

Loving God With All Your Strength

Pursuing Greatness In God's Eyes

I. Sowing To the Spirit

1. As we feed our minds upon the knowledge of God and begin to fight the fight to see our hearts conformed to His, more and more godly desires are birthed within us.
2. There is, however, one last battleground before the love of God begins to bear full fruit within us. Those Spirit-birthed desires face a battle against the desires of our flesh.
Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.
Romans 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.
3. We must deliberately choose to spend our strength sowing into what God is working in our hearts.
Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.
4. This takes on two separate manifestations: spending our strength in ways that cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our hearts, and deliberately weeding out the work of the flesh in our hearts. It is both a tightening of our grip upon the kingdom and a loosening of our grip on the things of this world.
1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
5. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus squarely takes aim at the central holds the world has on our life, and lays out how to find freedom in a lifestyle of abandoned love. He urges us to be free from desire for the riches of this world (*Matthew 6:19-21*), the distraction of this world and its fleeting pleasures (*6:22-23*), and the cares of life (*6:24-34*).
Luke 8:14 Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.
6. As Jesus exposes the primary ways the world takes root in our hearts: becoming our reward, our focus or our trust, He calls us to instead find freedom in making God our reward, fixing our eyes on things eternal and choosing dependence on God.

II. Storing Up Treasure In Heaven

1. God is not displeased with the heart of man that desires so much – the problem is we have misdirected our desires and settled for a far lesser reward.
C.S. Lewis - "The Weight of Glory" - Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.
2. In fact, God says it is impossible to please Him if we don't first believe about Him that He loves to reward those who seek Him.
Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
3. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus overturns the religious world with one simple word – “blessed.” He introduces a lifestyle of holiness based not on self-denial, but the pursuit of a higher satisfaction. Throughout the sermon, Jesus emphasizes the rewards of seeking the kingdom.
John 10:10 ...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.
4. The call is not just to deny the desires of the flesh, but to actively pursue a greater treasure – the reward of our Father in heaven who is pleased to give us the kingdom.
Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
5. The riches Jesus is talking about are not specifically material things. In fact, they're not even primarily material things. The issue He's exposing in the heart of men is our desire for approval, or put another way our desire for greatness.
6. Man's lust for money, influence, fame and power is often not so much about those things in themselves as it is the great need in our hearts for approval and significance. We may not word it that way, but deep in our hearts we have a desire for greatness – to know our life counted for something, that we're important... for someone to look at us and call us a success.
7. Jesus' exhortation is to live lost in the eyes of your Father in heaven (**6:3-4,6,17-18,19-21**). Make Him your reward, and let His approval and delight satisfy your heart.
Matthew 6:6 ...pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
8. This is the place where Jesus lived – He knew He had His Father's approval and acceptance and He was utterly free from the opinions of men. It enabled Him to live in a way that man called foolishness and failure.
Matthew 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

9. God has a very different standard of what greatness looks like than man does. When we're living before His eyes and not the eyes of the world, we're set free to pursue greatness in the kingdom, which is sacrificial love.

***Matthew 20:25** But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

III. Setting Our Eyes on Things Above

1. The second call that goes right alongside it is to shift our focus – to set our mind on things above and not on things below.

***Matthew 6:22** "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"*

2. To truly put our reward in our Father and His love requires fixing our eyes on Him. Everything we take in from the perspective of this world will try to plant wrong desires in us. We fight the desires of the flesh by feeding ourselves on eternal perspective – what really matters, and what does not.

***Colossians 3:1** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

3. One of the cruelest things we can do to ourselves is to begin seeking the kingdom and keep looking back to the world. If we're still feeding our eyes and our ears on the world's message of what's important and valuable it will always leave us conflicted, and hindered in our pursuit of the kingdom.

***Hebrews 11:13** These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.... 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

4. It takes ongoing revelation of the things eternal to keep our hearts joyously content realizing that what we're gaining is infinitely greater than what we're giving up.

***2 Corinthians 4:16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

5. Shifting our eyes is about seeing things from a different perspective and evaluating by a different standard. We are to lift our eyes to our eternal Bridegroom and live to get closer to Him. We're not to measure the success of a life of love by its impact or by whether it's returned or appreciated or rewarded or respected by men. Our only objective is nearness – to see Him and get close to Him.

