Do You Wear Water Wings or Swim with the Swimmers?

Hebrews 5:12 - 6:2

Wear water wings and goggles to the pulpit. When people laugh ask, “What?”
Please turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 5.

When I was a kid, I loved the water. Florida is hot, and pool water is refreshing. I grew up in North Melbourne. It was called Eau Gallie at the time. I can remember riding my bike to Crane Field on Aurora Road during the summer to play sand lot baseball or tennis and then going swimming at the public pool. It was a great time, without a care in the world. Kind of like our lives now. 😊

Crane Pool was really two pools. There was a baby pool and a large pool. I don’t want to talk about the baby pool. I knew not to go into that pool, unless it was freshly filled. I was better acquainted with the large pool.

When I was 16, I was hired as a lifeguard at Crane Pool. It was a great job. I received a paycheck to be around the water, sit all day in the sun, and give myself a huge head start toward skin cancer. What could be better?

A few years ago, I noticed that my nose was getting very red when I was out in the sun for even a few minutes. I went to a dermatologist. She determined that my skin was OK, but I may have some pre-cancerous cells. So, she introduced me to a wonderful cream called Efudex. Efudex doesn’t hurt to put on. It works silently to remove bad cells. I didn’t even notice I had it on until I looked into the mirror. Over a period of weeks, my nose changed in appearance. Have you ever seen a hotdog that has been on the grill way too long? That’s what my nose looked like.

During my summer as a lifeguard, I became very familiar with the pool. I knew how to clean the pool, test the water in the pool, and put chemicals in the pool. One thing that was immediately noticeable was that the large pool had a shallow end and a deep end. There are two ends in a swimming pool.

The shallow end is for people who are not accomplished swimmers. There were always lots of water wing swimmers in the shallow end. They splashed around and had
a great time enjoying the water. They had water wings to help them float and no real responsibility. A person does not need to know a lot about swimming to enjoy the shallow end. He just needs a pair of water wings. The shallow end is the Water Wing Zone.

As a lifeguard, I expected to see little kids in the shallow end, and I expected to see adults helping the little kids. It was odd to see older kids, teenagers, and adults who held on to the shallow end for dear life.

The deep end is for accomplished swimmers. It is for people who once wore water wings, but who progressed beyond splashing around and having fun. Swimmers in the deep end of Crane Pool had increased their knowledge about swimming. They had practiced their knowledge. They could swim using several strokes: freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke, and sidestroke. Some could even do the butterfly stroke.

Water wings are OK for little kids, but they look silly on someone else. It's not right when, after several years of coming to the pool, someone is still in the shallow end in water wings. It's completely right when a little kid, becomes comfortable with the water, takes off the water wings, puts her face in the water, accepts instruction, practices diligently, and heads to the deep end of the pool to swim with the swimmers.

To get to the deep end, you must leave your comfort zone. There are no water wings in the deep end of the pool. The deep end is not the Water Wing Zone. The deep end is the Speedo Zone. The deep end is where the best swimmers hang out. During the last Summer Olympics, I watched some of the swimming events. I didn’t see any water wings, but I saw a lot of Speedo racing suits, even full body length Speedos.

There should come a time in a Christian’s life when the shallow end is no longer a big enough thrill. A bigger adventure is needed. A significant challenge is needed. A transition out of the comfort zone is needed. The experience of deeper waters is needed. The rush that comes from launching out in faith is needed. There should come a time in a Christian's life when she takes off the water wings and heads for the deep end of the pool.

There is adventure for you at the deep end. Your feet don't touch the bottom and there is a very high diving board. Swimming and diving require commitment. When you dive into the water, you are committed to use your skills in order to swim around and
return safely to the side. As you climb the ladder to the high dive, you are committing. When you walk out onto the diving board, your commitment increases. When you step off the board, you are fully committed. The deep end is thrilling.

The Christian life is like swimming in a pool with a shallow end and a deep end. It's OK for a new Christian to wear water wings and enjoy splashing around in shallow water, but she should not enjoy the ease of shallow waters for long. She should become comfortable with the water, take off the water wings, put her face in the water, accept instruction from the Bible, practice the Bible's guidance diligently, and head to the deep end of the pool to swim with the swimmers.

