



# Streams

A Publication of Northlands Church

Autumn 2007, Issue 1



# Elder's Vantage Greg Haswell

**It is a delight** for me to see a congregation-wide publication start up. Far more than a mechanism for information and communication, it also strengthens the sense of community we share, and provides opportunity for those bursting with words from above. I am particularly eager to read input from our teaching team and other members who have labored behind the scenes, working at their gifts and being diligent in the Word. This varied diet is just a small reflection of the unending riches found in God's Word. I anticipate that it will serve to provide a diverse spiritual diet to feed our hearts and minds. I hope that you are blessed in the reading of it. Our thanks go out to the team whose vision and hard work has produced this project. Well done!

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I am intrigued by the change of season we are experiencing in the Spirit at the moment. It seems that our spiritual spring has come. The freshness in the air is unmistakable. Like the blossoming of trees previously held captive by a cold winter, new buds are flourishing, new hopes are rising, and all around I see members beginning to dust off cherished promises and whispered dreams.

These are not the naïve pledges of disillusioned people seeking to motivate themselves to fresh and compliant duties. These are not New Year's resolutions doomed to stagger right out of the starting blocks. Ours is a genuine awakening of hope, the season of new things. Things that were not possible even a few months ago are soon to become evident throughout the church. It feels like the church is emerging from behind closed doors into the new sunlight. What was frozen is now fresh and clear. What was closed to us is now possible. What was pruned back to

the ground is set to explode with new growth. It is the season to go outdoors and dream.

There is fundamentally nothing new we are doing. Instead I believe that the Lord Himself is changing the season. Now, unlike the winter months, seeds that have been sown in faith grow. Efforts produce almost immediate results. There is a new dawn of hope, a fresh heart to believe, and a healing of winter's aches and pains.

So here are a few turn-of-the-season tips for us to consider:

### **Repent in Order to Enjoy Times of Refreshing**

Moves of God and times of refreshing often come as a result of times of repentance. This was part of Peter's message after healing the crippled man in Acts. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the

Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus." Acts 3:19, 20 (NIV) This is a season for repentance, steadfastness and careful living.

### **Spend Time with the Master Gardener**

Abide deeply in the Word, as this will produce an abundant harvest in this season. When we miss these opportunities for intimate fellowship with the Cultivator of our souls, submitting to His voice, distractions and disorder can soon spring up. Somehow time spent with Jesus and in His Word seems to bear more immediate results, as does the lack of the same.

### **Make Changes Now**

Many people get burned in their Christian walk. Often the product of broken expectations, harsh life rebuttals or unfulfilled hopes, we struggle to heal in the winter. Smarting under the injustice, nursing the wound, we seem powerless to overcome the hurt. Springtime brings with it a sense of rejuvenation, healing, and the promise of new things. I encourage you to try again for the hopes and dreams that have lain fallow and unrequited in winter. Dare to trust again, stir your heart to bold faith once more.

### **Enjoy the Blessings of the Lord in Your Life**

There is a great sense of accomplishment and joy in a well-tended garden. Its beauty and peace, fragrances and delights make all the effort worthwhile. When God blesses your life with new growth and fragrant gifts, take time to enjoy them and give thanks to our God who delights to give generously to His children for their enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17). We must accept with as much maturity God's appointed season of singing as we did His seasons of sowing and sowing.

I look forward to enjoying God's riches, His smile and favor in our lives as He leans close in His graciousness. May this season be full of His intimacy and presence in your lives.

My lover spoke and said to me:

*"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me. See! The winter is past, the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."*

*Song of Solomon 2:10-13 (NIV)*

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*Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,  
and come with me.*

## *The Deal Killer*

Lance Campbell

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)*

### **“Forgive.”**

Think about most modern teaching on forgiveness. It focuses on the various personal benefits of forgiving others, the private emotional detriments of withholding forgiveness or the long-term physiological side effects of carrying a grudge against some offender.

But strangely, Jesus never mentioned these things—any of them.

Without the aid of these novel psychological constructs, Jesus decisively delivers his Father’s directive concerning forgiveness, through a disturbing little tale we know as “The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.”

You remember...after a certain man’s blinding debt load is compassionately canceled forever, he is immediately discovered cruelly denying similar relief to an associate who owed him a mere trifle. When news reached the good and forgiving King, he stood and shook the great hall with this wrathful indictment:

*“You wicked servant! I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” Matthew 18:32,33 (NKJV)*

Forgiveness, from the Greek *aphiemi*, literally is to send away, to free from demand for repayment. Think about what that means. Anyone who forgives chooses to absorb the cost, to incur the loss. A forgiver is one who estimates the damage and deliberately elects to bear the expense of it himself; he assumes that burden and releases his debtor from all its claims.

This is an incredible gesture of selflessness and compassion.

And while we might expect to occasionally find this type of noble action among beneficent rulers, surely we would not expect it to be common among the rest of us mortals. The fascinating reality, however, is that now there seems to emerge a clear, divine expectation. As a result of our freely bestowed mercy, we now have an obligation, a duty or responsibility newly imposed on us: we are morally obligated to forgive others as we ourselves have been forgiven.

