

# Deep Water

After [Jesus] had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.

-Luke 5:4-7

The story of how Peter became a disciple is rich with interpretation, as well it should be because so much has been packed into this scripture. I want to spend a little time looking at how Jesus specifically mentions "deep water" in His instructions, as well as what happened when Peter did as he was told. It is quite simple, actually. When one goes into deep water, one will catch a lot of fish. When one goes deep in Christianity, one will be well rewarded.

I don't know if too many people would question this lesson, but I do wonder how many will admit they are actually in shallow water? And certainly, most Christians are in shallow water. If it were otherwise, then we would not see 67% of Protestant and 80% of Catholic young adults leave the church between ages 18 and 24. This is a terrifying amount of fish that "got away," and most of them will never be caught.

The shallows give a sense of security, as one can stand in the water. The shallows are familiar, as we can see everything in it. The shallows are enticing, as we can feel the water about us. The shallows are easy, as only a minimum effort is necessary. The shallows are forgiving, as there is almost no penalty for making a mistake.

In contrast, the deep is scary, as there is nothing to support oneself there. The deep is mysterious, as only a tiny fraction of it can be observed. The deep is overwhelming, as it immerses us within it. The deep is difficult, as it takes much effort to not only get there, but to maintain one's position once there. The deep is unforgiving; one must respect it on its own terms or perish.

But the shallows are also dead, as no fish are found there. It is in the deep that life exists. So much life, in fact, that not only can one's net break with a careless toss, but the boat itself is in danger of swamping. As Christians, we have a choice to make. We all will experience God's love, but do we choose the shallow of His love, or the deep of His love?

While many people believe they are in the deep, it is generally easy to tell who really is and who is not. Those in the shallows cling to the old ways; they never give them up. Those in the deep will sacrifice anything to get deeper still. It's not that they don't have ties to their old lives; it is that they look at those ties as expendable.

Those in the shallows will pray the prayers as they were taught them. Those in the deep will expose the most intimate and embarrassing aspects of their lives in their prayers.

Those in the shallows will feel God's love; those in the deep become part of God's love. Those in the shallows will feel blest by God; those in the deep will be the blessing.

If Christianity comes easy to one, then one is in the shallows. If one constantly tries to push oneself as a Christian, then one is heading into the deep. If one only does what one is told to do for God, then one is in the shallows. If one seeks out better ways to serve God, then one is heading into the deep. If one only reads and studies scripture that one finds appealing, then one is in the shallows. If one embraces the whole of scripture, even the disagreeable parts, then one is heading into the deep. If one only goes to church regularly, then one is in the shallows. If one brings the church with them to school, work, home and entertainment, then one is heading into the deep. If one only believes Christian teachings as being the truth, one is in the shallows. If one builds on Christian teachings to discover truths on one's own, then one is heading into the deep.

We have a choice to *listen* to what scripture says, or to *do* what scripture tells us. We have a choice to merely read scripture, or to try to understand all the history, culture and symbolism of scripture. We can merely call ourselves "little Christs," or we can imitate the actions of Jesus. We can wade in the aura of God, or we can swim towards the source of the aura.

I challenge the gentle reader to take an honest inventory of himself. Are you comfortable in the shallows, then don't be surprised when you catch no fish. Push yourself, take risks, and leave the comfortable behind. It is only then that you will catch fish.

Come! Let us be what the Church was meant to be, and let us all go swimming together.

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