

A Deeper Well, Waters Rising

The move to Anaheim was a shakedown. Everything that could be shaken was—from our relationship with our previous church to the still reverberating effects of our sexual abuse crisis.

God was merciful. He used both earthquakes to level us. He was preparing us for a new season of growth founded on simple trust in His goodness towards us. We sent our roots down a little deeper in the Source, and ceased to be so readily dismayed by hardship.

God demonstrated that goodness through the advocacy of John Wimber. As head of the Vineyard movement, a pastor of pastors, John had navigated dozens of sexual messes created by unhealed churchmen and women. He knew the need for safe and powerful places in the church for getting real and getting healed. He loved our main offering-- 'Living Waters'--and insisted it become a primary offering in his church and beyond.

Strength in weakness: could our little band of wounded healers step up and quicken our training of lay persons to make their churches such a merciful haven for the sexually broken? John said yes; DSM prayed: 'Lord have mercy.'

God had mercy and insisted we do it His way. John featured me in one of the annual conferences sponsored by the Vineyard Anaheim. This 5-day conference sold out and so another was slated for the next week: total conferees over two weeks? 10,000 people! (Desert Stream did daily workshops for hundreds and I was scheduled to address the large group a couple times each week.)

Like every novice given such an opportunity, one tends to over-function, jamming a brief talk with every sparkling insight ever mined. Not helpful. God knows this. After laboring over 'the talk above all talks', He made it clear to me that my efforts were unacceptable. (A few hours before?!)

He led me to preach on PS 103:6: a simple word on how God works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed, those like me who had been damaged by sexual sin.

I essentially shared my story. I left my impeccably prepared teaching on my seat, and mounted the podium with a few notes jotted on scrap paper. I taught for 20 minutes and prayed over the people for 40.

God poured out His mercy in a manner I had never seen before, or since. This 'mercy surge' lanced the shame and pain of a Christian people who had little experience in bringing their sexual brokenness into the light of Christ's merciful body. The screams and agonizing sobs sounded like hell breaking loose but actually it was Heaven freeing captives.

Pastors took note of the healing available for their people if the church would take up her

responsibility. Desert Stream began to flow with a new force and freedom throughout the USA and beyond.

Our strategy was to train a group of lay leaders to do 'Living Waters' in a church; then, when locals were digging a good well of healing for their people, we would come and stir up the waters a bit in order to bring people into 'Living Waters.'

Around this time, I recall fondly a conference we did in the heart of San Francisco.

That Vineyard Church happened to be on Folsom Street in the middle of the city's notorious sadomasochism district; and our conference happened to coincide with the weekend of their annual 'Leather Festival'. It was hard to bear the oppression of the enslaved. How much more heartening to watch over 400 Christians of every ethnicity pouring out of the church and bearing powerful mercy for the sexually broken!

The Kingdom of mercy is more potent than the rule of any perversion.

We were in the right place at the right time. The Vineyard Anaheim had become the hub of an international network of churches and Desert Stream benefited. Following the Vineyard model, we began to plan an international strategy for identifying and raising nationals to dig deep wells of Living Waters in their lands.

We were digging a network of wells vigorously. The waters of mercy were rising and beginning to pour out to the nations.

'As You have shown us mercy, O God, in the desert places of our lives, would You show mercy to the beleaguered state of marriage in the USA? As the Perry vs. Schw. case wends its way to the National Supreme Court, prepare for Yourself a victory. We shall render to Caesar what is Caesar's but we shall prayerfully fight that what is Yours, O God. Prepare the hearts of each justice, especially Justice Anthony Kennedy, to uphold marriage according to Your merciful design. Remember mercy, O God.'