6. The reward that we're pursuing is not a prize given for good behavior. It is the natural result of choosing a life of sacrificial love: we get closer to Jesus and closer to His heart. Jesus calls us to a life of sacrifice not because by our sacrifice we earn a reward, but because God's nature is to give all.
***John 3:16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*
***Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her*
7. Sacrifice is the definition of love. Love gives all. The Sermon on the Mount is a call to love for Love's sake.
***Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
***1 John 3:16** By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.*
***John 15:12** This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*
8. God measures love not by the impact of what we do, but by our willingness to reach deep and give. So much of what Jesus calls us to in the Sermon on the Mount is precisely about establishing that value system. He calls us to do weak things that cost us and seemingly accomplish nothing, because it's the sacrifice that He's looking at.
***2 Samuel 24:24** Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing."*
***Mark 12:41** Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. 42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. 43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."*
9. The world will call waste what God rewards and cherishes. It's those who have their eyes fixed on the face of God, watching His reaction to the movements of the heart, that are empowered to live extravagant love.
***Matthew 26:6** And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. 8 But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?..." 10 But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me... 13 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."*

IV. Becoming Like Little Children

1. The final call is one of trust. Love demands that we lose the focus on self-preservation that has been planted in us by a broken world.
***Matthew 6:24** "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry... 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?... 31 "Therefore do not worry... 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

2. Much of the lifestyle that Jesus calls us to in the Sermon on the Mount is for the purpose of cultivating dependence upon God, and breaking dependence upon other things. God wants us to trust Him enough that we're OK with needing, with wanting, with hungering and thirsting for something we cannot attain on our own.
Matthew 5:3 “ *Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*”
3. Pride and independence are the greatest hindrances to the growth of genuine love. The effect of “having enough” without God is that we will not come to God with the same openness or urgency or yieldedness. We will not respond to His invitation with the same eagerness.
Revelation 3:17 *Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see... 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*
4. God is a jealous Husband. He wants something more than a one among many relationship. He wants to be the One who is our all and to whom we give all, and He uses the wilderness to bring us there – separating us from our other lovers to remind us of the One we really want.
Hosea 2:5 *...For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.’ 6 “ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, And wall her in, So that she cannot find her paths. 7 She will chase her lovers, But not overtake them; Yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, For then it was better for me than now.’... 14 “ Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness... 16 “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the LORD, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ And no longer call Me ‘My Master,’”*
5. We cling to other lovers out of the same fear that causes us to do it so frequently in human relationships – we've been wounded in love. We have many friends, but no close friends because we don't want to let anyone close enough that we would be hurt if they left us. All of the other means to live a comfortable life with or without God become a means to distance ourselves out of self-preservation. Our Father lovingly insists that we abandon those defenses and let Him in.
6. To receive the kingdom requires the trust of a little child. God insists that we come to Him in weakness unlike every religion of man's imagination where we get to come in our own strength.
Matthew 18:2 *Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*
7. Perfect love is built on perfect trust. In a perfectly loving relationship, neither party is looking out for their own interests, but for the interests of the other, because they know that they can depend on the other to watch out for them.
8. That's why over and over again, Jesus assures us of the goodness of our Father – that He sees and He will reward. He is a generous Father who loves to give good gifts to His children. That is the foundational revelation to empowering a life of sacrificial love.

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The Sermon on the Mount Lifestyle

I. A Life of Sacrificial Love

1. The Sermon on the Mount is both a call to repentance exposing a wrongly placed reward, focus and trust, and a practical guide to a lifestyle that promotes a right heart posture.
2. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount calls us to an abandoned, sacrificial love, and points out enough ideas for what to bring to the altar of love to last us for a lifetime.
3. Our dreams and desires, the lusts of the flesh, our rights, our resources, our time, our physical and emotional strength, all of it is our living sacrifice as an act of love.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

4. It all points to a surrender of self. If we're willing to surrender a life that is about us, we gain a life that is about Christ in us.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

