

September 27: Finding Streams

Gather: Bible, paper, pen, Optional: tea/coffee, art supplies or appropriate clothes for the weather

Introduction:

Last week we thought about life in the wasteland and those times in our lives that feel like that is what we are in – dry, barren or overgrown with weeds. This week we are exploring how to find streams among those times.

Streams:

Read **Isaiah 43:18-21**. What stands out to you in this passage?

Think about those times when you feel stuck in a desert or wasteland. Do you tend to dwell on the past? Or do you look with hope to the future? In this passage, God's people are encouraged to look toward the future and see the new way and streams that God is providing.

Here are 2 other ways to think of wastelands and streams:

1. Over the past summer we have had many hot days. There wasn't a lot of rain and Alberta was continually experiencing states of fire bans and restrictions. The land was dry, and fires were a great risk. People were hoping and waiting for rain to come, not just for crops or gardens, but also just for the fun of having a campfire. When rain comes, it is a relief – to the land and the people. Among other things, the rain allows plants to thrive and for people to have some fun.
2. COVID-19: Who would've thought we'd be amidst a pandemic? Yet, here we are, still adapting to the changes of life that happened in what seemed like an instance. We went from our 'regular' lives of going to school, church and work, and being with people without restrictions. Then all of a sudden we could not attend church or go to school in person. Many people lost their jobs. Lots of people were (and continue to be) isolated from others. We went through a lot of changes from stores closing to stores opening with restrictions, social distancing and masks now being required. We have found ways to come back together in some ways at least, but not in the ways we were familiar with before. To many, the last 6+ months have felt like a wasteland and they are waiting for it to be over so they can be with people again.

What about for you personally? In light of those 'wasteland' times for you, what do you think streams might look like in your own life? Have you already seen the new way that God is making, or are you still waiting to see what that might be?

In your physical desert, you may need the literal relief of water.
In your spiritual desert, you need the relief and hope of Jesus.
In your emotional desert, you may need rest or healing.
In your social desert, you may need a friend.

We may not see the streams that God brings right away, but they are coming! Keep looking and wait patiently!

Finding Streams:

One way to find those streams is by engaging in times of rest in the presence of God. As we take a break from all of the things happening around us, removing ourselves from the work that makes us weary, or taking a moment away from people that can drain us, we find rest and rejuvenation in the presence of God.

Take some time to intentionally rest in the God's presence right now. Try and do it for 15 minutes or more. Take a walk, sit in a dark room and close your eyes, drink a cup of tea in silence – whatever your strategy might be for taking time alone with God and away from others. As you rest in God, you can talk to him about whatever is on your mind or heart. He may choose to speak to you during this time, or he might just be present and listen to what you have to say. Enjoy that time with him.

Reflection: You appreciate rain more when you don't have it for far too long. In the desert times when we look for the relief of streams, we may find we appreciate the water more when we find it again. Take a few minutes to write down times in your life when you felt like you were in a wasteland. Then think about and write down the new ways God made and the streams He provided.

Memory Verse: Isaiah 43:18-19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

Prayer: Take a moment to think of where you need God's rejuvenation. In what ways are you feeling like you're stuck in the desert/wasteland?

Listen and pray through the song *Desert Soul* by Rend Collective. Ask God to bring 'streams' of relief, revival, healing, etc.

Challenge: Think of how you might be able to take part in helping others find relief. Can you be a friend to the friendless, especially now that you're back at school? Maybe you could give a family member a break by helping with a chore or sharing encouragement. Pick something and do it!