

## Our Spiritual Journey

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We are a people who are always on the hunt for a bargain, whether it be for material goods, relationships, or life itself. A major driving force in our human nature is **“what can I get?”** We desire to make life work on our terms, so we can get the most enjoyment and satisfaction, so we can find meaning and fulfillment. There is nothing wrong with desiring reasonable satisfaction and fulfillment, but the problem with the world is that we all want it on our own terms. Like little demi-gods, we all try to order the world and our surroundings to suit ourselves. But life was meant to have one God in charge.

I have a question for you. In your search for *“what can I get, what have you gotten?”* Are things working out the way you hoped and foresaw, or do you find that your dearest dreams are always being put on hold as the treadmill of life carries you along for the ride? Eventually we find this: *“hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes it is a tree of life.”* (Proverbs 13:12).

In Ezekiel 47, we are presented with a river of life flowing from the Temple of God. The water symbolizes many things in Scripture regarding the spiritual life. Water brings life, it regenerates and cleanses. Jesus said a river of life will flow from those who are saved by His blood, reconciled to the Father and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. All physical and spiritual life originates from God. Water brings death by flood, or drowning, or spiritually through baptism. Scripture is to be interpreted literally, yet this metaphor of a *‘Journey Through the Waters’* can be used as a descriptive allegory of how God leads a person to find spiritual life and growth.

*“He measured 1000 cubits... and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles.”* (Ezekiel 47:3)

As a young man, I often felt that I was standing on shore watching life go by and carrying away my dreams with it. My moral failings were getting me into trouble, but I saw through the false hopes of modern life and it created in me a great dissatisfaction and sense of nihilism. I hoped there must be more to living than consuming and dying. Many try to find life’s meaning through pleasure, money, hobbies etc, but though they may fill life with fun, fun does not fill life with meaning. The river of life rushes ever onward and some of the most successful people have wondered at the end of their life what the purpose of it all is. **Does your life have a higher purpose?** To those who stand on life’s shore looking for something deeper, the idea of God may seem like a cold frozen river. God may seem threatening, occupying a place we don’t want to go. God gets a bad report for no good reason beyond our ignorance and self-righteousness. We proudly strut and say, “If there was a God life wouldn’t be like this.” To those who say, “prove there is a God”, God says, “prove Me wrong.”

At age 27, I was standing on the shore when someone presented Jesus Christ to me. Inwardly I was quietly searching for the answers to life and even asked God for help. Then this messenger came with a simple message:

*“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters...Incline your ear and come to Me. Hear and your soul shall live... Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.”* (Isaiah 55:1-6)

*“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

My uncertainty of God’s existence and my fear He wasn’t to be trusted gradually began to melt. My perception of Jesus Christ changed from skepticism to faith. A spiritual door opened and it was like I was standing on a beach, being captivated by the sun dazzling on the water and hearing in my heart God calling me to take the step of faith. You know how inviting the beach is on a hot summer day. The warm water hits your toes and invites you in! Suddenly God was real, safe, and a refuge from my sin, guilt, and fear of death and judgement. Does your guilt weigh you down? Does fear of death and the unknown stalk you? **Are you searching but finding no answers?** Are you tired of your inability to live up to what you know is right? Have you truly considered that your philosophy of life may be wrong? Are you looking for rest for your weary soul?

**Here is the gospel - the good news about Jesus.** Our sins have separated us from our Creator, so He sent us His Son Jesus Christ to take our place in the judgement that is due for our sins. He did this by dying on the cross as a sacrifice for us, and proving He is Lord over all by bodily rising from the dead. If you will confess your sins to God, repent from your way of sinful living, ask Jesus to save you from your sins, and are willing to follow Him, God will forgive you of your sins and give you the gift of eternal life. You will be reconciled to God and have an unfading hope. You will know personally the Living God who created you and have a new life in a close relationship with Jesus.

*If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:9-13)*

**Water to our ankles is a symbol of salvation.** God touches our sin and by virtue of pinning our sin on Jesus, we are cleansed by His death, the shedding of His blood on the cross. The call to bring our sin to God 'just as we are' is a call to freely receive mercy and grace, not first clean up our act. It requires our persuaded heart-felt faith. You can't fake it, but you will receive it, if you sincerely repent and believe in Jesus. The day I trusted in Him was a new beginning. God calls it being 'born again', meaning born from above, a spiritual birth to one who was spiritually dead. You know how good water to the ankles feels. You soak in the warmth and life becomes what it is meant to be. The measure of '1000' signifies the journey you are on toward a spiritual destiny. God's call goes out to everyone, and the choice of coming to salvation is personally offered to you. God has prepared everything you need. Once you step in the water, you want to walk out in it. God calls us deeper and measures the way.

*"Again he measured 1000 and brought me through the waters; the waters came up to my knees." (Ezekiel 47:4)*

Christianity is a journey - Jesus said "follow Me." Those born from above are termed 'spiritual babes' who are called to grow in grace and knowledge. Some children like to stay in the ankle-deep water, and so do some Christians. God's call and will is that we journey the spiritual walk He has measured out for us. It takes a while to walk 1/3 of a mile in water, and to progress toward spiritual maturity. God calls us beyond the contentment of the warm shallow water. We cannot stay in 'comfort-zone Christianity', where we just enjoy what feels good to us. **Water to our knees is a symbol of submission.** Here God touches our desires and calls us to deal with our selfishness. We are called to increasingly submit our life to the authority and will of God.

