



Finding Your Wellspring in Desert Places

I am going to do something new.

I will clear a way in the desert.

I will make rivers on dry land.

Isa. 43:19

There was a man who was lost in the desert. After wandering around for a long time his throat became very dry, but in a distance he saw a little shack. He made his way over to the shack and found a water pump with a small jug of water and a note. The note read, "Pour all the water into the top of the pump to prime it, if you PRIME THE PUMP you will receive all the water you need". Now the man had a choice to make, if he trusted the note and poured the water in and it worked he would have all the water he needed. If it didn't work he would still be thirsty and he might die. Or he could choose to drink the water in the jug and receive immediate satisfaction, but it would only last a short time and might not be enough and he still might die. After thinking about it the man decided to risk it. He poured the entire jug into the pump which would PRIME THE PUMP and began to work the handle, at first nothing happened and he became a little scared but he kept working the handle and suddenly water gushed out. There was so much water the man was able to drink all he wanted, took a shower, and even filled all the containers he could find. Because he was willing to give up momentary satisfaction, he received salvation in the desert places of his life.



He was filled to the brim with excitement and anticipation for his future.

Isn't it great when you're just cruising along in life, the wind is at your back, all the lights are green and all systems are "Go?" In times like this, it feels as though you've tapped into some kind of magical force, as every choice you make, every action you take manifests at a level even beyond your own expectations.

Life seems effortless, like you've finally learned the steps to the great cosmic dance of the universe. No more doubt and hesitation, no more confusion and uncertainty, just clear skies and smooth sailing ahead. Your relationships feel full and nourishing; creative ideas flow, work is satisfying, opportunities abound. Your cup is filled to the brim and overflowing. Life doesn't get any better.

In times like these, you might even start feeling a bit cocky and take one hand off the wheel, ease up on the gas, put the top down and let the wind blow through your hair. You might even put your life on cruise control, knowing that you're in the "groove" and your momentum will carry you to wherever you're going. You might think O.K God I've got this now!

Life seems almost too good to be true. Maybe that thought even crosses your mind. As in, "Wow, I wonder how long this can possibly last?" But you dismiss that thought as life's goodness just keeps coming and you're enjoying the ride.

And then, so imperceptibly that you hardly even notice, some subtle shifts occur. That new client you thought you'd landed becomes hesitant, the payment you were expecting is delayed, your significant other starts getting cranky, those creative juices start to dry up and new opportunities seem a bit out of reach.

You hardly notice, that while the wind was blowing through your hair and you were on cruise control kicking back enjoying the ride, your life went into neutral and your forward momentum began to slow. Even as you lose momentum, you have a set of good comfort stories and excuses to entertain and distract your mind and for awhile, you don't even notice the change. From where you're looking, everything still seems to be moving in the right direction. Who's direction are you following? yours or God's. Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Ps. 3:8

You failed to see that you'd taken your foot off the gas. You got so distracted by the things of the world, the beautiful scenery, you forgot to be present in the moment, aware of the "dance" and how to move in it. Perhaps you became so seduced by the trance of false and worldly conceived comfort and ease you stopped paying attention to a subtle prompting. That subtle knocking on the door of your heart. Once again you begin to be mesmerized by the things that the world has to offer. You forget about your source.

Ever so gradually, those green lights turn yellow, your momentum slows down, and one day, the yellow lights turn red and you come to a dead stop. Once again you find yourself deposited at the doorstep of what seems like a vast desert.





When the ego gets a bit too big for its britches and we lose our humility, life has a way of serving up just the right remedy. Not like punishment. Not like we're bad or wrong. Just off track. And if you've committed yourself to being a servant of truth, the truth will ultimately set you free. You just need to be willing to undo the chains that bind you to whatever false notion of truth brought you to the desert to get your attention.

The soul's process and agenda; will ultimately have its way with us. The great scholar and psychiatrist, Dr. James Hillman, has written extensively about the soul and its "code," a kind of imprint, it must fulfill. According to Hillman, the soul has no preference as to how we unfold its agenda, only that we do. We might strike out on a certain path and travel it for eons and if we lose our way, we'll eventually end up in the desert, one of the soul's favorite places for doing its fine-tuning.

The soul feels right at home in the desert. The soul work is best done in the deep, quiet, dark places within, far from the noise and distraction of daily life. So if you find yourself in the desert, here are some things to remember:

1. *Know you are in an important soul process.* Trust it. The soul doesn't mess around. You will be allowed to return to the main road when you've done your work. So get busy.
2. *Surrender.* You might as well. Resisting will only prolong your stay. Stop resisting and give yourself permission to be right where you are. You're here, aren't you? If you were supposed to be elsewhere, you would be. Accept your fate and invite your ego to join you.
3. *Get still. Become silent and listen.* Set aside all your agenda, let go of your strategies and game plans and open yourself to receive guidance from a higher source. Don't force it. In the silence will come the guidance you need.
4. *Pay attention to your dreams.* Dreams are the language of the soul. Put pen and paper next to your bed and before turning out the light, ask for a dream or wisdom that will help you know what to do next. Be sure to record your dreams upon awakening. Look at your dream as a story in which you are all the characters. What do the various parts of the dream suggest to you about your journey? What is your purpose; what is God's purpose for your life?
5. *Keep a journal.* Record your process. Give your subconscious mind a chance to download its content and step back. This is a goldmine of information to explore. You'll find clues for how to make your way through the darkness.

