

Our bodies tell us so many things. Sometimes we can't prove something, but we just know it in our gut. We base important decisions on what our gut is telling us. Our body or spirit tells us when there's something not quite right. We may not be sure what it is, but we just have this feeling that we want or need something more.

Our bodies certainly tell us when we need food, water, or sleep. We need these things to live. When we need water, our bodies tell us by producing signs of thirst: dry mouth, lips or eyes, headache, low energy or fatigue. If we ignore these signs, over time severe symptoms of dehydration occur, and eventually our body shuts down.

Physically, Jesus' body was shutting down. He had been on the cross for hours and the loss of blood and fluids caused him to physically feel the signs of severe dehydration. He was nearing the end. Spiritually, Jesus was feeling a different kind of thirst.

When Jesus was preparing his disciples for his death, he tried to reveal who he was and to show how he connects to their lives by using several different "I am" metaphors: I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the Resurrection, I am the true vine, and I am the way, the truth, and the life. At the foot of the cross, perhaps the people were waiting for Jesus to prove that he was all of these things, that he was the Messiah, as many had prompted him to save himself if he was. When they heard him say "I am," perhaps they were anticipating another deep "I am" saying. But Jesus simply said, "I am thirsty." What was Jesus thirsty for?

Theologian and humanitarian Jean Vanier says "that to be thirsty in biblical language is to be 'dried up inside', 'to feel totally empty and in anguish'"¹ Jesus had emptied himself and was done with the whole thing. Another spiritual writer, Trevor Hudson, said, "To be thirsty is to long for love, acceptance, and affirmation."² Jesus was thirsting for a connection with the living and loving God. He longed to be reunited with the Father.

As the Psalmist said, "As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him" (Psalm 42:1-2)? Jesus was thirsty for God, to be in communion with the living God. He was ready to go and stand before him.

After Jesus confessed his need, someone dipped a sponge into sour wine and lifted it up for him to drink. Possibly a loving act to care for him in his last moments. Do you think the vinegary wine quenched his thirst? No. Only God could give him the living water he needed.

What do you thirst for? When it's hot and when we're at higher altitudes, we thirst for water. After hard, physical labor or exercise, we also thirst for water to replenish the fluid loss from sweating. In the cooler temps, we may thirst for warm cider or hot tea. When it's cold, hot chocolate or coffee. First thing in the morning, I thirst for my coffee, so I can wake up and get going. On Friday afternoon, I thirst for our Sunset Party, when our family gathers and we celebrate the end to the work week by watching the sunset. But nothing quenches our thirst like the Living Water.

¹ Trevor Hudson, *Pauses for Lent*, 27.

² Ibid.

We try many other things or people to satisfy our thirst: spouses, children, parents, our jobs, volunteer work, or hobbies. These relationships and activities are important and add value and meaning to our lives, but the real root to our thirst is being connected to the one true God. We will still thirst for true connection until we are reconciled with Christ.

There was a time in my life when I left the church. I said that I would return when I felt the need. I didn't for a while, but I still felt this void in my life. I tried many things to fill the emptiness I felt: romantic relationships, friends, different kinds of jobs, marriage, children, even food and drink. Yet I still felt this longing and thought, there's got to be something more in this life. I've tried all these things and my soul still thirsts for something more. Once I realized I was thirsty for the one true God, and I drank the living water, my thirst was satisfied. And, I keep drinking the living water every day.

We all have a physical thirst and a spiritual thirst. We thirst for connection, justice, and unconditional love. When we don't get those things, our bodies tell us that something doesn't feel right. We long for something more. We can tolerate the yearning for a while, but we get to the point when we are compelled to take action. We have to do something. We need it to live. All we have to say is, "I am thirsty."

Jesus understands our thirst. He was thirsty too. Jesus invites us to come to him and drink his living water. To drink from Jesus is to receive his Spirit in our lives. The water Jesus offers makes our lives new. We receive love, acceptance, and admiration. We feel the connection to our

living God. Before you leave this place, I invite you to take a bottle of "living water." I encourage you to drink from this bottle this week as a reminder that Jesus is the living water that satisfies your thirst. Refill it, and whenever you drink the water, say this prayer, "Lord, I am thirsty. Give me your living water."

Life-giving God, You are our God. We earnestly search for you. Our souls thirst for you. Our bodies long for you in this parched and weary land. We think that other things will satisfy our thirst, but only you quench our deepest longing. Give us the strength to keep seeking your living water through all of our trials and seasons of our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.