

Year-End Report 2008

Published by Desert Stream Ministries



Twenty-Eight Years of Healing, Equipping, and Proclaiming.

Advent 2008

Advent means to await the arrival of something or someone. In the historic Church calendar, Advent applies to the four weeks leading up to Christmas. Its goal is “inward preparation” for the arrival of Christ: awaiting the coming of Christ with focused expectancy. On a devotional level, Advent means meditation on the events leading up to Jesus’ birth—His first arrival. It means clearing out the time and space to consider the amazing men and women God called to prepare His Son for entry upon the earth.

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“Advent is concerned with that very connection between memory and hope which is so necessary to man. Advent’s intention is to awaken the most profound and basic emotional memory within us, namely, the memory of the God who became a child. This is a healing memory; it brings hope. The purpose of the Church’s year is continually to rehearse her great history of memories, to awaken the heart’s memory so that it can discern the star of hope.... It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope.”

Pope Benedict (1986)

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Advent 2008

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This newsletter contains six devotionals. Use these six devotionals any way you want over the course of this Advent season.

Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, will be the focus of our Advent devotions. These are sinful people as complex and conflicted as we are; they combat fear and doubt with hunches and scriptures, visitations and dreams. Like us, they hoped their leadings were divine, and had to wrestle down thoughts to the contrary.

Remember, when the Spirit directed them, Jesus had not yet come... We on the other hand experience their participation in Christ's entry with the assurance that He did come—they had that assurance only in faith.

Today we live between the advents: Jesus has come, and He will come again. We all are called to teach and proclaim His second advent. We await eagerly that arrival with hunches, scriptures, visitations, and dreams, knowing we know only in part. Like Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah, we see through a glass darkly.

Yet the Light pierces the darkness and compels us to follow His leadings, boldly, and yet in fear and trembling, just like our friends from the first advent.

Perhaps their witness has its richest and most relevant application to us today as we await Jesus' Second Advent. May our meditation upon their role in Christ's first arrival help prepare us for His second coming. **DSM**

Zechariah: Hope Deferred & Fulfilled

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick,

but a longing fulfilled is the tree of life."

PROVERBS 13:12



Dean Greer

By Dean Greer

The dictionary defines Advent as "the arrival of something important or awaited." Advent for me has become a season to reflect

on God's provision—His promise fulfilled. Each character of the nativity manifests that fulfillment as God reveals the impossible. I marvel at the heart of the Father who gives good gifts to His children.

Each year I identify more closely with a different character. This year I relate to Zechariah. We know from Luke 1 that he had no child because his wife was barren, and they both were old in years. This was a man who knew well that "hope deferred makes the heart sick."

Not even an encounter with the angel Gabriel could convince Zechariah that God had greater plans. The angel tells the old man that God is going to give him a son, John the Baptist. Zechariah responds, "How can I be sure of this?" Because of his unbelief, he is rendered mute. The angel declares, "Now you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that this birth happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

How familiar is his doubt, his fear, his disbelief. Zechariah, unable to see beyond the limitations of his life, is unable – or just unwilling – to trust in the Creator of Life. His silence is perhaps an opportunity to listen, an invitation to be still and know that He is God.

Like Zechariah, I have desired a child. I cannot tell you how many "angels" the Lord sent over the years to tell us that He had a child for us. A part of me believed, wanted to believe and even proclaimed my belief. Another part of me wasn't so sure. The obstacles were too great. It was just last year, during Advent, that Chrystal and I were in the thick of our adoption proceedings. Things were not looking good for us and my wife and I were low on hope.

In my unbelief, I found a friend in Zechariah. His story became for me a symbol of God's provision. He reminded me that in light of my desire to control the situation, God's sovereign hand would prevail. We gathered our friends around us and pressed into the waiting, the believing.

This Christmas we are introducing Jeremiah, our 6-month-old baby boy, to the rest of our family in California.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy" Isaiah 2:9

I am humbled by these words foretelling the birth of Christ. How many have doubted, even mocked the reality of God fulfilling His promises before seeing them come to pass?

May this Advent season lead you to remember; may it lead you to believe. **DSM**

Dancing *in Bethlehem*

“Do not be afraid, Mary,

you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus.”