Leave the shallow end behind you.

Courageously swim to the deep end.

Many of you have blessed me with your courage to swim to the unfamiliar waters of the deep end of the Christian life. I'll mention just one of you for times sake. Louise Whiting was a faithful choir member, enjoying singing in the choir, until LBC need a pianist. Playing the piano in front of all of us was not what Louise wanted to do. But, it was what God wanted Louise to do. Louise obeyed God and swam to deeper water. Recently, Louise headed for even deeper water, accepting God’s call to be the VBS Director this summer. Now, she’s really out of her comfort zone. She’s in the deep end. Some people have said she’s gone off the deep end. 😊 Just kidding, Louise.

Let’s contrast the shallow and deep ends of the Christian life. Decide in which end you are swimming.

Christians in the shallow end have the Bible on a shelf Monday through Saturday. Christians in the deep end have the Bible on their minds every day.

Christians in the shallow end pray in crisis. Christians in the deep end pray without ceasing.

Christians in the shallow end are feelings driven, tossed around by emotion. Christians in the deep end are faith driven, solidly planted in God's Word.

Christians in the shallow end want their way in worship style. Christians in the deep end know that various worship styles attract different people.
Christians in the shallow end want happiness, which can change with circumstances. Christians in the deep end experience joy, which is not affected by circumstances.

Christians in the shallow end have an inward focus, concerned mostly about the needs within the church. Christians in the deep end also have an outward focus, reaching out to the needs of an unbelieving world.

Christians in the shallow end seek ease as spectators watching the efforts of the church. Christians in the deep end seek service as participants in God's kingdom.

Christians in the shallow end are a social club desiring fun. Christians in the deep end are an army working to rescue people from the enemy.

I could go on, but I think you get the picture.

Do you like the ease and security of your water wings? Do you splash around, wanting your church commitment to be minimal? Do you stay in water where your feet reach the ground, and you can stand in your own power? Do you spend too much time in your water wings? If you're a shallow end Christian, you're missing the thrill of deeper waters.

Take off your water wings and put on your racing Speedo. Get up on the starting block. Listen for the sound of God's starting horn. Dive head first away from your comfort zone and into deep water. Experience the thrill of swimming with the real swimmers. Receive the reward of completing a race for God.

Are you in the Water Wing Zone or the Speedo zone?
Do you splash around in the shallow water or swim with the swimmers?
Is your life in the shallow end or the deep end of God's kingdom?

Let's look at Hebrews 5:12 – 6:2

**Hebrews 5**

(12) In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food.

(13) Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.
(14) But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 6

( 1) Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go onto maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,

( 2) instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

When a person first becomes a Christian, basic truths are appropriate. The Bible calls these basic truths milk. We can relate to that. Newborn babies need milk, so they don’t choke. If you give a baby peanut butter on a cracker, he will choke. That type of food is too hard to swallow.

Newborn Christians need milk, so they don’t choke. If you give a newborn Christian meaty truth like, “Do good to your enemies,” he’s going to choke. It’s too hard to swallow as a baby Christian.

Hebrews 6:1-2 describes milk. Milk is elementary teaching. It’s basic. It’s foundational. It’s the kindergarten of Christianity. It’s learning to read God’s Word. It’s learning the books and numbering scheme of the Bible.

Verse 1 tells us milk is learning about repentance from acts that lead to death. The Bible tells us that everyone has sinned and the penalty of those sins is spiritual death, meaning eternal separation from God. That is milk knowledge. It’s for baby Christians.

Verse 1 tells us that faith in God is milk. Baby Christians have faith in God that he will give them eternal life and take care of them. That is milk. It’s for baby Christians.

Verse 2 tells us milk is instruction about baptisms. Baptisms plural. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into God’s family. That’s baptism number one. Then, we are baptized by emersion under water as a public confession that we are dead to our old way of life and resurrected to walk in a new life. That’s a second baptism. Baby Christians know about baptisms. That is milk.
Verse 2 tells us that the laying on of hands is milk. Jesus imparted blessing to people by laying his hands on them. Jesus laid his hands on sick people to pray for them. In the book of Acts, people received the infilling of the Holy Spirit when hands were laid on them. Hands were laid on people to appoint them to special work in God's kingdom. The laying on of hands is milk.

