

Spiritual Hunger Going Deeper Series

Introduction

Last week, the vine and the branches and fruitfulness.

This week we take a look at “Spiritual Hunger” through the lens of Jesus words found in Matthew 6...specifically, “Give, Pray and Fast”

Randy’s Grandpa Remington deposited something important about character into his young life

- He taught him that character is who you are when no one else is around and no one is watching
- This was taught in the context of the business world, as he would take potential employees golfing and watch close. His reasoning was if they would cheat at golf, they would cheat at anything.
- “Nanny” and other hidden cameras are used to see what the caretakers do when no one else is around, because the stakes are so high

A B4 member, Bob Corser suddenly and unexpectedly died before the holidays.

By all appearances on the outside he was generous, Godly man, husband and father. He had no time to prepare or “clean anything up”, so many saw into his private life just as it was.

As his family looked into his brief case, his desk drawers, (secret corners of his life), they found nothing that would contradict that image. In fact a journal was found that documented things about his kids, notes from his loved ones, etc.

Jesus is saying what you do in secret will one day publically show who you really are.

Most of us when we hear the term “secret things” we think of them as being evil or bad, but this is not always true.

In fact this lesson is about getting away into those secret places with God. It is important because it shows the *real you*, we do it just because we love him, because we want to draw close to him...not for others to see.

Nothing hidden from his sight

He will meet you in the secret place and He will reward you in the public place.

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

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(Matthew 6:1)

*“So **when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**”* (Matthew 6:2-4)

There is hiddenness to our relationship with God. This is a precious truth that he desires to be alone with us, spend time...with just us. We may not get an audience with the President or Governor, but the creator of the universe is calling us for a private time together. This contradicted a culture where religious leaders wanted to be seen and heard.

As identified by Jesus there was a contradiction between secret and public areas in their lives.

“Hypocrites” used here is an acting term indicating wearing a mask

When you do these things remember why you do them.

Jesus said, “when you give” don’t announce it.

“When” implying that we are doing these things...”then” your father will reward you.

Mark Zuckerberg, (Creator of Facebook) “announced” that he and his wife gave 75 million to a hospital in San Francisco.

Whereas this is admirable, giving is between you and God in private. Many get uncomfortable when money is discussed, but money is a spiritual issue; he’s not after our money he is after our heart.

Because, (V21) “where your treasure is there your heart will be also”... nothing withheld in our lives

God see’s secret prayer just as much as He see’s secret sins.

*“And **when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**”*
(Matthew 6:5-6)

*“**When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**”* (Matthew 6:16-18)

The religious leaders of that time would go to the busiest places and pray loud and be seen by others.

Jesus gets to the heart of things; it is not the repetitive prayers or the volume

loud and be seen by others.

Jesus gets to the heart of things; it is not the repetitive prayers or the volume that is important.

He wants you to go into a closet, a room where no one else can see you for your father sees the secret prayers.

Sometimes it's just you and the father, it is an end to it self.

Many times when we see believers walking and living a life that reflects Jesus, it is a result of time spent alone with him.

"Its your face I want to see, your voice I want to hear"

Speed vs Soul

"What does it profit a person to gain the whole world, and lose their soul?"

(Mark 8:36)

Randy shared with us about a Mentor in his life, he was a businessman who said; "the way I went about my business dealings have sucked my soul dry". He went on to say that he didn't know his family or even himself...losing your identity in the lord and your soul.

This is an issue of speed verses soul.

We need to slow down... you can get lost, find time to go into the closet. But take time do the other important things with our family and loved ones.

An example is not answering a text when we are talking to someone, not allowing our lives to be engulfed by things, technology, business.

Fasting reveals what controls us

Fasting is about abstaining from food, that will help us focus on a spiritual hunger inside of us, a deeper hunger.

It will revel what is controlling us...pressing in drawing in closer to God. It can involve more than food since were focusing on what "controls" us, other areas might be sex with our spouse, technology, etc.

There is more about fasting in the scriptures than giving, repentance and other important things.

Fasting will increase the intensity and the focus of your prayers.

