

Week 3: A Purpose We Must Pursue – The Church Multiplied

Day 20: Lakes or Rivers

The Passage: Ezekiel 47:1-12, John 7:37-39

The Focus: “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit.” (John 7:38-39)

The Meditation: “Rivers of living water will flow.”

Empowering Truths: Lakes are fun for boating, swimming, and wakeboarding. But they are weak. Lakes produce no power unless water is released and sent out from them . . . and technically that is a river. Rivers generate great power. As they flow, they turn turbines that produce energy.

Most pastors and churches are striving to build lakes. People flow into one place, around one pastor, give to one budget, building one vision. The goal becomes closing the proverbial “back door” and growing your lake.

But Ezekiel and Jesus seem to have a different, much more powerful vision, a river vision. Ezekiel sees a trickle flowing out of the temple that grows exponentially larger the farther it goes. This water is pure and powerful. It turns salt water into fresh, and where this river flows “everything will live” (Ezekiel 47:9). This is a poignant picture of multiplication where people flow in, are equipped, and then flow back out to bring life where there is death.

Jesus never calls us to be lakes, but he promises we can be rivers. He says the Spirit will quench our own thirst, and then become a river flowing through us, bringing his life to others. Our responsibility is to 1) come to him, 2) drink from him, 3) believe in him, and 4) flow for him (John 7:37-39). His Spirit is to be the water and power of the entire process.

We can’t multiply what we don’t have. Therefore, we must drink. We can’t multiply what we don’t give. Therefore, we must flow. We are empowered as we become radically generous.

As leaders our focus must be on whom we can raise up and release, whom we can send, and who can flow through our ministries to bring the “water of life to the world.” This is the work of the Spirit, and the more we live in this place of faith and crazy generosity, the more we are empowered.

We can’t outgive God. We may feel that if we generously give we will run dry, but we are living in the paradoxical kingdom. Lakes dry up but spring-fed rivers keep flowing no matter how much they give.

For each of the past twenty-two years, our local church has “sent” up to 20 percent of our members out the door. They have flowed into the neighboring areas to start new ministries and churches. Yet Jesus keeps the new people and the finances coming in to feed our “river church.”

1 Corinthians 10:4 speaks of this miracle when it tells us how the Israelites in the wilderness “drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” The spiritual picture is of a “rock spring” following them in the desert. Imagine that. They could freely give away water because the source was unending and traveled with them.

How is the Spirit calling you to move into the generosity of multiplication? Will you trust the spring of the Spirit?

Power Truth: God empowers and multiplies when we generously give away our best.

Our Prayer: Lord, we are prone to a mindset of scarcity, that if we give, we have less. Forgive us. Deliver us from our fear and doubt. Forgive us for our pride that wants to gather people and resources to ourselves. Help us to drink deeply daily from your Spirit so we can generously flow to others. Deepen our trust. Multiply what we give. Thank you for being our “living spring” who is always with us.