Verse 2 tells us that knowledge of eternal judgment is milk. Even baby Christians know that judgment is coming. Those people who have accepted Jesus as Savior will be judged and will receive eternal life in heaven. Those who have rejected Jesus will be judged and will receive eternal death in hell. Knowledge of eternal judgment is milk.

It's OK for baby Christians to practice elementary, foundational truths.

In Verse 1, Paul tells us to progress beyond elementary teaching and go on to maturity. Swimmers must shed their water wings and become mature swimmers. Babies must lay aside milk bottles and consume food for the mature. Christians must grow beyond basic Christian living to spiritual maturity.

1 Peter 2:2 says,

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

Milk is appropriate at first. It helps us grow initially. A new Christian needs foundational knowledge about spiritual things. However, there comes a time for each Christian to put aside the milk bottle, take off the water wings, and head for deeper water and solid spiritual food. Milk is a temporary diet.

Let's look back to Hebrews 5:12-14

Hebrews 5

(12) In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food.
(13) Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

(14) But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Verse 12 tells us that some people have been Christians long enough to be teaching spiritual principles, but they need to be taught simple, foundational things again. Some Christians need milk when they should be eating solid spiritual food.

Verse 13 relates Christian infancy with not being acquainted with teaching about righteousness. Conversely, maturity is related to familiarity with teaching about righteousness, meaning living the way God wants us to live.

Verse 14 tells us that solid food is for mature Christians. It also tells us how to become mature. **Maturity comes from constant use of God's Word to train ourselves to distinguish good from evil.** Mature Christians have progressed beyond spiritual milk to consume solid spiritual food. Mature Christians know about righteousness and separating good from evil.

Let's look at some **examples of the maturity** that comes from consuming the meat of God's Word.

**Turning the other cheek** is a sign of maturity that comes from the constant use of God's Word. It goes beyond knowing elementary things to living right. Infant Christians **know** simple truths. Mature Christians **practice** difficult principles.

**Doing good to our enemies** shows maturity. **Avoiding strict rule-based legalism** reveals maturity. **Serving in God's kingdom** is a sign of maturity. **Promoting unity in our church** indicates maturity. **Reaching out to un-churched people** shows maturity. **Praying fervently for others** reveals maturity.

Our godly behavior, which comes from constantly using God's Word, points to our maturity. On the other hand, worldly behavior points to a lack of maturity.

**1 Corinthians 3:1-2** says,

(1) **Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in Christ.**
(2) I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

Worldly behavior is associated with spiritual immaturity. If your knowledge of spiritual things is limited to basic foundational knowledge, it's time to move from milk to meat. If you are not acquainted with teaching about righteousness or distinguishing good from evil, it's time to change your diet from milk to meat. If your life is worldly, it's time to eat solid food and mature.

God wants us to be mature. He wants us to use his Word constantly as our guide to living. He wants us to pursue righteousness. He wants our lives to be godly. He wants us to put down our milk bottles. He wants us to take off our water wings. He wants us to head to deeper waters.

Luke 5:4-6 says,

(4) When Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."
(5) Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."
(6) When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

What if Simon didn't listen? What if Simon listened, but stayed on shore? What if Simon listened but went to shallow water? To do something great, Simon had to go to deep water, just because Jesus said so. There were no water wings. There was no shallow water. The water was deep and the results were miraculous.

Do you want to do great things for God? Take off the water wings and swim with the swimmers. Leave the shallow end and head for deep water. Climb the ladder of the high dive, and leap to full commitment in God's kingdom. Become an expert swimmer…and maybe even a lifeguard.

Let's pray.
We’re going to sing hymn number _______. Are you ready to take off your water wings? Are you ready to push out from your comfort zone into deep water? Are you ready to be mature for God. Are you willing to commit to service in God’s kingdom?

Surely, God has spoken to some of you during the last 30 minutes. Surely, some of you have decided to take the next step of Christian maturity. If you have made a decision, please come to tell me about it as we sing.