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God's Ways and Streams in 2021

James 4:13-16

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No plan survives contact with the enemy. (Military saying)

Isaiah 43:18-21

¹⁸Forget the former things. Do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹See, I am doing a **new thing**. Do you not **perceive** it? Now it springs up. I am making a **way** in the desert, and **streams** in the wasteland. ²⁰The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, ²¹the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

An estimated 20-30% of churches will close in the next 18 months.
(David Kinneman, Pres of Barna Research)

God makes a way to guide, and streams to sustain and refresh.

WOCC In 2021 (Lord willing ...)

➔ **Way in the desert**

➔ **Streams** in the wasteland (Refreshment along the way)

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2020 has humbled, if not humiliated, many leaders.
Every man has a plan that will not work.

Military Saying: *No plan survives contact with the enemy.*

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This has never had more meaning for me than the days we are living in now.

What is the new thing? It's not what you might think.

What this verse is NOT about is God changing the circumstances, and God's people waiting around for circumstances to change. (some may be just waiting)

It's about God providing direction and refreshment within the environment of bad circumstances.

- Where is the "way" and streams
 - ➔ It is in the desert.
- What is the WAY in the wilderness, the STREAMS in the wasteland?
 - ➔ When we receive God's provisions we honor Him!
 - The wild animals ➔ God's people

- → Praise God!

Many of God's people think God's blessing is all about Him changing the circumstances around us. It can be that, it sometimes is that. But changing circumstances around us not the only avenue of blessing.

God provides a way - a direction, a path, a thing to follow.

- Pathways bring purpose, expectation, anticipation of a positive outcome.
- This counters meaninglessness, directionlessness.

God provides streams of refreshment

- streams refresh us on our journey. Cool plunge, water to drink.

David Kinneman, Pres of Barna Research estimates some 20-30% of churches will close in the next 18 months. That's the bad news.

The good news is...

→ 70-80% will survive, some will thrive.

God makes a way to guide, and streams to sustain and refresh.

Q. Do we perceive the WAY God wants us to take, and the streams He refreshes us with?

WOCC In 2021 (Lord willing ...)

Way in the desert

Carey Nieuwhof

- **From Sunday-focus to everyday.**
 - We can try to fight this, which we will surely lose, or accept it and pivot to an everyday emphasis.
 - **Example.** Catherine Nagamine vs. Everyone else.

1st C believers changed their ways of worship.

- From Synagogue and Temple → homes
- From Saturday (Sabbath) → Sunday (start the week)
- From following a Law → following a Person, Jesus
John 14:6: I am the way and the truth and the life.

I am not advocating abandoning all our moorings and foundations,
But to do what we think Jesus would do to feed His flock and reach more
sheep if he were here.

He is here through the church.

Today: Help people bring sacredness into daily life.

- Produce share-friendly content.
- Zoom clips of ... share link in connection.
 - our people sharing.
 - Dialogues on a passage
 - Film kids sharing.
 - Catch people helping, say a word.
 - Know who we are,
 - be who we are (characteristics, not sin),
 - naturally share who we are.

(Seth Godin?)

Streams in the wasteland

Refreshment on the journey

Personal things are good...

- The Doctors show - Dr. Ian
 - Pull weeds
 - Blow on your thumb
 - Chew gum
- Kerwin – makes dioramas

But we are talking more about what we can do **as a church**

- **Sharing: Joan Doi**
 - ○ Small groups (Grow And Share)
 - ○ One to one - utilize Natural and existing friendships to connect individuals.
- 1) Share and prayer guide.
 - a. Sermon highlights, questions, & application
 - b. Anything interesting to click to “share” online?
 - c. Any Quiet Time highlights?
 - d. A.C.T.S.S. prayer

○ 1 interview per month. Plan early, advertise. Pre-record if that's better.

NOTES:

Carey Nieuwhof:

- **The Church, as a group, not merely a few observant individuals, will see online as front door rather than back door.** This acceptance will change people's perceptions and expectations of online exposure.
- **Digital "scales"** (get bigger, reach farther) in a way that in-person cannot.
- **Staff for online** like it's real, because it is.
- **Online giving** will become normative.

Our people will need to be re-trained to think of church differently.
Is there a good metaphor?

How does this affect the **sacredness of Sunday**, or one day of the week set aside to rest or gather or present offerings? I think for the immediate future Sunday will continue to have a sacredness, but I also think that will wane. Sundays began losing its sacredness with stores opening on Sunday, then sports and music activities taking priority over Church gatherings. Covid has accelerated this.

What did we do before COVID that didn't work well?
What activities do we not continue once cleared of Covid?

What did we change that worked?

What in the Wheel Illustration changed for us?

- Obedience to Christ, as we knew it pre-COVID, went out the window. Opportunities to serve shrank dramatically.
- Are we into the Word less or more? Praying less or more, fellowshiping less or more, evangelizing less or more? Do an honest assessment. COVID may be the explanation, but is it an excuse?

Regardless, What should we do about it?

What about fear? Do an honest assessment.

How do we counter fear?

What does obedience look like in this new environment?

If vaccine is the solution, should we pray more about that?

We got people to serve when they attended, but now cannot do that, so what do we do? How do people serve?

Change of Perception is the most important thing we can do.

“Do you not perceive it?”

- Saw it one way, now see it another way.
- = Vision
 - Actual vision is a paradigm change.
You see what others don't.
You see what is not yet.

Facebook memes on wearing or not wearing masks.

Don't want government to fine me.

You might catch or spread COVID.

Fear? Disregard?

How does God want us to look at it? What has he shown us?

What battle do we fight or not fight? What hill to stand fight on? What hill do we not fight on.

Tons of "evidence" either way.

Special Covid topic - Stumbling block causing my brother to sin?

What would your faith look like if you were as convicted about Jesus' death on the cross as you are about social distancing rules, who should be President,

Who do you say that I am?

How does it show up in your life? Examples:

- People who help in Sunday Service.
- Online church
- Online giving
- Decorate the church
- Zoom meetings
- Assisting Safe Haven
- Cleaning Yard.

WOCC DNA

It's not effective to merely follow the old marketing scheme. Yes, the world becomes your market, but it's also your "competition." you must also out-market the competition, and out-attract the competition (world). More spots on media, and more eye-catching.

Its resource-hungry, very inefficient, not who you are.

Seth Godin - People like us do things like this.

Who are we? How do we do things.

Past the theory and good ideas, the main reason people actually attend is still because they were invited.

Godin - its your satisfied people who are your most effective megaphone.

That's YOU.

So... why are you here? What satisfaction, fulfillment, yoy do you receive being a part of WOCC? Many or most have been at other churches. Why WOCC?

That is WOCC's DNA.

Our DNA is not something we want it to be, or what we program to be. It's not made, it's discovered by reflecting on who you are, who WE are together.