Drawing Us Deeper



by Rik Berry

I want to know God more. I want to go deeper. I want to be out of my depths in God. These words echo the sentiment in many popular songs of worship. I believe this longing is characteristic of multiple generations and cultures today. I think it is due to something God has been quickening within us globally. And I have heard its harmonic chorus issuing forth through all the arts. It has been growing in clarity. It is the sound of God's Word, varied in its expression and singular in its emphasis, as it has gripped countless leaders, artists, and worshippers. As a visual artist and musician, as well as a Vineyard pastor, I speak for both those who move in the prophetic through the arts and those who pastor the prophetic. The essence of what we have heard and sensed is this, "Get ready, prepare yourselves, for my Kingdom is at hand. Get ready, go deeper."

God has given the command for our nets to be cast into the deep. A number of years ago just after renewal began in Toronto where we lived, I was inspired with an image of a mighty wave cresting over some fishermen. With the mixing of these two metaphors God was saying that he will come like a wave and, by his momentum, will make us fishers of men. Not in a little way… but like we have never seen before. The image of the disciples casting their nets into the depths of the unknown and drawing forth a harvest that dwarfed their limited imaginations is an image pointing us to the depths as well. Go out into the deep and cast your nets. (Lk.5:1-11).

After casting their nets into the deep and bringing in their oversized catch, Peter expressed what they all must have felt when he asked the Lord in embarrassed shame to leave him, for he was a sinful man. Then Jesus said to them that he would make them fishers of men. Throughout the rest of Luke 5, Jesus demonstrated what spiritual depths they would see as they followed him. In the painting, I felt that the wave wrapping around the image of the fishermen's great catch indicated God's hand and momentum in it all. This certainly was what Peter reacted to. Jesus had taken them to the edge where they could look down into the profound depths of God's mystery and sense God on the move, that he was in the world and up to something.

After this painting God had my attention. This was around the same time that I was first trying out the whole idea of painting on canvas what I was hearing from God in the spirit. The inward hearing from God





was emerging in my images and in my music. How many times are we empty and without inspiration as artists? For me, this inward inspiration was profoundly different than before. It was like someone had just given me a license to fly a jet or soar in a glider. The exhilaration of God getting me to paint what he was revealing and also giving me the visual inspiration to express it seemed so on course, so led by God.

Around then God also spoke through someone in a group of people praying over me one day that what I would paint would happen. I didn't forget that word, even though I laughed. I can image some wild possibilities and I could paint them… but this wasn't the sense of what was said. I think I let that word go for a while until some things began to happen that I saw were in my paintings. I had painted "Champion of the World" a painting with Christ riding a white horse through the harvest field in which 25 or so cities of the world are represented, one of them being New York in which the World Trade Towers were being struck by lightening. When people asked back in '96 what the significance was of the lightening striking the towers I said each time that I believed God was going to cause something to happen in New York or in the North East that would bring a mighty shaking to our economy.

Shortly after this in '97 I painted "Eagle's Release" which reveals four of the economic centres of the world. New York with its towers is visible. There is an eagle representing the Spirit of God striking the skyline at dawn. In front of the buildings there appear to be stacks of gold coins representing the wealth of the nations. They are toppling under the eagle's talons. The significance of this painting is that God is releasing resources in radical ways for his Kingdom and his purposes. The people in the foreground are worshipping God and trusting in his provision. Though this image does hint at the 9/11 disaster, I didn't see the full import of what God was revealing until months after the disaster.

I suddenly became alert to the words that had been spoken over me a few years before. I wondered and continue to wonder what it means fully when God said, "What you will paint shall happen". It seems to me that it is very much like Jesus saying, "Whatever you ask for in my name it will be given to you." We can't just ask for any old thing, we have to ask in Jesus' name for what he has for us. So, for that to happen, we have to go deeper. The depth of God is calling to us.

We might want to ask why, if all authority on heaven and earth has been given to us in Jesus' name and we can ask anything in Jesus' name and it will be done for us, we don't immerse ourselves in his name and let this current rising wave of God carry us along deeper and further into his Kingdom business.

Now, some of us are stumbling into the deep things of God and are just not used to recognizing that this is God's realm. Here, in the deep things of God, are found the mysteries of life, both the answered and unanswered. Here is found God's living word, his inspiration, his direction, his will and purpose. Did you realize that our poetry, music, writing, drama, dance and visual art forms are all pointing out to us, the very creators of the art, that God's word is in it and is coming forth reflecting in a profound and prophetic way these mysteries. I remind myself continually, "Do not ignore what God is saying through your art."

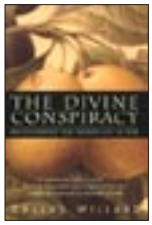


There is no coincidence that God inspired me to paint images that portrayed the World Trade buildings in them. God's purpose clearly was not a warning through them but rather consolation of the fact that he is there when our world is shaking and that he will bring good to those who are trusting Jesus his son. Look at your poetry, look within the drama and music God is giving you. What is God revealing to you?

We plumb the depths of God's heart in either meditation or desperation. We speak as we hear in part. We paint or dance as we see in part. Here in the depths of God's mystery is truth, glimpses of the whole, but given to us in such a way that would discourage us from claiming it originates in the domain of our full understanding. It is given to us and revealed through us, spoken, sung, or depicted in such a way that points to God. It requires the multiple confirmations of others who add more facets of truth. For the human author is not even aware, often, of the total import of God's word through them. They too receive more understanding as God's word precipitates from mist to life-giving water.

I believe that to find more of God we have to go deeper into prayer and in our ability to listen to God, but I think there is another important component. God, from within his unfathomable depths, is drawing us deeper; he is calling us to himself. Peter, standing in his boat, heard that same call as Jesus stood on the water and beckoned to him saying, "Come." How are we going to respond? Will we step out and let God take us deeper? We are out of our element when we begin to plumb the depths of God's mysteries, but graciously he guides us to himself as we let him ignite his fire in our hearts. ■

Recomended Books



The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God

by Dallas Willard

(Harper SanFrancisco)