Five scriptural motives for fasting

1. To hear from God

"While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2)

2. To intercede for others

"When they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting" (Psalm 35:13)

3. As an act of repentance

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"Nothing's going on in the place of worship, no offerings, no prayers ... nothing. Declare a holy fast, call a special meeting, get the leaders together, round up everyone in the country. Get them into God's sanctuary for serious prayer to God" (Joel 1:13–14, The Message)

“Fasting intensifies the act of repentance, so that you understand more about the ugliness of sin and the beauty of God's mercy”

4. For Strength and Direction

"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust" (Acts 14:23)

5. An act of worship

"She (Anna) never left the temple, but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying" (Luke 2:37)

Life Group Sermon Application Curriculum Leader's Guide

Week of **02/22/15**

Going Deeper Part 8" (Spiritual Hunger)

The more times we go into our closet with our Father, we will grow to love and know him in such an intimate way. Just ask someone who has walked with the Lord for many years; these times become the most precious moments of our lives. Here is a quote from an unknown writer: *"Quiet Time, Be Still and Listen Quiet time could refer to those precious moments after the kids are in bed, but for Christians, a quiet time is more than that. Quiet time, or devotion time, refers to our daily appointment with God, when we shut out as much outside interference as possible. During our quiet time, we may sing praise songs, pray, read Scripture or daily devotions, meditate on God's Word, or simply be still and listen"*

Main Sermon text: (Matthew 6: 1-18)

There are some **consistent themes**, and key points, that emerge from these passages:

- Randy spoke about character, being the same person in private as in public. Jesus talked about giving, praying and fasting and not allowing it to become hypocritical, implying wearing a mask. Like doing something in public for attention, which you do not do when no one is around.
- We learned that there is hiddenness to our relationship with God. That God desires to be alone with us, spend time...with just us. We may not get an audience with the important people in our world, but the creator of the universe is calling us for a private time together. This is an opportunity to grow in our relationship with him and for him to restore and shape our lives.
- Jesus deals with an area that can make some people uncomfortable...*giving*. Jesus pointed out that there was a contradiction between the secret and public areas in the lives of the religious leaders of that time. He said that they were "Hypocrites"; this term was used in that time period as an acting expression indicating wearing a mask. When we give, we can't let our motivation be to be seen, remember why we give.
- As with giving our prayer and fasting are not meant to show others how religious or holy we are. He wants us to go into a closet, a room where no one else can see you for your father see's the secret prayers. The benefits of fasting can be tremendous spiritually, but act normal, don't advertise what you're doing, trying to impress others. When we see believers walking and living a life that reflects Jesus, you can be assured that it is a result of time spent alone with him.

Discussion questions/prompts for your group: (These questions are designed to help your group go deeper, understanding and applying

Discussion questions/prompts for your group: (These questions are designed to help your group go deeper, understanding and applying the Bible passage(s) and the sermon)

- 1) When Randy talked about his Grandfather and how he spoke into his life concerning being the same when you're being watched as when no one is around. Also using Bob Corser as an example of a life lived in public that was confirmed by the "secret corners of his life". What were your thoughts and how were you challenged by these examples?
- 2) We need to ask ourselves a tough question, are we having those private times with God? Jesus was our best example of this, when you think of times in the "closet" alone with God, what has been your experience or what is your expectation?
- 3) For some "giving" is a taboo subject, but Jesus, (here and elsewhere in scripture) shows how important this issue is for us. In other scriptural passages, he has challenged a young man who allowed money and wealth to become an idol. Jesus understands that this is a spiritual issue, a heart issue, verse 21 he said; "where your treasure is there your heart will be also" Here Jesus challenges us, why are you giving, to be seen by others? We are all aware that God doesn't need our resources, but would you share a time when God challenged you in this area?
This may be difficult for some to talk about. There have been terrible abuses in the past in churches, by people and in various media religious outlets. But it is too crucial of an issue not to delve into. If nothing else share from your own experience.
- 4) Please share your experiences when you spent time with God as described by Jesus in our passage. Also when you read about fasting, what comes to your mind, do you have any experience with fasting? Discuss the "five motives" for fasting.
To hear from God/to intercede for others/an act of repentance/for strength and direction/an act of worship.

For those who might like to use visual aids in their Bible storying, or study preparation, especially for groups with children, here are some helpful links:

<http://ministry-to-children.com/many-silent-years/>

<http://www.raisingourkids.com/coloring-pages/printable/bible/index-02.html>

Log on and check "Right now Media" there are several good resources that will relate to this study for the kids. Some are for pre-school and older, so go surfing and see if you can find something for your group.