You run in water to the ankles, but water to the knees slows you down. God brings every Christian to the place of submission, where the walking gets a little more difficult. Some modern gospel messages present Jesus as the way to solve your problems and make your life easier. The true gospel is that Jesus meets our greatest need, which is for righteousness before a Holy God. Life gets better because you know your Maker and your destiny, but it does not get easier. The hardest thing for us to yield to is the authority of another, who calls us away from selfish interests and preferences. When we enter into a personal relationship with Almighty God, it is described as a submissive child to the Father in heaven.

Again, we have a choice, to decide how submissive we will be to God. But be assured of this: God measures out the journey and we will go through every step, whether joyfully submissive or kicking and complaining. This is no place for an attitude of "I'll go with the flow if it goes my way." Many resist God in the area of following godly leaders. To evaluate your submission to God, answer the questions of Lordship. Does our life have a positive spiritual impact on others? Does our life make others thirsty for God? Does our life shed light on what is really true? A life of submission to God means even our enemies will be at peace with us (Prov.16:7).

*"Again he measured 1000, and brought me through; the water came up to my waist." (Ezekiel 47:4)*

When you get out into water to the waist, something changes. The water is colder and since your middle is so sensitive, you may feel uncomfortable; you are vulnerable at the very place of your greatest strength. **Water to our**

**waist is a symbol of doubt.** Here God touches our security in order to help us deal with issues of fear and trust. When you are waist deep in the ocean, you move slowly, your feet search the bottom for stability. Here we are tested to see if we trust in the unseen God or in what we can see. How great is our trust when God pulls the rug out? We see in the early life of Jesus the joy of salvation and submission to the Father's authority. But what was going on in Gethsemane, the night before the cross? The testing went deeper than ever before. He sweated drops of blood, as He looked into the jaws of darkness and fought to trust.

Doubt is normal in the Christian journey, but isn't often talked about. It is seen as a lack of faith, a weakness. But it is a necessary passage so God can reveal to us the depth of our trust in Him. As we journey toward maturity, God wants to test our shallowness, to change us. Some think they did all the changing they needed at salvation or lordship. We may chafe at a wall we cannot climb. We want others to change, but God speaks like this: *"I Am the Lord; I change not, so when are you going to change?"* Ask this when in the middle of doubt: what does God want me to change?

*"Again he measured 1000, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep." -Ezekiel 47:5*

Years ago, I decided I needed swimming lessons. I was tired of swimming like a rock. At the second lesson, the instructor wanted us to jump in the deep end. She showed us how to jump without sinking, and then got me to do it. I knew I had to abandon my fear of deep water to the instructor's control. As I was going to the bottom, I wondered if I would be the first person to drown taking swim lessons at the Y. But I pushed off the bottom and came up fine, although it made the rest of them pretty nervous. **Water over our head is a symbol of abandonment to God's control.** God measures out the path of your journey to a place where you will have no control. The river will carry you wherever God wants you to go.

There is something mysterious and dangerous about deep water. When I took sailing lessons, one of the requirements was to be able to swim 50 yards with a life jacket. Well I managed to do that much, and found out why. My instructor took us out into the middle of Pictou Harbour in an 11 foot Laser sailboat and then dumped it. I knew the manoeuvre to right a heeled-over boat was coming but it still startled me. As I slid into the dark water, I didn't worry; the life jacket kept me afloat and I just relaxed as we righted the boat. I wish all of life's mysteries were that simple. God will take you to the place where all personal control must be abandoned. How little control we really have over our life!

**Ultimately, faith is not something you hold, but Someone who holds you.** How many of us can swim a wide river? Eventually we all come to a depth in life that we cannot cross; it could be cancer, death of a loved one, some sort of devastation. The ultimate river is death, and that no one can safely cross alone. Do you think you can handle death? Does your materialistic philosophy guarantee your destiny? Denial will not work in the day when you are in over your head. You must allow the living God to get hold of your life by repenting from your sins and trusting in Jesus. If not, you will be swept away in the day of judgement. I invite you to come to the water and call upon the Saviour.

*"Everything will live wherever the river goes...  
Trees will grow... their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail." (Ezekiel 47:6-12)*

God makes a Christian instantly, but spends a lifetime shaping us into the likeness of Christ. If you are stuck in 'comfort-zone Christianity', you need to obey the call to submit what you want to what God wants. When you find yourself in an insecure and fearful place, look at what God wants to change in your life. Don't go back to a shallow spiritual life. When you find yourself carried away by things you can't control, then abandon yourself to the control of God. Abandoning control is manageable when we relax and trust Him. The incredible thing is that God calls us to abandon control of our life to Him, so that spiritual life may be brought to others, and so our inner wounds will be isolated. God has opened to us the mysteries of salvation and destiny, but how He works in our life and uses it to fulfill His plan remains a mystery. **It is all about trusting Him.**