

Spiritual Health Check: Thirsting For God

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[0 : 0 0] So this morning we're beginning a new sermon series and it's funny we were driving to church this morning and Connor said oh we're starting a new series this morning and I said how do you know that and he said I just remember you finished one last Sunday and all right it's working. So this may feel like one that makes more sense at the beginning of the year but it also flows very naturally out of Discipleship 101 the series that we just explored and so I think we can all understand the concept of a checkup right that's a pretty pretty common idea. We take our cars in for them. We have medical and dental checkups. We may engage the services of a financial expert or a consultant or resources to help us budget wisely. We do financial checkups all the time. We may have occasional workplace evaluations to ensure things are healthy on that front as well as we do our jobs.

Pilots do pre-flight checks all the time before they leave the ground and I think we're grateful for them right. So why is it important to do these things? Why is it important to do these kinds of checkups? Well I'm going to suggest that it's important for us to set a baseline. It's important for us to establish a healthy standard upon which we can measure things in the future. Does that make sense? Because when we know what healthy should look like, should feel like, we're going to recognize then what normal is and once we recognize that we can better be able to tell when warning signs pop up.

Right? When things start to get off track we're better able to address it, better able to course correct before things get out of hand. And so as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, it's important for us to recognize that our spiritual health is, I would argue, even more important than our physical health.

And over the coming weeks in our series Spiritual Health Check, we're going to take a closer look at some of the ways we can assess our spiritual health and identify important things that we need to pay attention to. And this morning we're going to begin by considering what it means to be thirsting for God.

Have you ever been really thirsty? I mean really, really thirsty. Well maybe it happened to you at a time when you were on a hike or during some kind of other physical exercise. Maybe you were working in the yard, we're getting back around to that time again. Some sort of physical exertion. Maybe that's the time you experienced it most. Do you remember what it felt like to have a cold glass of water?

[3 : 1 1] To have that thirst, that aching in you satisfied and quenched. It's a good feeling and maybe you can remember it in your head. And there's a sense of relief there, isn't there? A deep relief. A sense of satisfaction. A sense of contentment. But we can also recognize that thirst in that way is caused by a physical need. And that need quenched that way may only be temporarily satisfied.

And so I believe that the basic idea of thirst for water, for hydration, beyond that we can also recognize that people thirst for other things as well, don't they? People long for, thirst for, hunger for love or acceptance. They thirst for or hunger for money or influence or even sexual satisfaction.

Or a variety of other things. And that sense of longing, I've talked about this in the past, it's not something that ever seems to be satisfied by the things of this world. Right?

But also this longing, this need for something more, it's hard-coded into us. It's written into us in our very basic being. That thirst or longing is not some kind of weakness, it's not some kind of flaw, because it's how we've been created. It's intentionally part of who we are as human beings. But my friends, the reason the things of this world can't truly satisfy the thirst within us is because that is ultimately a spiritual thirst that we feel. It's a longing that will always transcend our physical needs. We were created to thirst for and hunger for and long for something that is more than this world can ever provide. And the only thing, the only person that can truly satisfy that thirst and that longing in us is God.

Can you recognize times in your life when you have turned to other sources? When you've turned to other things or other people to satisfy that deep thirst within you? How has that worked out for you?

[6 : 00] Did you leave that interaction, that situation, feeling satisfied? And if you did, how long did it last?

1 John 2, verses 15-17 warns us, Hear this part.

The world and its desires pass away. But the man who does the will of God lives forever.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, he sent us into the world to be partners with him in changing the world, not having the world change us.

God has sent us into the world to change it, not have it change us. Can you recognize the difference? Or from a different perspective, perhaps, have you ever felt truly close to God?

[7 : 26] Spent time with him in prayer, reading his word, felt deeply connected, but after a time that thirst seemed to come back. It's important to recognize that even when we're connected to God, that thirst will return.

Because we were created to be dependent on and constantly connected to God. God absolutely quenches our thirst when we spend time with him.

Quenches that deep spiritual longing. But that once and for all kind of longing, kind of quenching we're looking for, I don't think that'll happen this side of eternity, personally.

And that's not a weakness in you either. Let me encourage you on that front. Because yes, only God can satisfy our spiritual thirst, but we have a tank.

That tank needs to be refilled and replenished constantly. We need to remain connected to and return to the source, God himself.

[8 : 42] And as we consider our spiritual health, it's important to recognize that thirst within us and seek to remain thirsty.

That's contrary to common logic, right? Seek to remain thirsty. But then also seek to continually quench that thirst at the only true source.

So what does it mean to be spiritually thirsty? We hear that concept, but what does it mean? Well, I believe it begins by recognizing that the spiritual thirst and longing within us is, as I said already, part of how we were made.

And there's one true source for quenching it. Psalm 42 talks about this spiritual thirst right at the beginning where it says, 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. Just as our physical bodies depend on certain things to survive, our soul depends on, finds strength in, and is fed by God alone.

[10 : 08] Anglican, I love this quote, Anglican archbishop and poet, Richard Chenevix Trench. There's a middle name for you, right? Chenevix. Anglican archbishop and poet said, None but God can satisfy the longings of an immortal soul, that as the heart was made for him, so only he can fill it.

None but God can satisfy the longings of an immortal soul, that as the heart was made for him, so only he can fill it. The only one who can truly satisfy the human heart is the one who made it.

