



# QUENCH

A DEVOTION FOR  
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One of the great privileges of my life has been to journey with people. I mean really get in there with them. As a pastor to a local parish, I've been trusted with sinister secrets, amazing accomplishments and so much in between. Along the way, I have noticed patterns that seem to reflect a common experience. In every life there is suffering. Every day is followed by the night. Every night is followed by the day. Through every turn of life I am struck by the deep yearning to uncover "something more."

If one of the great privileges I've had is to journey with people, along that journey one of my deepest heartaches has been the yearning, the longing, the thirst so many carry. We want more. We want to "go deeper." We want to make meaning out of the ups and downs of our lives. Karl Barth beautifully talks about the connection between the body and the soul. Many think of the term, "Embodied souls" for this. The elastic skin we wear seems barely able to hold in our burgeoning spirits. Our minds are amazing tools that seem to know more about a depth to life that is often elusive and hard to tap into.

Tension. There is an unmistakable tension between our carnal lives and a spirit life. We walk around, eating, drinking, playing, wanting, hurting in our bodies. We want these bodies to take us deeper, but that takes practice. To feel the inspiration of something more, we need to work with our bodies. We need to practice mystery — something my mind doesn't like to accept at the first pass.

These devotions are a call to practice. These pages are full of scripture that has meant something to me, even if it wasn't obvious the first time. Each day I'm inviting you to practice aligning your body and your spirit. Let the tension be. Don't fight it. And in letting our embodied souls work together, I pray you will find the well with water that Jesus said will let us never thirst again (John 4:14).

Each day you will find a physical and spiritual practice. I use the word "practice" intentionally as it does take practice. Stilling yourself before the greatness of a God who is waiting for you takes practice and dedication. Or sometimes it doesn't. Showing up each day and committing to wholeness is worth it. I pray you will take these 4 weeks to journey inward even as you grow outward.

The devotions are meant to be plain and straight-forward. But God's work in your life might be anything but direct and clear. I hope that the simple format will be an invitation for you to lean deeper into the mysterious moving and calling of a God who wants to be with you. A God who promises love to you always (Romans 8:38-39). A God who isn't worried or mad at your questions and doubt. A God who knows you fully (Psalm 139:13-16). A God who calls both your body and spirit to a deeper, fuller way of being. A God who promises to quench your thirst.

Grace & Peace,  
Pastor Cole

## Day 1

*All of you who are thirsty, come to the water! Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat! (Isaiah 55:1)*

Have you ever been really thirsty? I mean mouth dry, tongue sticking, completely desperate kind of thirsty? It's an awful feeling. The need for something that, for most of us in the western world, is available everywhere. When I'm thirsty I find myself wondering why I hadn't already gotten a drink. Why didn't I just go pour a glass of water and quench my thirst?

A couple of months ago I found myself extremely thirsty. Not for water, though. I was spiritually dry and needed — desperately needed — a drink of water that could meet the longing of my soul. Have you ever been thirsty like this? Maybe you've never called it "thirst" or maybe you've never put your finger on that feeling as a need for spiritual water, but I believe that's what it is.

We all get spiritually thirsty and just like drinking physical water is good for our physical bodies, so is drinking the water of God for our souls. We are all made to need God, through a personal relationship and relationship with others. When we don't pay attention to this thirst, we find ourselves dry and spiritually dehydrated. But God wants to give you a drink.

Get some water. Seriously, go get some water, I'll wait. Now take a drink of the water. How does it feel? Is it refreshing? Have you forgotten how nice a cool sip of crisp water tastes? Does your body somehow seem to *need* this?

Now imagine taking a spiritual drink of water. Isaiah 55 tells us that God freely gives life-giving and thirst-quenching water to all those who are in need. Tell God of your thirst and trust that just like that cup of water, God will quench your thirst today. Say out loud or write a prayer that tells God how you are in need, what your heart desires.

Isaiah 55 goes on to say, *Seek the Lord when he can still be found. Call him while he is yet near* (Is. 55:6). The Lord is waiting for you. I believe God is calling you near to meet that deep longing, the deep thirst we all have inside of us. Spend some time in prayer and read through Isaiah 55. See how the loving God of all creation wants to meet your need right where you are today.

Prayer:

*Loving and life-giving God, I am thirsty. I'm not even sure I know what I'm thirsty for. I just know that I am in need and your Word promises you will meet my needs. So come and be with me today. Quench my thirst. Call me closer to you. Invite me to bring my emptiness and be filled by your love. Thank you for your enduring presence in me and through me today. I love you, O God. AMEN.*

## Day 2

*God! My God! It's you — I search for you! My whole being thirsts for you! My body desires you in a dry and tired land, no water anywhere (Psalm 63:1).*

We don't have many plants in our house because our cat thinks they are extra food for her. She will eat all the leaves and flowers, then get sick from it. The plants we do have we have to hide from her. I've got this small bamboo plant on the top of my dresser. We put it up high so our cat can't get to it. The only problem with putting it out of the way is that I forget it's there. I forget to water it, so it withers and looks sad. Then I realize it's shriveling so I focus and for a couple of weeks, I water it again. It's amazing how the leaves bounce back with some consistent attention. The brown bits turn back to green and the plant seems to stand up straight, proud of who it is and happy it's being cared for again.

