

Deeper, Not Different

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19
Psalm 40
1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20
John 1:35-42

- Wife:** “Did you take care of that problem with the cable company?”
- Husband:** “No, did you?”
- Wife:** “No. Why would I do it? You said two weeks ago that you’d take care of it.”
- Husband:** “No, I think we talked about it and we came to the conclusion that one of us...”
- Wife:** “No!”
- Husband:** “...that whoever could get to it would take care of it.”
- Wife:** “No—you said that *you* would take care of it! But, I should have expected this; you never follow through on anything that you say you’ll do, and then you expect *me* to do it!”
- Husband:** “Okay—quit making a mountain out of a molehill.”
- Wife:** “It’s NOT a ‘mountain of out of molehill’!”
- Husband:** “Again, this critical nature. Take some responsibility yourself. If you see something that needs to be done, why don’t you do it?”
- Wife:** “I DO EVERYTHING! Is it that much to ask you to do ONE thing?! Give me a break! I’ve had it with this; we’ve got to stop this fighting. This is the way we’ve been fighting year, after year, after year. We’ve got to do something. It seems to me we have three options—we can stay miserable, we can get a divorce, or we can try to make it better.”
- Husband:** “Well, the one thing we did agree on is that we would not get a divorce. And, staying miserable is not really a great option. But, what are we going to do? What *can* we do?”

What *can* they do? They can choose to go **deeper!** Life is full of difficulties, struggles and challenges. There are difficulties in marriage, challenges at work, strained relationships, illnesses and death, loss of jobs, midlife crises, and countless other challenges. Often, when we’re going thru such struggles, we want to **run**; we want to **change our circumstance**, to choose something **new and different**, hoping that it will solve our problem. In reality, most of the struggles and challenges we face in life are invitations into something deeper, not something different.

One day, while I was praying at the seminary, an image of a submarine came to mind. It was traveling near the surface of the water from one sea to the next. Eventually, it stopped in the middle of a body of water and it began a series of dives, each one deeper than the one before. As I watched this image play out in my mind I realized that God was trying to teach me something important—part of our lives are spent trying to get where we feel like we’re supposed to be, but once we’re there, we need to start going deeper. This is what leads us to spiritual maturity. It stretches us for God’s greater glory!

What does it mean for us to go “deeper”? Simply put, it means that, in the midst of the challenges and struggles of life, we find eternal meaning in our situation by prayerfully discerning how God is laboring to love us and how He is forming us more and more into an image of His Son, Jesus Christ. This usually entails our letting go of our own desires and coming to a deeper awareness of God’s desires. It frequently means choosing to love and give without counting the cost. A great Scriptural example of this is Jonah.

God gave Jonah a difficult challenge—to preach a message of repentance to the people of Nineveh. Rather than facing the difficult challenge and letting it stretch his faith and love, Jonah ran! He caught a ship heading for Tarshish with the hope that God wouldn’t notice. God did not let Jonah get away that easy, though. We all know the rest of the story—Jonah realized (while in the belly of a fish) that God was calling him to a deeper trust and faith. He finally chose to do what he didn’t think he had the strength to do, and countless people were blessed by it! When things get tough in our lives, it’s easy for us to do what Jonah did and run. However, today we are invited to respond in a different way—by going *deeper*! Rather than running, we are challenged to respond as Samuel did in today’s first reading, “Here I am!”

One of the important roles of the Church is to provide people with opportunities to “go deeper” in their commitments and practices. For example, married couples that are struggling in their vocation can find resources for taking their relationship deeper through a weekend-long retreat called [Retrouvaille](#). There is a Retrouvaille retreat coming up in just a few weeks, so we’ve included information about it in the bulletin this week. It is the most successful tool I’ve seen in helping married couples find healing and reconciliation. It is a great way for couples to choose something *deeper*, rather than running to something *different*.

In addition to this amazing ministry to married couples, our parish offers several Bible studies and prayer groups that can help us to go spiritually deeper, to experience God’s presence in the midst of the struggles and challenges of life. This week, let’s take time to prayerfully reflect on the challenging and difficult situations we’ve been going thru lately. In what ways have we wanted to run, to cut off relationships, and to choose different situations? And, most importantly, let’s ask God to show us how He wants to use the situation we’re in to make us more like Christ.

SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISE:

- ✚ Read Mark 10:35-45. In what ways was Jesus calling the Apostles to something deeper, rather than to something different in this story?