LUKE 1:30-31



Chrystal Greer

By Chrystal Greer

For the past seven years, I have celebrated Advent with the Desert Stream staff. It helps me to savor the first coming of our Lord. There

is something to being still, to taking in the scripture, and reflecting on the Son of God. Most churches focus on the manger scene but there is so much more. What led up to Jesus' birth?

In the past, my meditation upon the angel Gabriel and his announcement to Mary about her bearing Jesus (Lk 1:26-38) reminded me of my barrenness. It spoke to me once again of Christmas without my own child. Each time I would have to press in and look a little deeper to the true meaning of her example.

In my own desire for a family Mary has taught me 'to not be afraid,' just as Gabriel said to her. Those simple words have given me hope. I too dared to believe that I had favor with God, and that God could overturn the impossible.

For as long as Dean and I have worked for Desert Stream, I have desired to be a mom. I've grieved the inability to bear biological children then faced a long winding road to adoption.

Last year at this time I was busy putting together a Christmas fundraiser to revive our dream to adopt. It was yet another step on an impossible journey. The money raised was immediately spent. Our vision to adopt seemed like a mirage!

Dean and I locked into scripture; "For to us a child is born..." (Is. 9:6) described our expectant hearts. Like Mary I too could anticipate something so miraculous!

God delivered a child for us just after Easter. So this year I am celebrating Christmas with Dean and our new son Jeremiah! Barren no more, my spirit overflows with new life.

I have 'danced' Mary in several church Christmas programs. I have felt God's pleasure in her faithfulness. It is a feeling I have longed for throughout the year.

But this year is different. I hold Jeremiah in my arms and leap for joy. God turned "my mourning is turned into dancing." Like Mary, I am blessed among women. I dance to glorify my faithful Father. **DSM**

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I've grieved the inability
to bear children.
Mary has taught me
'to not be afraid'.
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and that God could
overturn the impossible.*



Receiving the “Gift?!”

I can't say I've ever wanted children. I grew up in a home with two broken parents who did their best. I wasn't really a child in my home; I was a third parent.



Char Wells

By Char Wells

I can't say I've ever wanted children. On the day my parents gave me the infamous 'sex' talk, I cried. I so traumatized my parents that

they refused to give it again to any of my four siblings.

Why the trauma? In my parents' well-intended presentation of sexuality, I thought they were telling me that I had to have kids. At the tender age of 9, I made up my mind: no-one was going to make me have kids! No one would be calling me 'Mom.'

This mindset stuck with me into young adulthood. The possibility of children rarely crossed my mind. I thought I might adopt one or two when I was good and ready and had been married for no less than 5 years. Imagine my horror when my husband-to-be told me of his life-long dream to be a father! And quickly!

Not marrying Jesse was out of the question, but that is not to say I did not balk. When I suggested that perhaps maybe I would be ok with having a child after five years of marriage, my usually light-hearted beloved looked like I had just run over his puppy. Perhaps the life that I had planned wasn't the one ahead of me.

I grew up in a home with two broken parents who did their best. My father was an alcoholic with a serotonin deficiency and my mother was co-dependent to the point that she wasn't her own person. I had 4 younger siblings. I wasn't really a child in my home; I was a third parent.

To this day my parents call me for advice on how to raise the other four. Just yesterday my

dad called to inform me of a possibly serious medical issue that my mother is having but told me not to tell 'the kids' as not to worry them. Everything inside of me screamed, "I'm a kid! Why can you never get that?"

In light of this, I felt it redundant to have children of my own. I needed a break from parenting and the one-year wait Jesse was proposing was roughly the worst idea I had ever heard. Five years, I assured him, dead puppy or not, it would be five years. Little did I know what the Lord had in mind.

I did trust God. God knew that I wasn't ready to have a child. I conceded to Him, believing that His timing was perfect and the day that I found myself pregnant would be the day that I could no longer imagine living without the kid.

As Jesse loved me in a way that only a husband can, my heart opened more and more. I learned to trust him, to trust that he had my best interest in mind. During these first two amazing years of marriage I watched him defer his opinions and goals in order to ensure a safe and stable family.

Much to my horror, I felt a growing desire to have a child! I rarely acknowledged it to Jesse but rather brought it frequently before the Lord. Although our home was a peaceful place, I was still afraid.