So we need to recognize this morning that there are actually three kinds of spiritual thirst, thirst, and I'm just going to highlight these this morning for us. The first kind of spiritual thirst is that of the empty soul.

And that's a soul that doesn't recognize God or a need for him. An empty soul can constantly be thirsting and searching and striving, but may be blinded to its real need.

And blinded to the idea of where true satisfaction can be found. And the true tragedy here is that just because someone longs for satisfaction, longs for peace that only can be found in God, doesn't mean that they're looking for God.

[11 : 52] Can you recognize that? The second kind of spiritual thirst is that of the dry soul. Friends, we become dry when we're seeking to be satisfied by the world, and that happens to the best of us.

Even though we know that God is the only true source, we know that in here. Sometimes forget it in here. We may also experience spiritual drought when we're going through hard times in our lives.

When we may feel God has left us, and maybe that has happened to you. When it's in fact we who have pulled away from him.

At a time when we should have actually drawn closer. Can you recognize that? A time when you felt like God left you, God pulled away.

When in fact you could have drawn closer to him. Spiritual drought can also come at times of physical or mental exhaustion.

[13 : 02] And maybe you can recognize that in your life at times. And it's interesting because God created us as a unity of, as a fusion of, body and soul.

So when you're feeling spiritually drained or spiritually exhausted, check how you're feeling mentally and physically, because they're all interconnected. You're not somehow weak because you're feeling tired and mentally challenged, and that's making you feel like you're distanced from God.

We're all part of that. It's a unified whole. So it's not a surprise at all when we're feeling down, depressed, sad, anxious, or we're feeling drained physically, that our spiritual health and connection to God may also suffer.

So it's something to keep an eye on. The third kind of spiritual thirst is that of the satisfied soul.

And that may sound like a contradiction, right? Does it sound like a contradiction to me, to you? If you're thirsting, how can you be a satisfied soul?

[14 : 16] Well, it's because once we have, as Scripture says, seen and tasted that the Lord is good, as we read in Psalm 34, verse 8, we come to know a unique kind of satisfaction, and ultimately we crave that.

We want more of that. Theologian A.W. Tozer, you may have heard his name, beautifully captured something that he called the piercing sweetness of Christ.

And this piercing sweetness Tozer described satisfies only to leave us with discontent wanting more. Tozer said, Oh God, I have tasted thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more.

I am painfully conscious of my need for further grace. I'm ashamed of my lack of desire. Oh God, the triune God, I want to want thee.

I long to be filled with longing. I thirst to be made thirsty still. Isn't that beautiful?

[15 : 45] Friends, it's the Holy Spirit at work within us that initiates that spiritual thirst. It's not something that we do on our own or need to muster on our own.

God initiates that thirst to draw us to him so that, as we recognized already, he, and only he, can truly satisfy it.

So how do we develop healthy habits relating to our spiritual thirst? I always like to give you tips.

Meditate on the Bible. It's easy for a pastor to say that. But don't just read it to get through it. So if you spend time in the Word of God daily or weekly or whatever your pattern is, don't just do it to check the box.

I need to read a chapter today, chapter read, done. Or don't read it out of a sense of responsibility or habit. Those are good things. But whenever you spend time reading God's Word, take time to meditate on a verse, a thought, a concept, even a word.

[17 : 01] Ask questions about what you have read and let the words, or sorry, and then seek to apply what you've read in your life.

So ask God to reveal to you what he is teaching you through what you read. And then seek to apply that in your life. Next, pray the Bible.

Does that sound weird? It's not meant to. Consider praying through a passage that you've just read. Whether you're reflecting on what God has told you in that passage or taught you, or use the words of Scripture as a prayer back to God.

Let the words that you have read in Scripture be your prayer back to Him. Pray that God would deepen and sustain your thirst for Him.

Pray that He would plant a thirst for Him into a friend or into a family member that you care about, that you're sharing your faith with. Someone that you've had a relationship with in the past, and as I say, have been sharing your faith with.

[18 : 18] Pray that God will make them thirsty or thirsty again. Another tip, read the work of other thirst-inducing writers.

C.S. Lewis, J.I. Packer. There are literally thousands of writers who take Scripture, take the thoughts and ideas of God, and make them personal through their own stories, and you can apply them to yours.

One mention of this that I read this week is read John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. I think it was C.S. Lewis who read it hundreds of times, over and over and over, because it was thirst-inducing for him.

So when you read writers like this, seek them out. Ask other people that you know who read Christian authors. I'm not talking about fiction necessarily, but that can help as well.

But ask people for advice. Pastors do that all the time. Say to each other, hey, what are you reading? What's inspiring you? What's making you thirsty? It's good to share those things with one another.

[19 : 41] When you read something that has inspired you and drawn you closer to God, share that with people. Because those kind of authors will deepen your thirst and will also help to challenge you in ways that you may not have considered on your own.

And that's God working through that as well. So my friends, are you thirsty? And are you thirsting for God?

That's an important thing to consider as we begin to perform spiritual health checks on ourselves. Are you seeking after the only one who can truly quench your thirst and lead you into deeper relationship with him?

Friends, God created us with a thirst and a longing that can only be satisfied in him. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Drink deeply again and again. Amen.