

From the Depths to the Shallows

Background

At the beginning of June 2012, I was at Revival Camp near Evesham in the English Cotswolds. On the final day, Andrew Leakey talked about discovering our identity. The phrase “to take the things which are deep and bring them into the shallows” started going through my mind. I jotted it down as a reminder as I knew I had to do some work on it. It turned out that I didn’t need the reminder as it kept invading my thoughts. I have been exploring what it means for me (and maybe Christians in general) and feel it’s now time to write it down.

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I believe that God is telling me that one of the things he wants me to do is “*to take the things which are deep and bring them into the shallows*”. My first reaction was that this means that I am to make some of the more difficult aspects of Christianity more accessible. This would involve explaining them in terms which everyone can understand. As someone whose secular job and passion is all about training, I naturally found this particularly attractive. However, as I thought more about it, I became convinced that there’s more to it (although it still remains the underlying thought).

My first thought was that while the word came to me, it’s applicable to all Christians at whatever stage we are in our walk with Christ. We all need to be discovering and sharing the mysteries of our faith.

OK, if we’re meant to take that which is deep, the first thing we need to do is go after them (notice I’m now saying “we” rather than “I”). It may seem obvious, but we can’t share what we don’t have. This means that we will have to step outside our comfort zones and grapple with truths we find difficult until we not only understand them but take them on board so that they become integrated into our lives. This may sound daunting, but we’re not on our own. As well as a vast array of Christian literature and a host of gifted teachers we have the Holy Spirit to guide us to a deeper understanding of these truths. Indeed, there is so much human-based teaching and information out there, some of which may be conflicting and contradictory, that we must never neglect the Spirit’s guidance.

And what about bringing them into the shallows? Actually, it’s not a separate step. Researchers have discovered that the most effective way to learn something is to learn it to teach others. If we know we must explain it, then we will ensure that we get to grips with every aspect. We cannot teach from a superficial knowledge. However, let me reassure you at this point that we don’t have to be the supreme experts to share what we have discovered, we just need to be serious about it, aware of where we struggle and seek ways of explaining it.

The key point here is that we are not only meant to be sharing what we discover but also make it more accessible to others, especially to those who are at an earlier stage in their spiritual journey. At the same time, we should be equipping and inspiring all we come into contact with to make their own discoveries. While teaching a child to read, a parent may read stories to their child, but the aim should always be to bring the child to the point where they can read for his or herself.

I could stop at this point but as I thought about it, I came to a new revelation about the nature of “that which is deep” or “hidden”. I believe that in the past the church (and I’m not singling out any denomination here) has been guilty of implying that some of the “deeper truths” are

only for certain people (ministers, priests, theologians etc.). I don't think this was ever meant to be the case. There may be some things which are meant to be hidden – for example, only the Father knows when Jesus will return – but everything else is meant to be sought and found:

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear [awe or overwhelming wonder] of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth knowledge and understanding.” – Proverbs 2¹⁻⁶

“He [God] reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness and light dwells in him.” – Daniel 2²²

“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the rooftops.” – Matthew 10²⁶⁻²⁷

“Whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.” – Mark 4²²

The message is clear. God wants us to discover that which is hidden. It's like a parent creating a treasure or Easter egg hunt for his children. He hides the treasure where it can't be seen but then gives the seekers a treasure map or set of clues. Our heavenly Father has given us clues in Scripture and the revelation of the Holy Spirit so that we can discover all he has for us.

So if we're required to seek out “the things which are deep and bring them into the shallows”, let's do so not with a spirit of reluctance but one of excited anticipation as doing so will bring us into a deeper relationship with the father.

Pete Bennett
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