Our souls can be like my neglected bamboo plant. When we tend to them, they stand up straight and carry us throughout life. When we ignore our spirits, they can wither and cause a craving for more.

This Psalm taps into that craving for something more. We carry within us a deep stirring for something more than what is obvious and easy. Have you ever sensed that craving? Have you ever felt something just beyond what you can see or touch? Could this stirring within actually be the God who lives and moves and loves in me? Is my soul really calling out for more?

Maybe you feel that thirst or craving, maybe you don't. I've found in my own life that sometimes my

desire grows dim or quiet. Sometimes, even if I know in my head I need God, my practices and patience for sitting with God aren't great. We need a boost. We need a refreshing moment with The Divine that will rekindle this desire.

Take a moment and read Psalm 63:1 out loud. Even if you have to whisper it, make yourself pray it out loud.

Now do it again.

As you read that verse aloud, did your shoulders relax a little? Did your eyes focus in as something in you breathed a deep, "yes," to this prayer? Can you feel the deep from within you calling out to the deep of God?

Maybe you can, maybe it didn't do anything for you. Either way, you're on the right path. God knows that we are in need. Our souls are like plants that need care. Even if you don't feel the leaves of your spirit straighten up in one day, know that the more you water your Spirit with time in Scripture and prayer, through service and worship, the more nourished your whole life will become.

Prayer:

*God, I don't always know that I'm thirsty, but I trust that you do. You know that I need you even if I'm not good at telling you that. Thank you for coming for me today, for watering my thirsty soul today, for loving me exactly as I am today. I love you. AMEN.*

## Day 3

*Peter exclaimed, “Absolutely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean” (Acts 10:14).*

When I graduated from seminary, I was full of myself. And why wouldn't I be? I had just received this piece of paper that had the words “master” and “Divine” really close together with my name below it. (Seminary graduates usually earn a “Masters of Divinity.”) So I went into the church I served with all the right answers. I was the master of this God stuff, so I thought everyone should listen to the “profound” things I had to say.

In Acts 10, Peter had a similar feeling. He was one of the founders of the “first church” after Jesus left earth. He had followed Jesus around for 3 years watching him heal and teach. He was there when Jesus died and there again when Jesus rose from the dead. He too felt those words “master” and “Divine” close together and the power that gave him. But in Acts 10, he is shown in a vision that the answers he is holding onto so tightly, they aren't always right.

For Peter, a devout Jewish man, there were dietary restrictions that he strictly followed as a way of staying pure with God. In a vision he had, he was being told to break that diet, to eat what was “unclean.” The story goes that after Peter had this vision, he began ministry with non-Jews. He began to break his own rules. He began to learn new questions for his tired answers. He says, “I really am learning that God doesn't show partiality to one group of people over another... This is the message of peace...

the good news through Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all!” (Acts 10:34-36).

As you wade deeper into exploring your own thirst, your need for God, it’s tempting to think we have found “the way.” It’s tempting to believe that a devotion or the Bible is the only way God wants to quench our thirst. But God comes for all people in all sorts of ways.

Have you ever experienced God in a strange or unexpected place before? Have you ever felt God in a conversation or interaction? How do you think God wants to show up in your life?

Today, talk to someone you wouldn’t normally talk to. Maybe it’s a co-worker or someone from school. Maybe it’s a relative you haven’t spoken to in a while. Maybe it’s someone you don’t really like. Have a small conversation and be open to the idea that God comes for us all, and God can use us all to be love and life in the world — even those who don’t have the “right answers” or who we’ve called “unclean.”

Prayer:

*God, I’m sorry for the ways I’ve boxed you in: telling you to come in just this way or that. I know you can use anything, even the people I don’t always like. Help me to be open to how you want to fill my soul today. Help me to see how you are calling me to love beyond myself. Help me to love with a love you give — a love that quenches every thirst. I love you. AMEN.*

## Day 4

*God's wind blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it's going. (John 3:8)*

On a road trip, I like to avoid using the GPS as much as possible. Chock that up to ego or maybe it's a guy thing, but I like to pretend I *know* where I'm going. I like certainty and clear knowledge. Put me on the side of Nicodemus in John 3 who was equally frustrated with the mysterious and confusing teachings of Jesus. Jesus says that God's wind or "Spirit" is like a wind that we can't pin down, contain or predict. It's everywhere and sometime seemingly nowhere. It inspires and magnifies even as it obscures and alludes.

I wish navigating through life was clear and plain. I wish that God has a spiritual GPS app we could all download and our paths would be clear — even if we resist using the GPS (more ego I guess). Jesus, however, seems to hint in John 3 that God's presence in our lives is more like the wind. Unpredictable. Powerful. Subtle. Invisible but present.

