

Going Deep Study Guide Part 1

“Going Deep” *“The nature of spiritual formation”*

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18



What about the church and its goal of making of devoted followers of Jesus? Do we exist to see people transformed from a state dominated by sin to a state of freedom from the tyranny of sin where the Holy Spirit enables me to:

“love God with all my heart, soul mind and strength and my neighbor as myself”

“to produce every person mature in Christ.”



To a state of adulthood

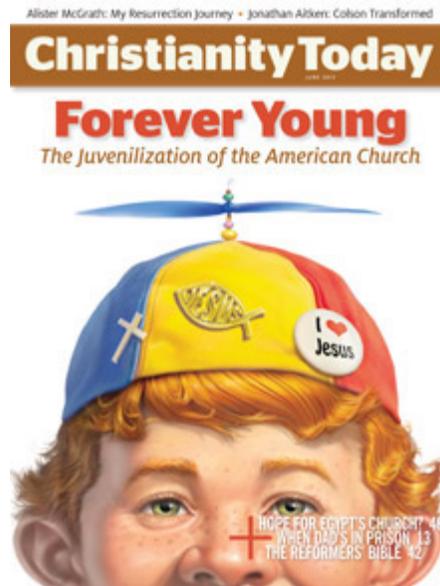
Spiritual maturity = *When we can effortlessly do what Christ would do when in our situation.*

Barna research found that fewer than 10% of Christians are deeply committed!

John R W Stott describes our day as one of: “Grow without Depth”

I have struggled for some time to find a way to express or describe what I am seeing in both young and old Christians – this prolonged childhood– this extreme delay in growing up in the faith –men and women who should be eating meat still needing a bottle.

It is what Thomas Bergler calls the, “*The Juvenilization of Christianity.*”



It is an aversion to growing up into a responsible adult Christian. It is a cultural problem that has effected the church and the spiritual development of young believers.

America is going through a “dumbing down” era. We are less equipped, that sophisticated, less mannered, less polite, less committed.

The Church is facing the same thing! We are shallow!

Duty, discipline, scriptural living, holy habit and holy affections, denying oneself, sacrificial loving and giving – all traits of mature Christians have now been decoupled from adulthood! And moved down the road to some future point of Sainthood!

And we have accepted as the norm a self-centered, emotionally driven and intellectually empty faith that is focused more on “personal happiness and fulfillment” than on “personal holiness and faithfulness”

The Remedy to our problem is a real personal response to the 2000 year old call of Jesus to:

- “Follow me” →**
- 1. Directional - get in the way with Him**
 - 2. Replicational – become like Him.**

What the Bible calls *following Jesus* encompasses the whole idea of “spiritual formation.”

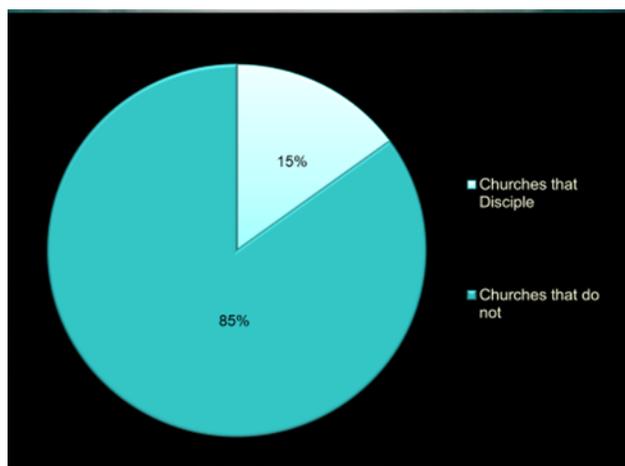
And spiritual formation encompasses the whole idea of Christlikeness or personal holiness!

Spiritual transformation = is the (1) process (2) of being conformed (3) to the image of Christ (4) for the sake of others.

It involves “pivotal “moments (crisis or moments of actualization) but is primarily incremental (process).

The **greatest strength of the Holiness Movement** is their deep and sincere desire to be all that God wants them to be. But their **greatest weakness** is the lack of a clear path or strategy or instruction on how to get to that place.

A survey of the CHM found that out of the top **30 churches 85%** of them had not reached an unchurched person and discipled them to maturity in the five year period of the study!



The desperate need today is not for a great number of intelligent people or gifted people, but for deep people.” – Richard Foster

“If you will deepen the work, God will broaden the influence”

A W Tozer

What does a shallow Christian look like?

Biblical Picture

Exodus 32, Hebrews 5:11-14, John 13: 31-38

Marked by:

- 1. Inability to function independent of close supervision.**
- 2. Impulsiveness**
- 3. A lack of faithfulness and loyalty - Quickly turns aside – easily corrupted**
- 4. A lack of moral stability. Without restraint and rules they fall fast.**
- 5. Preoccupation with self rather than God and His Glory.**
- 6. Self-absorbed rather than others oriented.**
- 7. Inability to listen, receive and act on the Word of God (dull of hearing)**
- 8. A lack of understanding of Scripture and teachings about right living.**
- 9. A lack of discernment.**

What does the deep Christian like look like?

