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**HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR GOD & SPIRITUAL PRACTICES**

**Week of January 10, 2021**

**Elders Sunday – Group Discussion Questions**

Our deep need for God can be compared to hunger and thirst. Our need for spiritual sustenance is even more important than our need for physical food. As Jesus Christ said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4; quoting Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus also pronounced a blessing on those who seek diligently after God: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). But, let’s face it. Sometimes we become almost too comfortable with God and the stories in Scripture can become flat and uninspiring. Sometimes we lose our anticipation of encounters with God. Sometimes we feel like we are just going through the motions and our spiritual life is coasting. We can become bored and miss the awe in worship. Boredom isn’t a negative emotion all the time. In fact, a recent article found that boredom is essential for human development and unlocking creative potential. Why is it that God offers people a life to the fullest, yet many followers of Jesus seem to live on life support? Because we are apprentices of Jesus, there are disciplines that Jesus had in place to encounter the Father. Sometimes we have to go into times of hungering and thirsting for God—This is the time in our discipleship walk that we need to dig and press in! In Psalm 42, we see desperation of desiring a real encounter with God.

**Psalm 42**

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My [[3](http://web.mit.edu/jywang/www/cef/Bible/NIV/NIV_Bible/PS%2B42.html#footnote_200280896_3)] soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon--from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me-- a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

In the New Testament, Jesus is able to show his disciples (or apprentices) what a spiritual life looks like.

Follow this link and walk through the discussion questions together. John Mark Comer talks about the importance of following the practices of Jesus and encountering God and following the way of Jesus in the video “The Goal of Apprenticeship to Jesus.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PqMB6lm_m0>

**Weekly videos also available at gracegathering.com/groups.**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**1) Is there a time in your spiritual journey that you became flat or bored? What did you do to press into God? Were there practices that helped you dig for His presence?**

**2) Sometimes, like in Psalm 42, we become downcast, depressed, and feel a sense of hopelessness. How do you think the practices or disciplines of Jesus are linked to hope and anticipation?**

**3) When you think about the practices of Jesus what is one particular practice of Jesus that you’d like to investigate?**

**Example Schedule for Group Time**

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| 10 min. | Welcome time |
| 15 min. | Ice Breaker or Relational time (i.e. Sweets and Sours, a game, etc.) |
| 7 min. | Watch the video |
| 20 min. | Discussion |
| 10 min. | Prayer and closing |