

KEY APPETITE: Hunger for God and Hope

Hunger is a driving force in so many ways. Growing teenage boys usually have a seemingly insatiable appetite for food. People who are oppressed under totalitarian regimes develop a deep hunger for freedom which often leads to massive protests and non-compliance to tyranny.

Hunger is a mighty good thing. It is the greatest persuader I know of. It is a marvelous mover. Nations have learned that you can do most anything with a populace until they get hungry. But when they get hungry you want to watch out. There is a certain spirit of desperation that accompanies hunger. I wish we all had it spiritually. I wish to God we were desperately hungry for God.

I will guarantee to you that after the crucifixion of Jesus there were 120 mighty hungry folks at Jerusalem. I do not believe if they had not been mightily hungry they would not have gotten so gloriously filled. It was because they were hungry that they were filled. One of the works of the Holy Ghost is that of preparer. He comes and prepares the heart of men in advance by putting a strange hunger for that event that has been promised by God until it comes to pass.

- John G. Lake in message 'Spiritual Hunger'

My great hunger for God and his Word began back in the early 1980 's. I borrowed lots of teachings on cassettes from various free lending libraries and took copious notes on them. God was preparing me for a teaching and writing ministry which commenced about 10 years later, which also opened doors for me to teach God's Word in various countries.

In the early 1990's I had the privilege of doing some missionary work in Russia and the Czech Republic, both of which had suffered for decades under atheistic Communist regimes. While there we observed a terrific hunger for God and the teaching of his Word.

In the Czech Republic during January 1992, I experienced the most amazing move of God I have ever seen. I went there from London with another friend to teach new believers in newly formed churches in three different towns. Before we had arrived, God had brought salvation and healing to many through some meetings with an Australian evangelist, we came as followup for these hundreds of new believers.

Our nightly meetings were held in local town halls as mostly young people and older women packed out the gatherings. As we entered the meetings we were greeted with appreciation expressed by much applause, flowers and bottles of Cocoa cola. One night we went to a basketball game and then spoke to all the attendees afterwards about the message of Jesus and his kingdom. While I was speaking, at least 25 persons collapsed in their seats as if dead. This happened in all the meetings as the Holy Spirit came upon the people to bring trances, visions, physical and inner emotional healing. After years of bondage and oppression, the Holy Spirit was bringing freedom, peace and joy to those who longed for God and hope.

I spent the whole summer of 1993 based in Russia in the large Siberian city of Novosibirsk. From there we dispersed to various smaller villages to teach and preach. One evening we took a half-hour bus ride to a rural area and then walked for about 15 minutes down a railroad track until we came to a hamlet of just a few houses. We entered one home that had perhaps a dozen people. Before I began sharing some Bible truths with them, one lady remarked that I was an answer to their prayer that God would send someone to teach them the Bible. This was the type of spiritual hunger we encountered during our time in Russia. The same was true during a three month mission to India in 1998 where we taught 25-30 students in a newly formed Bible School. Some of the pastors rode bicycles over 7 miles just to attend our morning sessions during the week. When I returned to India in 2012, it was a joy to hear that most of them had gone on to plant churches. It was thrilling to also see some of them again in person with their big smiles.

When John the Baptist and Jesus entered the public scene in Israel nearly 2000 years ago, they discovered a similar hunger among the common people who were also known as the people of the land or 'scum of the earth' people. The Romans and the religious elite extracted between 40 to 70% of the income of the poor with taxes and fees. There was no middle class, only the super wealthy and the peasant poor.

Many of the rich in Jerusalem derived their wealth from vast estates in the country. These were worked by slaves and hired men or rented to tenants. One of Herod's chancellors owned an entire village. It was said that another person had inherited 1000 villages, 1000 ships, and so many slaves that they did not know their master. According to the sages a man of wealth was one who had 100 vineyards, 100 fields, and 100 slaves to work them. Some of the special artists working in the temple received the equivalent of \$300 a day. At the same time unskilled workers in Jerusalem received their food and about 25 cents for a day's work. The rich did not mingle with the masses of commoners.

- The Upside-Down Kingdom (1978) - Donald Kraybill

This was the type of world that Jesus entered at the beginning of his public ministry. He was embraced by the masses of people because he brought them hope, healing, miracles and even bread. He fed over 5000 people with just 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. This caused the people to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah to come. - John 6:14
Even before Jesus was born, his mother Mary made a prophecy about him.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but he has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

- Luke 1:51-53 NIV

God had arranged for Jesus to come to earth at just the right time. The people were hungry for hope and change. I hope you are too, as we continue this series on key kingdom truths.

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