I was afraid of the unknown, of all the uncertainties that a child would bring into our lives. What would happen to us? What would become of our relationship? These questions kept me anxious and kept me from letting Jesse in on my little secret, the secret being that I knew I was ready.

On Mother's day of this past year, I found out the inevitable. I was indeed pregnant. I watched as a little plus sign appeared on a pink plastic stick and thought, "This is for real, I can't change this."

As I sat there pondering all the ways my life was about to change, I heard my Father in heaven say something very clearly. "Be not afraid." (This is apparently the stock answer for pregnancy in heaven as these were the same words that Gabriel said to Mary when he told her that she would have a son.)

In Mary's response to the angel, I saw something incredible. After the angel completes a long list of what her Son will be she says simply, "Be it unto me according to Your will." Mary realized something that I only did recently. We can't change what the Lord has planned for our lives. We can fight it tooth and nail but there will always be an uncomfortable bumping up against the better thing.

Mary knew from moment one that it would just be silly to fight this news, these good tidings of great joy. She knew it was better to just accept them and say "I trust that You know what is best for me." And so in the wisdom of God, a 14-year-old girl gave birth in a stable to the Messiah.

As I walked back to our room to give Jesse our wonderful news, I knew exactly how I wanted to tell him, I had known since the day he told me he wanted to be a dad. But my words went out the window. At that moment all I could do was throw my arms around him and cry.

We laughed and cried together and then as one embraced the mystery. In my heart there was a resounding 'yes' to this better way that the Lord had for me. I knew just as Mary did that He had looked on my humble estate and from now on I would be called blessed. "He who is mighty has done great things for me" (Luke 1:48-49) **DSM**

Father *in the Fire*

I am the father of a son not yet born, a life dependent on my wife and I.

In a matter of months more will be required of me than I have ever had to give.



Jesse Wells

By Jesse Wells

Joseph is awesome. It astounds me—God chose an earthly father for His Son. What kind of man would God choose to provide protection and leadership for His family? Truly, God is deepening my own understanding of manhood and fatherhood.

I am the father of a son not yet born, a life dependent on my wife and I. This little soul will look to me for protection, safety, love, and identity. There is no other way for him—I am his father and he is my son. In a matter of months more will be required of me than I have ever had to give.

But right now things are required of me. Right now I must act as a husband to my pregnant wife. My wife and I have been married for almost two and a half years. We have gone through many trials and hardships together, and we remain very much in love. This experience of child-bearing requires clarity and commitment to being a man. I have had to wrestle with my masculinity in ways I have not known before.

I need to step up for my wife, to protect and nurture the beautiful one who nourishes and houses my son. It has been like lifting rocks to build a wall. I must move them individually, but continuously. I am building not just a wall, but a castle that shields my family and declares my identity to both my family and the world. Before this can be, I need the rocks to be set in the right places and to be mortared well. I'll need wisdom and truth from the Lord to guide me.

So I look to Joseph, the man God chose to protect Mary and raise His own Son!

After Jesus' conception, the circumstances in which Joseph found himself tell us a lot about who he was and what God required of him. He was not simply asked to take part in extraordinary circumstances. Yes the invitation included mystery, but also, it seemed to him, a shameful reality. His ability to provide a place of safety for his family was tested before he grasped the mystery of the Messiah he was going to raise.

Perhaps he was tempted to strike at Mary out of the pain of rejection, or the threat of social shame. The unbalanced amount of power that a man had in those days could have wrecked Mary's life. How Jesus responded to his mysteriously pregnant wife manifested true masculinity, the kind of heart a true husband is meant to have. His love for God and Mary overcame the evil he could have committed.

Joseph acted righteously. He used his power to protect her, not to punish her. He sought to honor her, and to resolve the engagement quietly, as he was "unwilling to put her to shame." (v. 19)

This is a character to mark your marriage by. Joseph's deference toward the protection and honor of Mary at the expense of justifying himself exemplifies true manhood. God saw in him these qualities. After this test, he proved to the world what kind of man he was. Righteousness compelled him to endure the shame in order not to fuel Mary's shame. In that way, Joseph foreshadowed what Christ would endure on the cross.

