

## “Hunger and Thirst” “Practicing the Way” #1

It is God’s presence we should hunger and thirst for. But sometimes we settle for secondhand knowledge of God. We want someone else to experience God and tell us about it. Moses went up the mountain and spoke to God as with a friend, and Moses wasn’t willing to leave God’s presence. But the people settled for letting Moses be an intermediary.

*Exodus 33:11, 15 NLT - 11 Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, would remain behind in the Tent of Meeting. ... 15 Then Moses said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place.*

God wants us to taste and see that He is good. That is a personal and direct invitation. We should not let anything, or anyone, get in our way of directly connecting with God.

*Discuss how we let things get between us and our direct connection with God. What appetites derail us, or who do we depend on as an intermediary? Then identify practices you can engage in that will get you more directly connected to God.*

### WRAP-UP

God desires a close relationship with you because He radically loves you. That relationship requires us to spend time with Him, abiding constantly in Him, so that He can shape us and give us fruitful lives. Don’t let anything (appetites) or anyone (intermediaries) come between you and God because your loving Heavenly Father, the Creator of the Universe, is more than enough to meet your every need.

### Memory Verse

*Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!*  
-Psalm 34:8 NLT

### PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members’ needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Consider fasting from something that distracts you from God this week. It can be anything from which you derive satisfaction (not just food)... but instead seek to be satisfied by God’s presence and His love.*

### INTRODUCTION

As we enter the Lenten season leading up to Easter, we begin a new sermon series that examines how we practice our faith in a way that deepens our relationship with God. What are the habits and rhythms of our lives that draw us into God’s presence, and do we recognize what competes for our attention and devotion?

### Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Do your mealtimes vary greatly or are they very predictable?

### STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

#### 1. God wants a relationship with you

Throughout the Bible God is revealed as one who wants to go deeper in our relationship with Him, but we have not always been eager to respond.

It is easy for us to focus in on one or two places where we allow God into a relationship with us (typically as Lord and Savior) and forget how extensive God wants our relationship with Him to be.

*Galatians 4:6 NLT - 6 And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."*  
*Isaiah 54:5 NLT - 5 For **your Creator will be your husband**; the LORD of Heaven's Armies is his name! **He is your Redeemer**, the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth.*  
*Jeremiah 31:3 NLT - 3 Long ago the LORD said to Israel: "**I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love.** With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.*  
*1 Peter 2:25 NLT - 25 Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to **your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.***

*Use the verses above as a starting point to name and reflect on the different relationships that exist between you and God.*

God is my \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Genesis 3:9-10 NLT - 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."*

Just like Adam, we know God is seeking us, but we may end up distancing ourselves instead of responding. This might be due to the distorted way we view ourselves; either thinking of ourselves as unworthy of God's attention or being so self-reliant we don't think we need a close relationship with God, except in dire emergencies. But it can also come from misplaced motivation when we do approach God.

*When might we approach God in an attempt to earn His favor or out of our sense of obligation? How does that reflect on how we view our relationship with Him?*

*Truly lifegiving spiritual practices should foster a deeper relationship with God. What are some of the things you do that deepen your relationship with God?*

## **2. Abiding in Christ**

*John 15:5 NLT - 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.*

You wouldn't cut a branch off of a tree and expect it to remain healthy, so why do we presume we don't need to be constantly connected to Christ?

*What does John 15:5 tell us we are capable of apart from Jesus? God knows exactly how He made you and what you are capable of though Him. Share with your group a time when you felt that God prepared just the perfect opportunity for you to flourish (in a relationship, job, ministry...). What kind of fruit did it produce? Did you ever undertake something that sounded like a good idea, only to find it wasn't where God was leading you?*

God is our source and strength, and we cannot be fully alive apart from Him.

*How do you know when God is directing or empowering you to do something? In other words, how do you sense God's leading?*

## **3. Hunger and Thirst for God**

When we don't abide in Christ we will abide in our appetites. Appetites are our desire to satisfy our needs. We are all subject to our appetites. Although they are God-created, they can be sin-distorted. Of course, we have an appetite for food and drink, but many other things can drive our actions as well.

*What are some of the appetites you have seen distorted in people's lives? What kind of pain and destruction can result?*

*Luke 15:12-13 NLT - 12 The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. 13 "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living.*

In the parable of the prodigal the younger son was convinced that he needed money to be happy. He took his inheritance and pursued wild living, but all it brought him was pain.

Our appetites tell us that God is not enough, and there is something else we must have. Pursuing our appetites can derail our pursuit of God. In fact, we may replace God as our source of life and rely instead on whatever our appetites dictate.

*John 6:35 NLT - 35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

*What does Jesus tell us we must do so that we never hunger and thirst? When we find ourselves hungering for other things what does that say about our relationship with God?*

The enemy of hungering for God is not poison, it is apple pie. If you are feeding on other things you leave no room for God to satisfy you.

*Psalms 42:1-2 NLT - 1 ... As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. 2 I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?*