One of my favorite places in the world is Tenant Mountain up on the Blue Ridge Parkway in the western part of NC. At the top of this mountain I would find a tucked-away patch and sit for hours. The wind usually howled up there. It would blow off my hat and force me to lean into the ledge I was perched on. No matter how hidden I felt in the side of the mountain, the wind always found me. I wonder if that might be like what Jesus was talking about when he was speaking to Nicodemus? Was he trying to tell this religious leader that faith and a faith-journey is unpredictable and we

won't always know? Was he trying to encourage him to just sit and feel God's wind blow? Was he trying to encourage him to trust that although he may not see it, God is present and moving?

Take some time today to sit outside. If it's raining, just open your back door for a minute and listen. Let the noise of the ruffling trees or gentle breeze sweep over you. Imagine it's an invitation from God to physically feel the spiritual power of God's love in your life. Take another minute to just breathe in that wind. Trust that it's a call from God. Trust that it's God's presence inviting you to loosen your grip on knowing and trust that, just for right now, being is enough.

Prayer:

*God of love and grace, I want to feel you in my life today. I want to really feel you. I need you to come into my life and give me a drink of your refreshing and life-giving water. Be with me today. Let the wind of your Holy Presence be in my life. I love you. AMEN.*

## Day 5

*The Samaritan woman asked, “Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (Jews and Samaritans didn’t associate with each other).*

(John 4:9)

I have this friend who seems to have it all together. He is disciplined, focused, energetic, caring, kind, compassionate and so much more. I, on the other hand, am willful, curious and unfocused, occasionally lazy and often selfish. Yet, this friend of mine would probably not describe me like this. He would paint a brighter picture, a gentler depiction of who I am.

Why is it that we can’t see how precious we are? Why is it that we don’t fully accept that God wants to be with us?

In John 4, Jesus was on a journey and got tired so he took a break at a well. It was the hottest part of the day so it would have been mostly vacant. Then comes the Samaritan woman and Jesus asks her to help him get something to drink. Her first reaction is, “Why would you even talk to me?” I wonder how many times we’ve been in the presence of Christ and rejected an encounter because we thought we weren’t worthy. We take one look at ourselves in the mirror and decide that we must beat ourselves down to be worthy of a moment with God.

John 4 seems to suggest that God comes into our messy lives exactly as they are. We are enough right now for God to come be with us. That must sound painfully obvious, but I don’t think enough of us

believe it — or wouldn't we hang out with God all the time?!

Take some time today to write a note, send a text or message to someone you appreciate. Tell them how you see them. Tell them they are enough. Let them know you think they are precious and worthy of sitting at the well with Jesus. As you encourage someone else, take a minute of silence. Close your eyes. Imagine Jesus coming to you right where you are. Do you recoil? Do you trust that he really wants to be with you? Let God's presence into your life and just sit with it for a while. Into our messy and imperfect lives, God shows up.

Prayer:

*God, I want to sit with you today. I want to sit with you, exactly as I am: imperfect and precious in your eyes. Help me to see myself as you see me. Help me to see others as you see them. Be with me as I try to sit by the well of living water with you today. I love you. AMEN.*

## Day 6

*Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?" Jesus said, "Not just seven times, but rather as many as seventy times seven times." (Matthew 18:21-22)*

I was scrolling through Facebook one day and I came across a story someone posted about a famous person that had done something terrible. This awful act was over a decade ago and the famous person has since tried to make amends and improve their life. Even still, many haven't been able to get past their previous bad behavior.

As I sat there looking at the anger in the comments towards this person, I felt myself thinking about the church member who posted the story: "That's not very Christian. You are supposed to forgive them. Wouldn't you want a second chance?!"

There, job done. I am a good person because I thought poorly of someone online. I continued scrolling, feeling good that I was able to forgive this person, even though others couldn't. Until I got to another story by another church member. This time the story detailed errors about someone I didn't like. I immediately found myself thinking, "how unbelievable are some people!? I can't believe this person did that! What an awful person!!"

Then it hit me. While I thought I was so morally superior, not 30 seconds later I was judging, criticizing, holding onto anger for a person who I don't even personally know.

As we journey into deeper connection with God, more is required of us. The more we drink from the well of God's love for us, the more love we are being invited to share. One of the places I struggle with this personally is forgiveness. It's not easy for me to forgive someone who I believe has clearly done something wrong. I like "right and wrong." When someone is wrong, there should be consequences. Of course the Bible does talk about consequences to our actions, but Jesus focused more on forgiving others than demanding a reaction for mistakes.

How does it feel when someone forgives you? Especially when you *know* you are in the wrong. How does it feel to really forgive someone else?

Who do you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from today? Is there a relationship that could use a simple, "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you" to move forward? Take a few moments and consider what Jesus tells Peter, that we shouldn't forgive just a couple of times, but always! Hold onto an attitude of grace today and see how your relationships will grow.

Prayer:

*God, I don't always want to forgive others, especially when I KNOW they are wrong. But you forgive me, even when I KNOW I am wrong — and I am grateful. Help me to offer others the grace you so freely give me. I love you. AMEN.*