The testing of Joseph described the first job of a husband and father. It shows us what Paul was talking about in Ephesians 5. Joseph was to Mary something of what

Christ is now to the Church. Joseph embraced the path of humility, washing her with the Word of honor, and preparing her for her high call. (v.26)

After passing this test, God spoke to Joseph. He revealed His plan to Joseph and called him into a deeper level of masculinity. Joseph was called to stand behind the leadership of the Lord and be a pivotal part in ushering in a new covenant. God had set into motion the greatest event of human history and He invited Joseph to help realize it!

In my own life I have been called to take part in God's purposes for this time and for the people around me. I find solace in the picture of Joseph. He is a man who stood strong, and righteously in the face of adversity. He showed Christ to his family, and was a picture of strength in a time of crisis. He was a true umbrella for his wife, giving her love and seeking to honor her.

There are times when I as the husband must go low in humility in order to preserve the honor of my wife, and show her the greatest love I can. The greatness of Joseph was that he was willing to offer everything that he had to honor his wife and the Lord's purposes.

That is the mark of a true husband, to be like Christ and go as far as you can for the other. Joseph stood strongly in that masculinity. He built his castle of identity and protection for his wife and child. He endured challenges that would have seemed insurmountable. God entrusted a mere man to raise up the One who would save us all. **DSM**

Magnifying *Mercy*

By Andrew Comiskey

God showed me what He wanted...

He wants to pour deep drafts of it upon broken people and so give them what they need.

He gives the haggard soul what it needs: unfailing love.



Andrew Comiskey

As I sit before the Lord in this hour, I am grateful. I have just received news of victory. Over the last five years in California, we have battled for righteousness in marriage.

And we finally won. By a slim majority, California citizens voted last month to honor marriage as solely heterosexual.

California—the land of powerful, trendsetting extremities has become a model of restraint. California citizens said to its ‘gay mafia’: ‘We cannot give you marriage. God won’t let us.’ Now California’s righteousness, not its sunny clever perversion, goes out to the nations. Bless you California, and your God-fearing citizens who fought for marriage amid much opposition.

I am proud and humbled by this state I love so much. More than that, I am humbled before God. This battle has reduced me to mercy. If you read the blog, (soon to be a booklet!) you will notice how mercy became its reoccurring theme.

For everything I discovered wrong about ‘gay marriage’, God showed me what He wanted. And He wants mercy. He wants to pour deep drafts of it upon broken people

He helps us with mercy.

Mercy meets us in a babe

then calls us into the

splendor of His majesty.

and so give them what they need. It may not be all they desire. But He is smarter than that. He gives the haggard soul what it needs: unfailing love.

This haggard soul has needed that love as never before. I felt so weak and small in this battle. Yet together with all the saints—awesome kinsmen who stood with me—we discovered this love. And it freed us to do the impossible.

I felt like Mary waiting with Elizabeth for the promise of new life. Together we actively waited for God. And He gave us the promise of victory. “Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her would be accomplished!” (Luke 1:45)

Mary means a lot to me. She symbolizes the church. She was the first one who embodied Christ. She is a humble and exquisite model to us all. From her, we observe how to receive Him, how to attend to His stirrings, and how to manifest Him on the earth. You could say that Mary was the first church!

Now we are the church. As such, Mary warrants our attention. She is worthy of our emulation and our honor. Let’s just draw the line at worshipping her. After all, she never asked for deification. All she wants is for her Son to be glorified!

In this season of honoring marriage, we like Mary manifested Jesus—the true image of God on the earth. And as previously cracked bearers of that image, we at Desert Stream can only attribute to His mercy the liberty to manifest His Design for humanity.

Mercy freed us; we extended Him freely and with gratitude to a world often hostile to His design, and yet so desperately in need of it.

Mary means a lot to me.

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*She is a humble and
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We made Him known as we testified to His faithful love. Jesus broke the domination of same-sex attraction and freed us for whole heterosexual relating! Now we live to honor Him through honoring His image in marriage. We can say with Mary this Advent:

“Our souls magnify the Lord and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior. For He has been mindful of the humble state of His servants. (Luke 1:46-48)

It’s easy to be humble when mercy frees you to see how broken you are. The healing that follows can only be ascribed to Him. Gratitude is the only reasonable response.

