



DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Shallows – Part 1
A Pathway to Your Destination
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Main Idea – God has something significant available to you. To access the deeper things of God you must make sure you are not stuck in a shallow environment. In order to increase your capacity to understand the deeper things, build your “house” next to God’s “house”.

Deeper waters

- God has an important purpose for your life available to you.
- However, you will not find that purpose if you are living in a shallow environment.
- The deeper ideas and understandings of life are not available in superficial, surface-oriented places.
- The secular world operates according to the rules of shallow waters. A deeper understanding of things is not possible, nor encouraged, in those environments.
- To find what God has for you, you will have to venture into deeper places.
- To get to deeper waters, one must first pass through the shallows, but cannot stay for long – nor become comfortable – there.
- The shallows are simply along the pathway to the deeper environment.
- **1 Corinthians 2: 6-12 – However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (NKJV)**

Sign #1 that you might be in shallow waters: Temperature - Attitude

- The water temperature widely fluctuates in the shallows. This change happens daily, and sometimes hourly.
- In deep water, the temperature is constant and stable.
- If you experience widely fluctuating moods or attitudes, it might be a sign you are living in shallow waters.
- God is calling you into deeper waters so your attitudes and disposition will be stable.
- **Exodus 14: 14 – The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still. (NIV)**
- Many tests and trials will regularly come to you in your life. Do not be alarmed or surprised when they happen. Knowing ahead of time they will happen, and having anticipated their arrival, you can remain stable.
- God will keep your temperature stable during life's tests.

Sign #2 that you might be in shallow waters: Turbulence - Instability

- There is much turbulence in shallow waters. Waves in the shallows can be quite destructive. There is not nearly as much turbulence under the surface in deep water.
- The deep waters of God are stable. They are like a strong foundation.
- Instability in life comes from building directly onto the “ground” without first preparing a good “foundation”.
- Everything you build for yourself in life must be established on the right value system.
- Knowing you have built your life on the right values – and faith system – will give you comfort that you will survive instability in the outer environment.
- **Luke 6: 46-49 – “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like the man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” (NKJV)**
- It is interesting to notice that immediately after those words from Jesus, the gospel writer Luke provided an example of someone who had built on a firm foundation. **Luke 7:1-10** is the story of the Roman centurion soldier who built his expectations upon his faith in Jesus' abilities. Upon seeing the centurion's faith, Jesus said, **“I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” (v.9)**
- It is important to build your house in a good “neighborhood”. What comes into

your house is influenced by the rest of your neighborhood. The centurion knew that proximity to Jesus was the right neighborhood.

- Do not be inconsistent on what you allow into your house from the outer environment. Be mature, and sure of the wisdom taught in God's "neighborhood". Double-mindedness is not something God will work with.

James 1: 5-8 – If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Sign #3 that you might be in shallow waters: Tidepools – Loneliness

- Tidepools are in shallow places where fish can become stranded when the tide goes out.
- Isolation for any extended period of time is not safe.
- Everyone must be part of a community. (One can be in a crowded environment and still not be part of a community.)
- In **Psalm 23**, if God is your shepherd, you will not be alone in "**the valley of the shadow of death.**" The shepherd is with you, and so are many other sheep at the same time.
- A good community will encourage you.
- A good community will challenge you to continually improve.

Proverbs 27: 17 – As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. (NKJV)

- A good community will show up for you, even when there are obstacles.

Make room for God in the deeper water

- Being in "deeper water" – learning more about God, and growing in your understanding of Him - is a place that you yourself have to work toward.
- Examine your "neighborhood" to evaluate if your temperature is constant, your foundation is stable, and your associations are part of a good community.

Reflective Questions for The Shallows – Part 1

1. Have you ever been stranded in shallow waters in your life? To which of the three dangers: temperature changes, turbulence, or tidepools were you most susceptible?

2. In the real world physical environment, what does it take to move to a better neighborhood? In the same way, what might it take to spiritually move to a deeper spiritual neighborhood?
3. Why, do you suppose, it requires you to be in deeper spiritual waters in order to see what God has planned for you in your life?