

Depth. Depth of compassion… I'm out of my depth… Drinking from a deep well… Deepening wisdom and understanding… Depth of character. This word applies to so many aspects of our lives but it always communicates one thing: that we have gone beyond the simple, the expedient and the shallow to mine the deeper things that God has prepared for us. For most of us it is a bittersweet thing, a love-hate kind of relationship. We love the result but will do almost anything to avoid the process.

In this fall edition of the Vineline, we will be exploring the many implications of this quality in our journey of following Jesus. The primary reason for doing so comes out of what we as a National Team believe that God spoke to us about our movement when we gathered at the beginning of this year. As many of you will recall, he spoke to us about this being a year of favour. Yet it was also very clear to us that our appropriate response to his blessing needed to emphasize going deeper.

As I wrote shortly after our gathering, "...he reminded us of the early church who focused on giving themselves wholeheartedly to deepening relationship with God and with one another (Acts 2:42) rather than having their attention fixed on blessing. 'Deepen in your commitment to me,' he said. 'Go beyond a focus simply on intimacy to a worship that is rooted in personal holiness and prayer; go beyond simply believing in me and truly abide in me.'" (John 15)

"He also called us to mature in our understanding and expression of the covenant loyalty to one another that is his intention for us as a people. (Phil. 2:1-4, Heb. 12:14, 15) He spoke to us about growing in our calling as servant-leaders: not being content to simply tell others how to live their lives but truly walking side by side with them in their journey to become like Jesus. (2 Cor. 1:24) 'I want to call you to a new monasticism,' we felt he said. 'Instead of a vow to poverty I am calling you to a prosperity of contentment that issues in generosity; instead of chastity, I am calling you to purity and sexual healing; in the place of the historical term 'obedience' and all that it implied, I am inviting you to mutual submission – especially in an intergenerational sense of the hearts of parents turned to their children and children to their parents.'"

We've all heard the phrase, "a mile wide and an inch deep." Too often it is used to describe the spiritual life of Christians – we run after the blessing and touch of God but don't respond in any active way to let the 'water' of those encounters seep into our inner lives and characters. John Wimber, in his later years, challenged the Vineyard movement to respond to the outpouring of the Spirit that was taking place in the nineties by digging ditches for that spiritual water to flow constructively into practical, kingdom ministry. I suppose that this Vineline is really about how to start digging those ditches.

Of course, our goal isn't to produce a result that is a mile deep and one inch wide either! "Deep and wide", the old hymn goes. "Deep and wide, deep and wide, there's a fountain flowing deep and wide." The resources that come to us through the cross and blood of Jesus are certainly enough to give us a rich breadth of spiritual vitality and experience and to work deep within the soil of our hearts. Our cry is for both! ■