

## Day 1



### The Hidden Treasure

A man of great wealth wanted to buy an expensive diamond. In the city of Madras he found exactly what he was looking for and bought it. Delighted with his purchase he boarded an overnight train for home. A pickpocket had followed his movements and having boarded the same train entered the same compartment. This gave him maximum opportunity to do what he did best, especially when the other was sleeping. No matter how he tried through the night he was unable to find the diamond and next morning, utterly frustrated, and nearing the destination, he decided to come clean and admit his intentions. The man didn't seem surprised and simply said, 'I know. While you thought you were watching me I was keeping a close eye on you and knew what you were up to so I took precautions and hid the diamond'. 'But where' the other replied. 'It's right where you never thought of looking, inside your own pocket. What we seek without can only be found within.'

## Day 2



### The Diamond in Mud

We are the treasure that we seek, We are the precious diamond. However that diamond is usually not obvious. It comes coated in mud and needs a lot of cleaning before we can see ourselves in our own magnificence.

Even in the womb we absorb our mother's feelings. The loss of a twin, while that is very common, has long term implications, even without our mother even knowing. Our ancestral influences are engrained before we are ever born. The quality of our parenting and experience of family has an enormous bearing as does our school experiences and our relationships with friends.

All of these and so much more create a coating of mud that conceal the diamond. Unfortunately when we come to look at ourselves, mud is what we see, and we conclude that mud is what we are. We may even compare our mud with someone else's mud and do our best to make that mud look more presentable. Yet all the time the diamond is just waiting to be discovered beneath all the layers.

## Day 3



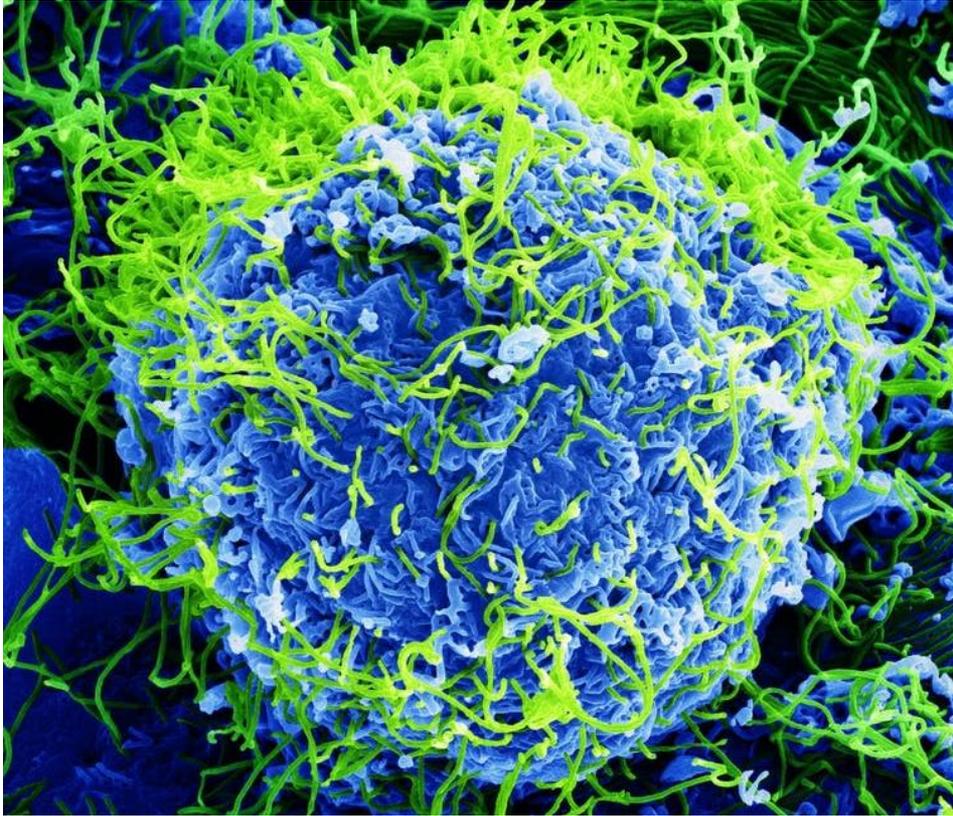
### Muddy Rejects

When we think of ourselves like a diamond that has been coated in mud our true worth is obscured beneath the layers. The true self is the diamond and we may get glimpses of who we really are but unfortunately some never do.

There are so many unfortunates who are forced to live a life that is so much less than what was meant for them. All they have ever known is the mud that is not always of their own making. A man buried five of his children who died in infancy while the next two survived. While these lived a big part of him had already died and become well hidden under layers of grief. To numb his pain he turned to drink and became an alcoholic who was rejected by his family and regarded as a nuisance in his community. When he died under suspicious circumstances it was a relief for most and few tears were shed at his grave.