From now on, all generations will call us blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things through us—Holy is His Name. (1:48, 49)

God delighted in using us along with hundreds of other saints to defend His honor in marriage. In so doing, we made

Him known. In answering our prayers and in empowering our actions, He did great things—Holy is His Name!

His Mercy extends to those who fear Him from generation to generation. (v.50)

Mercy comes to those who fear Him; to those who take seriously His judgments.

Mercy to the children who need not be subject to the delusion of ‘gay marriage’;

Mercy to the marriages which need grace to endure for the sake of kids;

Mercy to the truth-filled fundamentalists who need it in their same-sex attractions;

Mercy to the emergent church who must give a clear answer to gays seeking it;

Mercy to messengers like you and me who need to return to the first things—

the babe who offers Himself to us in powerful weakness to redeem us from ours...

‘What do we have that we did not first receive?’ (1Cor. 4:7) Absolutely nothing.

His mercy is everything.

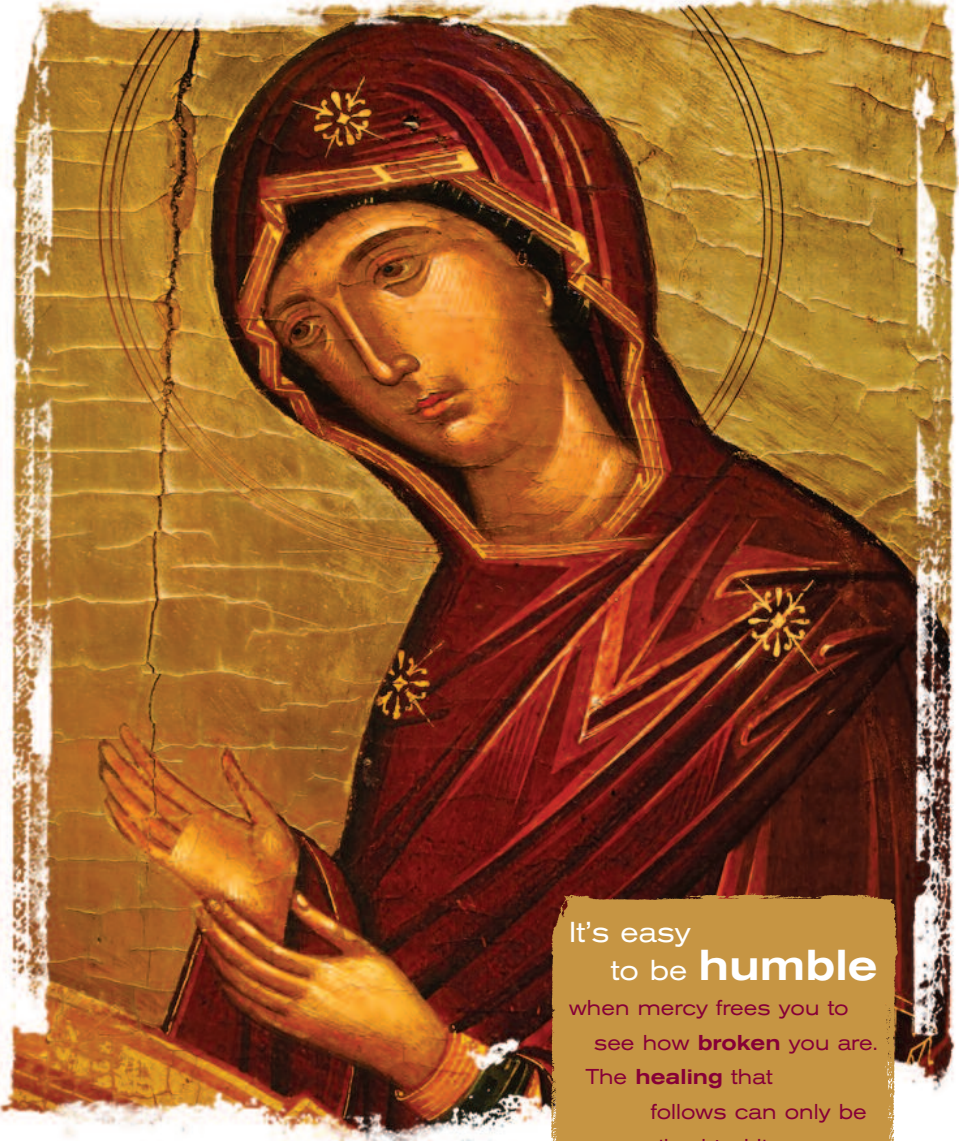
He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. (v.51)

Powerful businessmen, flashy celebs, lawyers, mayors and even our new president elect could not deter the common Californian from disciplining the greed of the gay community and its sympathizers. ‘No, you cannot have marriage!’