6. *Look for the edges where growth is possible.* Making even one small change in the system changes the entire system. What one, small change can you make?

7. *Do it. Take action in the direction of your higher wisdom, guidance and purpose.* This one action will itself cause another shift in the journey. Keep taking new actions, even if you can't see the outcome yet. For precept upon precept, line upon line, hear a little and there a little Isa. 28:10

8. *Trust the process.* Suddenly you'll realize you're wide awake! That's the point! Now you can begin to see a path through the desert and beyond. You might see many paths leading to new territories beyond.

9. *Choose one* and begin the next part of your journey. The steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord. Ps. 37:23.

10. *Enjoy the ride!* But remember, going on cruise control can lull you back to sleep pretty quickly, so maybe you should consider keeping your hands on the wheel and foot on the gas and put your life on "Conscious Steering" instead. Pay attention! Listen to the Lord. What is your higher purpose in life ?

Finally, don't be surprised if you find yourself back in the desert sometime in the future. Get over it! Deserts happen! Don't waste time fretting about being there. It's part of the process. The sooner you accept your fate, the sooner you can begin to evolve and go beyond and the sooner you can discover who you are and what your purpose is. God has given you a purpose and gifts of the Holy Spirit to be used for the church. To bring the church into unity and one accord.

Remember even Jesus had to spend time in the desert in preparation for his ministry. Spending time in the desert is an absolutely necessary part of our process. It is a gift. It teaches us to accept our vulnerability, it teaches us compassion and humility. It teaches us our own value and worthiness. It teaches us about love. The soul will surely have its way with us. When it takes you to the desert, sit up straight and pay attention. The teacher (God) has arrived and class is about to begin. And take notes. Our desert places are a training ground where God molds us and transforms us.

You might not even notice your arrival here at first. The mind, in its infinite capacity to escape reality, still holds on to the fantasy that everything is still working; all systems are still go. Perhaps your body is the canary in the coalmine that eventually lets you know all is not well. Insomnia, digestion or elimination problems, or a lack of fulfillment might be the first clues that something is off.

You become aware that you feel empty and dry. Your veil of denial is rudely ripped away. Your attention is finally engaged and you realize that one more time, you've fallen asleep, a humbling awareness.

Welcome to the spiritual desert, this vast interior terrain that at first glance, appears to be foreboding territory. This isn't the first time you've found yourself here. You're familiar with this place. The last time you visited, you probably resisted being here. After all, on the surface, it doesn't exactly look like the most exciting place to be.

No welcome mat is spread. No juice bars in sight. No cool, shady places to stop and rest. And furthermore, it looks like you're out here in the wilderness alone and completely unprepared for the journey. You have no rain gear, no camping equipment, nothing to sit on or keep you warm. You left your GPS behind, and there are no familiar landmarks. Where's a Starbuck's when you need one?

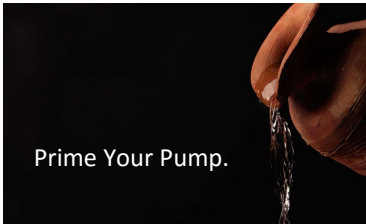
You look for something, anything, to give you a sense of direction, but there are no signposts. The sun has set, the sky is dark, devoid of stars. You might as well be on the moon and wonder if perhaps you are. No doubt about it. You are seriously off track.

You're not the first one to admit that you have traveled this road a few times in your life on the planet. Each time you come to your senses and realize where you are, and manage to do the work that is being required of you to cross the desert and find your way back to the main road. You might vow this time will be the last.

But such a vow is a foolish denial of the human journey and the spiritual work we're all required to do. Who of us believe we could avoid a similar fate? If we are here to evolve, if we are here to deepen and expand our knowledge of who we are in Christ. If we are here to contribute to the transformation of our collective human experience, we must be willing to do the work that is required of us.



Namely, we must be willing to shed the old skins and let go of our limiting beliefs about who we are and why we're here. To do that, life requires that we periodically "take ourselves to the wood shed" and do some remedial work. You look for something, anything, to give you a sense of direction, but there are no signposts. The sun has set, the sky is dark, devoid of stars. You might as well be on the moon and wonder if perhaps you are. No doubt about it. You are seriously off track.



If I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Philippians 2:17

Are you willing to sacrifice yourself for the work of another believer—to pour out your life sacrificially for the ministry and faith of others? Or do you say, “I am not willing to be poured out right now, and I don’t want God to tell me how to serve Him. I want to choose the place of my own sacrifice. And I want to have certain people watching me and saying, ‘Well done.’ ”

It is one thing to follow God’s way of service if you are regarded as a hero, but quite another thing if the road marked out for you by God requires becoming a “doormat” under other people’s feet. God’s purpose may be to teach you to say, “I know how to be abased” (Philippians 4:12). Are you ready to be sacrificed like that? Are you ready to be less than a mere drop in the bucket— to be so totally insignificant that no one remembers you even if they think of those you served? Are you willing to give and be poured out until you are used up and exhausted— not seeking to be ministered to, but to minister? Some saints cannot do menial work while maintaining a saintly attitude, because they feel such service is beneath their dignity.

Have you taken your eyes off the source. Are you afraid to sacrifice what God has already given you in order to be fruitful and gain more. Are you willing to prime the pump by giving your all?