No one asked why his diamond had become so hidden in the mud or even if he ever had one in the first place.

## Day 4



### Fear is a Virus

A nurse who worked under a renowned doctor for many years noticed how well he managed his own health even though he was dealing with sickness almost every day.

One day she asked him how he managed to stay so healthy while being exposed to bugs and viruses of all kinds. He said, 'I never give them a chance to get near me'. 'Explain', she asked. 'First I have learned to do my work without fear. Viruses and fear operate at the same low frequency of energy. Fear and anxiety lower your immune system to the level that bugs can attack so the more you reduce fear, stress and anxiety the more you will maintain your health'.

The thing we fear most often comes our way because the door has been left open so in that sense the virus of fear is what we have far more control over than this present Corona Virus.

## Day 5



Sunset at Our Lady's Island, Wexford

### What Gets to Us?

Close to the 'Leaning Tower' on the Causeway to Our Lady's Island there is a notice that reads. *It's not the water in the ocean that sinks our boat but what we allow on board.* The boat represents our lives and it's not what happens to us that brings us under but how we allow it to get to us. The boat is designed to float on water and it's never the water outside that sinks it but what is allowed inside.

In our lives we will never have utopia - imperfection will always be with us. There will never be the perfect partner or the perfect family. No job is perfect and neither is there the perfect community, nor are we ever going to be perfect ourselves. The challenge is always to accept what is and not allow our judgments to cause us to leak. Life is not about perfecting that which is imperfect but is about perfecting our love. Therein lies the greater challenge.

## Day 6



### Who Am I?

'Who am I'? Jesus asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' It wasn't that he cared a great deal what anyone thought since he was so much his own person. Yet he did ask. It was an easy one for them to answer, 'Some say John the Baptist and others Elijah'. He used that to ask the bigger question, 'Who do you say that I am?' To which Peter is able to give his big confession of faith, 'You are the Christ the son of the living God'. How could those questions apply not just to Christ but also to ourselves? Who do people say that I am is really a question of the way society tends to look at us and in a manner that's far from being fair to the vast majority. Society tends to value us in terms of social background and makes distinctions on the basis of where we come from. Often we are important to the extent that our family of origin is considered important and respectable. Our body image, whether we are rich or poor are also big factors in terms of whether we hold standing in the eyes of the world. Whether we are productive and useful is another factor. Our worth in the eyes of society tends to be seen in terms of what we own or in some cases what we owe! Image is all important, the size of the house we live in, the latest model of car that we drive, the designer clothes that we wear, those we socialize with and in some cases where we do our shopping.

Then there's the question of how those closest to us see us. So many live their lives never, if ever, being true to themselves, because they are always trying to be what others want them to be. These are the people pleasers who are unable to say 'no' because someone might not like them for doing so. The power to truly be oneself and live one's own life is never exercised because it is always given away to others. To allow ourselves to be controlled by another human being is a frightening prospect and utterly unwise.

The positive side is that those closest to us often will see something in us that we can't see in ourselves, a hidden talent or potential, and these can awaken good in us we never knew existed. These are the ones who by their encouragement set us free to become more than we are and more than we ever thought that we could be.

## Day 7



### Self Confidence

There's the big question of who do we think that we are ourselves. In our early years our sense of self comes from others and the things they say to us. A parent who tells us we are clumsy, useless or good for nothing, or a teacher who tells us we are stupid can destroy our confidence and block our potential. Visitors to Asia are often puzzled to see a six ton elephant tied by a rope round its leg to a tiny stake in the ground with the same animal being capable of uprooting trees weighing several tons. As a baby elephant it was tied by its leg to a stake when that was sufficient to hold it there. Later as an adult with all its strength it still believes itself to be incapable and so it never tries. A remark made during childhood can hold us fettered for a lifetime.

It's far too easy to value oneself in terms of what I do, but we forget that one day we will be capable of very little. So who will we be then? We are not what we do but what we do is an expression of who we are.

If I have made some serious mistakes and messed up my life it's all too easy to think that my mistakes make up who I am and spend the rest of my life beating myself up. A lot of material things that can give a false sense of security where I believe that I am somebody because of what I own. Finally if my body is getting old or I have a condition that leaves me in a lot of pain it's very easy to think that this is me and there's not much more to me. I am the way I feel and have very little value simply because at this stage I really can't offer all that much.

Whatever society may think we are; whatever others may think of us and whatever we may think we are ourselves is never the full picture nor does it bear the slightest resemblance to the full picture. St. Paul says that 'we are already the sons and daughters of God and what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed but all that we know is that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.' Peter got just a glimpse of that reality when he said 'You are the Christ the Son of the living God.' Not only that but when he got a grasp of who Christ was he got a glimpse of who he was as well.