He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. (v.52)

What could be more intimidating than the smart, gorgeous, and moneyed gay mafia? This is not a marginalized minority, but a powerhouse in California’s cultural and political life.

God-fearers arose from the ground up and gathered to honor the design of their God. The humble ‘honored marriage for the good of all’ (Heb. 13:4); they brought down those who rule California from their lofty perch.



It's easy to be **humble**

when mercy frees you to see how **broken** you are.

The **healing** that

follows can only be ascribed to Him.

Gratitude is the only

reasonable response.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. (v.53)

God vindicated those who longed for justice in the area of sexual civil rights. For the first time in a decade, I participated in an advance that curbed rather than conceded to the demands of gays. We won! We restrained what has become a persistently savvy, sneaky and successful force in nearly all aspects of California life, even its church life.

God took marriage out of the hands of those who should not have it, and filled the hungry with righteousness.

He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever. (vs.54, 55)

He helps us with mercy. I wept as I sat before the 40-foot stained glass image of Jesus, mighty in mercy, which arises from behind the altar in my home church (St. Gregory Episcopal of Long Beach, CA). Mercy meets us in a babe then calls us into the splendor of His majesty.

As we in our littleness say ‘yes’ to Him, He magnifies our holy efforts. We emerge into sons and daughters who represent Him well, accomplishing feats of righteousness that bear witness of Mercy Himself.

This Advent, may we join Mary in glorifying and rejoicing in God our Savior. **DSM**

Corporate Corner



By Annette Comiskey

"The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." Luke 1:25

Annette Comiskey

When I think about the Christmas season, Elizabeth would be one person I identify with the least as a mom. Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, spent many years praying for a child. Barren but seeming to accept it, she was described as righteous before God (Luke 1:6).

As a mom, that was never my problem. Andy and I were blessed with pregnancy after pregnancy! But in the last few years I have looked to Elizabeth as a symbol of hope deferred.

When we started Desert Stream in the 80's, I firmly believed there would be a day when we would "work" ourselves out of a job. Not that there wouldn't be a need for our ministry, but that most churches would be equipped to minister to the sexually and relationally broken.

Also, I never imagined the day when homosexuality would be seen as a "normal" choice as it is today.

What we see today is contrary to what I thought would happen.

Many churches refuse to acknowledge the need for Living Waters in their church, some not even wanting Andy to speak from the pulpit afraid of offending church members. Culturally, Christians who hold to God's standard for sexuality are often seen as merciless and legalistic.

My hope waned. I began to feel that Living Waters wasn't making a difference. Why should we go on? Then I remembered Elizabeth being seen as upright before God. How did she do that in face of her barrenness, the realization that what she had desired would not occur?

Elizabeth must have given God her desires and trusted in Him. And then, God delivered! Advanced in years, Elizabeth conceived a son that would herald the coming of the Savior!

I now identify with Elizabeth, trusting in Him, hoping in His word. My hope is not for a child but for a turning of the tide towards the acceptance of homosexuality. I look forward to the day when I will proclaim, as did Elizabeth, look what the Lord has done for me.



Year-End 2008

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DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES
PUBLISHES THE FOLLOWING:

Newsletter (Spring and Fall)

Mid-Year Report (Summer)

Year-End Report (Winter)

Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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L E A D E R S H I P

DESERT Stream
MINISTRIES

Training Seminar For:

Living Waters, CrossCurrent, Salt and The River

September 26—October 2, 2009

Heartland Presbyterian Conference Center, Kansas City, MO.

**For more information contact Dean Greer:
dgreer@desertstream.org**

**This will be the only training in 2009!
Register Early!**

T R A I N I N G S E M I N A R