

I must say that I do not know what it is to be really hungry. Even though my parents often struggled to make ends meet, there was always food on the table and there was never a time when a meal of some sort was not there for us. When our own children were small there was the odd occasion I had to miss out on meals myself in order to ensure that there was food for the children, but that did not last for a prolonged period of time.



I suppose that most of the time, when we use expressions such as, 'I'm ready for my dinner; I'm starving' or 'Is tea ready; I'm dying of hunger', I would say that we are only feeling a bit peckish, but not hungry to the point of feeling weak and certainly nowhere near starving. (I do apologize for these comments if that is your

current situation.)

Our bodies need food at regular intervals, initially as children, in order to grow adult bodies and as adults that they may function as they are meant to function. Lack of the right nutritional foods or alternatively, plenty of 'rubbish' foods, may have adverse effects on us healthwise.



I would say that all of these things that are said about food for our bodies also apply to food for our spirits. When I first started to use a computer I came across the letters G.I.G.O., Garbage In = Garbage out. If we take rubbish stuff into our spirits then rubbish stuff is going to come out! Although the spirit part of us cannot be seen at all by anyone, others are certainly able to have some idea of how we are

in our spirits by what we say and the way we behave.

Can I ask a question? It may be your desire to have a healthy body, but, is it also your desire to have a healthy spirit? How hungry are you to know more about God? How strong is your desire to be more like Jesus? There is an old chorus that goes, 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after You.' Does your soul 'pant' to have a closer relationship with the God who created you, who formed you and who made you for this very reason?

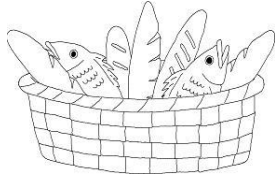
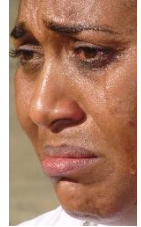


I personally find that my hunger to draw closer to God can vary according to what is going on in my life. If I am very tired or not feeling too well, then I am afraid that more hunger for God is not on my list. In the normal day to day run of things, yes, I have a desire to know God in a deeper way. Hearing a really challenging sermon or listening to some of my favourite worship songs causes my hunger for God to soar and deepen. It is at times like this that I long to be more like Jesus and find myself saying, "Anything Lord that pleases You." It is very easy to put a 'No boundaries' limit for God to use us when we are feeling very hungry spiritually, but often much more difficult when we are trying to keep up with our busy everyday lives.



I am reminded of the time we can read about in our Bibles when the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down and worship in the temple neglected. After the walls had been rebuilt Ezra brought the book of the Law - ie. The first five books of the Bible - out of the temple to read to the people. (Please bear in mind that these people would not have copies of this readily available to them as we have today.) They built a wooden pulpit especially for this occasion and all the men and women were there listening from early morning until

midday. Some of the temple priests were there explaining about what was written. The people were all upset and weeping because of the way in which they, as God's people, had not kept to what God had asked them and they recognized that they were not in the right place spiritually. The outcome was that they all fell down and worshipped and the lives of that large community were completely changed as they hungered to know more of God and His plans for their lives.



Another instance when I am reminded of people's spiritual hunger is on the occasion of Jesus feeding the 5,000. In fact, it says that there were 5,000 men so including the women and children too, we are probably looking at around 10,000 people. (For those of you who are football fans, that is about a third of the crowd at Stoke

Stadium!) I am sure that the majority of you reading this will have already heard how Jesus fed all of those people with five loaves and two fish, but to me there are two additional 'miracles' about this account. In these days of P.A. equipment I have often wondered how Jesus could possibly make himself heard without a microphone. Even by standing on the side of a hill or mountain and shouting his head off I still do not see how all of those folk would have been able to hear him!



The other 'miracle' I find about this event is that all of those people were so spiritually hungry that although they had been listening to Jesus for quite a while, they did not seem to be ready to go home, even when it got quite late. It was a 'lonely' place so there was obviously no food market available for them and they were not to know at that point what Jesus was about to do with the loaves and the fish and yet they still remained there and showed no sign of all getting up and going home. No doubt some would have heard of the miracles that Jesus had done and may have been there hoping that they themselves would be recipients of a miracle, but it appears rather that they are remaining there in order to be able to hear the precious words that Jesus was saying to them.

God does not force Himself upon us. He waits for us to have the desire to draw closer to Him. If there is no hunger on our part then there is no deepening of that relationship. There are many, many things in this life that can make our lives interesting and with which we can fill up our time. These things may satisfy us for a while but they will never fill that God-shaped hole that each one of us has in our spirits. There is a song I heard recently; although I forget the exact words, about having a 'hungry heart'. I hope and pray that all of you will have that 'hungry heart.'

Psalm 42: 1 -2

'As the deer pants for the streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.'

Bible Readings:

Nehemiah 8 Ezra reads from the books of the Law

Mark 6: 30 – 44 Feeding of the 5,000