

The Deeper Life

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"For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:14

In every generation there are a few rare individuals who break free from mediocrity and apathy. These trailblazers are hungry for God and yield their lives to follow hard after Him. They yearn for something deeper and more meaningful than just a surface relationship with the Savior.

We know from Scripture that "wide is the road that leads to destruction and narrow is the way that leads to life." Hell's highway is wide and broad with people standing shoulder to shoulder, unknowingly edging toward the very edge of the abyss. But there is also a narrow road that leads to life, and if you were to sit under a tree beside the road and watch you would notice that only every so often does anyone pass that way.

There is also within the body of Christ a broader path called "status quo." Many believers are on this road, saved, with heaven as their final destination, but they fail to seek God's highest or best for their lives. Along this path there is also a narrow gate that leads a few of us down a path far less traveled. On this path are many twists and turns with bumps and awkward places that require a leap of faith to continue. This is the road called "sacrifice." It is a long walk down this unpopular and lonely road and few want to go there.

On the road called "status quo," travelers are content with what they've always had. They are enamored by the "blessings" of God. They seek Him for what He can do for them and become spiritually satisfied with the gifts of His hands. They desire a life of ease, comfort, and simplicity. They avoid those who preach about "carrying a cross" or "denying self." It is far easier to seek a popular, "feel good" message.

A rare few travel the path called "sacrifice" and are not content merely to follow the multitudes down a crowded highway. For these saints the only place of deep satisfaction is in His manifest presence, where they can actually touch His face and feel His heartbeat. They're absolutely convinced that He is the only One worth pursuing! They have a kingdom mindset and see things in light of eternity rather than being consumed only by what they see and hear. They cry out with passion, "Jesus I want the deeper life found only in you."

So what does it mean to live the deeper life? It means walking a road far less-traveled where consecration, holiness, humility, intimacy, devotion, and sacrifice are treasured--where its travelers would rather invest themselves in pleasing God than in pleasing man. It is a place where the Lord rules and reigns in their hearts and they realize that crowns aren't simply given as souvenirs, but are earned. Where taking up the cross and following hard after God, though difficult, still brings deep contentment to the soul—and is its own reward. To them pleasing God means everything.

A life of sacrifice and devotion is a virtue, a sweet fragrance that actually scents the throne room and blesses the heart of God. To be perfectly frank, anything less leaves us all feeling empty and dissatisfied. It is not good enough to think ourselves devout because of the number of prayers we pray. If we go home from church and are arrogant and angry toward those we say we love we are only deceiving ourselves. Spiritual maturity must be more than just a desire or an intention--it must be walked out.

We often fill our lives with empty things and shallow pursuits gradually growing weaker and colder in our souls until we have finally had enough. At that point a hunger from deep within is born and we rise up and say, "I'm desperate for more of God!"

Why does it take so long to realize our desperate state and seek the cure? Because it's tough to face the truth we often conceal, even from ourselves—that the old way just doesn't cut it anymore. When the Holy Spirit shows us how weak and wayward we are, we are then humbled and can only cry out with deep hunger for a fresh encounter with the living God, and nothing else will do. In fact, we feel like we'll die without it. It's only at the place where we will settle for nothing less that we are truly ready to go deep with God.

But be warned. Going hard after God will offend others. It is inevitable--the moment you press into God, Christian friends will show up with "words of encouragement" that are actually ordained by the enemy, designed to quench your fire and stifle the deep hunger inside you. And make no mistake about it, if you act on their words they will lead you back through that narrow gate and onto same old wide way. Better to lose a friend than to miss out on the incredible treasures of the Spirit of God.

And while you may offend those close to you by going hard after God He is pleased and excited by the deep hunger in your heart. That's why you must silence the conflicting voices around you, of both humans and spirits--that urge you to settle for less than God's best. In order to go deep you must determine in your heart to march to the beat of a different drummer leaving others behind who are not willing to walk the road of sacrifice.

Are you determined enough to arrest God's attention—to say you won't let go until you've pressed in? Are you tired of standing on the sidelines, a mere spectator while the

passionate pass you by? Get desperate enough today to press in. Cry out with all your heart, refusing to settle for anything less than God's best. Get hungry for the deeper things of God, moving beyond the status quo to touch His very heart.

Going hard after God will mean loving God not just in word but also in deed. Sweet surrender is the first step to empowerment and the anointing that comes only when we refuse to settle for anything less than serving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. It is hard to convince our finite minds that carrying a cross can bring peace and contentment, but because it is by His strength that we accomplish anything, He gets the glory and we are filled up in the process.

He is the sweet master, and in order to please Him we need only adore Him on this narrow path, even without fully understanding it all. By walking the path of sacrifice we finally realize that we can never become mature without first dying to the old selfish lifestyles that demand more and are never satisfied. In dying to our old man we become that fully developed "new man" that God intended—something that could never happen otherwise. As we walk down the narrow path of sacrifice He accomplishes His grand design for our lives. We become reliant on Him and He frees us from self by revealing our weaknesses by the power of the Holy Spirit. An intense desperation is created by the emptiness we find in all earthly things, which hold little appeal at that point. We discover the doorway to the deeper life by first being discontent with a shallow, egocentric existence.

The natural man would love to go deep in Christ and his pure love at no cost, but it is only his excessive self-love and pride that acts so childish and demanding in the first place. And while God's fatherly heart takes no joy in seeing us struggle He knows the road of sacrifice brings about steadfastness and meekness, purifying our motives and intentions to the point where we are worthy to feel His deepest heart cries and carry His message of love to a lost and dying world.

Take heart, precious friend, when bearing the cross down the narrow and winding road of sacrifice, as you anticipate the joy that comes with pressing in. As you go hard after God, let me encourage you. You have set out on a journey of divine proportions, determined to settle for nothing less than touching the very heart of God, and I guarantee that in that place is fullness of joy, where you will find that He is altogether lovely and everything you ever wanted.