II. Sacrificing Self-Indulgence

1. Jesus calls us to pursue righteousness (**5:17-37**) for the sake of holiness (belonging to the Lord). The pursuit of righteousness looks very different when it's done for the sake of being set apart to the Lord than when it's done for the sake of avoiding punishment, and that is what Jesus is calling us to. Jesus is calling us to be pure in heart.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

2. The call to holiness removes all of our convenient separations between big sin and little sin (**21-22**), inward sin and outward sin (**27-28**), forbidden behavior and just undesirable behavior (**31-32**), and sacred portions and secular portions of our life (**33-37**). The longing for God's presence drives us to actually pursue holiness and settle for nothing less (**17-20**).

3. The highest motivation for holiness is realizing that we are holy to the Lord. We were made and chosen to be His.

2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

4. It is the happy holiness that Jesus proclaimed in the Beatitudes where we realize the greatest portion is ours – to be called as God's own and called to taste of the pleasures forevermore at His right hand. It produces a longing in us for God to free us from those lesser desires that we might have room for more of Him.
Psalm 24:3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face.
5. It is a holiness built on the spirit of adoption. Not a striving to be righteous so that God would like us and allow us near, but a reaching for holiness knowing that He has drawn near in order to make us holy so that we could fully receive the benefits of His nearness.
Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
6. As we begin actively engaging in making our hearts a more comfortable resting place for God it keeps us constantly mindful of our identity and our calling – we belong to God and He has joined Himself to us.
7. There is a *reactive* pursuit of holiness – responding fully when we catch ourselves in wrong thoughts, feelings or actions. Don't let a temptation or stumble slip by without confessing it, but more importantly repenting – changing your thinking. Use those stumbles as opportunities to deal with the root issue with God.
8. And there is a *proactive* pursuit of holiness – responding to what we're seeing in the Word and deliberately making plans to change our thoughts, feelings and actions to align them more perfectly with God's heart. Set aside time on a regular basis to determine areas that you want God to work on in your heart and make plans to pursue a change in that area.

III. Sacrificing Self-Promotion

1. Jesus calls us to a life of sacrificial love that insists that we lay down our expectations and our guards and love for Love's sake (**5:38-48**).
2. This is probably the most offensive and most difficult portion of the Sermon on the Mount. It runs counter to our rights-based culture, asking us to lay them all down. It runs counter to our capitalist culture, telling us to give to those who have not earned it. It runs counter to our efficiency-based culture, telling us not to look at the return on our investment.
3. Its core premise is very simple, but very painful. We are to stop looking out for ourselves and basing our decisions on the impact they may have on our earthly future, and instead we are to love for Love's sake – to love simply because it is the nature of our Father and we want to be one with Him.
4. Specifically we are to let go of our hold on: our rights (**38**), our safety and comfort (**39**), our possessions (**40**), our time and energy (**41**) and our money (**42**). We yield them not only to God as His servants, but as servants of the God who is a servant to all (**45**) anybody and everybody has a claim on our resources.

5. There is only one thing that can possess a person to behave in such a way. It's not required by anyone's standards of moral living. It doesn't make sense if we're looking for a favor returned. It doesn't make sense even if we're looking to make the world a better place. It only makes sense only to those wanting to get close to their Father by joining Him where He is as a servant to all. *Matthew 5:45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*
6. Jesus says our reward is greatest when what we do goes totally unrecognized, unappreciated and unrewarded in this world. Because it's then that we get to put our full reward in the smile of our Father in heaven. This is both a continual heart posture, and a deliberate activity.
7. Our heart posture is always to be living to advance God's agenda – which is to selflessly love all. We are to trust God to take care of our own reputation, desires and needs. Our one aim and reward is God's smile. The two biggest opportunities to practice that heart posture are when we're praised and when we're rejected.
8. We cultivate that heart by intentionally engaging in unseen, unrewarded acts of love: whether that's blessing, serving, giving, prayer or fasting. Set aside times to minister to the Lord unseen and unknown by anyone other than Him.

