

Deeper

"God desires you to move in closer to Him, to draw near, to approach, to go deeper..."

Total Life victory, and the idea that we are a three-legged stool - body - mind - spirit; we are *tri-partite* - three parts, and we're observing three "rights" that we need to give up:

- 1] I give up the right to be offended - I won't live offended, or hold on to being offended.
- 2] I give up the right to withhold encouragement. Everybody on this planet needs to be encouraged - to be given a word of encouragement.
- 3] I give up the right to *not* take responsibility. God has given us a gift. It is our ability to respond rightly to unrighteousness, unlawfulness, immorality, and injustice, and I give up my right to not respond - to stay silent on things that matter, in terms of the Kingdom and the world we live in.

Two months ago, Pastor Jimmy preached a message called *"Take a Stand"*. That was the beginning of stepping into saying, *"I will not be silent on those things that go against the Word of God that are happening in our culture."* One clear word for today is simply this, *"God desires you - us - me to move in closer to Him - to draw near - to approach - to go deeper."*

He gives us an invitation

1] God wants you to draw near and to come close. He desires a relationship with *you!* He issues the invitation, *"Come..."* Every one of us has an invitation coming to us non-stop, 24-7, 365 days a year, to *"Come close - draw near."* At the end of Psalm 23 it says, *"Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

Did you know that you were being followed? Two things that are hot on your heels right now are: 1] goodness, and 2] mercy. The problem is, though, that we're moving so fast through life. We are *so busy*, and can be so distracted and caught up in what's happening in our culture - whether scrolling your news feed or *"doom-scrolling"* on X. We're so spun-up in *"things"* and are going *so fast*, that mercy and goodness can't even catch us. We're learning that sometimes we need to say *"Yes"* to God's invitation to slow down, and to allow his goodness and mercy to catch up and overtake us by doing things that are sustainable for us in our everyday lives.

James 4:7 NKJV

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Sometimes we make spiritual warfare complicated. This is *not* complicated, because when we’re submitted to God, we are empowered by him - filled with him - and we can stand protected from the enemy, not only protected in the defensive mode, but engaging in an *active* mode. We can take the fight to the enemy.

James 4:8 NKJV

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...” (Draw near - to get closer to God and get to know him better.) This is all you have to do: *draw near - come close*. He issues the invitation, but *we* initiate the *movement* - taking the step with intentionality and purpose. We have to get out of the boat, just like Peter did.

Hebrews 4:16 NKJV

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” These three things are given to us in our time of need: mercy - grace - help, and all we have to do is approach - draw near - go close. That’s what he invites us to do.

Matthew 14:28-29 NKJV

“And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ ”

Jesus said one word in response to Peter’s request - *“Come!”* Peter *did* sink - but he also walked - a natural man became supernatural - and executed an event that defied the laws of gravity.

Matthew 11:28-30 MSG

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Isaiah 55:1 NKJV

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Are you thirsty here today? Do you feel *parched*? Do you feel like you need something? God says to come purchase it, but he’s going to give you what you need to obtain it. *That’s* the love of God *for you!* These are just a few of the many invitations in Scripture: *“come - draw near - partake”* - all are his invitation to us today.

2] There is a progression of intimacy - a protocol of relationship with God and his kingdom. When God calls us to come near, he doesn’t leave us guessing or wondering.

What does it look like to make movement or to take a step toward God? It’s like not getting faster, but *slowing down* a little bit, or by being intentional to simply create a “Sabbath moment” in the middle of your busy day, where you pause, taking a breath (a God pause), and saying, *“Father, thank You for Your presence with me today. Thank You that You said You will never leave me. You’ll never forsake me. You’re here right now in the middle of my job, and You’re right here with me, helping me to create holy moments with everything I do.”* It’s all an act of worship when I consecrate it to him, no matter how mundane it may be - it is holy - it’s beautiful - and it’s for *his glory*.

