

Fresh Bread For The Fight

Mat 3:16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

The Starving Baker and The Hungry Savior

There is a picture Tim Elmore creates of an unlikely baker. Certainly not one you would expect, but one you might know all too well. The story goes like this...

You visit a bakery not far from your home. It's new. You know you're going to love this place because they've hired a new baker who has recipes for breads, pastries, donuts, cakes and cinnamon rolls that are to die for.

Word has gotten out about this bakery. Crowds start forming lines each day, waiting for the new confections to come from this baker's marvelous kitchen. After you purchase your cinnamon roll, you sit down to watch this baker in action—and you notice something right away. The baker doesn't seem to have enough help. Everyday, he ends up trying to serve all the customers himself. He is scurrying back and forth, busy with all the requests of the people—but oblivious to what's happening to him. His exhaustion is quickly becoming burn out. What's worse, as you watch him for a few weeks, you see a change. This man is getting thin. Very thin. It almost seems like he is shriveling up. What's the deal?

Suddenly, the problem becomes obvious to you. This man never stops to eat. The irony is, he is so busy serving bread to everyone else, he never stops to eat anything he serves. With food all around him, he is starving.

The starving baker is a picture of a pastor, leader, CEO, teacher, parent, entrepreneur who constantly gives to those they serve, but neglects taking the time to take care of themselves. The inevitable result is that sooner or later, they've burnt themselves out and are taken out of the fight (Elmore, Habitudes).

Be honest, how often have you found yourself in a similar place—pouring out, having neglected to pour in?

Contrast the starving baker to our hungry Savior. Jesus had gone forty days without anything to eat. He had fasted and prayed for 40 days in a wilderness. At the conclusion, He then faces three tests from the enemy. Yet even in His weakened state, He emerges triumphant and ready to minister to multitudes. What was it that sustained Jesus in a place where most leaders would have been burnt out?

Jesus found three sources of spiritual nourishment in the waters of the Jordan that every leader needs to be sustained and propelled through both the good and difficult seasons of life.

1. JESUS WAS FED BY AN OPEN HEAVEN

Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him.

Man was designed to live in unbroken relationship with the Father. We were created for relationship. However, sin separates and severs that relationship. Unrepentant sin causes the heavens above us to become like brass. There is no open communion and no fresh revelation. All works done for the kingdom are done out of religious duty, and lack life.

Jesus entered the waters of repentance and the heavens were opened to Him. In doing so He showed each of us the way back to an open heaven. The key that unlocks a brazen heaven is repentance.

ABCs of Repentance:

Acknowledge - the need. Jesus said, it was necessary for Him to be baptized “to fulfill all righteousness.” Also note that Jesus went to John, He didn’t do this alone. There is true freedom in going to a trusted friend or mentor and coming clean. Repentance begin with an acknowledgement that our ways are not in alignment with His. Yes this applies to sinful behavior, but also our attitude and thought life as well. We are continually being transformed into the image of Christ, this means there is a constant work of letting go of what is not like Him, and taking up what is.

Believe - fully upon Christ. Everything you need pertaining to life and godliness is found in Christ. Put your full faith in Jesus as the the source of freedom from sin and the foundation of righteousness. Having acknowledged the need, now turn to Christ as the only one from whom the answer can be drawn.

Commit - your ways to Jesus. Repentance is a change in thinking that results in a change of direction. This is more than a confession of wayward thinking, it is an about face. It is a firm decision to be empowered by His grace and walk differently.

2. JESUS WAS FED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

John the Baptist testified of this very moment, ***“I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him” (John 1:32).***

What was remarkable to John was that the Spirit descended and remained. Scripture offers many examples of the Spirit of God coming upon a man for a season and then lifting, but no one had seen the Spirit fully come and remain on a man until Christ.

Everything Jesus did, He did in the Spirit. There was an ease to the work because it was empowered by the Spirit.

A young evangelist came to Leonard Ravenhill excited to share with the older evangelist how he had filled 50 weeks of the upcoming year with speaking engagements. The excitement in his voice and eyes was dampened when the seasoned minister responded, "When will you pray? All you're going to do is end up working for God." Ravenhill added, and that is exactly what he did, he worked for God.

Jesus showed us the way to work with the Spirit. He said, "the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" (Jn 5:19).

It's true you can work for God or work with God. One is for more fruit filled than the other!

3. JESUS WAS FED BY THE FATHER'S WORD

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Father spoke three powerful statements over Jesus. Three statements every child of God needs to hear as well.

- A word of Identification (This is My Son)
- A word of Affirmation (whom I love)
- A word of Validation (with Him I am well pleased)

The enemy came to test Jesus concerning each of these, yet Jesus refused to give place to the devil rebuking Him each time with the Father's word.

Jesus said, "It is written, ***"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*** (Mt 4:4).

"Comes" is in the present tense. We are fed, not just by what God said, but also what God is saying. This is the power of both the written and spoken Word of God within our lives.

The Logos Word - the written Word of God

Need a word of identification, affirmation or validation in your life? You can fill pages with verses from scripture that speak those very truths over you. Your daily discipline of studying God's Word is essential for your life and ministry. Remember a Bible that is worn out likely belongs to a person who is not!

The Rhema Word - the spoken Word of God

Along with getting into the Word and reading what God has said, is that moment the Word speaks to you. Scripture is alive and filled with the words of life. Along with studying the Word, keeping a journal close by to record those revelations that God speaks to you is key. Think for a moment. What is the last word the Father spoke to you in that place of devotion that refreshed your soul? If it's been some time...then it is time to get under an open heaven, let the Spirit come, and the Father speak.

Questions

1. Where are you like or have been like the starving baker? What are some of the mistakes you made to bring you to that place?
2. Do you have a trusted friend that you can share your struggles with? Who is a key mentor or leader in your life you can confide in?
3. Where are you working for the Holy Spirit rather than working with?
4. What does your daily devotional time look like? What can you change to make that time more fulfilling?

Prayer

Father, today we acknowledge our deep need of You. We cannot do this thing called life without Your sustaining power. Therefore I repent of my wayward ways, thinking and attitude. Forgive me for seeking to do this on my own. I recognize that everything I need is found in your Son. Jesus, I put my hope, faith, and trust in You alone and I commit to walk according to Your ways. Lead me, and I will follow.