Although we cannot not be expected to “work up” this kind of forgiveness under our

own steam, it seems that once we have been forgiven of our enormous debt—so freely given simply because we asked—it is expected that we should behave the selfsame way toward those who commit comparably little offenses against us. It has become for us more than a benevolent option for those who would go the “extra mile;” it is somehow a mandate, a requirement, a moral imperative. And failure to extend mercy under these circumstances has been given a new name: wickedness.

God is setting a new theological benchmark here. A person who has been shown mercy yet refuses to show mercy to his fellowman—this, God says, is wickedness. Wickedness is being shown kindness yet not allowing His kindness to lead us to repentance. (Romans 2:1-4)

*Anyone who forgives chooses to absorb  
the cost, to incur the loss.*

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Appreciate the stark contrast. Compare the big-hearted willingness of the King, who gladly bears the loss of his personal resources, to a petty, small-minded, self-absorbed servant who’s not big enough to shoulder a few dollars’

loss - or even to extend the deadline a bit! This is not just moral carelessness; it's true wickedness.

By withholding forgiveness from anyone, we expose the wickedness in our petty hearts and cause God to repent for having shown us such mercy. This is a classic example of an instance where previously granted grace is revoked at the King's command. On what basis? The seed of grace has failed to find purchase; the heart has refused to be changed by the wonderful grace freely bestowed upon it. Let us tremble as we see the good King wrathfully revoke an agreement—which was previously free, final and eternally binding—and reinstate the full debt. Just as we have judged, so we will be judged.

Scripture is clear: while our willingness to forgive others could never be considered a condition of receiving forgiveness, our unwillingness is held out as sort of a cosmic "deal-killer". It is proof that God's grace was to us without effect and that our hearts were never genuinely transformed. It also puts us in imminent danger of hearing the King's call to reinstate our freely pardoned debt.

In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Matthew 18:34-35 (NIV)

Jesus' words here deserve no cushion or dilution; they are best taken full-strength to produce in us a renewal of awe and profound gratitude. How helpful it is to be reminded of the dread and great peril we have narrowly escaped, the exhilarating rush of relief when our debt was canceled and the joy we now have from a clean, forgiven heart.

And the only valid expression of this joy is not judgment on our brother, but rather a yearning to see him set free, to share this great joy and to faithfully exercise the high privilege we have been granted to extend this same relief to another.

Our Master is not urging us gently here, but rather warning us sternly. Dare we withhold forgiveness even another hour?

*Dare we withhold forgiveness even  
another hour?*

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## *The Beauty of God*

Mitch Harper

A.W. Tozer, in his book, *The Pursuit of God*, speaks of the "gaze of the soul". This is a profound phrase because it touches on an aspect of our relationship with God that goes far beyond the realm of human comprehension into the realm that, in a manner of speaking, could conceivably be called "the depths of the beauty of God". This beauty is not something to be merely understood or talked about—it is something for the heart to behold. Think about the difference between knowing that there is a Grand Canyon and standing at the edge of it in wonder. Our relationship with God is like that. Good theology and teaching are important and they give us a mental framework to understand the things that God has revealed in His Word, but good teaching cannot make the heart believe. I think that when we are satisfied with just understanding, that we do not understand anything at all; we fall short of the very intent of the revealed word of God: to truly know God. This is the truth that sets free (John 8:32) and the kind of mind-renewing that transforms (Romans 12:2). In fact, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for searching the scriptures, but not coming to Him for life. (John 5:39)

The capacity of our spirits to absorb the beauty of God will only grow as we drink in the living water of the Holy Spirit. The heart that is satisfied with less than the wholehearted pursuit of God faces the dangers readily found in the shallows of mediocrity, where the heart and mind are so easily bogged down with the worries and distractions of life. Mediocrity is everywhere. Mediocrity makes us content with less and makes us obsessed with self. To be mediocre is to trade eternal pleasures for dirt. The Lord is eager to show us His love and shed abroad that same love in our hearts. He wants to give us power to grasp how great an inheritance we have in Jesus (Ephesians 1:17-18) and make us understand that no mind has conceived, no ear has heard what God has prepared for those that love Him. (I Corinthians 2:9) Yet He reveals it to us by His Spirit.



# Focus on the Nations

## Vincent Skinner and World Revival Ministries

Micheal Skinner

Vincent Skinner had a call on his life to preach the Gospel from the age of twelve. He had many personal encounters with the Holy Spirit that cultivated a deep hunger in his life for God. In the 1990's, Vincent and Lisa Skinner founded World Revival Ministries. Vincent's ministry is distinguished by the passion for souls and the Presence of God. He ministers prophetically as well as in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit, drawing many to salvation, healing the sick and setting the captives free. (Luke 4: 18)

Philippians 3:3 has been a motto for his personal service before the Lord, "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh..." (NKJV) He has ministered in the USA and abroad, in Europe, Brazil, Austria, Africa, Central and South America.

