

Equipped to do what I want

One of the benefits of going on holiday to a hot, coastal region is the opportunity to cool down by taking a swim, whether it's in the local pool or in the sea. However, not all seas are the same and one that is quite different is the Dead Sea. Some of its distinguishing features are that it's extremely salty; it's not possible to swim in it; and it doesn't have an outlet. Sounds quite negative, huh? As I thought about these things, I concluded that I don't want to be like this. Instead, I want four specific things:

I want to refresh others. The water in the Dead Sea is extremely salty. If you have the misfortune of opening your mouth at the wrong time and accidentally ingesting some of the water, you'll soon discover how undrinkable it is. So, if you're looking for something to quench your thirst, the Dead Sea won't deliver. One of the things I love about eating out in some places is being served a glass of cold water as soon as you enter the restaurant. It might seem a small thing but, when you're thirsty, there's nothing quite like it! Jesus said, *"...if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward"*.¹ In a similar vein, *"The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed"*.² And, *"Reliable friends who do what they say are like cool drinks in sweltering heat - refreshing!"*³ The Dead Sea doesn't have a look-in here. I don't want to be like the Dead Sea!

I want to make progress. Ever tried swimming in the Dead Sea? Not possible... Its high salinity makes it very buoyant, so all you can do is float and bob about like a cork! In the Dead Sea, progress is not an option; but in Christian living, progress is essential. The Bible reminds us that *"we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity..."*⁴ What progress are you making in the direction of maturity? For example, is the fruit of the Spirit⁵ developing in your life in a noticeable way? The Dead Sea prevents you from moving on. I don't want to be like the Dead Sea!

I want to have an outlet. The Dead Sea is unusual in that, although water flows into it, nothing flows out of it. Its level doesn't rise because of the amount of water that is lost through evaporation. From an early age, I've had biblical truth poured into my life. But if I'm content to just amass this knowledge and not allow it to make a difference to the way I live, then what use is that? No matter how many chapters of the Bible I read, or how many verses I memorize, or how many creeds I can recite, if there's no outlet in the form of a transformed life which impacts other people for good, then I'm wasting my time. The Dead Sea has no outlet. I don't want to be like the Dead Sea!

I want to be real. You know the expression WYSIWYG - what you see is what you get? That's where there's no pretence, no falseness, no hidden surprises below the surface. Travelling in the coach alongside the Dead Sea, I admired this beautiful body of water. It truly is a very pleasant sight. But what you see is not what you get! Merely looking at the Sea gives you no indication of its unpalatable saltiness; you'd never guess it was impossible to swim in it; and you could be forgiven for thinking that water flowed out of it as well as in to it. But its appearance is very different from reality. We have a tendency to be like this too, right? We can be so occupied with outwardly presenting the right image to people around us that we pay little attention to being conformed inwardly to Christ's image. The Dead Sea isn't what it appears to be. I don't want to be like the Dead Sea!

¹ Matthew 10:42 (NLT)

² Proverbs 11:25 (NLT)

³ Proverbs 25:13 (The Message)

⁴ Hebrews 6:1 (NET Bible ®)

⁵ Galatians 5:22, 23