In 586 BC, Babylon came and literally decimated Jerusalem - destroyed the city wall and the Temple, and took out all the treasures of the Temple, and carted off many of the citizens of Jerusalem - God’s chosen people, who were given by Him their promised land (not Heaven, but God’s provision where his abundance is and where he called them to be).

For seventy years the people of Israel were in captivity, much like today, where many of God’s chosen people - his beloved sons and daughters - are also in captivity. They are captive to the things of the world and to sin - addictions, brokenness, trauma, mental illness and physical illness. God’s heart is still to deliver, but even in the midst of captivity he brings *encouragement*.

Ezekiel had a vision of dry bones coming together and coming to life. He also prophesied about the river of Life that flows out of the Temple of God. Wherever the river of God flows, things happen.

Ezekiel 47:1-5 NKJV

“Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side. And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed.”

Here is the progression. If this is a protocol of relationship, it means this - we need to go deeper. It's easy to step out onto a beach and go a few feet out into the water. But God says to *“come deeper”* - take a step into deeper water - but again, we stop out of fear, and God says, *“Come.”* Why are we stopping when there's a potential for so much more? Why are we waiting? Why are we hesitating?

If we live in the last of the last days before Jesus comes back, he wants us to come closer and go deeper - and just playing religion and playing church won't cut it anymore. The world today needs *answers* - and it needs *Truth*, and *Truth tellers*. It's not the preachers pounding pulpits that are going to do it - it's you - who are salt and light where you live, work, and play.

That's who is going to deliver the Truth in a school board meeting, or a city council meeting. It's *you* - standing up in your office with the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that's in you - the Truth of righteousness will be empowered because it's you saying it, not the religious leaders that are expected to. This is not a time to be silent anymore. It's not a time to hold back - not on social media pounding out your grievances, where it doesn't accomplish anything - or bode well for the Gospel and Life of Christ in you, and the nature and character of the God we love, but in your every-day conversations with real people.

We need to be bold, brave, and courageous, and speak the Truth in love. Everybody else is speaking *their* “truth” - why not you? If Jesus is the center, don't settle for *ankle deep* or *knee deep*. Step into the water. Go deeper - draw nearer, and *don't stop*. Now we're in over our heads. Now we have to swim. There's *effort* involved - to be in the water fully immersed - fully covered and fully protected - coming in closer and nearer.

3] As we grow in our relationship with God and his kingdom, the result is fruit, abundance, and life and joy beyond anything we can imagine. There's something that happens as we do this. Not only are we protected, but we are provided for - and we're in over our heads - *with Him*, crossing this river of Life, healing and grace.

Ephesians 3:20-21 AMP

"Now to Him who is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen."

That's the God we serve and love. He's the One who issues an invitation to *"Come deeper! Get closer!"* There's something for *you* as you get deeper in the water where God is, and it's our *safe place* - in the storm with Jesus.

Today, will you answer that same call that Peter answered? - to step out of the boat and into the water? Will you say *"Yes, Lord, I'll take the risk. I'll go deeper. I'll immerse. I'll go all the way in and become a disciple and a student of Your Word, and a person of prayer."*

3John 1-2 NKJV

"The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." [prosper - simply to have good success in all areas of your life]

Ezekiel 47:6-8 NKJV

"When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: 'This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.'"

Imagine what the River of Life will do for you. It is representative of the very Presence of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. The Presence of God heals everything it touches, and it produces a continual flow of abundance.

Ezekiel 47:9-10 NKJV

“And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many.”

Hear the power of the invitation of God, who is saying, *“It’s time to go deeper - to stop settling for second-best when you can have first-best. Why settle for something that is beat up and worn out, when you can have this now? Time is short. Why wait? Now is the time!”*

Prayer

Father, we want to go deeper. We’re ready to get in the water - out of the ankle and knee-deep water to cross the River of God - the healing river of God that flows from the Temple. We’re ready to cross it and be in over our heads with You! We ask for Your grace to see it done. In Jesus’ name. Amen