

I. YOU ARE A LIVING THIRST

A. All of humanity are incarnate thirsts for infinite fullness. Our inescapable dilemma. Whether you know it or not, you are one big thirst, one giant ache.

¹ O God, You are my God...My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. (Ps 63:1)

¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:19)

B. All of humanity has a gaping, limitless, voracious thirst for God, all of humanity. *Most of us don't know what we want but are pretty sure that we don't have it*.

C. St. Angela describes an experience where Jesus spoke to her saying” *make yourself a capacity and I will make myself a torrent*”. God wants to give Himself completely to us! He doesn't want to give us a 'trickle' on the inside (Jn. 4: 14), but a torrent. However, *the torrent will be commensurate to the capacity carved out*.

II. YOUR THIRST CAN BE QUENCHED IN FASTING

“But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face...your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Mt. 6:18

A. Embracing a life of prayer and fasting is embracing our glory, as ones created as incarnated thirsts, quenched in God alone. To fast the inferior pleasures is to be expanded for the superior—thus becoming satisfied.

B. To many of us, the thought of fasting causes an inward groan—the feeling of remorse for what we know we *should* do and haven't, or what we think we *would* do if we could only be more spiritual.

C. The truth is that fasting is not supposed to be a hindrance to pleasure but a way of entrance into pleasures unending. We deny our *flesh* but our *spirit* is set before an abundance of divine pleasure

Story – Deborah telling me about her call to a fasted lifestyle—are you for real?

D. The subject of fasting is complex in its many dimensions. Its complexity flows from both its perils and its glories—its dangers and its benefits. Its results on the soul are not neutral.

E. Why did God choose fasting as a means to quench us? God desired to give this means of encountering Him to the entire human race, including every generation and every culture, every socio-economic status, educational background, age, etc.

F. Throughout history a multitude of believers have entered into the grace of prayer and fasting. A fasted lifestyle is *by no means a new concept in terms of church history*—it is mostly only new to our understanding as modern western Christians.

III. YOUR DESIRE FOR GOD AND HIS DESIRE FOR YOU SUSTAINS YOUR THIRST

- A. Fasting before a Bridegroom - This paradigm of fasting enlarges the heart through encountering God's beauty and affections. This is not a fast to achieve God's attention but to experience the affections He already has for us. **We fast not to move His heart but to move our own.**

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.’” Matt. 9:15

- B. The purpose of fasting is to increase our experience of God—the One we love. Above all, it tenderizes our hearts to receive more of God, faster and deeper. The purpose of fasting is *love*.

IV. OUR PRONENESS IS TO SEEK AFTER FALSE “QUENCHINGS” FOR OUR THIRST

- A. ***We stimulate and seek to satisfy our souls in a thousand ways other than by God and His Word.*** There is a god that must be dethroned in our lives—the god of physical appetites, specifically the god of *food*, that undermines the Cross of Christ.

1. ***Our culture of immorality in the western world is deeply founded and rooted in an abundance of food and ease.*** We have so stuffed and propped up our souls with activity and so many legitimate, yet not God-enhancing, pursuits (food, relationships, pursuits of ministry/finances, noise, music, activity), that ***the raw, naked, weakness of our soul never gets exposed.***

2. The average believer is terrified to forsake all of the extra stimulants and to wait before God in absolute rawness of heart.

3. ***The fasted lifestyle unmasks the true state of our spiritual reality.*** We live under a delusion that we are mightily abandoned to God. A life of fasting brings us into the true reality of our spiritual life by putting us right in the torrent of our screaming souls.

- B. To embrace the *fasted lifestyle* is to **acknowledge my poorness**, my weakness and my inability to keep my heart from dullness. We recognize **our need of a continuous resistance** against the spirit of the age and the dullness that settles over our hearts.

V. PRACTICALS OF EMBRACING THE FASTED LIFESTYLE

- A. **#1 Willful determination** - We must determine we are going to give God everything. This includes a continual resigning up when our resolve wanes.

- B. **#2 Living the Gospel wholeheartedly** – We will only pray as well as we live—in all categories of life. 98% givenness to the Lord does not promise us the blessings of finding our thirsts quenched.

- C. **#3 Having an Undivided Heart** – Our heart must be singly focused on the Lord and not

- D. #4 Good time management - this is most often due to a lack of vision or revelation of experiencing the deep things of God.
- E. #5 Understanding the nobility of seeming barren, empty, dry prayer.
1. We are in transition into living primarily by the Word of God and only secondarily by the legitimate pleasures God gives us.
 - a. There is a life in God; that's real and profound and powerful on the other end of the transition—a life where we are primarily nurtured, nourished, stimulated, and propped up by the Word of God.
 - b. One of the true difficulties of fasting is this delay—the rewards are both hidden (internal) and slow in coming.
 - c. Knowing about this delay helps us to continue in the grace of fasting even without seeing immediate reward.
 2. Dangling in Between
 - a. When we are transitioning from secondary pleasures to primary pleasures, there is a place of what I call, “dangling in between.” We are not stimulated by anything in the natural (we’re fasting these props) and the spiritual stimulants haven’t come alive yet.
 - b. There are two things happening as we are caught in the lurch of this transition. We have the vision of what is coming and the struggle of what is behind us.
 - c. We’ve known a little foretaste of the realms we are to know in God but it is not so dominant or so prevailing that our struggle with our old addictions is over.
 - d. When we don’t experience the superior pleasures that we’re laboring for, we go back to the old stimulants for comfort, yet we soon find they have lost their power because of our high vision.
 - e. We are left dangling in between. The old way does not have the strength to satisfy us and we do not yet have the capacity to receive the new way. We are left in the raw crankiness of freefalling. Welcome to the fasted lifestyle! ☺
 3. **My experience: “Ahhh—I’m ruined! I’m cranky in both worlds. Help me God!”**
- F. #6 Cultivating supplication in personal direction from the Lord—Crying out for help at all times.
- G. #7 Really denying self in prayer, fasting and giving - As believers we will experience the cross daily in our lives (both involuntarily and voluntarily).