Ephesians 3:14-21.

¹⁴For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁵Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,¹⁶That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;¹⁷That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,¹⁸May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;¹⁹And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.²⁰Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,²¹Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. *(Paul use words that carry the idea of depth)*

Marked by:

1. Strength – v 16

“strengthen with might in the inner man”

Internal vs External living – “out of the abundance ...

Ill. Job – a man who lived from the inside out not the outside in.

2. Depth - v 17

“dwell in your hearts” to settle down and make at home.

Ill. Abraham –Lot God ate with Abraham in his tent but he sent angels to Lots house. He didn’t feel at home there.

“rooted” – firmly anchored, fixed, the opposite of shallow, nourished.

“grounded” – architectural term – foundation- deep enough so you can’t go high.

3. Knowing– v 18-19

“to comprehend” - apprehend – prehensile
“to grasp”

To know - “to *know* experientially the love of God which surpasses knowledge”.

4. Christlikeness - v 19b “filled unto all the fullness of God” = Christlike or Holy

The means of our fullness is the Holy Spirit and the measure of our fullness is Christ.

Going Deep-- How? (The Pattern)

You don't become a deep Christians on your own any more than a little boy playing soldier becomes a great general on his own.

Christians who are spiritually deep people have gone through God's process of deepening his children. Whether it is Moses, Paul, John Wesley or John Doe, all deep people have three things in common.

1. Encountering God – “Knowing Him”

We must “know” the God whom we serve and what His expectations are for us

2. Encountering Ourselves

“Understanding that we are both defiled and damaged”.

3. Encountering the Holy Spirit

“It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to be and become all that God has for us. He has the power to cancel our past sin, cleanse our hearts, conquer our problems and change the person we are presently into the person God's says we can be”

Going Deep-- How? (The Process)

The kind of spiritual formation that transforms us into the image of Christ so much that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are at the center of the deep habit-structures of our life, does not occur instantaneously or automatically. This kind of holy life requires the application of: spiritual disciplines, walking in the fullness of the Spirit, letting others speak into our lives and allowing the difficult circumstances of live to transform us rather than deform us.

1. It is a Partnership

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, for it is *God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure*. Phil. 2:12-13

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, *I worked harder than any of them*, though it was not I, *but the grace of God that is with me*.
1 Corinthians 15:10

“Grace is not opposed to effort but to earning”

He provides
on the switch.

To cultivate, to make the most of. . .
the power but we flip

2. There are tools (means or disciplines) that He and We use.

A. The Disciplines or the Means of Grace

Disciplines of Abstinence

1. Solitude
2. Silence
3. Fasting
4. Frugality
5. Chastity
6. Secrecy
7. Sacrifice

Disciplines of Engagement

1. Study
2. Worship
3. Celebration
4. Service
5. Prayer
6. Fellowship
7. Confession
8. Submission

"The discipline of the Christian disciple is not to master anything, but rather to be mastered by the Spirit. True Christian discipline is the human effort to create the space in which the Spirit of Christ can transform us into his likeness." --Henri Nouwen

Nourish (your soul) it with good works, give it peace in solitude, get it strength in prayer, make it wise with reading, enlighten it by meditation, make it tender with love, sweeten it with humility, humble it with penance, enliven it with psalms and hymns, and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory. Keep it in the presence of God, and teach it to imitate those guardian Angels, which, though they attend on human affairs, and the lowest of mankind, yet "always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven." [Matt. xviii. 10] *William Law – A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*

B. The Holy Spirit – he enables, enlightens, directs, disciplines and transforms.

C. Godly Men and Women – you need to be enriched by the counsel and wisdom of others. All of us need. Godly men and women who have experienced life and know God intimately to speak into our lives.

a) Person to person encounter

b) Books or other spiritual resources.

Moses had his father-in-law Jethro. Paul had his traveling partner Barnabas. Timothy had his spiritual father Paul. Wesley had his books, his brother and his Moravian friends. The early Methodists had the class meeting – a system that produced a steady stream of deep people. Tozer had the writings of the Early Church Fathers and the Mystics. Deep people will always have someone in their life that affirms, instructs, corrects, and holds them accountable.

D. Difficult Circumstances.

E. Choices that bring Change.

F. Time -

ILL. Making Pickles – Brine and Vinegar solution, if you dip in and take out all you have is a baptized cucumber. Put in for 6 weeks – you have pickle.

David McCullough's The Great Bridge McCullough tells a great story, this time of the building of the Brooklyn Bridge, which arched the East River and joined Manhattan to Brooklyn. In June 1872, the Chief Engineer of the project wrote: *"To such of the general public as might imagine that no work had been done on the New York tower, because they see no evidence of it above the water, I should simply remark that the amount of the masonry and concrete laid on that foundation during the past winter, under water, is equal in quantity to the entire masonry of the Brooklyn tower visible today above the water line"* (italics mine).

It is one more illustration of an ageless principle: *the work done below the water line (in a your soul) that determines whether he or she will stand the test of time and challenge.*

III Missionary leaving Africa and writing home – *"I want God to get out of my life all that Calvary has provided"*