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**Ignite Your Desire for Intimacy with GOD**

When it comes to spiritual growth, desire is the primary fuel. We need an inner craving or passion to drink deeply from God’s fountain of beauty, holiness, and love.

**You are** **Called to ‘Desire’**

What do a screaming baby, a thirsty deer, and a Olympic sprinter have in common? They all provide active, vivid pictures of the desire that fuels our spiritual growth.

 1 Peter 2:2 (IV) As newborn babes, desire the

 sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow

 thereby,

 Psalms 42:1-2 (IV)
 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so

 panteth my soul after thee, O God.
 2 My soul thirsteth for to see God, for to see the

 living God. When shall I come and appear before

 thee, O God?

 1 Corinthians 9:24 (IV) Know ye not that they

 which run in a race all run, but only one receiveth

 the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

These word pictures portray an intense, insistent

yearning for God that can’t be ignored. Panting,

hungering and thirsting, craving— does that describe your present relationship with your heavenly Father?

 Matthew 5:8 (IV) And blessed are all they that do

 hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they

 shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well, it was her desire that He immediately addressed. He invited her to thirst, not for another human relationship, but for the water of life that only He could give.

 John 4:15-16 (IV)
 15 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever

 shall drink of this well shall thirst again;

 16 But whosoever drinketh of the water which I

 shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that

 I shall give him shall be in him a well of water

 springing up into everlasting life.

Jesus’ invitation is heard in other’s voices throughout Scripture:

 Isaiah 55:1 (IV) Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come

 ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come

 ye, buy, and eat; yea, come; buy wine and milk

 without money and without price.

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Our Lord is provider of physical as well as spiritual blessings.

 Alma 16:119 (IV) And the Lord provided for them

 that they should hunger not, neither should they

 thirst; yea, and he also gave them strength, that

 they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it

 were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.

Our journey with Christ is an invitation to desire. Am I hungry for God? Am I craving His Word? Do I yearn to be like Jesus? The answers to these questions are also indications of spiritual maturity.

☆**Keys to Increasing Your Thirst**

If desire is the fuel for spiritual growth, then we need a plan for increasing it. Scripture points us to a number of spiritual practices that can help.

**1. Embrace repentance.** Repentance—the act of facing and confessing our sin—is the first step toward increasing our thirst for God.

 Matthew 4:16 (IV) From that time, Jesus began

 to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of

 heaven is at hand.

A call for repentance were some of Jesus’ first recorded words in the gospels. Repentance does two things in us:
 First, it keeps us honest about our hearts’ true condition—our weak desire for God and our deep attachment to sin.
 Second, it creates a deeper thirst for God because we realize how desperately we need Him. God uses repentance to empty us so that He can fill us with a hunger for Him.

**2. Stand with the church**
Left to ourselves, our desire for God will wane and drift. Other desires will come in and choke out God’s Word. Share with fellow saints your godly desires.

 Mark 4:20 (IV) And he said unto them, Take heed

 what ye hear; for with what measure ye mete, it

 shall be measured to you; and unto you that

 continue to receive, shall more be given; for he

 that receiveth, to him shall be given; but he that

 continueth not to receive, from him shall be taken

 even that which he hath.

That’s why the New Testament writers exhort us to seek God in the body of Christ.

 Hebrews 3:13 (IV) But exhort one another daily,

 while it is called Today, lest any of you be

 hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

 Hebrews 10:24-25 (IV)

 24 And let us consider one another to provoke

 unto love and to good works,

 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves

 together as the manner of some is, but exhorting

 one another, and so much the more as ye see the

 day approaching.

As we increase our prayer and study time, God softens our hearts and reawakens a hunger for Him.

**3. Become intimate with the Word**. If you currently read scriptures off and on without a plan that’s a good start. It’s far better, though, if you formulate a plan to study regularly and eventually seek a long range plan for understanding all godly principles, commandments, the lives of notable men and women of the scriptures, and events, and so forth. Increasing your knowledge of God, his attributes, his Son, the Holy Spirit, his eternal plan and God’s will in our lives and in the church brings us so much closer to our heavenly Father.

 If you aren’t reading much scripture now, try beginning a regular reading program with the Psalms. These "songs and prayers of David" not only contain vital information about God, but they also train us in the language of desire. If you don’t understand some passages or want to know how to do deeper research into topics and specific books or verses, ask the Pastor or other congregation leaders how to proceed.

 Psalms 63:1 (IV) O God, thou art my God; early will I

 seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh

 longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no

 water is,

 Psalms 84:2 (IV) My soul longeth, yea, even

 fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and

 my flesh crieth out for the living God.

 Psalms 143:6 (IV) I stretch forth my hands unto

 thee; my soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land.

Can you hear the longing in these ancient, God-inspired prayers? Engaging with these Psalms will change us, molding our desires until we really do pant and thirst for God. Please consider trying to read—lovingly, attentively, slowly—at least one psalm a day at the start. Meditate on it and then use it as the basis for a prayer to God. If you want, try making the verse personal by changing pronouns to first person where appropriate.
 **4. Focus on God’s goodness.**
In our efforts to increase our hunger for God, most of us focus on the intensity of our desire: Do we have enough? If not, we have to try to get more. We have to pump it up. And when our desire seems to wane, we panic and fret.

 1 Peter 2:2-3 (IV)
 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of

 the word, that ye may grow thereby,
 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,

There is a connection between experiencing God’s goodness and hungering for Him.

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Think of your all-time favorite food. When you take that first bite and the flavor hits your taste buds, you

crave it more. In the same way, when we taste God’s goodness—when His grace, kindness, and love intersect with our hearts—we will crave more of it.

Feelings come and go. God will remove our shallow, feeling-based desire so that he can plant in our hearts a deeper, God-given stream of desire—a bold, unquenchable prompting to keep seeking His face even when He seems absent. This desire doesn’t arise from mere human effort; it is a gift from God. And it comes primarily as we take our eyes off ourselves and focus on God’s goodness and grace.

We’re often ashamed of our struggle to desire God as we should. Because we feel that way, we hesitate to ask God for help. He deeply wants your efforts to please him to succeed.

**5. Pray for Intimacy with the Father.**

Let your heart-felt yearning to draw him close be known. Seek God's assistance, his blessing, wisdom, strength, peace and Holy Spirit to guide you to truth.
Jesus commanded us to ask, seek, and knock.

 Matthew 7:12-13 (IV)
 12 Say unto them, Ask of God; ask, and it shall be

 given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it

 shall be opened unto you.

 13 For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he

 that seeketh, findeth; and unto him that

 knocketh, it shall be opened.

This verse can be literally translated “ask and keep asking, seek and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking.” Pray diligently, persistently.

We need to keep asking—insistently and passionately—for holy desire. Why? Because God is unbelievably generous; He wants to give us good gifts. And He has already promised to answer our requests.

 Ezekiel 36:26-27 (IV)
 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new

 spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the

 stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a

 heart of flesh.
 27 And I will put my Spirit within you and cause

 you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my

 judgments and do them.

 Philippians 2:13 (IV) For it is God which worketh

 in you, both to will and to do of his good

 pleasure.

God desires intimacy with us far more than we know.

We need a willing heart to make positive changes to our lives and a contrite spirit to ask for his help to experience an INTIMACY that rests on his promise: **Draw near to him and he’ll draw near to you.**