

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

What Does It Mean that People Want "Deeper Bible Study?"

by Mike Leake

"We want deeper Bible study."

Ever hear that one? If you have ever surveyed your church about Bible study and small group options I almost guarantee you have heard those words. While community is still the number one desire for many when it comes to groups, recent surveys have shown that right on its heels is the desire for "going deeper".

And you know how we respond to this desire?

We give them studies that go "deeper *in* the Word". And what we mean by that is that we rub the nerd sauce on even thicker. We bust out our interlinear. We start talking root words and we do far reaching word studies. Or we go the route of biblical theology and trace a theme throughout the story of the Bible. These are all great practices...but it doesn't seem to scratch that itch.

One of two things seems to happen. What often happens is that nobody shows up for our super deep Bible study. Or they show up and they get bored and they drop out. And so we conclude that they didn't actually want deeper Bible study. Or, secondly, people do show up, they devour the Bible study, they really learn their Bibles, they get deeply educated but something is still missing. Sometimes it seems as if knowledge isn't translating into lifestyle. But more often than not, what is happening is that these folks who are devouring the word studies are *still* asking for something deeper.

This is because when people say they want deeper Bible study they do not mean they want to go deeper into *the Word* but what they are really desiring (and what I believe the Spirit of God is prompting) is for the Word to go deeper into *them*. This is what they mean when they say that but we've often heard this request the wrong way.

I suppose some you could read this as if I'm saying a deep dive on the meaning of the Bible isn't necessary. But that's most certainly not my point. Such a deep dive is a must in order to actually have the word applied to the deep recesses of your heart. This is not a call to go back to the unhelpful small group discussions centered around "what does this verse mean to you". But do notice Hebrews 4:12.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Notice what is happening here in this verse. The Bible is not a passive instrument which we dissect. You don't go deep into the Word. The Word goes deep into you. That is what Hebrews is saying. God's Word will search you out into the depth of your being. It goes deep.

I'm convinced that sometimes our "deep Bible study" is actually a smoke screen to avoid the real deep work of the Spirit. We can puff ourselves up with knowledge and pride ourselves on "knowing truth" but in reality our deep dive is nothing more than learning to use bigger gongs for our clanging cymbals.

What this all means is that we *do* need to labor to learn what the Word of God means. We absolutely must. We cannot cut corners of interpretation because to do so will mean that the medicine applied to our souls will be diluted. But we must never be satisfied as if that is the end of our labors.

The Spirit of God intends to use the Word of God to go deep into our hearts. We have to learn to ask tough questions. We must learn how to apply the gospel to those deepest and darkest parts of our stories of shame and sin and even victory. That is what people are crying out for when they say, "I want deeper Bible study". They don't mean word studies. They mean a different kind of deeper.

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Undercover Mentor: Redeeming the Everyday

by M. R. Conrad

Nelson Knode was supposed to be teaching me trumpet. He did that, and he did it well. But Nelson did so much more than teach me trumpet. He was my undercover mentor.

My Undercover Mentor

“I want to walk with Jesus,” Nelson told the ten-year-old me, his blue eyes a bit overly intense. I never knew the professional trumpeter without snow-white hair. In my mind, wrinkles had always creased his face. And his mantra never changed, “I want to walk with Jesus.”

My trumpet lesson was half trumpet technique and half discipleship. Since we met every Sunday after church in the church basement, I guess that made sense. I often could not tell where Nelson’s musical pedagogy ended and his sermon began. Some of the stories he told to prove his points would fit either option.

Nelson didn’t just talk: he modeled what he taught whether it be in trumpet performance or the Christian life. Now, years after my teacher went to be with the Lord, people hear me play the trumpet and say that it uniquely sounds like Nelson Knode. His wife says it to this day. I hope a clear tone in my trumpet playing is not all that rubbed off. Like Nelson, I want to walk with Jesus too.

God used Nelson Knode to mentor me. At the time, I didn’t see it that way. I was just making loud noises in the church basement. But it has got me thinking—who could I influence in the everyday tasks of life to walk closer with God? Could there be more substance—an eternal aspect—to the relationships in which God has placed me?

William Carey’s Undercover Mentor

John Warr made shoes. He was a few years older than his fellow apprentice, William Carey. Warr was also a born again Christian of the despised dissenters in the late 1700’s. Carey grew up in the Anglican church, prejudiced against all dissenters whether they be Baptist or Congregational.

As they hammered on shoe soles, Warr would talk with Carey about his soul. At first, Carey argued against his coworker. As time went on though, Carey began to feel “a growing uneasiness and stings of conscience gradually increasing.”¹¹ Carey read the books Warr lent him. Not long afterward, Carey attended a dissenters’ prayer meeting with his coworker. Then, the young shoemaker left the dead religion of the Anglicans of his day and trusted Christ as His Savior.

History forgot John Warr. For over one hundred years, Carey’s biographers did not even know the name of the young man so key in Carey’s conversion. However, the fruit of Warr’s mentoring work with William Carey reached beyond their humble shoe-making shop in central England, leapt across the world to India, and stretched through the ages as countless missionaries have followed the example of the young man John Warr led to Christ.¹²

You, As an Undercover Mentor

Most of us—even pastors and missionaries—will never be William Careys. But we can all be John Warrs and Nelson Knodes. We can be undercover mentors to others. Our occupation, whether it be teaching music or making shoes or programming computers, should be vehicles for God to use to influence others. I’m not suggesting we should be sneaky. There was nothing underhanded about Nelson Knode’s or John Warr’s witness. They spoke and lived the truth openly before all. However, they used their daily occupation as a tool to encourage those around them to know Jesus Christ and to live for Him.

Who could you influence in the everyday tasks of life to walk closer with God? Could there be more substance—an eternal aspect—to the relationships in which God has placed you?