praise.

We must remember that our longing is our legacy.

Our longing for God is how we leave our mark on this world. Think of the men and women of faith throughout history who have championed change because of their holy hunger for God.

Our holy hunger should motivate us to serve others: to not just offer spiritual food in the form of the gospel, but to meet practical needs as well.

Jesus said to His disciples, “Give, and it will be given to you: Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will men give unto you. For with the measure you use, it will be measured unto you” (Luke 6:38).

The greater our longing for God, the greater our motivation to serve Him by loving others. And the more we serve Him, the more we will long for Him.

So, as you partake of food this Thanksgiving, remember to taste of God's goodness—and maintain your holy hunger. {eoa}

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