One of my favorite miracles was of a Brazilian teenage boy with extreme allergies that manifested as horrible sores on his arms. The boy testified, "During the ministry I was worshiping God and I felt heat come on them (arms), and when I looked I was astonished

*"One of my favorite miracles was..."*

that the sores went away as I watched. It was like an iron went up my arm and ironed them away, right before my eyes!"

An amazing thing happened in Central America where Vincent was ministering in a chapel jail. Once a week a minister would come and give the salvation message to those in the jail, with little results. Knowing this, Vincent decided to preach a very short salvation message, and then let the men meet the One he

spoke about. So he said, "Now I would like to show you that God is real. I would like three volunteers to come up." No one came forward, so he challenged them, "Come on, I dare you to come up!" So three of the biggest and meanest looking convicts came up to the front, with hard looks and faces. Then Vincent spoke, "Holy Spirit, touch them now!" As soon as he uttered this, the three men violently dropped to the floor and one of them cried out, "Jesus, save me!" The other men began shouting and crying out to God. Everyone wanted to be prayed for. Even the convicts outside the chapel started running to get in. Because of all the screaming, the guards thought that they were killing Vincent and ran to help only to find instead that Vincent was praying for the convicts. Many were saved and healed that day when God demonstrated His love and power, and confirmed His word with signs and wonders.

Vincent's ministry has affected our family beneficially in different ways. One of those ways is that we have been chal-

lenged to trust God in everything we do. The Bible says to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33) We have grown closer to God through depending on Him in all things. Vincent has also brought back stories of God's miracles, signs, and wonders to us. Hearing about God's love and power, like we read in the Book of Acts, has caused our faith and hunger for God to grow throughout the years. Through these testimonies, I am stirred even more to press into God, to know Him more, and to one day minister the Gospel in the nations.

*We have grown closer to  
God through depending on  
Him in all things.*

And that's what Vincent Skinner and World Revival Ministries is about.

# Watching on the Wall

Dionne van Zyl  
Diane Fowler

Be earnest and unwearied and steadfast in your prayer [life], being [both] alert and intent in [your praying] with thanksgiving. Colossians 4:2 (AMP)

It is a good thing when God's people, in one accord, join together in steadfast, intentional, fervent prayer, seeking the face of God for the people of God and for His glory! To that end, each quarter the elders want to share the leading of the Lord for the body of Christ at Northlands during this current season. **Thank you for praying!**

## *New Wineskins for New Wine!*

*"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." Matthew 9:16-17 (NIV)*

The Lord has been speaking to His people at Northlands that a new move is coming, a tsunami of a proportion that has never been seen before. *Pray that we would continue to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to His church corporately and that we would be quick to obey.*

There is a great sense that Jesus is purposefully preparing new wineskins for new wine as He instructs us in the grace of God and in the Father's love. *Pray that we as individuals would be yielded and cooperative in this process as Jesus prepares His bride for His new wine.*

Wounded hearts of individuals who have been hurt in previous churches are being healed in the hands of Abba Father. *Pray that the truth and love of Jesus would overcome the pain and fear of past experiences.*

There is a summons from the heart of God for unwavering commitment from leaders as they declare in faith that which they hear whispered by the Spirit of God. *Pray for the elders, deacons, home group leaders, and team leaders of Northlands during this new season of the Lord's choosing.*

# *Darting Thoughts*

Elizabeth Thornton, Editor

*See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear.*  
Isaiah 32:1-4 (NIV)

The most familiar prophetic picture given to us at Northlands is that we are an oasis of the Spirit. You cannot be in our midst for very long without hearing this imagery alluded to in one form or another. As many times as I've heard it though, I'm still captured by this metaphor that the Lord has used to describe this beloved group of people. That we represent water, life and a place of rest in the middle of a desert speaks volumes of the role we serve in this time and the purpose towards which we aim.

In the Isaiah passage above, a day is described when "each man will be like" (emphasis mine) a shelter, a stream, a shade found in the barren wilderness. And look at the results: renewed sight, opened ears, understanding gained, clear speech restored. Such results are far beyond our human capacity. Only the true Stream of Living Water can bring that depth of restoration. And how amazing that this is the day in which we now live, a day evidenced by the Holy Spirit empowering each believer to fulfill his or her God-given purpose!

*Streams* was envisioned with this end in mind: to provide an avenue of expression for those who, as Greg describes in his column, are "bursting with words from above" and desire to offer their gifts to equip and bless the church. I give my heartfelt thanks to each person who has given his or her time and effort to this first issue, and I can't wait to see what the Spirit will bring next! It is my hope that *Streams* will become a collective journal of these "new season" times that will testify from every page of all that God is doing in His goodness towards us. Be blessed!

We give this to You, Lord Jesus, Righteous King, our Shelter, our Stream, and our Rock, for the praise of Your wonderful name.

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