

DEEPER:

A Return To The Waves

October 24, 2010

Good Morning! If you are just joining us today, you have entered into a sermon series called DEEPER. Each of these letters stand for the beginning of a core principle that a Fully Committed Follower of Christ would live by.

The first two core Principles started with the D and the E of DEEPER. And to find out what those two principles were just lean over and ask the person sitting near you because I am sure they remember them from the last two weeks...

If you didn't hear them, they said, A fully committed follower :

1. Deflects a cynical world view with the Word of God, and
2. Extends authentic hospitality as a result of a forgiven life

These principles come from a scriptural understanding that people, all people, are on a spiritual journey and that **we are developing into something**. All along this journey there are things that help us move forward and there are things that serve as barriers to our forward movement.

The church is suppose to be a place where we help people identify where they are in their spiritual journey, **and help them identify and remove the barriers** that have slowed or stopped them in their development.

I have been calling them principles, targets on the wall, so to speak, that as we move ahead spiritually we know what we are aiming at. Today we look at Principle #3 and ask the question

How does a fully committed follower of Christ live, so as to become an effective witness to those at Stage THREE?

On your notes: A Fully Committed Follower:

3. Embraces transformation and moves beyond personal comfort

Here is the larger definition

A follower of Christ moves beyond his/her comfort zone and confronts self-defeating behaviors and distorted patterns of thinking that will derail him/her from God's plans and

purposes. As a result, a follower engages in lifelong learning through classes, small groups, accountable relationships and other opportunities that provide transforming encounters with God.

With this 3rd principle we have returned to Stage 3 or Life in the Waves according to the **Ocean Diagram** and if you remember we called this stage of Spiritual Development, the stage of Preparation or Equipping.

The 2 scriptures for today are prime instructions from the Apostle Paul for people at stage 3. Listen to how Paul talks to Timothy in regard to this:

“Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:14-15

Paul is instructing Timothy on how to correctly use this time in Stage 3, this stage of preparation. Let's break it down.

“Keep reminding them of these things” – *to remind quietly.* In other words, Timothy don't nag them and point your finger at them, and tell them what kind of lazy bums they are. But quietly and gently keep letting them know how to use this time.

First he says **what not to do** during this time:

Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. The word ‘quarreling’ is not arguing, it's meaning here is more like striving or competing, like one uping someone else. In essence he is saying, don't let this be a time of chit chat. In Luke 10:5, Jesus is instructing the disciples to go out. He says, “When you enter a house, first say.” The word say has 2 meanings. “Speak by weaving together the inner thoughts and feelings of your heart”. This is the meaning Jesus used. The second meaning he could have used but didn't for the word Say, was “To talk at random” . We are being warned by both Paul and Jesus to not use this time of preparation with random chit chat.

Next he says to Timothy **what to do** during this preparation time:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

“Do your best” - *is literally translated - Study* In other words, Prepare. Prepare yourself to present yourself to God. Paul is saying ‘Be Intentional’

We all know the difference between sitting and receiving something from someone who is prepared and some one who isn't. I come here on Wednesday nights and I receive a meal that has

been prepared. You can tell it hasn't been thrown together. It is wonderful. That is what Paul is saying, when it comes to your spiritual development, do everything in your power to use this time effectively.

Remember Stage 3 is a prime stage for getting Equipped for deeper spiritual water but the danger is that we can get comfortable and never venture out into God's intended purpose for our life. (Illustration: People/Pastors who get comfortable)

Then Paul has this other verse

*“Do not **conform** any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing** of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* Romans 12:2

If I have heard it once, I have heard it 1000 times, a person will say, “I am trying to figure out what God wants me to do with my life.” Look at that verse again.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

When you are wanting to know God's will for your life, the dreams God has for you, then that is a stage 4 question. Stage 3 is about becoming the person who can handle the dreams God is about to show you. And Paul says this is how you become that person.

*1. “Do not **conform** any longer to the pattern of this world,*

There is a person I have in mind, I call her Miss B, she teaches 4th grade SS, and one day she is walking down the hall of the church and I am talking to someone else. She is hurrying because she needs to set up the video and get the room prepared for the children's arrival. I look at her and say Good Morning. She returns the gesture as she hurries by. And the tragedy is I think to myself, “Oh Miss B, she is doing alright, she is a fine member of this church, I don't have to worry about Miss B. Little do I recognize that no one has addressed Miss B's spirit, for as long as she can remember, so long so, that she doesn't even think that that is part of what should be happening in church.

When this prevailing attitude happens in a church, meaning we look at people's activity in church and think that they are spiritually doing great because they are active, then very subtly isolation begins to take root in the people of that church, Oh they come to church, but the deep rich spiritual connection that should be a part of the spiritual experience is gone.

When that happens one of two things happen for a person. One is 'Seperation'. They leave. What happen to Miss B. She is out of here. People that leave for that reason, usually don't leave in a noisy way, they just leave.

The other reaction is conformity. They stay, and they resolve themselves, that this must be the best that it gets.

Conform – To act in accord with the prevailing standards, attitudes and practices

What does Conformity look like? It looks like this....I can not tell by looking at you, how close you are to just fitting in. Giving in to the fact that this must be all there is to life.

Paul is saying to the church at Rome, Do Not Conform

but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Transform – to change in condition, nature or character; to convert

In order for us to prepare ourselves to know God's dreams for us, we have to commit to Transformation, we have to embrace it, we have to come to that point where we can say, "I am willing to forgo my personal comfort in order to become the man or woman who can embody God's dream for my life."

Paul says we come to that point by renewing our minds.

Renew – to reinvigorate, refresh, revive

That is why classes, that is why small groups, that is why accountable relationships, and retreats and mission trips and so on. We need new God encounters.

Tom had really given up on the church. But his wife wanted the kids to have Sunday morning bible education, so reluctantly he took them to church. Tom had developed a hard exterior. I would pass him for weeks in the hallway as he waited for his kids and I would hurry past him, he just looked scary. Then he signed up to be a summer camp counselor and I thought nothing will go wrong at this camp because everyone of the kids will be too afraid of Tom to break any rules. Well at camp God and Tom met. He came back ready to grow. He took our first core class and the minutes it was over he banged on my door. And I said yes sir. And he said "What's Next!" His mind was being renewed, his conforming was gone and he was transforming right before my eyes. This is the principle we commit to at Stage 3.

Transformation vs. Personal Comfort. Are you ready to be a part of a body that is more concerned with who you are spiritually, than what you can produce? Are you ready to be that for other people? God is described as a Potter, with us being the clay. When we embrace spiritual transformation we are submitting ourselves to his shaping of us.

As the renewing process has its way in our life, then the God dreams of stage 4 begin to come into a much clearer view.

Let's pray