IV. Sacrificing Self-Centeredness

1. We surrender our right to be self-centered by embracing a lifestyle of giving (**6:1-4**). Where before Jesus asks us to surrender our right to refuse an enemy who makes a demand of us, He now encourages us to go out of our way to deliberately sow into the poor and into the kingdom as an investment. *Proverbs 19:17 He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.*
2. God so desires that we would begin seeing souls in dollars. That we would recognize the difference between temporary blessings that He entrusts us with now so that we can labor for His reward, and the eternal reward that He is preparing for us. *Luke 16:9 “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?”*
3. The exchange rate of the kingdom is unimaginable. We get to trade the things that are passing – our time, money and energy – for things that are eternal – the reward of the Lamb, the salvation of souls and a heart alive in love.
4. Jesus extends a divine invitation to use giving to move our hearts – “where your treasure is there your heart will be also” (**Matthew 6:21**). It's OK and even right to want a reward from giving if it's the right reward. Rather than giving out of habit or out of obligation, intentionally give asking for your heart to be moved – farther from its attachment to money, and closer in its attachment to the heart of God.

5. Make giving an extension of your prayer life. Pray for what you're giving to, and give to what you're praying for. Whatever God is highlighting – His heart for the lost, His desire for justice, His glory that is worthy of worship, His compassion for the broken, His love for His church – find ways to sow into it, even if it's little things.

V. Sacrificing Self-Absorption

1. We surrender our right to be self-absorbed by embracing a life of prayer (6:5-15). The primary issue of surrender in living a life of prayer is in gaining control over the focus of our thoughts. Prayer is about directing the focus of our thoughts toward God.
Matthew 6:6 ...pray to your Father who is in the secret place...
2. How we pray is based on this understanding – it is not just a repeating of our needs with the hope that God may hear. It is a redirecting of our thoughts to focus on Him – who He is, what He's like and what He wants to do – and from that focus addressing needs.
Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
3. Prayer is our only defense against being overwhelmed by ourselves – good or bad. The enemy would love nothing more than for us to be caught in the swirl of our own accomplishments and failures, our own strengths and weaknesses, and our own needs and struggles. The more we discipline ourselves to dedicated times of prayer and a lifestyle of ceaseless prayer, the more our focus shifts from ourselves and our own drama to the Lord and to the story He's writing in us and around us.
Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.
4. Besides releasing the provision and power of God, prayer is our escort into revelation and a life of hearing God's voice and walking in the Spirit.
Jeremiah 33:3 ‘Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’
5. Prayer is about a constant awareness and response to the reality of God. Pray as often as you can possibly remember to. The ongoing little conversations have a lasting impact on our hearts.
6. Avoid the possibility (and tendency) of praying self-absorbed prayers. Follow the pattern of Jesus in praying and lift your eyes to heaven and get them fixed upon your heavenly Father. Prayer should always result in things being set in perspective.

VI. Sacrificing Self-Preservation

1. We surrender our right to be self-sustained by embracing a life of fasting (**6:16-18**). Fasting more than any other discipline positions our hearts to remember that we have a need beyond bread alone. God calls us to it not because He doesn't want us to eat, but because He designed us to hunger and thirst so that we would always be conscious that we are needy creatures.
Matthew 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. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"
2. Fasting is voluntary weakness that allows God to release His strength in us. It leads to both emotional weakness and physical weakness.
2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
Luke 4:14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.
3. Fasting is an expression of longing for Jesus.
Matthew 9:15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.
4. One of the greatest rewards of fasting is hunger. It is just uncomfortable enough that we are ever-mindful that we wouldn't be doing this if there wasn't something that we were longing for and expecting to receive. Always go in with a clear sense of what you're hungry for.
5. Another is weakness. We quickly lose the idea that we're in control when we discover that something as simple as skipping a few meals leaves our brain foggy, our body weak and our emotions raw. Always ask for grace for fasting.
6. The other is disillusionment. Fasting inserts a giant disruption into the illusion that we are comfortable and well-fed and have all that we need. Emotions and longings that we can quiet by stuffing with food and entertainment come to the surface when we give them up for a time. Set aside times for prayer when fasting – it sensitizes the heart and change takes place more quickly.