

Thirst is the craving for fluids, and that craving is a result of one of two things: either you are low on fluids, and your body is telling you to fill up; or you have too much of something—like salt—in your system, and your body is telling you to flush it out.

Once upon a time I was hiking near Mt. Charleston, Nevada, and I mean to tell you, it was hot. At the same time, it was your classic "dry heat," so you don't really have the sensation of being that sweaty. But I'll never forget the first time we stopped for a water break. I got the water out and started drinking, and it was like something inside me took over, because I just kept drinking and drinking, guzzling down this water like there was no tomorrow. I hadn't even felt that thirsty, but my body was telling me that yes, I needed water right now. I kept up with frequent drink breaks the rest of the way.

There is an urgency to physical thirst that is easy to understand. In very cool temperatures, ten days is about the outer limits of how long you will live without taking in any water. Raise the high temperature to 100 degrees and you're looking at 5 days, max. There is no life without water—it's as simple as that.

Jesus says, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." He said these words to a woman that he met at the town well. Even though Jesus had asked her for a drink of water, it turns out that she was the one with the thirst, and it was a thirst that she was having a problem quenching. It was a thirst she had tried to satisfy in relationships with men, but five husbands later—six if you count the live-in boyfriend—there was still something missing. With a track record like that, she's an easy target for ridicule, so let's be careful as we think about her. The truth is, we all have a Nevada-desert-heat thirst for something. Our souls are parched, and our own attempts at finding life can be pretty desperate.

Maybe you're like that Samaritan woman, and you try to quench your thirst in relationships. You crave attention and affection, praise and appreciation. You love being loved. You'll go to great lengths to get that feeling. But the thing is, people have a way of disappointing you. They don't appreciate you quite as much as you would like. They don't love you the way you wish they would. You try on one

relationship after another, hoping this next one will hit the spot, but you're still thirsty.

Maybe you try to quench your thirst through achievement. By striving for excellence and success, you believe you can fill yourself up. So you work hard, you work long, you become successful, you hit each goal you set for yourself. You enjoy the fruit of your labor. But even so, when it's just you and the silence, there's an itch that you can't scratch; something gnawing at you; a thirst that your talent can't seem to touch.

Maybe you try to quench your thirst by "getting stuff." Maybe just a little bit nicer car; maybe just a little bit bigger house; maybe just a few more toys; maybe the next wave computerized gadget is going to be the one that finally makes me happy. Sure, I've got dumpsters full of things that I thought would do it for me, but maybe this next one will be the one, and I can finally be satisfied. That's what the commercial promised.

Maybe you've tried to quench your thirst by literally taking a drink. Drugs and alcohol offer a momentary escape from that nagging soul thirst you've got. For a little while, anyway, you can stumble around having forgotten you were thirsty in the first place. But as that window of forgetfulness gets shorter and shorter, a ravenous thirst of another kind takes over; a cruel, insatiable appetite for a false peace.

And maybe you've even tried to quench your thirst by turning to religion—and by "religion" I mean the religion that human beings have invented; religion that says if you do something for God, He'll do something for you in return. Religion that says that if you start going to church, maybe bad things will stop happening to you the rest of the week. Religion that says, "God, just get me out of this predicament, and I'll do whatever you ask." But then God doesn't hold up his end of the bargain, He doesn't answer your prayer the way you asked him to; You played the game and said the words and put a few bills in the offering plate, but the thirst is still there, and you're wondering, what more am I supposed to do?

I don't think I can say it any clearer than this: your desperate soul thirst will never go away until—until—you drink deeply of Jesus Christ. He is the source from which you must draw if you want to finally be quenched and healthy and whole. Now that's beautiful poetic language, all this talk of water and thirst and so forth. But what does it really mean?

It means that you receive Jesus on His terms. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, He is nothing less than the Messiah. The Messiah came to wage war against evil. He came to save sinners from the hellish consequences of their sins. He came to suffer and die on a cross and rise from His grave, and in so doing to dig a well that would overflow with forgiveness. To drink deeply of Jesus, then, is to humble yourself and to admit all the bad places your thirst has taken you and finally, to drink from His well of mercy. It means to guzzle the fresh water of forgiveness like there is no tomorrow, because life with Him depends on it. There is no life without water, and Jesus pours it out with extravagant generosity.

Life-giving water spills from the baptismal font. Jesus pours himself into us in his holy Supper. Jesus' words take dehydrated hearts and saturate them until they're like waterlogged sponges, overflowing with grace. Jesus has bucketful after bucketful of living water to pour out for you, if you will only hold out your cup to Him in faith.

And when you do, you'll see your thirst for relationship quenched in brotherhood with your Savior and Lord. You'll see your thirst for success quenched in Jesus' victory over death. Your thirst for getting stuff will be quenched in contentment and thankfulness for the gifts you've been given. A thirst for escape will be quenched by a confident embrace of reality in which Jesus is truly there, moment by moment with you. And your thirst for a religion that "works" will be quenched by a person...a person who loves you, a person who sacrificed everything for you and will never leave you.

The Samaritan woman had it right when she said, "Sir, give me this water." Give us this water, Lord Jesus. Amen.