



In Search of Deep Faith: A Pilgrimage Into the Beauty, Goodness and Heart of Christianity

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Seeking renewal after a draining season of life, Jim Belcher and his family spent a year traveling through Europe, exploring the faith that has shaped civilizations throughout the centuries.

Through the experiences of William Wilberforce, Vincent Van Gogh, Corrie ten Boom and others, Belcher saw glimpses of insight, beauty and courage that transcended human limitations.

In Search of Deep Faith chronicles their pilgrimage and the quest for spiritual depth.

A Family Pilgrimage to Find Deep Faith

I had come to Oxford and this year abroad, in part, to rest. I wasn't burned out or washed out or struggling with my faith. I wasn't bitter or angry or trying to run away. I wasn't at a crisis point or lost or in need of direction. Any of these would have made a good story or a complication to overcome. But I was none of these. I was simply out of gas, worn out, depleted like Bilbo in *The Lord of the Rings*: "I feel thin, sort of stretched, like butter, scraped over too much bread." I needed time away, to rest, and to contemplate.

What I really needed was spiritual rest. I needed to take stock of my life, rediscover where I came from and where I may be going. I wanted to take a year to drink deeply from the people and places that have nourished my Christian life for years. I planned to walk in the steps of my heroes, read their books again, and marinate in their lives—go deeper into their stories and learn from them all over again. It was going to be like a pilgrimage, a time to spiritually and experientially connect with the places and people that had most impacted me. And most importantly, to reconnect with God.

This book is about the pilgrimage to England and Europe that I took with my wife and four kids in August 2010 to June 2011. All we knew was that the journey would begin in Oxford. We had plans to travel to Europe but we did not know if I would go alone or take the family along. Where and when we would go would have to unfold as part of the pilgrimage. But this was part of the adventure, enjoying the serendipity of travel, learning to depend on God and being open to new and profound experiences. There is nothing like it, which is why people have been going on pilgrimages for thousands of years. In the end, we were surprised where we ended up and what we learned along the way.

I want to invite you along on this pilgrimage, to allow my family and me to be your tour guides. You may never go a pilgrimage like we did, but you are already on one, in your own life, right where you live. As you experience our pilgrimage, it is my prayer that it deepens and gives new perspective to your own pilgrimage, wherever you are on the journey. I pray that if you are in search of a deeper faith, you will find it in these pages. I pray that if you are a parent looking to love and shape your children, you will be inspired by our travels and the lessons we learned. I pray that if you are a skeptic giving Christianity a second look, you will be startled by what you experience as you come along with us. And I pray for everyone who takes the time to follow us on this pilgrimage, that you are deeply changed, as we were by taking this trip in search of deep faith.

—Adapted from the prologue, "A Need Deep Within the Human Heart"

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Jim Belcher

Jim Belcher (Ph.D., Georgetown; M.Div., Fuller) is associate professor of practical theology at John Knox Theological Seminary. He has also served as an adjunct professor at Azusa Pacific University and Reformed Theological Seminary.

Belcher is the founding and former lead pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Newport Beach, California, where he served from 2000-2010. He previously led the Twenty Something Fellowship and cofounded The Warehouse Service at Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena, California. He also cofounded the Restoring Community Conference: Integrating Social Interaction, Sacred Space and Beauty in the 21st Century, an annual conference for city officials, planners, builders and architects.

Jim Belcher, author of
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Belcher is best known for his award-winning book *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional* (InterVarsity Press, 2009). *Deep Church* argues that faithful Christian ministry must learn from the great tradition of classical and Reformed theology, as well as engage in the practice of discerning and creative contextualization.

In Search of Deep Faith: A Pilgrimage Into the Beauty, Goodness and Heart of Christianity is the follow-up to *Deep Church*. Belcher chronicles the experiences his family had during a year-long pilgrimage through Europe. There he investigated the sources of modern doubt and skepticism, as well as a number of remarkable examples of Christian witness through heroes of the faith like Lewis, Wilberforce, John Newton, Corrie ten Boom and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Belcher and his wife, Michelle, live in Fort Lauderdale with their four children.